

The Gospel Witness

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T. T. SHIELDS, *Editor.*

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

A Sermon by Rev. T. I. Stockley.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, May 29th, 1927.

(Stenographically Reported.)

Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing
of the church unto God for him."—Acts 12:5.



PRAYER is an unspeakable privilege, and it is a very wonderful exercise; that you and I should be permitted to open up all our inner life in the presence of God is truly a great privilege. But what does prayer mean? There are many varieties of prayer.

There is, first of all, personal, secret, prayer which you and I must never neglect. We ought to value that privilege so greatly that it should be our joy to be alone with God, and pour out our whole heart to Him. If we neglect that, our Christian life declines; and when a fall takes place in a Christian life it is generally the result of the neglect of secret prayer. Some years ago my wife and I were staying a little while in Switzerland, spending some days at a chalet just outside Grindelwald. Two or three times while we were there we heard a tremendous rumbling, and, rushing to the door, we soon saw what it meant. A great mass of ice and frozen snow had loosened from the mountain and swept down the mountainside in a great avalanche, carrying trees and huts and everything before it. That was not a sudden thing. The warm spring air had been loosening that great mass of ice and snow from the mountainside for weeks, and presently some trifling thing took place, and the great mass came sweeping down. And when a Christian falls, it is usually because he has neglected secret prayer, he has loosened his grip of the Lord Jesus because of that; and his fall, generally, is not a sudden thing. So we must maintain our secret prayer.

Another form of prayer is family prayer, when father and mother and children gather together around the family altar, and pour out their hearts together before the Lord. That is one of the most beautiful things in Christian life. But it is a practice which, I fear, is being sadly neglected to-day. There are many homes called Christian that have no family altar, where the children do not hear the voices of their parents regularly, nor frequently, in prayer. We need in these days to set up the family altar again, for we cannot afford to lose the blessing of family worship. Somebody once said that family worship was like the roof of the house. He said, "We should not like to live

in a house that has no roof." Surely you and I would like to have a roof to our house, the roof of family prayer. If we want personal blessing, we must have personal prayer; if we desire family blessing, we must have family prayer.

There is also the privilege of social prayer. I rejoice to know that this church exercises that ministry in regular prayer services,—indeed, it seems to me that on every alternate night during the week there is a prayer meeting. The power of this church, and all its ministry, will depend largely upon these meetings being well maintained.

Then look at prayer from another angle: there is what is known as protracted prayer. Some of the Lord's servants have spent long periods in His presence; they have spent hours, and days, and long nights, in unbroken prayer. Possibly it is not everyone who can do that, but some can and do; and the Lord uses them greatly. I am afraid it would not be very acceptable for me this morning to ask the question of this congregation, "How long, dear friends, do you spend each day in prayer? It might be a very sad revelation of the prayerlessness of most of us if we rose and honestly told how many minutes we spend each day in prayer. All of us need to spend much more time in prayer.

There is also the wonderful privilege of ejaculatory prayer. To my mind comes the beautiful illustration of Nehemiah. You remember how sad he was one day in the presence of the king. He stood before the king with the wine-cup in his hand, for he was the king's cup-bearer; and the king noticed an unusual sadness on his face, and he wished to know the reason. Nehemiah had been much in secret prayer about the condition of Jerusalem; he had heard the sad tale concerning the ruins of Jerusalem and the affliction of the people, and he had been much in private prayer about it all, and the sorrow of his heart was stamped upon his face that day. So the king said, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?" Nehemiah was anxious to give a right answer, so he prayed to the God of heaven. How? Did he rush away to his private room to do it? Did he open a book and read a prayer? No, nothing of the kind: but standing there with the wine-cup in his hand he sent up a cry in his heart to God—and the answer came back instantly. That is the wonderful privilege of ejaculatory prayer, that, in business or wherever we are; when, in the pressure of things, there is a tendency to be impatient or in some other way un-Christianlike, in our hearts, we may cry, "Patience, Lord", or "Grace, Lord" and the grace is immediately given. We are tempted in many ways, but whatever the need may be, instantly the answer can be given to ejaculatory prayer. Wonderful privilege!

Viewing it from another angle still: there is the prayer of faith, which it is our privilege to offer: when we see God's great promises, when we take them and stand upon them, and wait for Him to fulfil His Word, sure that the answer will come. When the promise is given, and you and I have fulfilled the conditions, we can stand and wait God's time, knowing that the answer will come. That is the prayer of faith.

Then there is the prayer of submission, when we do not know what the will of God may be. When my dear boys were in the war, I did not have any special promise that their lives would be spared more than any other boys. I had, therefore, to pray the prayer of submission, I could only say, "Lord, if their lives can be a blessing to the world, if by being spared they can become channels of blessing to others, in mercy spare them." That was my prayer—and the Lord graciously answered it, spared them, and brought them through; and I thank Him to-day that by His grace they have become what I hoped they might become, namely, channels of blessing to others.

We have these great varieties of prayer, and there are many others one could mention. But I want to call your attention to one special form of prayer,—the prayer of intercession,—"Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him"—for Peter, not for themselves personally, but for Peter. The church was in dire distress: James had been slaughtered by the king; Peter was in prison, and it seemed that he was to be taken from them as well as James. There was the power of Herod; there were the soldiers, and the chains, the iron gates and the iron bars—all these forms of materialism. But "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." As someone has said, "Here you have the clash of arms": prayer against the power

of Herod's material forces—and that sacred mighty power called prayer won the victory.

I.

I purpose to speak to you this morning not so much on the story before us as upon the subject of intercessory prayer. THE FIRST THING I NOTICE IS THIS, THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF MINISTRY. Let me carry you back in thought to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, where there were three divisions: the court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. When a man wanted to come to the holy place he must enter, first of all, by the one gateway, and there was only one. Our Lord has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In the open court of the tabernacle were two articles of furniture. The first thing is the altar; and the first thing the guilty sinner needs is the blood of Christ shed for his sins. Then you pass on to the laver full of water. The water is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the laver is symbolic of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit in the Word is the next thing we need for the purification of our lives, and the regeneration of our whole natures.

With these two forms of communion we are able to pass into the holy place; and there are three articles of furniture there: the table of shewbread on the right hand, the candlestick on the left, and the altar of incense in the centre nearest the veil. Jesus Christ is all of which these things are symbolic: He is the Bread of Life, He is the Light, and He is the great Intercessor. But in their application they speak of us too, because we are united with Him, members of His body. We may have fellowship with our Lord in these different ways. If we have worldly substance we may lay that upon His table, and so have fellowship with Him. Sometimes the Lord gives worldly substance to His people. I noticed a remark in a book that I was reading recently that gripped my memory: "When the Lord entrusts riches to His people, it is because He has need of them"; not because He wants them to live selfish and easy lives, but "because He has need of those riches." So we may have fellowship with Him by laying our substance upon His table.

Then there is the light of witness-bearing, the witness-bearing of a pure, holy, joyous, Christian life.

Thirdly, there is the ministry of intercession. Dr. Pierson put it beautifully once when he said that the golden altar of incense is nearest the veil, and the form of ministry that brings us nearest to God is the ministry of intercession. The highest form of ministry is prayer; and the highest form of prayer is intercession. It is sweetest to the heart of God. It is love upon her knees, doing her noblest work. If other forms of prayer are copper and silver, then this is golden. It has the very breath of Calvary; it breathes the very spirit of the Cross. It is the holy of holies of our ministry. Sometimes people speak of the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel as the holy of holies of Scripture, and that chapter contains our Lord's great intercessory prayer. The ministry of intercession is the holy of holies of our life. It is the chief instrument of blessing; it is twice blessed: it blesses the man who prays, it blesses those for whom he prays.

Some of you doubtless have read the life of Henry Martyn who went out to labour in India and Persia when only twenty-two years of age, and who burnt out his life for God in ten years, dying at the age of thirty-two. When you read the story of that life you feel he was always saturated with the dews of the Holy Spirit, and yet he tells us that he had seasons of dryness in his soul. Are there times of drought in your Christian experience, dear friends, when things seem to fade and wither, when things lose their freshness and vigour—do you ever experience such times of drought in your spiritual life? What did Henry Martyn do when seasons like those came upon him? "He prayed"—perhaps you will answer. Yes, he prayed, but not for himself. He got down upon his knees and poured out his soul on behalf of others. And invariably the dews of divine benediction came back to his own spirit when he engaged in the ministry of intercession for others; when he prayed for others he was richly blessed in his own life. Others have found it to be so, too.

This is what some people call "the reflex influence of prayer". Intercessory prayer deepens our interest in those for whom we pray; it expands our hearts; enriches our sympathies; uplifts and purifies our life; makes us kinder in our

judgment of others; inspires to noblest action, for the work that is done as the result of prayer is the noblest kind of work—so such prayer blesses the man who prays. Take the story of Job, part of which book we heard recited so ably here recently. In the forty-second chapter we read this, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." And what kind of friends were these? Friends who thought that suffering must be always the result of prayer is the noblest kind of work—so such prayer blesses the saw the suffering of Job, they concluded at once that he must be a great sinner or he could not be such a great sufferer. Therefore they charged him with all kinds of sin of which Job himself knew that he was not guilty. When they could not prove their charges that he had sinned openly and done wicked things in his life, they charged him with hypocrisy, charged him with being a bad man within, if he was not one without. Yet Job knew that he was neither. "The root of the matter" was in him, he knew that he was a man of integrity, and uprightness of heart. For these friends Job prayed, he poured out his heart on their behalf; and "the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends", so that he received a double blessing; and the latter end of his life was vastly richer than the beginning.

My friends, do you pray for people like that? Do you say, I cannot pray for people like that, I cannot like them well enough to pray for them. True, there are some people we cannot *like*; but we can love them. When love of God is shed abroad in our hearts we can love the most unlovely, and can pour out our hearts in sincerity in their behalf. Job prayed for the friends who accused him of every evil thing, of which he knew he was not guilty. People may make false accusations against you, they may misrepresent you, and whatever good thing you seek to do, but if you sincerely pray for them, you, too, will receive a double blessing. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends"; broke his bands, and set him gloriously free.

A life that can pray for friends such as Job's is a gloriously free life. Thus he who prays for others obtains blessing himself. But that is not the purpose of intercessory prayer: it is that others may be blessed. And others are blessed. He helps a man most who prays most for him. Amongst other things it holds back threatened trouble. There is a wonderful passage in the twenty-second chapter of the book of Ezekiel, where the Lord charged His people with all their sins: "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully"—priests, prophets, princes, and people, all gone away from God. Yet the Lord never likes to bring judgment upon a soul, or to a people; so he seeks for an intercessor, a man to stand in the gap before Him, to pour his heart in prayer on behalf of the people, like Moses of old. He could not find an intercessor anywhere, and therefore the judgment came.

But the metaphor the Lord used is to me one of the most wonderful in all the Bible. Think of a walled city or town with the enemy coming against it. He makes a breach in the wall; the army is ready to sweep through; but a man with sword in hand stands in the gap and dares any man to venture through, holding back the threatening army by his sword. When he falls, another takes his place; and the army is thus kept out by the sword of brave men within. The Lord uses that wonderful metaphor to set forth the power of intercession. If there is trouble threatening a church, are we going to let it come in? No!—down on our knees at once and hold back the threatening trouble by intercessory prayer; cry to the Lord, that the trouble may be kept outside.

There may be trouble threatening the family life. Are we going to let it come in and destroy the peace, and joy, and love of the family life? Surely not!—on our knees again and hold back the threatening trouble by prayer.

What a wonderful metaphor God uses for intercessory prayer: it is like a brave soldier with sword in hand holding back threatening trouble.

But it not only holds back threatening trouble, it also brings release from real distress. Peter was delivered in answer to prayer. It brings definite blessing, too. Some years ago I read the story of a gracious work of God in Southern China. Whenever I read a story of that kind I like to know, if possible, the secret of it; and the last chapter of the booklet that told the story of the blessing told the secret of it, too. What was it? There was a dear mother in Texas, a delicate woman who spent much of her time in her bedroom. She had a daughter away in China, a missionary; and this mother was constantly pouring out her heart before God that her daughter might be wonderfully used of Him. Every time she wrote to her daughter she said, "I believe a great revival is going to break out in your district, we are asking the Lord for it." One day she wrote, "I believe before this letter reaches you the revival that we have been praying for will have come"—and it had; and it spread over a wide area. Where did it begin? In that bedroom in Texas hundreds of miles away. God's reservoir is full to overflowing, and He only wants channels, channels of believing prayer; the blessing will surely follow.

Do we want it here? Then let the channels be deep and broad, that the torrents of divine blessing may flow; let our hearts be outpoured before the Lord, that the blessing may flow out unhindered over all the desert places around us, and in distant lands as well.

The ministry of intercession, I say, is the highest form of ministry.

II.

THE SECOND THOUGHT IS THIS: THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION SHOULD BE DEFINITE. We should pray definitely, first of all, for the servants of God. The saints at Jerusalem prayed definitely for Peter. They did not know how they could do without him. God had honoured him and made him a great leader, and they did not want him taken from their midst. So they prayed. Our Lord prayed for His disciples, those who were to be His messengers, in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's gospel; and Paul, writing to the different churches, asked for definite prayer for himself. Read the letters to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, and Thessalonians; he begs in each of these letters that the people should pray for him. He needed their prayers. So much depends upon the leaders, that the church can scarcely do anything better than pray for them, that they may be kept. The best help we can give our minister here is to pray for him. Wonderful things can be achieved through prayer.

Away back in the seventeenth century in the town of Shotts in Scotland there was to be a thanksgiving day, and Lady Culross was greatly concerned that that day should be a day of mighty power. John Livingstone was to be the preacher on that particular day; he was not a particularly great preacher, but he was an earnest man of God. Lady Culross knew there was power with God to do wonders; and she gathered a few of her friends together the evening before the thanksgiving day, and they prayed hour after hour through the long night, how they cried unto the Lord that the next day might be a wonderful day of blessing. John Livingstone preached, and brought the message of the gospel very clearly before the people. Five hundred souls were saved that day—in answer to what? To John Livingstone's appeal? Yes, in a measure; but more in answer to Lady Culross's prayer, and the prayer of her friends. Five hundred souls were born again in answer to a night of prayer. Doubtless many of you know the story of Mr. D. L. Moody. As a young preacher he was always earnest, but the story is told of two women who used to listen to him, and who believed something was lacking in his ministry; he did not seem to enjoy what they understood to be the filling of God's Holy Spirit, and they longed that he should have it. They would pray that he might receive this divine anointing, and then listen to him preach. Turning to one another they would say, "No, he has not got it yet." They continued to pray for him, until one day there was a new tone in D. L. Moody's ministry, and they said, "He has got it—he has got it now." God, in answer to their prayers, filled D. L. Moody with His Spirit, and made him a mighty power all over the world, winning souls to Christ.

Let us pray much for our ministers, for they are the targets of the enemy. The enemy knows that if the minister falls, the whole church is affected; if

the devil can lay him low, he has achieved a tremendous victory. Let us pray much for our ministers.

And what of our Sunday School teachers—do they not need our prayers? May not great things be accomplished in answer to our prayers for them? Mr. Cornaby, a missionary in China, in writing a book on prayer, tells this story. When he was a boy in Sunday School a certain class in that school was the terror of all the teachers. One after another of the teachers had tried, and had been compelled to give it up. At last a lady undertook the task. Some thought that she might have more influence—but it was just the same with her as it had been with the men. She was compelled to move away from the district, and she cried to the Lord particularly for the last Sunday she was to be with them. She came to the class quite expecting the Lord to answer prayer—but immediately the boys became, as always, utterly inattentive, very badly behaved, rude, and even insulting. Presently the lady threw her Bible down upon the table, and burst into tears. She wept as if she would break her heart. The boys had not met an argument like that before. When she recovered herself, she turned to the boys and said, "Good-bye" and left them. Within a fortnight, Mr. Cornaby tells us, the whole class came out boldly for Christ. He himself was one of them, a missionary far away in Ch'na; and he tells of many others of the class who became eminent in God's service. Prayer had won the victory, prayer and the lady's tears.

Let us pray also for the people of God, very definitely. God calls us to this. All God's great intercessors have prayed much for God's people. You remember Moses' sublime intercession, when he rose to the very highest point in his life; "If thou wilt forgive their sin . . . and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Let me be nothing, Moses said in effect, only save the people. And Samuel tells us he regarded it as a sin if he ceased to pray for the people of God. How did Elijah pray? How did Jeremiah pray? How did Paul pray?—"night and day exceedingly." Paul tells us he gave himself to prayer in behalf of the churches. And when you and I pray, "something happens at the other end."

There is a story of Gypsy Smith, the great evangelist, who has been in this country as well as in many other parts of the world. He was going to conduct, the story tells us, a great mission in Birmingham, one of the large industrial centres of the Old Land. On the Saturday evening before the mission began, a meeting was held to welcome him, and during the meeting he made a few remarks. He said, "If the Lord Jesus Christ should come to me and say, 'Gypsy Smith, what would you like here in Birmingham? Would you like to be the means of saving five thousand souls, or quickening five thousand Christians?'" Gypsy Smith said, "You would naturally expect me to say that I would rather see five thousand souls saved. But if I had that choice I would say, 'Lord, give me the chance of quickening five thousand Christians.'" Why? Because he knew quite well that the quickening of five thousand Christians would soon mean the bringing in of ten thousand souls. Oh, we need to pray for one another. We can snap our fingers at all the roaring of the devil outside of the church, if the church within is right. We need to pray for one another, that you and I, as Christians, may be what we ought to be everywhere, and under all circumstances.

Then we should pray for the unsaved, too. We should pray more for them than we plead *with* them if we want to be successful. I think one of the most beautiful pictures in missionary biography is the story of David Livingstone's death. Do you remember how the people found him? On his knees! No doubt that the last thing he did was to cry to God for Africa. You and I need to pray much for the unsaved.

I received a letter the other day from a minister in Southern Ohio. He said, "Sir, I should like to tell you that we have a new prayer test in our church." I was glad to read that they were selecting the worst cases in the district, and concentrating their prayer on them,—and God is answering prayer. The writer said, "Just recently we selected the worst man in the neighbourhood, the vilest of the vile. We concentrated our prayers on him, yet I must confess that sometimes our faith was rather weak. But one Sunday there very man came to church, much to the surprise and delight of everyone who knew anything of him; and when the appeal was made at the close of the service, up came that man, the very first to testify for Christ."

Yes, God answers prayer. Mr. Muller, as you know, received in answer to prayer, during his life time, nearly two million pounds sterling for his great work. But that is not all. He tells us plainly that he believed God gave him more than thirty thousand souls in answer to prayer throughout his lifetime. What prayer can do! Intercessory prayer!

III.

JUST ONE WORD ABOUT THE ATTITUDE THAT INTERCESSORY PRAYER DEMANDS. Intercessory prayer is characterized by an attitude of lowliness. All God's great intercessors were marked by that quality: Abraham, when he prayed, said, "I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord. Who am I but dust and ashes?"—his prayer was marked with deepest lowliness; Elijah cr'ed to God for rain with his head between his knees, indicating the humility of his soul. Daniel, with the burden of a nation's sin on his heart, threw himself prostrate on the earth, crying to God in profoundest lowliness. But with lowliness, great boldness, too, may characterize our prayers. If Jacob could say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me", when he was asking for himself, how much more can we say that when we are praying for others! I read to you just now the parable in the eleventh chapter of Luke's gospel. There is an illustration where our Master speaks of one who had a friend come on a long journey, tired and hungry; but unfortunately his host had nothing to set before him. He thereupon goes to his neighbour to ask for something, and finds him in bed with his family. He knocks and knocks, and finally, as Dr. Alexander Whyte suggests, the neighbours wake up and say, "What a shame for that man to be waking up all the neighbours." But it makes no difference—he knocks on. The man of the house says, "Listen to that man!" But finally he goes down and gives his neighbour all that he needs, saying, "Take it and be gone." God says we are to knock like that, knock—knock—knock—importunately—shamelessly, is what the word really means—shamelessly, the Master says, go on shamelessly until the door opens; He bids us to be bold in our prayer for others.

You remember how Martin Luther prayed for Melancthon when he lay very ill—he said, "O Lord, he cannot die; he must be raised up; we cannot do without him. Thy work needs him. Put Thy hand on him and raise him up." John Knox is another example of boldness in prayer; going among those hills and valleys of Scotland, he cried, "Lord, give me Scotland or I die." We need intercessors like that to-day, men and women who will cry to God in agony of soul, and with persistence, until mighty things are done. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." We need to pray, and pray—without ceasing. Elijah sent his servant seven times to see if there was any indication of coming rain—and he continued praying until the answer came.

Referring to George Muller again: Dr. Pierson told of an interview he had with him when he said, "Mr. Muller, we all know how wonderfully God has answered your prayers. But allow me to ask one question, Did you ever have to wait very long for an answer to your prayers?" Mr. George Muller had a very precise way of speaking, and he said, "My dear friend, there are two aged men now for whom I have been praying sixty-five years and four months,—they are not converted yet but I shall meet them in heaven." Dr. Pierson said, "Sir; how do you know that you will meet them in heaven?" "Because", he said, "my Master would never have sustained me in prayer all these years, and then deny me those two souls." I believe the facts are that one man was converted just before Mr. Muller's death, and one immediately after. Sixty-five years and four months for two unconverted men—daily praying for them! That is persistence.

If you and I sow the seed of such prayer, by the Spirit of God we shall come rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. The Lord teach us to pray!

I am going to ask one question before I sit down: dear friends, do you pray? Are there any here this morning who have never prayed? "Oh", you say, "I say my prayers regularly"—I am not asking about saying your prayers: I am asking, Do you pray? We read of a man in the Acts of the Apostles who was most regular about saying his prayers, more regular, perhaps, than any other man in his day. But one day an angel came to a servant of the Lord in the city of Damascus and said, "Behold now he prayeth!—he has been saying prayers all his life, now he has begun to pray." Have you begun to pray? Is

there a soul here this morning who has been saying prayers, who will now begin to pray? Is there a soul here this morning who, out of the heart's deep need and in agony of soul, will cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"?

Shall we so pray: O Lord Who art the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, we look up to Thee with joy, because we know that Thou dost love to answer prayer. O Lord, rouse us to more prayer; let us see the value of prayer, and the sinfulness of prayerlessness; may we learn to agonize with Thee from burdened spirits. God, bless this congregation, and if there is one here this morning who has never prayed, we ask that that soul may now, from his or her heart, send up a real cry to God. We know that Thou wilt answer. Lord teach us all to pray, for Thy dear Name's sake. Amen.

ANNIVERSARY SERVICES OF WORTLEY ROAD CHURCH, LONDON.

Note: The following notice came for insertion a few days ago, but was omitted by the Editor. In his absence we venture to print it.

London, May 23rd, 1927.

On Sunday, May 8th, anniversary services were held in the Wortley Road Baptist Church, when Rev. T. J. Mitchell began the second year of his ministry in London.

Dr. T. T. Shields, Toronto, was the special speaker for the day. He gave three rousing addresses. In the morning his subject was "Revival". In the evening he spoke on, "The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne", or "The Impossibility of Salvation Without Blood." The church was full to overflowing at both services; at the evening service a microphone and amplifiers enabled the overflow to hear the message in other parts of the building. Several decisions for Christ were registered at the evening service.

The afternoon meeting was held uptown in the Mason's Temple, when a very large company gathered to hear Dr. Shields' powerful address on the subject, "Is the Baptist Controversy a mere quarrel, or a reformation affecting all Christians?" This address was broadcast, so that the message was heard all over Western Ontario. Many came in their automobiles from the surrounding country to hear and see for themselves.

Dr. Shields spoke also on Monday night, pointing out the greatest need of the church to be "men"—men of courage, men of conviction, men who will stand for "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints". One who hears him often was heard to say, "That was the finest utterance I ever heard him give." Many who were previously prejudiced against Dr. Shields because of the propaganda that has been spread throughout the Convention against him, were completely won over,—*Veni, vidi, vici*—"I came, I saw, I conquered." This could truly be said of the coming of Dr. Shields to London—and the victory was first a victory for the Lord, then the message, then the man. All who heard Dr. Shields speak, felt his utter sincerity, and thanked God for this great leader that He has raised up in our midst to champion the cause of old-time religion.

(signed) T. J. MITCHELL.

NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

Next week's issue of *The Witness* will be a particularly interesting one. It will contain reports of the Toronto Baptist Association, the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Bible Union held recently in Chicago, also of the Annual Meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention now in session. Order this special number at 5 cents per copy; \$3.00 per hundred in quantities of twenty-five or more.

DR. SHIELDS AT HOME.

The Pastor will return from Chicago, where for the fifth time he was elected President of the Baptist Bible Union of North America, late in the week; and will preach morning and evening next Sunday. In the morning Dr. Shields will speak of decisions reached at the recent Convention. At the close of the evening service the Regular Monthly Communion Service will be held.

Last Sunday Jarvis Street again enjoyed the rich ministry of Rev. T. I. Stockley.

Editorial

Baptist Bible Union Takes Over Des Moines University

Telegraphic despatch from the Editor, Chicago, May 31, 1927.

The Baptist Bible Union at its Fifth Annual Meeting in Chicago, May 25th to 30th, decided to accept the proposal of the authorities of the Des Moines University, Iowa, to take over that institution and conduct it as a Baptist University. The University has twenty-two acres of land, five buildings, about three-quarters of a million dollars of assets, and six hundred students. As a condition of this offer, it is necessary to raise fifty thousand dollars cash within thirty days. More than forty thousand dollars were subscribed at the Saturday and Monday sessions of the Annual Meeting of the Union; and on Monday night the final decision was taken to assume responsibility for this enterprise, and the Executive of the Union empowered to carry out the undertaking. It is expected the University will be transferred to the Baptist Bible Union for its own absolute ownership and control about June 9th. The institution will be conducted on the basis of the principles embodied in the Confession of Faith of the Baptist Bible Union; and will be the only Baptist University north of the Mason-Dixie line, in the United States or in Canada, committed to conform its teaching in all departments to the Bible as the Word of God.

In this message to *The Gospel Witness* we appeal to all our readers to assist in this great enterprise. More than one hundred thousand dollars are needed in the next six months; therefore we earnestly solicit contributions from God's stewards everywhere. We would suggest that every *Witness* reader interested in this new enterprise form himself into a committee of one to canvass his friends, so that we may have subscriptions amounting to thousands of dollars. It is necessary that we receive gifts of many more thousands of dollars before June ninth. Send subscriptions by wire or special delivery mail to: *The Gospel Witness* Office, 130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Canada; cheques made payable to Mr. Harold Humphries.

THE TORONTO ASSOCIATION.

Some of the sessions of the Toronto Association of Baptist Churches were certainly interesting. For example, the Thursday morning session when there was supposed to be a "Conference on Present Day Problems in Church Life", Rev. G. P. Gilmour, with an air of great importance in his manner, spoke on "The Mind of Youth". If his hearers had known nothing about the "mind of youth" before he began, they certainly would not know much on the subject when he finished! Rev. O. C. Elliott dealt with the subject of "False Doctrine". One would suppose that the Biblical order would be, first to take the beam out of one's own eye before dealing with other people's eyes. This brother, however, appeared to be so blinded by the beam in the eye of the Toronto Baptist Association that he could not see the big operation that was required at home. So he dealt chiefly with Russellism—a form of false doctrine which we presume had no representative in the congregation. And it is wonderful how courageous a man can be in his blows when he knows that those at whom he is aiming are yards and yards away! We could not help wondering why Mr. Elliott said nothing about the "false doctrines" in our own Denomination!

But Friday was the lively day. During the morning session the following resolution was moved by Mr. Thomas Urquhart and seconded by Rev. W. F. Mesley:

"RESOLVED THAT THIS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION deploras the growth of worldliness in church life evidenced by the many professing Christians who attend the theatre, moving picture shows, dance halls, and card-playing parties; and evidenced further by others who carry on dances and card parties in the home, thus in many cases demoralizing the spiritual life of those who attend; and we further deplore the fact that many professing Christians use their

automobiles on the Lord's Day for pleasure, thus taking themselves and their families away from the Lord's House and making the Lord's Day a day of pleasure instead of a day of rest and worship; and further, we deplore the increasing tendency among our young people (girls as well as boys) to use the cigarette and other forms of tobacco, thus weakening the body as well as the mind, and clouding the spiritual perception of the youth; and we regret to say that some pastors and others are setting an unworthy example to the young people by the use of tobacco in various forms.

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that we call upon all our pastors from the pulpit and in the prayer meetings and Young People's Societies to strongly teach and point out the evils of these things, and that the continual practice thereof will ruin the spiritual life of our churches and bring about conditions which will, to a great degree, increase the difficulties at present surrounding a truly evangelical message, and further emphasizing the necessity on the part of every Christian to separate himself entirely from all these worldly habits, pleasures, and amusements."

The Canadian Baptist sarcastically remarks that the debate at the Association made "fine 'copy' for the daily papers". We heartily agree with this sentiment if the Editor of *The Canadian Baptist* means the storm of protest that arose over this resolution! Dr. Whidden tried to endorse worldliness in the churches by the use of such revered names as "Charles Haddon Spurgeon", and "Dr. Thomas".

It is a striking fact that while directly, and by implication, many used this opportunity to vilify the Editor of *The Gospel Witness*, he, as President of the Baptist Bible Union of North America, was engaged in Chicago negotiating with the officials of a great university with a view to the Union's taking over the university and running it, in all departments, on the principle that the Bible is the very Word of God, with all that that implies.

Following a suggestion from the floor, Mr. Urquhart deleted the word "pastors" from the clause in his resolution dealing with tobacco. But the resolution was too strong for the brethren, and on motion of Rev. B. W. Merrill was referred back to the Resolutions Committee for recasting. This was done, and the newly cast resolution was presented by the Resolutions Committee at the afternoon session. It was perfectly harmless in its new form! All the teeth of the original resolution had been carefully extracted, so that the tenderest skin could not possibly be hurt by it. In its new form the resolution was passed—and church members will be able to go on in their worldly ways just as they did before. When will ministers of the Cross understand what their message involves, and be prepared to go with our Lord "without the camp bearing his reproach"?

In the afternoon of Friday, resolutions were passed in connection with our denominational situation, about which *The Gospel Witness* will have something to say in next week's issue.

ARIZONA BAPTISTS.

We have received a copy of *The Morning Sun* of Yuma, Arizona, of May 6th, containing a report of the address of Rev. R. S. Beale, of Tucson, President of the Arizona State Baptist Convention, delivered in the First Baptist Church of Somerton. The title of the address was, "What I Know About Arizona Baptists". The report says Rev. R. S. Neal stated, in part:

"Nine years of unbroken fellowship with Arizona Baptists have acquainted me somewhat with this 'peculiar people', who through the grace of God have been redeemed from all iniquity and made 'zealous of good works.' I find my love for them growing and abounding with the passing of the years. From the time I first met with them in convention assembled at Safford, back in 1918, until the present, I have never ceased to thank God for them. It is indeed a heavenly privilege accorded me by my Father above to be permitted to labour with such a body of believers.

God-Fearing People.

"I have found Arizona Baptists to be a God-fearing people. The Baptists of this great commonwealth know and love their Lord. To them He is the

Alpha and Omega of every practice and experience. Those who come among this people can never say as Abraham was compelled to say on one occasion, 'surely, the fear of God is not in this place.' Brethren coming to us from every part of America have expressed surprise and delight with what they see and hear concerning our work. Easterners get a wrong impression of this far Western country and imagine that goodness is about the last thing one could hope to find. Thank God, those days are gone, and we trust, gone for ever.

"Our people are a Gospel-loving people. To them the Bible is the very word of the living God. To my certain knowledge every minister in our convention has borne testimony concerning his implicit faith in the Bible as the inspired word of God. In this they not only express their own conviction, but are voicing that of the churches which they represent.

"I am often asked if the Arizona Baptist convention expects to bolt the Northern Baptist convention.

"Never! Because we recognize that the foundation stones of our great body of organized Baptists were laid deep in orthodoxy. We do not expect to surrender the ship to these Modernistic pirates. Orthodoxy has built our schools, sent out the Missionaries, and maintained our work.

Modernism Unwelcome.

"Arizona Baptists love the great Baptist brotherhood and are set for the defense of that faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Modernism is as unwelcome in our midst as the Devil himself. I can say this with great frankness that we honour our national officers for their work's sake, but unless they are willing to accept the Christ of the Bible and the Bible of Christ, they are wholly out of fellowship with us.

"Arizona Baptists are a generous-hearted people. They know how to give. Twenty-five years ago the churches reported for benevolences a sum of \$945. Last year the annual report shows considerably over \$22,000 given. We hope to make the coming year the very best in the history of our work in this state.

"The evangelistic spirit prevails to a marked degree among us. We recognize that the fundamental mission of the church is the primal mission of the Son of God who came to seek and save that which was lost.

Membership Gain.

"A review of our work for the past twenty-five years shows that Arizona Baptists are a ground-gaining people. From a struggling band of comparatively few years past, they have grown to be a great body. Our membership now hovers close to the 6,000 mark. Last year the fifty churches reported 540 baptisms. Our property values have increased in the last twenty-five years from \$18,000 to considerably over half a million dollars. In the same period operating expenses have leaped from \$4,500 to more than \$120,000."

THE BAPTIST MISSION IN JAMAICA.

By T. I. Stockley.

Jamaica is a mountainous and beautiful island in the heart of the Caribbean Sea. It has been the scene of memorable events. Its aboriginal inhabitants were Indians, but these were exterminated by the Spanish conquerors when they took possession of the island. To supply the place of the murdered Indians, sons and daughters of the African race were introduced and made slaves. In the days of Oliver Cromwell, the British drove out the Spaniards, but they continued to bring men and women from Africa and make them slaves in Jamaica. Multitudes of these poor people perished by cruelty, and excessive toil. Their condition was wretched in the extreme. In those days, Jamaica was a place of almost indescribable wickedness. The white people were grossly immoral, and utterly regardless of religion. The Lord's Day

was given up to every kind of sinful pleasure. Sodom and Gomorrah could scarcely have been worse than Jamaica was in those days.

The first piece of work done by the Baptists in Jamaica was begun as far back as 1733. George Lisle, an emancipated slave, and a preacher from America, came to Jamaica, and seeing the miserable condition of his enslaved brethren, he took his stand on the race-course at Kingston, and preached the great liberating message of the Gospel. Many of his race received the message joyfully, and George Lisle formed the first Baptist church in Jamaica. In the year 1793 he opened the first Non-Conformist Chapel in the island. Lisle was often treated with ridicule and insult, besides being thrown into prison and laden with chains. One of the trophies of the Gospel at this time was a brown barber called Moses Baker. He was a very vile sinner before his conversion; but after that great change, he soon became a preacher of the Gospel. He went to quite a number of sugar estates, and preached to the slaves there, until a law was passed which forbade all such work on plantations. But the work of Moses Baker was greatly blessed, and some of the converts were formed into a church at a place called Crooked Spring.

For upwards of thirty years, good men of African birth or descent carried on our Baptist work in Jamaica, until in response to their constant appeals to England, missionaries were sent out from that country. The first English missionary landed in Jamaica in 1814, and others followed with considerable rapidity because the yellow fever cut so many of them down after only a few months of labour. But the Work of God went on. The years 1824-5 saw the arrival of Messrs. Burchell, Philipps, and Wm. Knibb. The great liberating, healing message of the Gospel proclaimed by these men was the very Balm of Life to the crushed and bleeding hearts of the slaves, and they welcomed it with eager joy. The triumphs of the Cross were wonderful. The congregations in some of the larger centres of population were numbered not by hundreds merely, but by thousands. There was strong opposition and bitter persecution, so that the missionaries often sowed in tears, but they reaped in joy, and their harvests were abundant.

Before emancipation came, the poor slave was driven to labour by the whip; was branded like a sheep; and corrupted by the licentiousness of his master. They were all subject to punishment by stocks, thumb-screw, iron-collar, the yoke, the block and tackle, and the whip. In the year 1831 a harmless plan was shaped by one who thought he had a right to be free; but others carried it to extremes, and the uprising of the slaves brought martial law, and with martial law, terrible vengeance. But the missionaries, especially the Baptist missionaries, were blamed for it all; and they would have been done to death if God had not intervened and saved them. This period of Baptist history in Jamaica is most thrilling, but it is impossible to tell the story in detail. This should be mentioned, however, that an infamous society was formed, called the "Church Colonial Union". This "Union" was formed with the determination to destroy our chapels, and to drive the Baptist missionaries especially, clean off the Island. The agents of this "Union" were helped by the riff-raff of the larger towns, and thus helped, they destroyed the fine chapels at Salters Hill, Falmouth, Stewart Town, Montego Bay, Brown's Town, Savanna-la-near, St. Ann's Bay, Ocho Rios and Lucea. In the last named place, the rector with his own hands helped the destruction of our chapel. But the hand of God was upon these persecutors, and many of them very soon died in some violent or terrible way.

At last emancipation came, and with emancipation wonderful blessing in our churches. Knibb and Burchell in England were able to secure £25,700 for the rebuilding of our churches in Jamaica, and when they returned, the joy and gratitude of the Baptist people knew no bounds. The congregations were immense. Thomas Burchell at Montego Bay had a Sunday morning prayer-meeting at 6 o'clock with 2,000 people present, and some of them walked 17 miles to be there. In the year 1842, through the influence of Wm. Knibb, the churches were led to take a momentous step; they took up the position of self-support. The step was brave, but unwise; for only two years afterwards, Knibb had to go to England to beg some help from the churches there, and a number of the English missionaries had to return to England because the people of Jamaica were so poor that they could not support them. That struggle for

self-support has continued through the years, and is as great to-day as it ever was.

How does the work stand to-day? We have some 210 churches with a membership of 32,000, and 47 Missionaries, about forty of whom are coloured and black, and the others are white. A few of these missionaries have one or two large churches, but most of them have four, five, six, seven, and one even eight churches to care for. Although they love the Gospel Message, and preach it, they are quite unable to shepherd such large groups of people separated so widely as they are, by mountains, deep valleys, and many streams. The writer has travelled through every parish in the Island, and visited nearly every one of the 210 churches; he knows, therefore, some of the great difficulties of such wide-spread fields of labour. And when the missionary is able to visit each of his churches about once a month, the members need to have very real and strong Christian experience to prevent church decline. The writer returns from some of his long journeys amongst the churches with an aching heart when he sees so many churches which might be, and ought to be strong, simply dying for the want of spiritual food, and a shepherd's care. However, there are in these churches men and women of fine Christian character whose lives have been transformed by the Holy Spirit, who are a constant joy to their missionaries, and who are esteemed and trusted by all who know them.

After exercising a year's special ministry amongst these beloved people in 1921-2, the writer was constrained to accept the position of Superintendent of the New Forward Movement, inaugurated for the following purposes: (a) First and foremost, the spiritual uplift and enlargement of the churches; (b) to bring some sorely needed financial help to the missionaries; (c) to re-arrange the large circuits of churches, so that no missionary shall have more than three churches to shepherd; (d) to secure a considerable increase of missionaries, both white and coloured; (e) to send some help to the aged and infirm missionaries; (f) and last, and very urgent, to launch out into untouched districts.

Now to carry out this imperative task, an annual income of at least \$10,000 is required. The extreme poverty of so many of our Baptist people makes it impossible for them to raise this sum. They can do a little, and they are encouraged to do all that they can; but they must be very largely helped, if the present work is to be saved from death. Out of their extremely deep poverty many of the people gladly bring their little gifts for the support of the work, but they cannot possibly do anything at all adequate to the needs.

An appeal, therefore, is being made to the Fundamentalist churches of America to come generously to Jamaica's help. The need is imperative if God's Work amongst the Baptists there is to be saved from decay, and put on anything like a satisfactory footing. It is pitiable to see things as they are to-day. And what is done in the way of help, must be done quickly, because Roman Catholics, and Russellites and others, like ravenous wolves are endeavouring to rend and devour any of our members whom they can reach. The great need is that Jamaica should be placed on the Missionary Budget of the Churches, and a regular, assured grant be made to this needy, and worthy field.

The Rev. T. I. Stockley, who is well known to many of the ministers and churches of America, will be devoutly thankful, both to those persons and churches who are led to help. He intends to send a quarterly letter to all such, so that they may see how their money is being spent, and what progress is being made on the field.

Editor's Note: Mr. Stockley has now come to Toronto as an instructor in the new Toronto Baptist Seminary, but the Jamaica Council have requested him to be their commissioner in Canada and the United States. All financial help should therefore still be sent to him, and he will gladly acknowledge all such help and forward to the Treasurer in Jamaica. Mr. Stockley will be extremely grateful if all the friends and churches who have helped in the past will continue to do so, and will gladly welcome new contributors. Address gifts to: Rev. T. I. Stockley, 130 Gerrard St. East, Toronto, Canada.

FROM REV. J. W. KEMP'S PEN.

The following paragraph is an excerpt from an article appearing in the May, 1927, number of *The Reaper*, a monthly magazine issued by Rev. Joseph W. Kemp, of Auckland, N.Z., in which Mr. Kemp tells of his visit to this Continent last summer:

The next city to be visited was Toronto, and here we were the guests of Dr. and Mrs. Shields, of Jarvis Street Baptist Church. My friendship with, and admiration for, Dr. Shields are not of yesterday's creating. For many years now I have been privileged to count him amongst my friends. What a change has come over this church since I first knew it over ten years ago. It is nothing short of cataclysmic. Several years ago, Dr. Shields took a pronounced stand against worldly amusements in the Church and in the lives of professing Christians. He preached his soul out on one occasion in a sermon which resulted in over three hundred resignations, including Choir, Organist, Church Officers and Sunday School Teachers. In fact, a man of less strength and spiritual power would have been appalled by such a wholesale clearance of workers. Not so with Shields. He had put his hand to the plough, and for him there was no looking back. Every effort the devil could devise was resorted to in order to force out of office the Minister who had disturbed the smug complacency of worldly church members, but in every instance the pit they dug for him they fell into themselves. Since this convulsive experience the church has enjoyed phenomenal prosperity, and never before in its history has there been such a continuous flow of blessing as is now experienced. The church is enjoying a perennial revival, and into this atmosphere we were welcomed. The church, as is usual, was filled in every part, and at the close of the evening service on Lord's Day quite a number of decisions for Christ were recorded. Dr. Shields is the most outstanding Fundamentalist of Canada. Many think he is much too pugilistic, but then there are some things happening now-a-days in the theological world that call for hard hitting, and Dr. Shields is not slow to deal heavy blows. After a heavy day spent at Jarvis Street we left for Vancouver, where we were to take steamer for home.

NEWS OF THE CHURCHES.

We regret that we are unable to publish all the items of news that reach us from the churches of the Ontario and Quebec Convention, but gladly publish below several annual meeting reports.

**Memorial Baptist Church, Stratford,
Rev. R. K. Gonder, Pastor.**

Throughout the year it has been God's work to inspire and encourage, ours to persevere. We see with great thankfulness a deepened prayer spirit in every department. God's Word is our only text-book, and in obedience to His teaching we are contending "earnestly for the faith". We are among the protesting churches in the denominational controversy, but have gained much more than we have lost by our stand. Our membership shows a net increase of twenty-five. There was raised for all purposes the sum of fifty-three hundred and thirty-five dollars. Apart from the Building and Parsonage Funds, there are no debts, but rather a substantial balance on hand in each of the respective treasuries.

**Wortley Road Church, London.
Rev. T. J. Mitchell, Pastor.**

On Monday night, April 11th, 1927, Wortley Road Church held its Annual Business Meeting, and glowing reports came from all organizations connected therewith. This has been a record year. Fifty-five new members were received during the year, fourteen of whom came from the Sunday School and Bible classes; while thirty-eight of the fifty-five have come to us by baptism, experience, and letter since we took our stand against Modernism in November last. Thirty-five were lost by death and dismissal, leaving us with a net gain of twenty for the year.

The Treasurer reports the largest surplus since the founding of the church.

The following motion was passed without a dissenting voice: That all obligations to the Convention Boards be cleared up, so that the members who have gone out from us may know that the monies they gave for above-named Boards will be so directed; but hereafter no monies shall be sent to the Convention Boards until Modernism has been cleared from the Convention. When this has been done, Wortley Road will prayerfully consider the Convention's needs.

Hespeler Baptist Church.

At the Annual Meeting of the Hespeler Baptist Church, held Wednesday evening, April 20th, the following resolution was passed: Whereas the Hespeler Baptist Church stands for the full inspiration and authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and for the absolute infallibility of Jesus Christ as the incarnate God, and for the truth that in His substitutionary death Christ endured the punishment for our sins in our room and stead, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; and whereas, Professor L. H. Marshall, of McMaster University, by his teaching implicitly denies the full inspiration and authority of the Bible as the Word of God and explicitly rejects the truth that Christ endured on our behalf the punishment of our sins; and whereas, the Convention of Ontario and Quebec at its annual meeting in October, 1926, expressed its confidence in him and its approval of his teaching, but it resolved that hereafter all missionary offerings of this church, not otherwise designated, go to support the budget of the Regular Baptist Missionary and Educational Society of Canada as follows:—

Home and Foreign	50%
Toronto Seminary	10%
General Expense	7%
Regular Baptist Literature	8%
Grand Ligne	8%
Baptist Bible Union	5%
Superannuation Fund	2%
	<hr/>
	90%

and that the remaining 10% go to the Sudan Interior Mission.

Watford Baptist Church.

At a business meeting of the Watford Baptist Church, held April 18th, the following resolution was adopted: "At a mass meeting of the Wyoming, Calvary, and Watford Baptist churches, Watford's request for a pastor who would not endorse Modernism was refused by the Wyoming and Calvary churches;

And whereas, th's church is opposed to the modernistic teaching of McMaster University, and has on its books a resolution to that effect;

And whereas, at a mass meeting of the Watford, Wyoming and Calvary churches, the Watford church was dismissed from fellowship and co-operation in the work on this field;

Be it therefore resolved, that the Watford Regular Baptist Church as contained in deed of said church, henceforth continue independent of the two aforementioned churches.

STUDENT MISSIONARIES.

The Regular Baptist Missionary and Educational Society of Canada has placed a number of students on summer mission fields. Encouraging reports of the first week's work are beginning to come in—one place reports seven conversions, and another one. Our readers are urged to pray for these young men, and their different fields of service.

TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY.

The first term of the Toronto Baptist Seminary closed May 20th, and students left last week for Summer Home Mission fields. Already two new instructors have been secured for the fall term, and the syllabus will be ready for

mailing in a few days. Prospective students and interested friends are invited to write for copy. Address: Rev. W. J. Millar, 337 Jarvis St., Toronto.

Gifts for the Seminary, some large, some small, continue to reach us; but we would urge those who stand with us in this Convention, as well as the Lord's stewards among our American readers, to remember this work by their prayers and gifts. Contributions will be most gratefully received from individuals and churches. Several churches have put the Seminary on their budget, and we would urge that other fundamentalist churches take this action. Cheques should be made payable to Mr. Harold Humphries, and addressed to *The Gospel Witness Office*, 130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto.

BAPTIST BIBLE UNION SENIOR LESSON LEAF

Vol. II.

T. T. SHIELDS, Editor.

No 26.

Lesson 13.

Second Quarter.

June 26, 1927.

Paul's Defence.

LESSON TEXT: Acts, Chapter 22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou shalt be his witness unto all men." (Acts 22:15).
PAUL'S DEFENSE IS THE STORY OF HIS OWN CONVERSION.

1. Paul was equal to every situation; his familiarity with several languages, his mastery of Scripture, his acquaintance with the learning of his day, and his natural strength of intellect, combined to give him a commanding influence over men. God can use any instrument, but His service demands our utmost endeavour to make the most of all our powers for His glory.

2. Paul speaks of his birth and education, and his resulting religious zeal (v. 3).

3. By a master stroke he calls his former confederates, the high priests and all those in authority, to witness to his zeal in persecuting the church (vs. 4, 5)—it was with their authority and with letters from them he was going to Damascus to bring men who called upon the name of Jesus to Jerusalem bound. A man must be conscious of a radical and manifest change in his whole character when he dares to put his old companions into the witness box.

4. Paul finds his mightiest argument in the simple story of his own conversion. The irresistible force of his logic, and the matchless strength of his reasoning powers, may be observed in all his epistles, but in this instance he does not argue in his own defense; but merely tells how God saved him. Surely God uses such testimony still.

5. A simple analysis of his story is as follows: (a) There was light from heaven (v. 6). So there must always be divine illumination before a sinner is made to see the error of his ways. (b) There was a voice from heaven also (v. 7). The Good Shepherd declares that His sheep hear His voice, and that He calls them all by name. (c) There was a direct message from heaven also (vs. 7-10). (d) To this was added the teaching of a faithful disciple (vs. 12-16). (e) And this issued in Paul's baptism (v. 16).

6. A further vision was given him respecting his future ministry (vs. 18-21). He was forewarned that they would not receive his testimony; to which he replied by reference to his own career, ending in a complete change of course as though that would convince them. But the Lord assured him that it would all be useless, and that He would send him to the Gentiles (v. 21).

7. When his testimony touched upon the religious and racial prejudices of his hearers, they cried out for his blood (v. 22). The fact is, that men are not persuaded by reason; the carnal mind is not amenable to reason in religious matters.

8. Brought into the castle by the command of the chief captain, who ordered that he be examined by scourging. As he was being beat with thongs, Paul demanded of the centurion whether it was lawful to scourge a man that was a Roman, and uncondemned. Thus he stood upon his rights as a Roman citizen.