

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

"HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE—WHERE TO BEGIN."

The second lecture of a series on "How to Study the Bible," by Rev. T. T. Shields, delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Tuesday evening, January 9th, 1923. (Stenographically reported.)



LAST Tuesday evening we observed the importance of having the right motive in the study of God's Word; that inasmuch as it is a supernatural book, written by men who "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," we are dependent upon the illumination of the divine Author for our understanding of the mysteries of the gospel.

I.

This evening we shall consider the principal Subject of this Book, the Subject to which all other matters stand vitally related. *This Book from Genesis to Revelation has but one theme—properly understood, the Bible speaks only of Jesus Christ.* The Apostle Paul was in accord with the purpose of the Holy Spirit in moving men to write the books of the Bible through many generations, when he said to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." That is the theme of the Bible from beginning to end. The Old Testament has precisely the same subject as the New; properly understood, these two parts of the Bible are complementary to each other: neither is complete without the other: together they constitute "the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son."

Every matter of which the Bible treats is related to the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Book is a revelation of God and of God's purpose concerning His human creatures. It treats of a great variety of subjects, but they are all vitally related to the main theme. Every word spoken before the advent of our Lord was a preparation for His coming, and everything recorded in this Book subsequent to His appearance among men is an explanation of that appearance. The Jews of Christ's day were great students of the Scriptures; they gloried in their special privilege of having had committed to them the oracles of God; and the Lord Jesus quoted the Scriptures to them as to people who at least professed to acknowledge their authority. He said, "Ye search the Scriptures, because in them ye think ye have eternal life: and these are they which bear witness of me." That verse, strictly speaking, is really not an exhortation to search the Scriptures; for Jesus was speaking to people who did search the Scriptures. What he meant was that, however much one may search the Scriptures, if he does not find Him, such study is in vain. And that is still true. The Scriptures bear witness of Jesus Christ, but we shall study them without profit unless in all our meditation we find our way to Jesus Himself.

I have read somewhere of a young minister who preached in the hearing of a minister of long and wide experience. After the service the young minister, desiring to profit by the larger experience of the older man, asked him what he thought of his sermon. The old man said, "Well, I had one serious fault to find with it, there was no Christ in the sermon." "But," said the young man, "there was no Christ in the text." "But," said the elder, "where did you find it?" "I found it in the Bible, of course," said the other. "Ah," he said, "you cannot find a text in the Bible in which there is no Christ. Do you not know, young man, that in England all roads lead to London, and in the Bible every passage points to Calvary?" "But," said the young man, "I do not quite see the way." "Then," said the elder man, "you must find the way, and if you cannot find the way, jump over hedges and ditches; but get to Jesus somehow." And that is the charm of the Bible, that it has one subject, and that subject is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps one will say, "But, sir, there are times when I desire to learn something about myself. For instance, I want to know something about my natural state." The answer to that is that you can never rightly estimate yourself except in relationship to Christ. You must measure yourself always by Him. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The story of the first Adam suggests the story of the second Adam. It is impossible that we should understand that story unless we find our way to Christ. And so of the potentialities of human life, of the utmost development of our own character. Where are you going to find a worthy ideal if you miss Christ? And where can you find power to realize the ideal apart from Him? If you would learn what a man ought to be, and what God has planned he may become by His grace, you must have before your mind a full-sized picture of Jesus Christ. In the practical matter of seeking light on life's duties, the Lord Jesus is our Standard. He must be put first, or we cannot be true; nor can we properly serve in any sphere until we have learned to relate all our conduct to Him. If you young people would know what your duty is with respect to the recreations that are so popular to-day you must first learn what your proper relationship to Christ is, and your relationship to Christ will determine your relationship to all these matters. There is little profit in studying mere abstract principles. We must see those principles in exercise, exemplified in the character and ministry of our Lord, or we have not come into the full light.

In intellectual matters, also, the same is true. We must bring everything to this one Standard. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." What are they? They are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations . . . and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And it is not until we have made Christ Lord in the realm of the intellect, subjecting all our thinking to His authority, that we have learned to think rightly. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ": beware of anything that is "not after Christ." So you see the principle. If you would know whether a book is good or bad, test it by this standard; and if you would know whether your method of study of a particular section of Scripture is proving profitable to you, consider how far that study, whether it be of the Old Testament or of the New, is increasing your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must find our way to Jesus.

Perhaps another will enquire, "Do you mean that when I come to such books as the books of Kings and of Chronicles I am to find Christ there?" I heard Dr. R. S. McArthur once say, apologizing for the pun, that history rightly interpreted is simply His story. And that is true. All history is related to the Lord Jesus Christ; and, without human design, all history is dated from His advent into the world; it is either B.C. or A.D.

Before I come to the still more practical part of my address this evening, I want to meet another objection. Someone here possibly may say, "Before I can bow to the authority of this Book of which you are speaking, I must know that it is really the Word of God, and I want first of all to discover by what standard I am to judge the Bible itself." Again, my answer is the same. The Standard by which you are to judge the Bible itself is Jesus Christ. He is the one Subject of the Book. He is the one authoritative Standard by which every

work contained in this Book is to be measured. We shall see more of that in our later study. But just at the outset we may observe that our Lord Jesus has put His imprimatur upon the entire Old Testament; and it is impossible for you to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord, as "God manifest in the flesh," and bow to His authority, and come to that Word with a desire to know His will, it is impossible thus to bow without accepting the divine inspiration and authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the New, because Jesus has certified to their accuracy, to their historicity, He has certified to their divine authority; and it is logically impossible to deny the divine inspiration and authority of the Old Testament without thereby impugning the authority, and implicitly denying, the Deity of Christ. Therefore, for the determination of our attitude toward the Bible itself, we must make the Lord Jesus our one Standard and Guide.

We come, therefore, to this, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament give us an infallible standard, by which truth may be identified.

II.

If that be so, if Jesus is the subject of the Book, the practical question is, *Where are we to begin?* How are we to begin the study of this Book in order that we may get to know all that we possibly can know about the Lord Jesus Christ?

Shall we begin with Genesis and read through the Book? The Bible is the Word of the Author of the nature of things, and He Who wrote the Book knows the constitution of the human mind. This is the greatest text-book on psychology that ever was written. You will find that principles of right action which operate in human life and which are the result of man's observation of the operation of the human mind, are in accord with the principles of this Book. For instance, I wonder if any of you have ever studied newspaper psychology? Most people read the headlines in the newspaper first. The heading of the article promises something startling, and you read the first paragraph. Then you read perhaps several columns only to find that all that is contained in the columns which follow has been summarized and condensed into the first paragraph. The reason for that is this: If I begin to talk to you this evening in a somewhat prosy fashion, as I dare say I have done, you will be courteous enough to sit there in the hope of hearing something more interesting by and by. So though I fail to secure your interest at first, there is some hope that I may capture your interest by and by. But if I write something for you, I must put the interesting thing in the very first word I write, or else you will not read it; unless the first sentences challenge the reader's interest, the book is left unread. Newspaper men have learned that long ago, and so they put the most interesting thing they have to say in the very first paragraph. An instance of what I mean is in the report you read to-day of the engagement of the Duke of York to the daughter of the Earl of Strathmore. How did the newspapers report that? Did they go right back to the genesis of things and tell you of a day when this Earl's daughter was bridesmaid to Princess Mary? Did it recite the whole story of their finding an interest in each other? Not at all. It began with the most striking and most interesting thing; it said, they are engaged, all the details are given afterwards. If we are to study the Bible with interest we must get to the most interesting thing in it to begin with, because the subject of this book, the most interesting thing in the Book, is on every page of it; but it is unlike any other subject, for having once engaged your interest it can hold it through all eternity. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." If I were speaking to an unconverted man who wanted to know where to begin with the Bible, I would not tell him to begin even with Matthew. I would give him the story in brief of the birth, and death, and resurrection of Christ. That is the whole subject of the Book, and if he has that, it will hold his interest. The details he can study later and forever. But as for those who are Christians, where shall we begin? I would recommend first of all a careful study of the four gospels. Matthew begins, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the Son of Abraham." He throws you right back into the Old Testament at once. Mark begins his book, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Luke begins

by saying that he is going to write concerning things which are most certainly believed among us, that as others had taken in hand to write these things, he would also give an account of the things of which he had been the witness. John begins, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now you have in the gospels the life-story of Jesus Christ. Do not trouble yourselves at the outset about their apparent differences. Supposing there were an accident out here at the corner of Gerrard and Jarvis streets, a motor accident, for example, and a policeman arrives on the scene. Several people are standing there, and he says, "Did you see this?" They say, "Yes." He takes their names, and by and by they are asked to give evidence. We will suppose there are four people, and they give an account of what they saw. First of all, it would appear that they did not quite agree. What is the difference? Ask them. One man says, "I was going east on Gerrard and I saw—" Well, if I were a lawyer, I should say, "Where were you going?" "I was going east on Gerrard." Of another I would ask, "What did you see?"—"I was going along Gerrard street."—"Where were you on Gerrard street?"—"I was on the south side of the street."—"And which way were you going?"—"I was going west." He did not see what the other man saw. How could he? The one was going east and the other west. Another comes along and he says, "I was walking north on Jarvis street, when I saw so-and-so." "And on which side of the street were you?"—"I was on the east side of Jarvis street, and south of Gerrard street." Another man was coming south on Jarvis. They each have a different story to tell, but each one is complementary to the other. They are all true, though in some respects their stories differ. They are all true witnesses; but each saw the accident from a different point of view from the others.

Now, divine inspiration does not destroy the peculiar characteristics of the personality through whom it speaks. As for instance, let us suppose there are different colours in these windows; there may be blue and purple and violet and yellow and red; and the morning sun streams through these coloured glasses. It is all sunlight, but is coloured by the medium through which it shines. And so God does not speak through Matthew in precisely the same way in which He speaks through Mark, nor through Luke as He speaks through John. But it is God Who speaks in each case. It is the voice of the Holy Spirit; and they are writing the story of the ministry of Jesus in the days of His flesh from different points of view, and it is all true. So that I think we should begin with an understanding of His earthly ministry. John's statement of the purpose of His gospel is equally explanatory of the purpose running through the other three: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

I think it is correct to say that you cannot obtain a complete outline picture of Jesus in the gospels. You will have to read the Acts of the Apostles; for while in the gospels we have the story of His birth, His ministry, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, in the Acts we have the record of the descent of the Holy Spirit in fulfilment of His promise. And the proof of the Gospels is in the supernatural character of the ministry exercised by the apostles whom He had chosen. Therefore, I want to suggest to every young disciple that the first and most important thing is a knowledge of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles; for therein you have a picture of Jesus coming out of the glory, down to the manger, made under the law, living His life, dying His death, being buried, rising again, ascending, receiving of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit; instituting His church, and writing the first chapters of her history.

We may now go back into the Old Testament with Christ. Once we know Who He is, and have a clear view of that portrait of Christ sketched for us in the Gospels and the Acts, know Him as the Eternal Son of the Father, we can go back with Him into the Old Testament. For instance, let me show you what I mean. The first book of the Bible begins, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." I put down beside that the first chapter of John: "In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." I thus find Jesus in the beginning and all through the book of Genesis. And let me lay down this principle in that connection. You will find in your study of the Gospels, and of the Acts, and of the Scriptures in general, that the scheme of redemption was no after-thought, but it was the unfolding of God's eternal purpose. You will read "of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." If that be so, we should expect to find some foregleams of that ultimate purpose in the Old Testament. If by a certain principle God is to redeem mankind, you will find Him giving preintimations of that purpose, and illustrations and examples of the outworkings of that principle. Now we know that it was God's plan to save the world by the principle of an incarnation; that He was to redeem man not by abstract philosophies, not by sets of rules, not by any principle of law, but by taking upon Himself our nature and being made in the likeness of men, and living out the truth before the eyes of men, as in these passages: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"; "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us—came to live among us—and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And, if God is to save the world through personality, by the principle of incarnation, we may expect to see Him setting that principle in operation right from the beginning. And that is what He does, and that is why the Bible is full of biographies.

Shall I give you Genesis in a few words? Here you have it. There is a great mountain range, and these are the outstanding peaks—Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Is there anything omitted from the book of Genesis when you have these biographies? Around these great personalities the history of God's unfolding purpose gathers. And you will find in every one of them some suggestion of the coming One. If you come into the Exodus, the whole period indeed from Egypt into the promised land, there are two outstanding personalities—Moses and Aaron, and around them gathered the history of those forty years. When you come to the promised land you think immediately of Joshua, and of the book that bears his name. You step on through the Old Testament, and you have such characters as Deborah, and Jephthah, and Gideon, and Samson, during the period of the Judges, and then a woman arises, and her name is Ruth; and as you read her story you find that the Lord Jesus is in every line of it. She is one of our Lord's ancestors. You pass immediately from Ruth into the books of Samuel, and again you come into the mountain ranges, and you have Saul, and David, and Solomon, and Rehoboam; and then the division of the kingdom into the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah; the new kingdom of the ten tribes, beginning with "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Follow the line and you will see his gradually-diminishing kingdom until it departs, and is blotted out from the page of history. But in every one of these you will find some suggestion, either by contrast or comparison, of the Lord Jesus. It is around His personality the historical portions of this Book are grouped. Or glance at the roll of the prophets—Elijah, Elisha, to whom our Lord refers as types of Himself; and then Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; and Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, and all the other minor prophets. Through all these personalities God's purpose ran; and as you study the historical and prophetic portions as they relate to the coming Christ, as they prepare the way for Christ, it is not difficult for one soon to get a bird's-eye view of the whole Old Testament by these outstanding names, all of them speaking of the second Adam Who was to come.

It is most interesting to read the story of any human life. And the Bible is full of the most fascinating stories of all literature, and they all lead us at last to the Lord Jesus Christ. The same is true of the New Testament. You get the subject of Jesus first, you get the outline of His character, in that divinely-drawn portrait in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. You go back into the Old Testament and you see Him lighting up every page of history, walking with you all the way through until you come back into the New Testament, and you discover it is the same Jesus that the prophets said would come; and you read with glowing understanding in the first chapter of the Hebrews, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us

by his Son": all down through the ages He has been preparing the way for His ultimate appearance in full-orbed glory in the Person of His Son.

Let us go with Him now into the New Testament. We have seen Him crucified, buried, raised again, and ascending into the glory, and we hear Luke saying in the Acts, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus—referring to the gospel which bears his name—of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." And you have in the second chapter of Acts the fulfilment of His promise and the descent of the Holy Spirit, and a New Testament illustration of the principle of the Old Testament, that God came down and took upon Himself our flesh, became partaker of our nature in order that we might become partakers of His. For what is the history of the New Testament Church? Immediately the sun shines upon a mountain peak again, and "Peter stood up with the eleven." Can you not see him? A human personality filled with the Holy Ghost. "Christ in you the hope of glory." He is going to write the history of the Church biographically; He is going to make history by making men and the men will make history. What have you in the Acts of the Apostles? There are many glorious characters portrayed there, but you can cover the Acts of the Apostles with a few names. There were twelve apostles, but you do not hear of many of them. There were Peter and John; then another man arises, his name is Stephen, and a whole chapter and part of another is devoted to him and he goes home to glory. And then presently you see another, Philip; then a man called Saul of Tarsus, and presently James reappears on the scene. And there are such characters as Barnabas, and Apollos, and Aquila, and Priscilla. It is a simple human story, telling of men and women of like passions with ourselves. Thus you have the story of the early Church in the story of the men and women who yielded themselves to the Lord Jesus, who were filled with His Spirit, and who went on living His life before men. What have you then in the Acts of the Apostles? You have the record of the inauguration of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit by virtue of the atonement of the Son, in fulfilment of the promise of the Father, thus accomplishing the remaking of men in the likeness of God. When you come to Paul's epistles for an elaboration of the doctrines of the gospel, you already know something about Corinth. You can understand the epistles to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians and to the Thessalonians and the churches in Galatia. Paul apparently never saw the people at Colosse. It is possible, therefore, to bring the New Testament before you in this group of names, and you have all the writers of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Luke the author of the Acts, the author of Romans and of Corinthians, and Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, first and second of Peter, you know something about him, and of Jude, and of John the brother of James, with the great Apocalypse at the end. Therefore, the Bible is really a self-illustrating and self-explaining Book, and I venture to believe that if in our study of the Bible we begin by studying it by itself, without helps, and permitting the Book to speak for itself as the Holy Spirit interprets it to us, we shall find it exceedingly profitable.

What I have said will be of no profit unless we begin to put it in practice. I state the principles again: the principal subject is Jesus, all other subjects being subordinate to that main theme; the place where we find the portrait most clearly drawn, the Gospels and the Acts, these portions of Scripture spanning the eternities, telling us whence He came, whither He has gone, and that He will come again. Go back with Him as the Eternal Son of God into the Old Testament and you will find that He lights up every page in the story of the great personalities that point to Him, and make promise of His coming. You find the same truth when you go through the New Testament into the Acts and the Epistles: "Christ in you the hope of glory," God speaking through human personalities. And in all this we must shut ourselves up to the one divine Teacher and subordinate every human help to that one authoritative Voice. So will He lead us into His treasure-house, and as we come we shall be able to say, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

Note:—As explained in last week's issue, owing to the Editor's absence, and in response to many requests, this series of addresses on "How to Study the Bible" delivered by Dr. Shields three years ago, will be printed instead of the usual sermon. Address in this issue is the second of the series.

Editorial

IN THE SOUTHLAND.

By the Editor, Macon, Georgia, February 15th, 1926.

For several days we have endeavored to get something written for *The Witness* family, but duties have crowded so closely one upon another the Sunday midnight has passed with nothing done. "While men slept the enemy sowed tares"; it is a good thing therefore to stay awake sometimes to try to do a little good while some men sleep.

It is just a week and a couple of hours since we left the most affectionate church family in the world (except yours, of course, brother pastor). We have felt ever since as though we had missed dinner for a month, because we had no time that Sunday night to say good-bye. And we have made a resolution—we are not going to leave home on Sunday night for anybody in future! Some of the friends in the South imagine Canada is a very cold country. Of course they are mistaken! We burn a little coal it is true, but what would the coal men do if we did not do a little business with them? A brother told me to-day of a friend of his who had an experience changing a tire in Canada at forty-two below zero, and he thought it was near Toronto! I assured him, of course, that he would have to go several hundred miles from our summer resort to find that temperature. As we write it occurs to us to wonder whether there might be another explanation, viz., whether the motorist was a fundamentalist and was under the necessity of changing his tire on Bloor Street West outside McMaster University? In such case, however, we are not sure whether the temperature would be excessively low or excessively high. In any event, we want *Witness* readers to know that we do not wear moccasins nor furs in the pulpit when in Toronto.

Detroit is a fine city, but it is like any other city in which a traveller has to wait in a railway station—a dreary spot. Why is it that when one so often longs for a few hours of leisure, he is unable to enjoy the inactivity of waiting in a railway station? Here is a subject for the professional psychologist: why when one is going he wants to stop, and when he is stopped he wants to go!

We had left the snow behind before we reached Cincinnati, where we met good Dr. Geo. Ragland, and had the joy of nearly three hours' ride together to Lexington, Ky. We got off the train to bid him good-bye, and there was a group of—better not say how many—we thought thirty to fifty, First Church people whom we greeted for about five minutes. What an unspeakable delight true Christian fellowship is! Those we meet in the fellowship of the gospel we feel we have known for a lifetime.

On the train everybody seemed to be going to Florida. A little tot enquired of us, "Are you going to Miami?" Canadians don't go to Florida because they feel the cold at home, but only because their aesthetic natures cannot well wait till June to see the beauties of the summer.

We reached Atlanta Tuesday forenoon. The weather was very comfortable, with a few good showers suggestive of April. We were soon at home with some of the brethren, and one of them took us for a dash about the city. Atlanta, we were told, was the second city in the South in population, New Orleans being first; but Atlanta is first in all but population. In any event it is beautiful for situation, and we do not recall ever seeing in any city so many magnificent homes. No one could tell us exactly where Atlanta's great wealth comes from, but it is evident that Easy Street, Atlanta, has a large population.

Our meeting in Atlanta was under the auspices of the "Billy Sunday Club". We found them a company of very earnest men with a passion for the souls of man. We were told that Billy Sunday's mission in Atlanta did lasting good. We had lunch with two of the club, a real estate man reputed to be very wealthy, and a lawyer. They seemed to be both whole-hearted in their Christian faith and service, and both dating their spiritual experience from Billy Sunday's ministry.

The meeting was in the large Wesley Memorial Church. The congregation could not be described as great, but influential in its representative character. When the Chairman asked the ministers to rise, thirty-two responded.

We are always learning something. In Atlanta we got a few lessons on how to meet half a town in a few hours. We accompanied one brother who illustrated a new type of sociability—"bless your old heart" he "sure did"! Time would fail to tell of his inexhaustible supply of good cheer, the freshness of his spirit, and the variety of his greetings. Crossing a street with him, we met a United States Senator to whom he said, "Good morning, Senator, this is Dr. Shields of Toronto, Canada. Well Senator, I'm mighty glad to see you. I always did think a lot of you—don't suppose it ever did you any good, but it certainly never did you any harm." All this has a meaning, if one can only learn how to do it. (When you stop your car for gasoline, don't forget to see to it that it has a full supply of oil!). All this is written by one who is sometimes called a disturber of the peace, and it is written with absolute sincerity, and in perfect consistency—once more, don't forget to take your oil can with you: even a gun needs oiling!

We had lunch on Wednesday with Congressman Upshaw—a good Baptist who is not afraid to be known as a Fundamentalist, Rev. and Mrs. Luke Rader, Rev. Hugh S. Wallace, and some others.

Macon was reached just in time to go from the station to the church Wednesday evening. We shall have more to say of Macon in a later letter. Up to Sunday night we have held twelve services.

Dr. Martin A. Wood, Pastor of the Vineville Church, is an incarnation of the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. We mean in the true, strong, gently great, and greatly gentle sense of the chapter. Brother Wood is a strong man, and the divine gentleness makes him great.

We spoke at chapel service at Mercer University Thursday morning for twenty minutes. It is a great institution with somewhere between seven hundred and a thousand students—we heard no official figures. Professor Newman, the great church historian, formerly of McMaster, was among the members of the Faculty on the platform. There was a great assembly of students, and they seemed to be responsive to our simple message.

Sunday has been a full, and we believe, fruitful day. In the morning we spoke on, "The God that Answereth by Fire", urging the necessity of determining to pray for a Heaven-sent revival, even if it involved accepting a scorching three and a half years' drought as an initial answer to prayer, and an indispensable precursor of a beneficent manifestation of the supernatural—in fire and rain from Heaven. When we called upon the membership to resolve to accept the principle of Elijah's proposal and to be satisfied with no substitute for Fire from heaven, and publicly to avow that resolution as did the people on Carmel when they cried, "It is well spoken", more than three hundred filed past the Pastor coming up the different aisles to take the Pastor's hand. In the afternoon we told the story of the redemption of Jarvis Street, and the patient people listened with apparent eagerness for more than an hour and a half. The church was full at the evening service, and God was with us as the gospel of salvation through the blood was preached. We have had a happy day, and after three great services beside the Sunday School, this article is scribbled as a sort of night-cap to help us to sleep, and to let our *Witness* readers know that they are always with us.

But we cannot close until we have written a few words on the important subject of the weather. We have to confess that Thursday and Friday were rather Marchy; but to-day was what they call down here, "a right pretty day". This afternoon all windows were open, as well as the front doors; and we drove to the church in an open car without an overcoat, and were too warm! But we are told that this "right pretty weather" may not last long, in fact, "they" say that this weather is rather "unusual". (Californians will please observe that they have no monopoly of "unusual" weather.)

These Vineville Church friends want to vary our programme and secure our release from Jacksonville to stay here another Sunday. Unless this is done we shall be in Jacksonville, Florida, February 21st; and Green Cove Springs Bible Conference twenty-second to twenty-sixth. If there is no special Convention called in Ontario and Quebec, we have other engagements in this Southland—of which—"more bime bye".

If our readers find these notes in a lighter vein than they expect, they must remember that they are written to use up the little surplus energy after a full and long Sunday of four services—just the whipping of the white of

the egg after the yolk has been used for the cooking—if you don't like it, do as we do with that ornamental imitation, show the ladies cover their pies with:—leave it on the plate. Next letter, we may be able to serve up some real meat-pie without any whipped froth on the top.—Meanwhile,

“To bed, to bed”, said sleepy head.”

(Note: Scribbled, but not read by us.)

P.S.—Must stay awake a little longer,—long enough to say that was a great telegram received Sunday afternoon, telling us of twelve hundred and fifty-three in Jarvis Street School. Evidently the scattering occasioned by the enlistment of new teachers just before the Pastor left spells increase. If Toronto weather is fair we expect to see that augmented teaching staff put the attendance up to fifteen hundred next Sunday. Let everybody help.

PROXY DELEGATES

A brother called in our office last week and informed us that a certain city pastor was industriously visiting his flock, and everywhere telling them that Jarvis Street was the first church to appoint proxy delegates to the Convention; and we were asked to offer a word of explanation. This we gladly do. So far as we know, the first time proxy delegates were admitted to the Convention was at the famous Guelph Convention, when it was decided to establish McMaster University in Toronto rather than in Woodstock. That Convention was made up very largely of proxy delegates. Churches from all over the land who could not send delegates were requested to appoint Toronto people as their delegates to represent them at Guelph; and we have been informed that the Guelph Convention was really packed with Toronto delegates. It was by that method the location of McMaster was determined. We have examined the Year Book for that year and find that the proxy delegates were challenged, and the late Dr. D. E. Thompson, who was then President, ruled that what the constitution did not prohibit it permitted; and the motion to refuse these delegates seats was declared out of order.

Since that time McMaster University has resorted to the use of proxy on every occasion when it has had an axe to grind. This was done in the Bloor Street Convention, and at many Conventions since.

Because we knew of this practice, we openly discussed the question in the pages of *The Gospel Witness* prior to the London Convention of 1924. We quoted from the Year Books at that time, and announced that if there were any churches too far away to send delegates, who desired representation and who were in agreement with our position in the Faunce matter, Jarvis Street would be willing to provide delegates. Six or seven churches wrote us, and we appointed nine delegates. At the London Convention this question was discussed in the Executive Committee; and we were called by long distance telephone and told that an effort would be made to refuse seats to our proxy delegates. We replied that we hoped the effort would be successful, for the reason that we should gain infinitely more than we should lose; for we knew that the Convention would be crammed from the other side. We were informed by an officer of the Convention that when the matter was discussed and examined, it was found that to refuse to seat proxy delegates would work such confusion as to almost destroy that particular Convention, there were so many of them.

While we are on this subject we may say that we believe the principle is not unsound. For example: If there should be churches in the Province of Quebec, or in any other remote part of the Convention, who could not possibly afford to send delegates to Toronto when the meeting is being held in this city, if that church knows that a certain matter will come before the Convention, and that church desires to record its vote, it is perfectly fair that some way should be found whereby that church should register its conviction. Otherwise, on that great matter it is really disfranchised by its geographical position and its consequent inability to pay for representation. And here and now we say to all the churches of the Convention who stand with us on the matter now engaging the Convention's attention—everybody knows where Jarvis Street stands, and how Jarvis Street members would be likely to vote at a Convention—and if there be a church, or churches, any

number of them, who desire representation at the next Convention, in order that they may register their vote in opposition to Modernism, Jarvis Street will undertake to provide those delegates.

Jarvis Street is not the only church that will do so, for there are many other churches—many of them in this city—whose members will take precisely the same stand.

We believe, however, it is desirable that the churches should be represented by their own members; and we would suggest that the churches begin at once to raise money, as a contribution to our missionary and educational work—that the churches begin at once to lay up money enough to enable them to send their full complement of delegates to the next Convention—whenever that may be held. If there should be a special Convention, then let there be real sacrifice so that all the churches may be represented; but if that should be impossible, Jarvis Street will stand ready to provide proxies.

We hope now that the pastor in question who has been misrepresenting the position of Jarvis Street, really understands the case. We have appointed proxies only because McMaster University led the way. We would not have followed had we not believed, as we have just now said, that the principle of proxy delegates is perfectly fair.

BAPTIST BIBLE UNION SENIOR LESSON LEAF

VOL. 1.

T. T. SHIELDS, EDITOR

NO. 1.

Lesson 12

FIRST QUARTER

Mar. 21, 1926

Application for entry as second-class matter is pending.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

Lesson Text: Twelfth chapter of Matthew:

To be studied in harmony with lesson text: Mark 2:23-28 and 3:1-35.

Luke 6:1-11 and 8:19-21 and 11:14-32.

I. THE SPIRITUALITY AND SERVICEABLENESS OF THE DIVINE LAW.

When the disciples of Jesus, being hungry on the Sabbath day, plucked the ears of corn as they walked through the fields and did eat, the cold, unsympathetic, spirit of Pharisaism invoked the letter of the law. They seemed to conceive of God as an arbitrary Parent Whose chief pleasure was to say, "Don't," to His children. Christ explained that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; and thereby He laid down this principle that every divine law is framed in the highest interests of man. Every prohibition is but a poison label, bidding us keep away from that which would injure us. Christ complains that they did not understand the Scriptures, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Only through the Word of God, as interpreted by the Spirit of God, can we learn the purposes of the law of God.

II. THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND.

Again these religious people observe Christ critically; and our Lord insists that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath. Is there ever a time, or place, or condition, in which it is not lawful to do well? Against the fruits of the Spirit there is no law. The details of this miracle are simple and instructive, Christ commanded the one impossible thing, and the man found himself able to do what was required. The commandments of God have within them always the power to effect their accomplishment.

III. THE RETIRING CHRIST. (verses 14-21.)

The shadow of the cross begins to fall across the path of Jesus, and the Pharisees take counsel against Him to destroy Him. It is enough for a servant that he be as his Lord. The better our works, the more bitter will be the opposition. Though Christ healed those who came to Him for healing, He withdrew Himself from the face of His foes. Yet in His hands were thunderbolts, and from His lips destruction might have issued had He but commanded the lightning to do His bidding. Again He fulfils the Scripture (vs. 17-20). Here we behold Almightyness keeping Almightyness in check. Few men may safely carry firearms, or be trusted with the direction of any destructive power, because these things may get beyond their control; but while our Lord had all auth-

ority in heaven and on earth, He quietly withdrew. Thus also will He withdraw from the hardened hearts whose doors are locked against Him. He will not strive nor cry. But on the other hand, those who, like bruised reeds or smoking flax, come to Him for help, receive the blessing of His gracious ministry.

IV. ANOTHER MAN POSSESSED WITH A DEVIL, BOTH BLIND AND DUMB.

There is a spiritual application of this: the Devil blinds the minds of those who believe not; and he ties the tongues of those whose voices should be heard in prayer and praise. But by the power of God he was delivered,—and Jesus is this same Jesus still.

V. THE UNPARDONABLE SIN. (verses 34-37.)

The unpardonable sin ought to be simply understood. Here men attributed to satanic power the works of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit is here exercising His invariable ministry—by casting out devils, and effecting the healing of the body, and accomplishing other miracles—of certifying to the Messiahship of Christ. And Christ says that the rejection of that testimony of the Spirit to Himself is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness. In the nature of the case, it must be so: no man cometh to the Father but through the Son; and no man cometh to the Son but by the power of the Holy Spirit. If therefore men refuse the Spirit's testimony to Christ, ascribing His gracious ministry to Satan himself, he rejects the only power by which he may come to Christ:

VI. CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

(verses 38-42.)

Here Christ certifies to the historicity of Jonah as a person, and to the record contained in the prophecy which bears his name. Here we are led to the solution of every problem in respect to biblical criticism: if a man will make Christ his Standard, and accept His judgment on these matters, he will be relieved of all trouble. We have never known anyone to be unsound in respect to the book of Jonah who was not unsound respecting the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures as a whole.

VII. THE USELESSNESS OF A RELIGION THAT CONSISTS IN MERE REFORMATION. (verses 43-45.)

To cleanse the life without filling it, to adorn it without fortifying it, is only to invite a greater defilement. Only as the house is occupied by the Holy Spirit is a man safe. Hence the everlasting choice is between one Holy Spirit and seven spirits unclean.

VIII. CHRIST'S RECOGNITION OF ONLY SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Though His mother and brethren desired to speak with Him, He insisted that those who did the will of His Father were truly His brother, or sister, or mother. This is an important principle to emphasize: in the Christian life the supreme consideration should be our relationship to the will of God.

CORRECTING AN ERROR IN LAST WEEK'S "WITNESS".

In our issue of last week an error occurs on page 9. We stated that the following quotation was from a sermon preached by Professor L. H. Marshall in First Avenue Baptist Church, Toronto, instead of from an address delivered by him in England on, "Baptists and Church Membership". We regret this mistake:

"To regard baptism as essential to salvation or even to membership in the Christian Church is to ascribe to the baptismal rite a crucial importance for which there is no warrant in the New Testament, or in any truly spiritual interpretation of the Gospel; or in common sense."

OUR BIBLE SCHOOL.

The attendance at the morning School last Sunday was 1,253 including 401 in the Pastor's class. At Parliament St. Branch in the afternoon 247 were present; and at the same hour the Chinese School meeting in Jarvis Street had an attendance of 67,—a total attendance at Bible School for the day of 1,567. The objective at the main School for next Sunday is 1,500.

LAST SUNDAY.

Dr. R. E. Neighbour, of Chicago, taught the Pastor's Bible Class, and preached morning and evening last Sunday. Dr. Neighbour has made a large

place for himself in the hearts of Bible-loving people in Toronto, and he was greeted with large congregations at both services. There were conversions both morning and evening, and the day ended with a prayer and fellowship meeting which was manifestly under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

DR. GILLON IN JARVIS STREET.

Dr. J. W. Gillon, of Winchester, Ky., who made such a host of friends in Jarvis Street—and, indeed, throughout the city—last summer, will preach next Sunday, February 21st. Dr. Gillon has been with Rev. Clifford Loney, of Stanley Avenue Church, Hamilton, for the last two weeks, and will reach Toronto in time for the Saturday evening prayer service. He will teach the lesson in Dr. Shields' Class Sunday at ten o'clock,—subject: "The miracle-working Power of Jesus", Matthew, chapter 8; and will preach morning and evening. Dr. Gillon is one of the greatest preachers of the South, and we anticipate great blessing for next Sunday.

A WORD ABOUT "THE GOSPEL WITNESS".

A GOOD EXAMPLE.

Not only do single subscriptions continue to reach us in large numbers daily, but scores of our readers are sending to our office, one, two, three, five, ten, twenty, and more subscriptions at one writing. During the Editor's absence we venture to publish the following letters which are typical of many received within the last few weeks:

"Rev. T. T. Shields,
Toronto, Canada.

January 28th, 1926.

"Dear Brother Shields:

"I am pastor of a small village church with a membership of fifty-two active members.

"Thanks to God first, and to you through *The Gospel Witness*, our eyes are being opened to present-day conditions. We look forward to each issue with joyous anticipation of a feast of good things and encouragement in the 'battle'; and we are never disappointed.

"Through the special offer I am endeavouring to get a copy (subscription) into every family of my membership. On Sunday morning I mentioned that had I sufficient means I would like to subscribe for each family. Monday morning an old gentleman, a member of very meagre income, gave me \$10.00 saying, 'I want this to be used to help distribute the paper you mentioned, that our people may know how to do true missionary work.' Praise His name.

"Find enclosed cheque for \$15.00 for fifteen subscriptions to *The Gospel Witness* for one year.

(Signed) _____"

A PASTOR IN ITALY WHO WOULD PAY \$10.00 A YEAR FOR "THE WITNESS".

"Dr. T. T. Shields,
Toronto, Canada.

Florence, Italy,
December 14th, 1925.

"Dear Dr. Shields:

"I want to be a subscriber to *The Gospel Witness* beginning January, 1926. Hope I am not too late for the special offer of \$1.00 for the year 1926, even, though my letter will reach you much later than the 20th of December. I have not lost one minute, but Italy is so far away from Canada! I do not mind if you cannot send me the first numbers of this year's subscription, if I can receive paper at this rate.

"Remember also that one dollar costs me five dollars through adverse exchange.

"If you cannot allow me for this year (1926) on the special offer, do not send back the one dollar, but keep it for a partial subscription, but please let me know and I will send the second dollar later on.

"With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) _____"