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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

"KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD."

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, Jan. 18th, 1925.
(Stenographically reported).

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—1 Pet. 1: 5.



THE human instrument through whom God speaks in this passage was the apostle Peter. Light is sometimes colored by the medium through which it shines: it is not the less sunlight because of that fact. And the word of God spoken by Peter, though it may be colored by Peter's experience, is still the Word of God. It is quite true Peter has a style which is peculiarly his own; it is not, on that account, any less the Word of God at his mouth. I think this passage reflects, in a very special way, the experiences of the writer.

You will remember how Peter loved his Lord. There was no doubt about it, that Peter was a passionate lover of the Lord Jesus Christ; and when he said to Him, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee"; when he declared: "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death", he meant exactly what he said. He thought he was strong enough to stand any kind of temptation, and to resist the fiercest storm. And yet you remember how easily he denied his Lord; how repeatedly in the stress of that fearful hour, he declared he did not know the Man, even sealing his denial with an oath. That must have been a very painful experience to him when, for the third time, he had said he did not know Him, and as he said it he lifted his eyes, and caught the direct glance of Jesus. He said nothing. He was there in the

hands of the enemy; they were thirsting for His blood; He never needed a witness more; He never needed human sympathy more than He did at that moment. And as Peter denied Him, he lifted his eyes, and he saw Jesus looking at him: "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." A little while before the Saviour had said, in answer to Peter's protestation of loyalty, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow; thou shalt deny me thrice". And when he had denied Him the third time, he caught the eye of Jesus—and immediately Peter heard in the morning hour the crowing of the cock. And he went out and wept bitterly. Then he saw Him taken to the cross, and he saw Him die. And when at last the Lover of his soul had bowed His head and given up the ghost, Peter's heart was broken.

I visited many times a woman who was a member of this church, and who was very ill. She had one daughter who came to see her; the other children had utterly neglected her. And one day she said to me, "Do you know, Pastor, I don't believe they would even make me a cup of tea". She was so terribly forsaken. And that mother died; and they carried her body to the undertaker's chapel. And then all the children came!—and they took out their pocket handkerchiefs and wept, and wrung their hands, and leaned over the coffin, and talked about their "darling" mother—whom they had utterly neglected in life. That is the wrong time to show our interest in our loved ones; but I think Peter must have been something like that. And when he saw Jesus die, he must have said, "There, now, He is gone; and I shall never have an opportunity of telling Him how sorry I am. Oh, I wish I had broken through the crowd and stood at His side, and said, I know this man." But he was too late; Jesus was dead.

How terribly dark those three days—those three days of the Master's entombment—must have been for Peter! It seems impossible for me to believe that Peter was ever able to close his eyes during those three days. For if, "Whom having not seen" we love, what must it have been to be in the Master's presence for three years; to have looked into His face, to have heard His voice, to have felt the touch of His hand, to have enjoyed His presence! I say, when He was gone, Peter must have mourned Him deeply. He had hoped in Him, but his hope was now a dead hope. It was extinguished.

Then on the third morning the news came that some women had been to the sepulchre, and they had found it open. And Peter, hoping against hope, yet scarcely believing, with John, ran to the sepulchre to see if it were true. And when they arrived they found it just as the woman had said: the stone was rolled away. They went in; and they saw the linen clothes lying. They saw the grave was empty; but the Book says,—listen!—"Him they saw not". But they saw some angels; and they went to tell their brethren of what they had seen.

And I pause to remind you all of this, that nobody was convinced of the resurrection of Jesus by seeing the empty sepulchre. Many people saw the empty sepulchre; they saw the linen clothes lying, they had all the evidence that Jesus was not there; but if you read the New Testament you will find that the only people who believed in the resurrection of Jesus were the people to whom Jesus Himself appeared. You may argue about the resurrection of Christ until the day of doom; but no one will ever believe in the resurrection of Christ until the risen Christ introduces Himself to the soul.

And then we read—Paul tells us—that He appeared unto Cephas, (Peter). Would you not like to have an account of that meeting,—the first time they met after the resurrection? Would you not like to know exactly what Peter said,

and what the Lord said to him? Well, if the Lord had wanted you to know all that passed in that solemn interview, He would have written it down. But I want you young people to learn this lesson: the Bible throws a mantle of silence over that interview, and not one solitary word that passed between Jesus and Peter is here recorded. There are some people who seem to think that they ought to tell everyone everything. It is wrong. There ought to be some secret interviews between you and your Lord. There are experiences which should be published to the world; but there are other experiences which belong to ourselves before God. He appeared unto Peter, and no man knows what passed; nor did Peter ever tell how the reconciliation was effected. But he writes here, and I think I understand him now with that background. Listen: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". . . When Peter penned those words, I think he remembered how his heart was thrilled at the discovery that Jesus was alive, "Not a dead hope, but a living hope".

That is the Saviour I preached to you last Sunday morning, a living Saviour. Begotten to what? What for? What is our hope? Here it is objectively: "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you". It is outside my province this morning to dwell upon that aspect of the text; but the words are wonderfully suggestive—an inheritance that cannot be corrupted, that can never be defiled, and an inheritance—how significant—that fadeth not away. Some inheritances fade away. They are big when you get them; but they get smaller and smaller and smaller until you have nothing left, especially when the family quarrel over father's will. By the time all legal expenses are paid, there is not enough left to go around: It is an inheritance that fades away. But this inheritance does not fade away, and it is reserved in heaven.

I do not know why, but once some one reported that I had been left a large sum of money. I do not know where they thought I had got it from; but for a little while I enjoyed the reputation of being rich. I don't know whether it was that I managed to be as cheerful as a rich man. But there was an element of truth in it, for I confess I am a multi-millionaire. And I confess that I put all my eggs in one basket—they are not eggs, I merely use that metaphor—but I have put all my wealth in one bank, the Home Bank—not the Home Bank of Toronto; if I had it would all have faded away—but I put all I have in the Home Bank of Heaven. And this Book tells me that my inheritance, my whole fortune, is reserved in heaven for me. I have no fear at all; I am never going to be poor; I am a millionaire for ever. So are you if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is with the other aspect of the text I wish to deal this morning. "Reserved in heaven"—That is fine. We have not received the inheritance in full as yet—"for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." I desire to explain to you, particularly to you young converts, how God keeps those who put their trust in Him.

I.

First: to discuss this principle, that grace preserves the life it gives. The very nature of salvation requires it. I wonder if anyone here can tell me what salvation is? Someone would say, "It is salvation from punishment, sir." Someone else would say, "It is salvation from hell." That is not what salvation is: that is only one aspect of it. Jesus Christ came, not primarily to save us from

hell, but He came to save us from that which makes hell; He came to save us from our sins. Another would say, "I can tell you what salvation is. Salvation means that I am going to be saved to heaven." No, not primarily. We are to be saved to fitness for heaven; saved to holiness,—from sin to holiness; and that means from hell to heaven.

I remember my father telling me that he met a man who was a hyper-Calvinist. (I am a bit of a Calvinist myself. I mean by that, I believe in the sovereignty of God, that He chooses His people). My father asked this man how he was getting along spiritually. "Oh," he said, "I am resting in the great promise that the Lord will save His own." And my father said, "You think you are one of the elect, then, do you?" "Yes, sir, I think I am one of the elect." But he did not show much of the fruits of the Spirit in his life. My father continued, "What are you elected for?" "I am elected unto salvation." "Yes, but what is salvation? I will tell you what it is: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. And the only proof that we are God's children is that we are Godlike." That is all! I have seen many children whose names I did not need to enquire. I have said, "Why, you are Mr. So-and-So's son, are you not?" "Yes, sir, but how did you know?" "Well," I feel like saying, "no one who ever saw your father would doubt whose son you are. You are just like him."

If we are the children of God, we ought to be like God, not like the Devil. We are born again; and by that new birth we are begotten of the Holy Ghost. The very nature of God is in us; and we must become like God. That is what we are saved for. There would not be any heaven for us if we were not fitted for it. If you were to introduce some people to heaven, it would be almost hell for them, because they would not be ready for it. The inheritance is reserved for us; but we are prepared for the inheritance. Think of a boy who is left by his father a very large fortune, and a mansion, full of servants; and if he should say, "I have plenty of money, and I have a big house, I don't need to go to school; I don't need to prepare myself for anything; I have all that heart could wish." And when he grows up he has plenty of money; but he does not know the alphabet, he cannot speak his mother tongue. He is an ignorant, uncultivated man, with plenty of money; and he is surprised when he gets into his big house that no one with any culture wants to come and see him. They say, "He has plenty of money, but he is an uneducated, uncultivated man". If the Lord were to give us a great inheritance, and keep it for us, if He did not prepare us for the inheritance, I am afraid the angels would not come to visit us. They would be ashamed of us. There would be one mansion on the golden street that would be passed by. But He not only reserves for us our inheritance, but He prepares us for heaven; He shapes our characters, so that when we get to heaven we shall be like Him. And if you do not get a little bit of heaven inside here, you will not have much heaven outside by and by.

Again, we are kept. You young Christians, listen: the Scripture says that some Power, other than your own, keeps you. We have not to hold on, to keep ourselves, but Somebody is going to keep us. The text is very simple and plain: You are kept by the power of God—not by your own resolutions, not by the strength of your own will, however strong it may be, not "by works of righteousness" which you may do, not even by your own obedience unaided by the power of God—you are kept by the power of God, so that when you get to heaven you will have to say, "I am here because the Lord saved me right from the beginning until now; and He has done it all.—Kept by the power of God!"

Now, I want to ask the question, How is this power of God mediated to us?

What is this power of God? They had a heresy trial in the Episcopal Church in the United States; and the court of bishops found a certain bishop guilty of heresy. I should think they would, because this is what he said: "The terms 'Saviour' and 'God' do not represent personalities but benevolent powers." What is the power of God? How are you and I to be kept by the power of God? Jesus Christ is not here to-day in the sense that He was in the days of His flesh; we cannot see Him; He cannot take us by the hand physically, and lift us up; He does not do that. How, then, is this power of God exercised in the life of the believer? This word is another word for the Holy Ghost: that is what it means. We are kept by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

And I believe that is where the weakness of the modern church lies. You have evangelists who go everywhere preaching the Word. Hundreds and thousands of souls may profess conversion; they come in one door of the church—and they go out the other. The Baptist churches of the Southern States report every year a loss of thirty-five per cent. of their membership; of every hundred that come into the church thirty-five are lost to the church. Why? (May it not be because the truth of the New Testament is not wholly preached? Jesus went home to the glory; but when He went up He sent His Spirit. The Holy Spirit came to take possession of every believer; and we are kept only as we receive the Holy Spirit Who lives with us every day—and all the day—to work out God's will in us. You will remember there is a Scripture, Paul writing to the Philippians, said: "As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So the Holy Spirit comes to occupy our hearts, to possess our lives, to control, to teach us, to energize our wills, to make us strong in the hour of temptation, and to live out Christ's life in us. We are kept by the power of God;—"strengthened," as Paul says to the Colossians, "with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

Boys and girls, do you ever get impatient? Do you? Did you ever use that slang expression, "That is the limit"? Did you? And have you come to the end of your long-suffering, until you determine you will not suffer any more? Well, there is a power which is described as a "glorious power" by which we may be strengthened in the inner man; which will issue in patience and long-suffering, and joyfulness. So we are to receive the Spirit of God, if we are to be kept by the power of God.

Now, let me make that very practical: "kept by the power of God through faith." How are we going to have this power? Just as I turn this light on—you don't see it, but it is in that wire—and as soon as I make the connection, I get the light. The power of God is "to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." How are we to exercise faith, so that we are to be given power? First of all, believe that truth I gave you last Sunday; believe the promise of God that when He saves the soul He saves it for ever. There is not any doctrine I know that is so productive of backsliding, and which is more dishonoring to God, than that doctrine which teaches that the Lord Jesus may save a man to-day and let him slip to-morrow. That sort of a Saviour is not worth having at all! No! Jesus Christ did not come to give me another chance. He came to put my salvation beyond the bounds of chance; He came to make it absolutely sure, and sure for ever. And I shall be kept by the power of God, first of all, in the

measure in which I believe that truth. To believe that I am God's child, and that He will never let me go, will, in itself, help me to walk in the ways of the Lord.

We should have faith in a living Saviour, not only in a crucified, but in a risen Saviour. Remember the power which is "to usward who believe" is the power which found its fullest manifestation in the resurrection of Christ. And what God did in Christ in the resurrection, He wants to do in you and me. And we are to believe! I think Peter had that in mind when he wrote this; I think he must have remembered the Lord saying to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And Peter, looking back on that, would say, "I know now why I was kept; I know now why I did not slip right over the precipice, why I was not lost—it was because He prayed for me." I think he was present—I know he was—when Jesus uttered those words in the seventeenth chapter of John, in His High Priestly prayer, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost—Peter or any of them. Peter is going to deny me, but he is not going to be lost—none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." And then He prayed to the Father, "Holy Father,—keep—keep—keep—keep—keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me."

I think Peter never forgot that prayer. He knew Jesus Christ was in the glory praying for him. So many people come to me, and say, "I wish you would pray for this one and for that one; and I am glad they do. I try to remember them as far as I can, and as the Lord lays them on my heart. But I would say to you, my dear friends, that we have an Intercessor Who is always praying for us—that we may be kept, as we were reading this morning, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Again, we are to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Someone says, "Well, how can I know when I have the Holy Ghost?" Now we are on delicate ground, aren't we? "How may I know when I have the Holy Ghost?" How do you know when you have Christ as your Saviour? You answer, "I know it on the authority of God's Word. That is how I know it." How may I know that I have the Holy Ghost? By speaking with tongues? A thousand times no! That is not the evidence. I am absolutely positive that thousands and thousands of God's people have had the fulness of the Holy Ghost who never did speak with tongues; and I am equally sure that a great many who profess to speak with tongues never did have the Holy Ghost! No, my friends, that is not the evidence. We are to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Ask Him for His Spirit; and having asked for it, believe you have it. Depend upon the Holy Ghost to keep you, just as you depend on Christ to pray for you, and His blood to cleanse you.

Is that all? No, we are to believe in a living Saviour, and in a living Spirit, and we are to believe in a living Word. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." When I believe this promise: "He that hath the Son hath life"—when I believe that promise, that promise communicates life to me, and I have life. I cannot explain it, but there it is: "God so

loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When you believe that you have everlasting life, it is communicated to you; and in the same way, the great promise of God which promises to give us grace, such grace as is necessary to holy living, as we believe this promise, that grace is communicated to us.

That does not mean that we are to believe only the comfortable promises of God. A great many people like to have comfort; and if I were to preach this morning as to make you bring out your handkerchiefs and wipe your eyes, and think of all the deathbeds you ever heard of, all the sorrows and afflictions you have had, and then assure you everything is all right—well, it would be all true, and you would go home and say, "What a fine sermon the Pastor preached this morning. I do love comforting sermons; I do wish preachers would give us more comfort." There is a place for a spiritual opiate, perhaps, but very often we have need of something else. Let me ask you, What do we want when we ask that? Do we want comfort or Christlikeness? Do we want to grow up into Christ? Is there a young man or woman saying, "I want to get the very best the Lord has for me. Every day I live I want to put off the old man and put on the new." If that is what you want, you must have something more than comfort. There is a discipline in the Word of God; and we are to receive the promises of God which discipline us, by faith; and rest upon them also.

Here is a word that will apply very especially to young people, but to everyone. You want blessedness, do you? "Yes," someone says, "I want to have a happy time." Well, I will tell you how you may be blessed—no, the Lord will: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." That is one thing. Now you boys, you were in bad company last week, and you know it; and you heard some boys taking the name of the Lord Jesus in vain, and saying things that you would not like to say yourself before your mother; and you know very well that the law of wisdom was not in the tongue that you listened to last week; and too much you were influenced by what some ungodly boy said. But you want happiness! you want to be kept from misery! Then take that Word of the Lord, and say, "I believe that up to the hilt, and I want happiness; and the word of the Lord says 'keep out of bad company,' and I am going to keep out of it. Whenever I hear anyone talking like that I am going to shun that boy's company from that moment." That is what the Word of the Lord teaches; and we are to receive the Word of the Lord, and believe that it means exactly what it says. "Nor standeth in the way of sinners." If you walk in the counsel of the ungodly you will almost certainly stand in the way of sinners; and by and by you will sit in the seat of the scornful. Now the Word of the Lord says if you want blessedness, keep away from these things. We are kept by the power of God through faith in that word of direction, God Himself by the Holy Ghost, keeping us by the power of that Word. And you young men, you are at college, are you? Yes, sir. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." That may mean some godless professor who reflects upon the integrity of this Word. If you are going to get happiness, get out of that atmosphere as quickly as you can.

"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." "Well," someone says, "you don't mean to say, sir, I am going to find happiness by reading the Bible?" No, I do not; that is what the Bible says for itself. It says that when you and I, taught by the Spirit of God, have learned to take delight in the wisdom of the Lord as here revealed, we have begun to be blessed; and as we meditate day and night, we shall be kept from all the sorrows that come to the ungodly.

I could quote you many Scriptures: Take for instance this word; everyone needs this: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." That is not a very comforting word, is it? because we all fail, in some respects, to bridle our tongues. If I am going to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, I have to believe what God says to me about my tongue, have I not? Let us be practical. This is not a profound sermon; it is a practical sermon. God says if we are going to have a religion that is worth while, it must touch our tongues; and if it does not our religion is vain. Now, does your religion govern your tongue? Does your religion put a bridle upon your tongue? Has it seasoned your conversation since you were saved? If we are to be kept in that matter, in respect to the tongue, we must just believe what God's Word says, and depend upon Him, and ask Him to set a watch on our lips and bridle our tongues. And He will do it.

Take the question of amusements, you young people: I spoke on that question a few years ago, and we had almost an earthquake in the church. We lost all the people who went to the theatre, and many who did not. But here is what I said then, and I repeat it now: the teaching of Scripture is this, that when you see there is something in your life that may lead somebody else astray, it becomes your duty, as a Christian, to give that thing up for the sake of someone else. If you can go to the theatre without harm, if you are a Christian you will absolutely refuse to go, because you may lead someone else to do it. And so with all the other things that I could enumerate. But we will have nothing to do with those things because of the power of God's Word. Read the eighth chapter of first Corinthians. If you want to be kept out of the theatre, take that chapter and get down on your knees before the Lord, and say, "Lord, help me to believe Thy Word, and to be kept by the power of God, and be saved from this thing."

So there is not a duty of life for which you cannot find instruction in this Book. It will tell you what to do at home, in the office, and everywhere. And if we are to be kept by the power of God, we must receive God's Word at its face value, believe it, and depend upon it, and the power of the Holy Ghost will help you. And so we shall be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

I wonder how many of us this morning are ready so to give ourselves wholly to God, and leave ourselves wholly in His hands?

THE PASTOR RETURNS AND IS AWAY AGAIN.

The Pastor returned from Chicago Saturday afternoon. The deacons met at half-past six, for meetings must be crowded in where possible. The prayer meeting room was crowded at eight o'clock; and the spirit of prayer was mightily upon the people. We are rejoiced to know that during the Pastor's absence Tuesday and Thursday of last week there were great meetings. The Thursday evening meeting was not held in the auditorium, but the large Lecture Hall was crowded in every part when the Rev. A. J. Bowen, of the South African General Mission, gave an address.

After preparing copy for this Witness the Pastor left at six o'clock Monday evening for Evansville, Indiana, where he will speak Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. He will return not later than Friday; and will be at the prayer meeting Saturday evening, and will preach at both services on Sunday.

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

EDITORIAL

THE INTOLERANCE OF FAITH.

We are hearing a great deal nowadays about the virtue of toleration and the value to society of broadmindedness. In some quarters there seems to be a special conviction that a peculiar quality of divine inspiration and authority belongs to the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. (Any adequate interpretation of that chapter, however, we fear would appreciably affect its popularity among those who profess to be so devoted to its principles. For instance, love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth".)

We know a great many ministers who excel in the virtue of toleration. They tell us they preach the gospel and nothing but the gospel; and that they preach it because they believe it. But they believe it to be a Christian duty to make large allowances for the views of other people. We heard a brother say recently that while he had no doubt whatever, personally, in respect to the virgin birth of Christ, he was prepared to be very generous toward the man who found it difficult to find language in which to express his belief on that subject. Thus it comes to pass that some professedly orthodox preachers are able to walk in step, not only in church membership, but in official relationship as pastor to deacon, with men whose views are openly and avowedly anti-supernatural.

In wider denominational relationships we find men who never cease to declare their orthodoxy, who yet serve on boards and support institutions whose teaching is subversive of evangelical faith. Invariably these amiable and tolerant brethren tell us that the gentlemen who deny the faith are among the loveliest characters in the world; and that if only we knew Dr. So-and-So, all our antagonism to his views would be at an end. When we hear these things—and we hear them often, even to the point of weariness—we wonder sometimes whether a certain type of minister's mind has suffered some sort of mental paralysis; or whether only one lobe of the brain is working, causing these brethren to forget how to reason or how to think; or whether, for some reason, a distinct line of cleavage between the intellectual and the moral and spiritual has been effected, so that a man's views of truth no longer have any relation to his conduct. We hear it said, "Dr. So-and-So is a man of winsome personality; he believes the gospel, too, but evidently conceives it to be his duty to have no contention with men of contrary opinions."

The question we ask in this article is this: Is that professed belief of the truth which is complacently tolerant of error really evangelical faith? For an answer to that question we must go back to the Book itself, for therein is the truth upon which evangelical faith rests. What of the Person Who is the object of our faith? Was He doubtful about His own mission? Did He believe in the absolute finality of the divine revelation made to men through Himself? Did He make any distinction between light and darkness, between truth and error, between righteousness and unrighteousness? A volume could be written

in support of an affirmative answer to these questions. He believed in the uniqueness of His own personality, in the divine authority of His message, and of the fullness and finality of that divine revelation of truth of which He was Himself the incarnation. A few passages are sufficient to establish this contention: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."; "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"; "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

But was He tolerant of those who differed from Him? Knowing Himself the truth, could He lightly regard error? Let Him speak for Himself: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

But now, what of the disciples of the apostolic day in whom the faith of Christ resided? In his sermon on Pentecost, Peter made no excuse for those who by wicked hands had slain the Just One; but required of all repentance as the only way of life. Nor did his preaching consist in mildly setting forth the truth, avoiding all contrast with error, as for example: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set a nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

If we take the human author of the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians as an example of tolerance, what has he to say? "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Or again, when Elymas the sorcerer "withstood them" (Barnabas and Saul), "seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteous-

ness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

Again: hear what the beloved John has to say: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

What if the principle proposed for our guidance in our attitude toward religious error were applied to other realms, where would it lead us? Why insist upon absolute accuracy, even to a single cent, in the teller's cage in the bank? He is dealing only in material values. Are these matters of greater importance than that heavenly currency in which, by special divine revelation, spiritual values are expressed? Why not be tolerant in the matter of dollars and cents? Why not be charitable when a man is wrong in his accounts a few hundred dollars? Why insist in the bank and in business that everything be standardized by a fixed and invariable multiplication table? Why not modify it and introduce a little tolerance into the auditor's department?

What if the rule were applied in the chemical laboratory? Or, to be very simple, when you take your physician's prescription to the druggist, if he should say that certain of the ingredients prescribed by your doctor are not in stock, why not say to him, "I am very broadminded: I do not believe in being over-exact. I preach and practice tolerance everywhere. You have many bottles on your shelves; make up the prescription of something else"? That, of course, is absurd; because the life of the body is at stake. But is the life of the body of greater moment than the life of the soul? If a druggist may not take liberty with a prescription issued by a physician who is a fellow-mortal and fallible like himself, why should it be insisted that we should be tolerant toward those who would change the prescription of the divine Physician, when He tells us specifically that there is but one Way of life?

Why not apply the principle in travel? Why insist upon the accuracy of a railway guide? Why take pains to ascertain what train you must take in order to arrive at a given destination? Everyone knows the answer. The truth is, this so-called tolerance is but another name for indifference to truth. Faith is the response of a divinely enlightened soul to truth divinely revealed in the only begotten Son of God. True faith knows beyond all peradventure that there is but one Saviour, and that there is but one way of salvation, which is repentance toward God as the One against Whom we have sinned, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ Who "died for our sins according to the scriptures."

We challenge a contradiction of the statement, that a faith that is deliberately and knowingly tolerant of error, of that which would subvert the gospel of Christ, is only a faith so-called. True faith, in the nature of the case, must be intolerant—even as righteousness is intolerant of unrighteousness, and light is intolerant of darkness, and Christ is intolerant of Belial.

"STRANGE FIRE."

The fire of which our text speaks was kindled by God Himself. It was a supernatural fire. It had a place in all the acts of worship. The sacrifices were consumed by this fire. When the priests put incense in their censers, it

ascended to God with the prayers of the people, filling the tabernacle with sweet odours, when touched by the flame of the heavenly altar-fire. The Jewish religion, at the inauguration of the Tabernacle service, was differentiated from all other religions by this supernatural element, signifying that this gate into the divine Presence opened upon a path which was lighted from the skies, and which shone more and more unto the perfect day.

Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron. They had been called and consecrated to their office. If ever men were really in "holy orders" they were. But they appear to have been lifted up with pride, to have had a too meagre conception of the divine Majesty, and a greatly exaggerated view of their own importance. They thought they could serve God in some other than the divinely ordered way. They were in no need of the fire from heaven. They did not need the supernatural in their religion. They could see no reason why fire of their own kindling was not "just as good" as that which was ever burning upon the altar. Their censers were made after the divine pattern, their incense was "the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary," but the fire was of their own kindling: "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said unto Aaron, This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."

Has this story any New Testament parallel? Do the principles underlying still obtain? Do men presume to offer "strange fire before the Lord" to-day, and if so, does the same swift judgment follow?

It was when the Pharisees attributed the power by which Jesus cast out evil spirits to Beelzebub, that Jesus said, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." John said, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it." The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that of "lying to the Holy Ghost," and they, like Nadab and Abihu, "died before the Lord."

When dealing with such solemn matters it is wise to write with great caution. The repudiation of the supernatural in religion, the but thinly-veiled attempt to reduce the Bible to the level of other books, the substitution of the oracular dictum of a colossal conceit which assumes the alias of "scholarship," for "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ"—all this is so akin in principle to the sin of Nadab and Abihu, and of Ananias and Sapphira, and to that unpardonable transgression of which the Saviour spoke with warning voice, that the reverent soul cannot witness such a spectacle without fear of some consuming judgment.

By how many is "strange fire" offered before the Lord! Do we serve in His holy temple only by the light of the Heavenly Flame? Do we walk in the Spirit? Do we seek to understand the Bible by the Spirit? Do we pray in the Spirit? Do we preach, do we teach, do we give in the Spirit? Do we recognize that only by that Fire can the gold be refined, or the sacrifice offered, or the incense burned, or the human be lifted to the divine?

And do any "die before the Lord"? "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Yes: many "die before the Lord." Not as Nadab and Abihu, and Ananias and Sapphira, as to their bodies, but they die

just as surely. That is the explanation of your apparently once Christian professor dead while he lives, wrapped in the ceremonies of Unitarianism or Agnosticism; that is the explanation of many a ministerial tragedy. It is the reason of the unfruitful lives of many a preacher, and teacher, and church member. They still come to the tabernacle, they are numbered among the priests, no fault can be found with their censers or their incense,—they are dead by reason of their "strange fire."

May we walk humbly before God, trusting the blood of Jesus, relying upon the power of the Holy Ghost, having no confidence in the flesh. "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out,"

AN ECHO FROM THE WEST.

On the occasion of our recent visit to Winnipeg we preached Sunday evening on the question of Church Union. Among those present in the audience was Dr. C. W. Gordon (Ralph Connor). Dr. Gordon came to see us the next day; and pointed out some things from the inside which we had not seen. The matters to which Dr. Gordon drew our attention, however, did not touch the principles which we had been discussing. We have just received a letter from a Presbyterian friend in Winnipeg, informing us that a story is being circulated in Winnipeg that on receiving the information conveyed by Dr. Gordon, we said that had we known all that, we should not have spoken as we did. Our only reply to that is, that it is absolutely contrary to fact.

When matters of such vital importance as are involved in the Church Union Movement are under discussion, argument is sure to be of a heated character; and both sides are likely to be betrayed into some indiscretions. These mistakes, however, do not affect the principles at issue; and it is with the principles themselves that contestants should be concerned. If it were necessary, and had we the time at our command, we would very gladly return to Winnipeg and preach the same sermon over again. The only difference would be that we should use a few more superlatives, and draw upon our vocabulary for a little stronger language with which to condemn the principles underlying this Church Union Movement.

We publish this for the sake of our Winnipeg friends; and desire emphatically to say that we have absolutely nothing to withdraw from the sermon delivered in Winnipeg on that Sunday evening.

CALL TO PRAYER.

We republish below the Call to Prayer issued by the Baptist Bible Union at its Conference in Chicago, January 25th to 28th. This Call has been published in scores of papers all over America. We call special attention to the paragraph printed in bold type; and we trust that our readers will respond to this invitation, and do their utmost to co-operate in these meetings for prayer:

The Baptist Bible Union of North America held a Conference in the auditorium of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Sunday to Wednesday, January 25th to 28th, and on January 29th in the Belden Avenue Baptist Church in the same city. In attendance and visible results the Conference was the most successful we have yet held.

The conference was called principally to issue a call to prayer for revival. At the last session of the Conference, a great congregation which packed the Belden Avenue Baptist Church to its capacity, endorsed the following Call to Prayer by an enthusiastic standing vote. The resolution speaks for itself:

"The Baptist Bible Union in conference assembled in Chicago, hereby expresses its deep conviction that the greatest need of the present hour is a great spiritual revival. We believe firmly that the Word of God clearly teaches that such a revival is still possible, and will be possible to the end of the present age. We have noted with great gratitude to God that in all the denominations great companies of the Lord's people are being inspired, manifestly of the Holy Spirit, to pray for such a spiritual awakening. We recognize the spiritual darkness of the times, and the force of the great modernist movement, which everywhere is seeking the destruction of the faith; and we believe that only the mighty power of God can turn the tide.

"We, therefore, hereby invite our fellow-believers of all denominations in general, and our fellow-Baptists everywhere in particular, to join with us in at least Three Days of Concerted Prayer for revival. The dates we venture to name are: April first, second, and third; with the further suggestion that, where possible, such prayer meetings should be continued on Saturday leading up to Sunday, April 5th, when earnest prayer should be offered that God would arise and plead His own cause, in the hope and expectation that the services of that day may be marked throughout the Continent by the conversion of thousands of souls.

"We suggest that churches, and mission halls, and other places where Christians assemble, be open for prayer during certain hours on all these days; and that in rural or other places where large meetings are impossible, prayer groups be formed; and that thus throughout this period of Concerted Prayer, there may be thousands of prayer meetings held all over the land.

"Between Modernism and Fundamentalism there is a great gulf fixed; but between true believers of every denomination, the unity of the Spirit still obtains. We, therefore, appeal to all believers, and to the Baptists outside the membership of the Baptist Bible Union, as well as to our own entire membership, to consider this Call to Prayer, on the ground, that, however we may differ from each other on minor matters, all Evangelical Christians must agree that a revival is necessary. It, therefore, cannot be wrong to pray that God will arise; and that His enemies may be scattered.

"We respectfully and earnestly ask that the Editor of every evangelical publication in America, and throughout the world, co-operate with us by printing this Call to Prayer. In many quarters we hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees. The fact that in so many directions the desire for a spiritual revival is finding expression in earnest prayer is itself an evidence of the movement of the Spirit of God.

"We suggest also that in anticipation of the dates named, all believers who read these words should privately, at the family altar, and in public, earnestly intercede that God may pour upon His people the spirit of grace and of supplication that there may be a widespread response to this invitation, in order that when the blessing shall come, as we believe it will, God may be everywhere glorified."

The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

Lesson LXXVIII.

March 29th, 1925.

HABAKKUK'S PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER.—Habakkuk, chapters 1-3.

This prophecy consists of a dialogue between the prophet and Jehovah.

I. Chapter One.

1. The prophet speaks to God (vs. 2-4): (a) He describes his spiritual vision as a "burden". If our eyes were divinely enlightened, enabling us rightly to view the moral and spiritual conditions obtaining in the human life about us, we, too, beyond doubt, should be burdened. We do well to pray for such a burden. (b) The prophet complains of general lawlessness (vs. 2-4). This is neither ancient nor modern. We ourselves do the same. The truth is, sin

is lawlessness; and sin everywhere abounds. (c) The prophet expresses his wonder at God's apparent inaction. His words, indeed, imply a feeling that God must surely be indifferent. Habakkuk faced the age-long problem which has always troubled righteous men (see Jeremiah 12: 1-14). And still men are disposed to ask why God's judgment seems to slumber. 2. God answers the prophet (vs. 5-11). (a) He tells him that He will surprise him with action, and that the work which He will work, even before his eyes, will be such that he will not believe it. Though sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, yet we may be sure that God will not be for ever silent. (b) The Lord informs the prophet that already a mighty nation is in preparation which He will use as a rod of chastisement and a sword of judgment for the wicked (vs. 6-11). God is never indifferent to evil, nor is He ever wanting for an instrument to carry out His judgments. 3. The prophet replies to the divine pronouncement; and expresses his fear, of the judgment for which he has asked, and his wonder that God should use such an instrument as the Chaldean power. Surely the chapter suggests that we had better leave the work of judgment to the Lord Himself!

II. Chapter Two.

1. The prophet declares that he will maintain an attitude of watchfulness, listening for further communications from the Lord. It is a commendable resolution, and one which we may all wisely emulate (v. 1). 2. The Lord again answers. (a) He declares that the judgment is sure. It may tarry—but it will surely come. This is the rule of His providence. The wheels of God move slowly but always surely; and, like the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, they go every one straight forward. (b) The Lord assures the prophet that the Chaldeans also shall be punished for their sins (vs. 5-8). God is no respecter of persons. He used the Israelites to punish the Canaanites; but when they fell into the sins of the heathen, He punished them also. (c) The three woes are pronounced (vs. 9, 12, and 15), so that sin brings its inevitable harvest, irrespective of the sinner's rank or condition. Woes are ever in reserve for evil-doers.

III. Chapter Three.

1. The prophet here prays for mercy instead of judgment (v. 2). We are on much safer ground when we pray that mercy and grace may abound. 2. Throughout this psalm—for such it is—the prophet magnifies the Lord; and concludes with a confession of trust (vs. 17-19). 3. Inevitably this will be the result of such a dialogue always. If we pour out our complaint before the Lord, we shall end by declaring, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHANGE OF DATE

"The Story of the Great Hymns."

The praise and worshipful service by Choir and Orchestra of Jarvis Street Church, announced in last week's issue of *The Gospel Witness* to take place on Wednesday evening next, March 25th, has been postponed, and will now take place on the night of

Good Friday, April 10th.

A further notice will appear in a later issue, but meanwhile all Jarvis Street members are urged to reserve the date, and also to make this interesting event known to their friends and acquaintances.

SUNDAY'S SERVICES.

Sunday was another day of overflowing blessing. One member remarked, "Every Sunday seems to be better than the one that has gone before." There were one thousand and twenty in the Bible School in the morning, three hundred and fifty-five of whom were in the Pastor's class. There was a great congregation entirely filling the church.

Before the Pastor's sermon, we had a very interesting address from Miss Farnell, a member of Jarvis Street who has just returned from seven and a half years' service in India. She told the great body of young people how she had received the call to foreign service when she was eight years of age, but had later put it aside; and how the Lord came to her again one Sunday morning while the Pastor was preaching in Jarvis Street, and she there and then definitely yielded to the Lord, and a few months later went to India. Her address produced a profound impression.

The Pastor preached on "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." In response to the invitation to confess Christ, a large number came forward. The invitation was then extended to all students who were in training for Christian service, definitely to commend themselves to the Lord; and to look to the Holy Spirit for their field of service. It was an appeal to avoid reliance upon human recommendations and the influence of any sort of stationing committee. About fifty students responded to this appeal, and thus declared their readiness to get back to the New Testament principle of permitting themselves to be directed to their field of labour by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Following this, a large number of young people came forward indicating their readiness to accept the responsibility of preparing themselves for whatever form of service they might be called to. We do not know how many came forward altogether, except that there was not room for them in the front and both aisles were somewhat crowded back from the front with those who thus declared themselves. Among those who came forward were many who confessed their faith for the first time, and applied for baptism and church membership.

At the evening service the church was again filled. Nine believers were baptized—seven men and two women. The Pastor preached on, "We ought to obey God rather than men." When the invitation was given, one hymn was sung through completely without any response. Then there was a break; and rapidly from all parts of the building they came until twenty-seven were standing together in the front. There were many who came into the full light of the gospel, and a large number who there and then applied for baptism and church membership. Altogether, Sunday was a day when blessing came like a flood.

A large number remained to the after-meeting; and after many prayers and testimonies, when the meeting was closed about twenty minutes past ten, a large number went forward to the organ and gathered around, singing the praises of God till eleven o'clock at night. There seems to be a large number of people in Jarvis Street who are determined to prepare themselves for that time when they will serve God day and night in His temple.

All this means that again next Sunday evening a very large number will be baptized. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!