

HAMAN'S GALLOWES TO BE ERECTED IN TORONTO

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT"

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, July 17th, 1927.
(Stenographically Reported.)

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—II Cor. 1:3,4.



WHEN I got off the train this morning an hour and a half ago, I learned of the great sorrow that had come into the life of a prominent family of the city, and the text I have read came to my mind, and I was led to choose it for our morning meditation; for such experiences are common to us all, and I doubt not there are many here who need some word of comfort. You will find the text therefore in the second epistle to the Corinthians, first chapter, and the third and fourth verses: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Toward the close of his life, the famous Ian MacLaren said that had he his life to live over again, and his ministry to exercise, he would lay greater emphasis upon the ministry of comfort. It is true we all need to be comforted; and our hearts will go out in sympathy to those who are bereaved. It will recall in many hearts experiences through which you yourselves have passed, and turn our thoughts back to Him Who is "the God of all comfort."

I should like to make three simple observations: *What God is*—He is “The Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort”; *what God does*—He comforts us “in all our tribulation”; and *why He does it*—“that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

I.

Our first consideration then is, WHAT GOD IS. How strange it is that men should turn their backs upon God! How strange it seems to us that so many should live utterly godless lives!—as though God were an enemy, as though He were a severe master, as though He were one of whom men ought always to be afraid, and from whose presence they should run for safety. What is God? This writer knows Him. God has revealed Himself to him; and he praises God, he blesses Him. The very name of God is a name that fills many a heart with concern. If you go into certain company and begin to speak of God, the smile is taken from many faces, and hearts are solemnized; and it is evident that God is to them one who is afar off, and not One Who is nigh.

First of all, then, God is “*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*”. We are to think of God as He is disclosed to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Men have never been able, of themselves, to imagine what God is like. When they have tried to do so, they have “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things”. If you study the religions of the heathen, if you look at their idols, and consider the visible manifestations of their thought of God, God is a horrible being, He is one to be shunned, to be feared perhaps, but never to be loved. The only revelation of God we have by which He may be known is the revelation of God in Christ. He is the express image of the Father’s Person, He is the very likeness of God Himself. When one said to Christ, “Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” the Master answered, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”; and the teaching of the Word of God is that we are to think of God as He has been manifested to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where did Christ spend His time? How was He occupied in the days of His flesh? Read over again the record of His life, for in the story of His life and death and resurrection you have the supreme manifestation of God. Even the little children came to Him, and from what is recorded it appears that they were not afraid of Him; but that He took them up in His arms and blessed them. Occasionally He was found among those who gathered to celebrate their joy, but more frequently He was found among men and women who were in sorrow, who were in deep trouble. His life was spent going about doing good: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, and teaching men the heavenly wisdom. And all that Christ did, God does, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”; and that which delighted the heart of our gracious Lord is that which lies nearest to the heart of God Himself.

And, very especially, we are to *think of God as He is disclosed in the Cross*, for there verily He appears as the “Father of mercies”. It may be we have had our sorrows and our tribulations, and I shall speak of that in a moment; but we have had many good gifts, we have received many benefits; and if we are honest before God we shall acknowledge that we have not deserved any one of them. Our God has been to us “the Father of mercies”; and every

mercy that has ever come into your life has come directly from God Himself. But the greatest of all mercies is the Lord Jesus of Whom it was said, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

But God is described here also as "the God of all comfort". There is no real comfort apart from Him. We had this same word in our text last Sunday morning, when I reminded you that it is the same word that is used of the Holy Spirit where he is called the Comforter, the Paraclete, the One Who comes to stand by. And God is here described as "the God of all comfort."

Look at the exclusiveness of it. It may be that some here have sought comfort in other directions, have sought to find something that will buoy them up, and steady them, and enable them to stand without seeking unto God. But there is no comfort, there is no strength on which to stand for all the trying experiences of life apart from God Himself. Let us cease from libelling Him, let us honour Him by thinking of Him in terms of His own revelation of Himself, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The face of Jesus Christ—stained with tears, may I reverently say, overcast sometimes with the shadow of a great grief in sympathy with the world that is stricken with sin and sorrow—the face of Jesus Christ is the face of God; and "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God", what God really is, for ever may be seen only as we look by faith to Christ.

II.

WHAT DOES GOD DO? He comforts us "in all our tribulation". He *stands by* us, that is what it means. This "Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort", stands by us in all our tribulation—not merely that He gives us solace, not only that He speaks with tender compassion, not only that He ministers gently, wiping away tears from our eyes—not that merely; but He invigorates us, He girds us with strength for the battle, He brings us into fellowship with Himself, and enters into fellowship with us, and in all our tribulation He stands by us.

My friends, you cannot escape the tribulation, however much you try. There is a period of life, I know, when people, some people at least, seem to be singularly immune, they are delivered from ordinary distresses. There are people who seem to live for a little while strangely sheltered lives; young people to whom life is just one unclouded, happy, summer day; full of games, full of music, full of every variety of gladness, no sorrow, no tears, no trouble of any kind. But, after all, that does not last long. It promises so to do, but we have not fared far along life's highway until we come to rough places, and the sun is obscured by some dark cloud, and the winds of adversity blow; and we find that every flower has its blight, that there is a worm at every root; and we find that the ancient sage was not a pessimist but a prophet when he said, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward". We cannot escape it, the days of tribulation come. Some of them are secret sorrows, tribulation of the soul; and there are many who seem, outwardly, to be prosperous, who yet carry at their heart a great grief; many who seem to be successful, who are continually fighting, waging a fierce battle.

But that element in life we all must face, we cannot escape these tribulations. There are some, of course, that are outward. When business goes wrong, and the income is diminished, and circumstances are adverse, and the

man loses his place and position—he is likely to lose his friends at the same time; you will find there are circumstances which your friends will be ashamed to share with you. I have told you that I used to be respectable myself once upon a time, fairly respectable! I have had people speak as though it was not a disgrace, at least, to entertain the Pastor of Jarvis St. Church in their homes; but I have lived to hear a man say, "I have been advised not to be seen in your company"! Well, I shall have to get along without him, that is all. There are circumstances of that sort above which we may rise, and at which we may laugh, toward which, by God's grace, we may become indifferent. That does not distress me in the least. But there are other conditions when it is an occasion of sorrow, of deep grief, to be forsaken by our friends. If you laugh, you will have plenty to join in the laughter; but if you weep, not so many will weep with you. Somewhere I have read, if I can recall it—

"It takes two for a kiss,
Only one for a sigh;
Twain by twain we marry,
One by one we die:
Joy is a fellowship,
Grief weeps alone;
Many guests had Cana,
Gethsemane had One."

We all must come to our Gethsemane, we must pass through our tribulations. But here is my message. there is One Who always stands by in our tribulation. Others may leave us—He never does. He comforts us in all our tribulation; He puts His arm of grace and power about us.

How I could multiply illustrations from the Book! He was with Abraham in his sorrow. Joseph was despised of his brethren, and sold into Egypt, and then, upon false accusation, he was cast into prison—but the Old Book says this, "The Lord was with Joseph". It did not make any difference where he went, "the God of all comfort" stood by him in all his tribulation. "The Lord was with Joseph."

Moses had rather a hard time, you know, and the people turned away from him for a while. They said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him". I have had a great deal of sympathy with Moses at that point, for he was a sort of absentee pastor, he was away so much; and when the people did not see him, they began to get a little bit dissatisfied. I think I will stop here and tell you a story. I had spoken on the subject once myself, but I heard Dr. Len Broughton speak from that text some years later. He said that the people were quite disturbed. They had not seen Moses about the camp for some time, so they went to Aaron, the assistant pastor, and said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him,—what shall we do?" "Oh", said Aaron, "bring me your gold, and we will see what we can do". So they brought their ear-rings and other jewels and cast them into the fire; and, according to Aaron's tale, they had a calf instead of a pastor! "Then", said Dr. Broughton, "they had a pastor that would stay at home!" That is not difficult, you can always find a pastor who will stay at home—because he has no other place to go, nobody else wants him. But I suppose Moses had some difficulty when people talked like that; but the truth was, he

was under command, having business with God; and the Lord stood by him all the way through.

Turn the pages of this Book, and come down to the book of Joshua and you find the Lord saying, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee—do not be afraid, Joshua, take up the task and go on." "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation", stands by us to the end.

One of the characters of the Scripture whose life has been full of inspiration to me is David. He had such a chequered career, such a variety of experiences. There was one time when he was off with his six hundred men, and in his absence the Amalekites came down and raided the city of Ziklag, and raised it to the ground, and carried off the women and children captive. When David came back and found the city destroyed, the very soldiers who had been with him spoke of stoning him, everybody forsook him; but the Old Book says this: "But David encouraged himself in the Lord". That is the only place where you can get abiding encouragement. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation", stands by us.

The same was true of Jeremiah in the dungeon—and everywhere else; of Daniel among the lions; and the Hebrew children in the fire—no matter where they were, God comforted them in all their tribulation. He said, in effect, "I am going with you to-day, I am standing by you".

Then, coming into the New Testament, you have the same record all the way through. The angel of the Lord was with Christ Himself in Gethsemane; and when the apostles were cast into prison and the doors were shut, the doors kept the apostles in, but they could not keep the Lord out, so He went into jail too. And even on the stormy seas: I love the story of that poor preacher going on an ocean voyage. He did not know anything about sailing, and when he advised them—by the way, let me whisper in your ear, I am going to preach on that text some day—when Paul advised them not to set sail, they answered, "What do you know about it?"—"And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close to Crete". But Paul knew more about the weather than those meteorologists in New York who have been advising the aviators. He said, "You had better not go, sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives". Yet they said, "You are not a sea-faring man—what do you know about it?" And they put to sea. That was one time when a preacher said to a sea captain, "I told you so"! And when everything was going to pieces, "when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we would be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship—come on and have something to eat"—"What do you know about it?" they enquired. What did he know about it? How did he know? Listen: "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve". "There stood by me"; He comes to "stand by" in all our tribulation, whatever our distresses may be.

What lies in the future among the things that you can see—some difficulty to-morrow? some burden on Tuesday? some conflict on Wednesday? some

sorrow on Thursday? some other kind of tribulation on Friday—that is the proper day for it to come, is it not? And who shall say what will happen on Saturday? I do not know, but listen: “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present”—that is to-day—“nor things to come”—that is all the other days—“nor height, nor depth”—and, lest anything should be forgotten—“nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”. He stands by right to the end. So count on Him, depend upon Him, wherever you are, just lean on Him.

A man came to see me in Des Moines last week, a fine gentleman he was, but a young man led him by the hand into the office, and then retired; and as soon as we had finished our interview, the young man who had waited in the hall, came back and took him by the hand, and led him out. This gentleman had no eyes of his own, and was dependent upon someone else's eyes. So are we, “for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”. But our Guide stands by us, He leads us, and energizes us, and gives us shoes of iron and brass, and promises that “as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

III.

That is what He does, and here is WHY HE DOES IT: “That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble”. “Any trouble”—that is rather a comprehensive word, is it not?—“that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble”. That is your business as a Christian, to stand by people in trouble, any kind of trouble. Is that how you spend your life? How we love to rejoice with those who rejoice! We are glad to accept an invitation to some festive occasion, but not so happy, or so willing, at least, to stand by those who mourn. But do you know why God puts us through all these experiences? It is in order that you and I may be trained to “stand by” people in trouble. If you are genuinely a Christian, the Lord's man, you will find nine people out of ten who come to you will come because they are in trouble. “Oh”, somebody says, “people do not bother me that way”—no, perhaps not; but that is no compliment to you! “Nobody comes to me in trouble”—no, they never go to an empty well to draw water! But if you have really learned the grace of God, and have become the channel of grace, and are fitted by your own experiences to minister to other people, prepared by God's grace to stand by people in trouble, you will find plenty of people in trouble in this old world. Someone says, “That is such a melancholy kind of business. I do not want to be engaged in that all the time”. But it is an unspeakable joy to know that you are able somehow to get into somebody's heart, and there to apply the healing balm. I know a man whose company I covet always, and wish that he were living nearer. It is not what he says: it is what he is, and the intimate way in which he understands.

I think I once told you about Sir William Robertson Nicols' article on a pair of shoes. He said something to this effect: People are like shoes. There are patent leather shoes for dress occasions. They may look very well, but they are not particularly comfortable; and certainly nobody thinks of putting on patent leather shoes of an eveningtime to find rest. And there are certain people who are trim and precise, but they do not help anybody. Then he described the tired man at the end of the day, so weary that he feels he cannot go any further. He goes home at the evening hour, and drops into a chair,

takes off his hot shoes, and slips his feet into a pair of old slippers, and says, "What a comfort, what a rest!" Dr. Nicol said, there are some people like that, simply touch them, and you are at rest. "That you may be able to stand by them which are in any trouble".

I heard of a woman who had a little child, the only one she had, and the baby was taken from her. She was standing at the little casket dumb with grief, and neighbours came in and told her that she ought not to sorrow, that it was the Lord's will and it was all right, that she must dry her tears, and rejoice in this providence—but she could not do it, that was all, she could not do it. And as she was standing there another neighbour came in. She did not lecture her at all, she just stood there at her side. Presently she slipped her arm around her, and, calling her by name, said, "Mary, I have three little pairs of shoes at home, and there are no little feet to wear them; but the feet that wore them once are walking the golden streets to-day"; and then that stricken mother burst into tears, and those two went out together,—“that we may be able to stand by them which are in any trouble”.

Can you do it? "Oh," you say, "I cannot understand my own sorrow"—but your present sorrow, my dear friend, your present difficulty, your present burden, is God's way of preparing you to exercise that holy ministry. You may not be able to do it to-day, but some day you will understand how to "stand by them which are in any trouble".

And people will find it out instinctively. It is not often I speak personally, but I will tell you of the highest compliment that was ever paid me. In the first year of the war I went to Kingston to preach, and there were a number of soldiers who came to hear me, among them a man who had on the badge of the military police. He came up to me at the close of a service and said, "I should like to have a talk with you. I know you have not time to-day, but may I come to your hotel some evening to see you?" I said, "I shall be very glad to have you do so, but have I ever met you before?" "No, sir," he replied, "but I have heard you many times; before I went into the army I used to sit in the gallery in Jarvis Street Church".

So one night he came to my room at the hotel, and told me of his experiences. Oh, the steep hills he had had to climb, and the burdens he had had to bear—and so many of them! And this is what he said, "I wanted to tell you why I went to Jarvis Street Church". I said, "That would be interesting". "It was because", said he, "you spoke in such a way that I had a feeling you understood something about climbing the hills. I went to hear a certain prominent preacher in the city, and he was very eloquent. I could sit and say, 'Is he not able? Is it not fine? But he does not get in here. He has not been over my road, he does not know my experiences'. But", he said, "the first time I came to Jarvis Street Church, something you said made me feel that you understood. All the time I was in Toronto I used to go, and when Monday came I felt I could square my shoulders for the burden, and go on for another week". There are things you cannot learn in college: some things are learned only in the hard School of Experience—"that we may be able to stand by them which are in any trouble".

How do you do it? "By the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God". "The God of all comfort" comes to us; and, through us, to others. You get the comfort from God, and then hand it out to others. Would it not be a great thing if every member of Jarvis Street Church would become a minister of that sort? so that all the neighbours would say, "When I am in trouble I go to see Mrs. So-and-So. These people from Jarvis Street somehow have strong shoulders, strong arms, and a great faith; and when there is not a star in the sky, and the night is black, and others are in despair, they have learned how to smile and say, It is all right. The Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts, is with me".

I wanted to bring you a comforting word this morning.

Let us pray: O Lord our God, we thank Thee for Thy great mercy, and for the multitude of Thy loving kindnesses. They have ever been roundabout us. We pray Thee to gird us all with strength for the battle; minister to us of Thy grace, we beseech Thee; and grant that we may not live selfish lives,

concerned for our own pleasure; but help us ever to remember that our lot is cast in the midst of a multitude of troubled souls. O Thou Helper of the helpless, be pleased to make us Thy ministers, we pray Thee. Bless our simple meditation this morning. Thou art able "to fill up that which is behind". May the abounding grace of our God be the portion of every member of this congregation this morning, and especially may unsaved souls find that greatest of all comforts, the comfort of knowing their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, and that they are now the children of God. We ask it in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Editorial

"THE FATHER OF LIGHTS".

The proper minding of the business of life, when sifted down to that which is cardinal and essential, resolves itself into a problem of selection, a reasoned or instinctive choice between the evil and the good, or between the good and the better, or between the better and the best. Life's garden is full of flowers, but some are poison-blossoms; its orchards are full of fruit, but some fruits have a worm at the core; the streets of the city are thronged with people, but some of the faces are masks; the stores are full of jewels, but some of the shining gems are paste; life's highway abounds with forked roads, and some of the roads lead to the wilderness and the precipice, and others to unfruitful fields. And the art of true living consists in knowing what flowers to pluck, what fruit to gather, what faces to believe in, what jewels to buy, what road to take to reach the city of good and perfect quality.

In James' epistle, the first chapter, and the sixteenth and seventeenth verses, we read: "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." It is a sign-board pointing the way. It warns against the evil of inferiority by pointing to the only good and perfect. When it is examined, it points to a principle to be recognized, a Person to be revered, and a predominance to be relied upon.

The art of living, then, consists in the constant recognition of this principle, that whatever is good and perfect in life is from above. We are cautioned against a common error: "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Here is a principle too generally ignored. Who believes that the true values of life are from above? That the only real wealth, the only true success, the only fame, the only worthy and enduring remembrance, are found in obedience to laws which are from above? How many a young man acts on the assumption that a business or professional career may be made to yield much that is "good and perfect" without any reference to a Will or Power from above. Let our readers heed the admonition in this respect, "Do not err."

There is a flaw in everything which is unrelated to the heights; and yet how many labour in business who have no skylights in their stores, and no upstairs in their houses! They grovel on the earth, fond of their earthly toys—as if they were "perfect"! But a man cannot do the day's work without reference to the laws which proceed from above, and have a really "good" day; neither can one seek pleasure on the lower levels of life and have a "good time". A man fancies that the character of a house depends upon the materials of which it is constructed, and says it is impossible to build a home of ethical qualities, that one must have bricks or stone and mortar. As a matter of fact, however, it is the moral element which enters into the building of a house which gives it value, which makes it durable. It is, indeed, the amount of conscience put into the building which determines whether it is to be a "good and perfect" house or not. And the principle holds in every field of human endeavour: it is that which is "from above", entering into our efforts, which determines their degree of goodness and perfection; and where that moral quality "from above" is lacking, nothing is really "good", nothing is really "perfect".

There can be no perfection of beauty without proportion and perspective. Many an otherwise good thing is marred by its straitened surroundings. Wellington's great statue in St. Paul's is almost a waste of the sculptor's art, because it is out of proportion, it has so little "above". If certain great pictures called "good and perfect" were to become yours or mine as "gifts", they would lose their perfection in our possession—we have no house large enough to hang them in. We have seen great buildings, architecturally almost perfect, but which were spoiled by their situation, they lacked spaciousness, so that everything was necessarily viewed at close range, and seemed therefore to be lacking in the perfection of proportion. David acknowledged a "good and perfect gift" when he said, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room." All life is out of proportion until we view it in relation to things above; then life becomes proportionate and symmetrical, and the temple grows into beauty under God's infinite blue.

But the Word teaches that the complement of earthly and transient things "cometh down", so that life is not without its elementary goodness and perfection. Whatever is lacking below, may be had "from above". Heaven is not without a listening ear, and an open hand. Priceless gifts have come to us, but such tears of penitence as have been free from the bitterness of despair, such material prosperity as has been without moral taint, such spiritual wrestlings as have developed moral fibre and faith, such goblets of joy as have had in them no dregs of sorrow, such vanquishments as have been potential moral victories, such crucifixions as have necessitated resurrections, these experiences of life have been good and perfect gifts, and they all have come from above.

The source of all perfection is a Divine Personality,—“The Father of lights”. Men are in danger of worshipping mere determinative force, of bowing down to an abstract something called Law. But good and perfect gifts do not grow from the fruitifying overflow of an impersonal Nile: they come to us through well-defined channels; there is, as we have already pointed out, a right way of living; there is a monopoly of goodness and perfection—but it is a personal monopoly, we are enriched by “the Father of lights”.

And this is the distinctively Christian, attitude. We have not to vaguely refer to the great First Cause: “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven.” And so those great principles which are the yellow metal in the ore of our mining, which constitute the enduring element in all that is wrought by human hands, which are the warp and woof of all that is of moral worth in human life, these proceed from one to Whom we are no more strangers; He is our Father above.

How instructive is the figure by which the Personal Source of goodness and perfection is here represented! God is likened to the Sun, “the Father of lights”. The ablest astronomer could not exhaust the wealth of teaching which resides in this analogy; and we can but make use of one or two perfectly obvious lessons. All that enters into terrestrial existence is dependent upon the Sun. Let him but withhold his warming, vitalizing, rays, and the year is no longer crowned with goodness, nor do the paths drop fatness; then the pastures of the wilderness would mourn, and the little hills put on sack-cloth—the pastures would lose their garment of flocks, and the valleys their golden raiment of corn, and joy and singing would give place to the silence of death,—indeed, were the sun to loose his hold upon this planet, it would fall into infinite space, and by its passage, be converted into a consuming fire.

So are we dependent upon God, not only as to our physical being, but 'tis—

“His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even;
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven.
And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.”

In this holiday season, as one travels about, he is made keenly aware of how much the pleasures of life depend upon sunshine. Even the gardens of kings wait on his smile, and the flowers are of a sad countenance if his face be hidden from them. The undulating fields, the flowered hedgerows, the winding highway, the wide and solitary moor, and even the majestic, heather-clad hills—the whole spacious landscape, all are clad in robes of sombre hue, when mist and cloud obscure his disc, and put on their most beautiful garments only when they meet the Sun as a bridegroom coming forth out of his chamber. But when he comes forth, behold their garments are crimson, and emerald, and silver and gold.

And thus are we, without beauty, and without perfect pleasure, until the smile of the "Father of lights" shines upon us. Well do we sing,—

"Sun of our life, Thy quickening ray
Sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, Thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.

"Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn,
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch Thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine."

But the figure suggests that we are still indebted to His beneficence when we are least aware of it, for His ministry is not confined to sunny days. He is the "Father of lights": every true light, whether it be the steady glow of the lamp of some exact science, or the flickering torch of philosophy, or the flaming beacon of revealed religion, or the ruddy smoking flax of conscience,—every true light is a child of the Father of lights, all were kindled at that Orb of light and life.

Thus in the night-time of human experience when the Sun is hid, and even the stars are obscured, and men kindle for themselves some tiny taper to light them to their toil, or on their journey, they do but borrow dust of gold from His treasury, a spark from His flame. A little child doth lead them, and the child is a child of the "Father of lights".

Let us consider the man who acknowledges no indebtedness to religion. He has attained to a position of eminence in his profession, and he is not without pride in his achievement; but religion was not an element in his success, therefore he never prays, nor gives thanks to God. His advancement is due to his natural intellectual strength and receptivity; he lives and labours by lamplight, not by sunlight, for he has tapped the springs of knowledge and the oil has flowed! "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Your light is from God Who is the "Father of lights".

Someone else owes his success to mechanical means. He says science has lighted the way to success for him. We were told by a manufacturer not long since that one girl could attend to twelve machines in his factory, that the cost of production was small, and the profits large, and he was prosperous. But he was being made rich by a light which is a child of the "Father of lights".

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou O Lord, art more than they."

Much more is wrapped up in that figure, but we leave it for our readers to unwrap its golden leaves.

We would speak of the perpetual predominance of this beneficent Monopolist, "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". Unlike the sun, "the Father of lights" has neither parallax—as the word is literally here—nor tropic of turning; God is greater than His greatest work, and more reliable than the clock of the universe. The sun appears above the horizon at a different time each morning, and sinks from view at different times in the course of the year. The sun is not always the same; he journeys south-

ward to the solstice, then turns back again. Thus summer dies away into autumn, and autumn into winter. But not so with God, He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever". His power knows no diminution; what He has done, He can do again; His love knows no change. Are we constantly anxious lest we should lose a friend's favour? Are we often in fear lest, unwittingly, we have given offence? Are we distressed in anticipation of a twilight in another's affection—a twilight that presages night? The Word speaks of One Who will keep on sending us "good and perfect gifts"; He will not change; He will not visit us with winter; we shall never need to run from Him to seek a more congenial clime; having loved His own, He will love them even to the end,—no parallax nor tropic, but one eternal solstice is given us in Christ.

His faithfulness will not fail. So exact are the movements of the heavenly bodies that astronomers can foretell an eclipse to a minute a hundred years in advance; but the Scripture says God is less variable than the clock of the universe which never loses a second in a millennium. Surely here is a ground of hope, that He Who has a monopoly of goodness and perfection is our Father, and will be forevermore the same,—

"God of all goodness! to the skies
Our hearts in grateful anthems rise;
And to Thy service shall be given
The rest of life, the whole of heaven."

HAMAN'S GALLOWS TO BE ERECTED IN TORONTO!

The Gospel Witness is able to announce that the next meeting of the Convention of Ontario and Quebec will be held in Temple Baptist Church, Toronto. This will be news to a good many people, as it has long been understood that the October Convention would be held in Windsor. Some time before the last Convention, Haman determined to erect a gallows by which he hoped to put an end to Mordecai. After the Convention he applied to Ahasuerus in Ottawa to authorize its erection. The finishing touches were to be put to the instrument at the Convention in Windsor, after which the execution was to take place.

But now, for some reason not far to seek, the place of meeting has been transferred to Toronto. The Pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Toronto, Rev. W. E. Hodgson, was away on his holidays, and another minister was occupying his pulpit. But Mr. Hodgson was summoned home by telegram to be present at his own church Sunday morning, August 14th. Before the morning service, Rev. H. E. Stillwell and Mr. R. D. Warren attended a meeting of the Deacons of Temple Baptist Church, and, we are informed, stated that Windsor was too far away, that several churches in Toronto had been examined, the new Park Road Church among them, but that it had been decided that Temple would be the best place for the meeting. At the close of the morning service a special business meeting of the church was held, and the Temple Church, we understand, by unanimous vote, agreed to entertain the Convention of Ontario and Quebec next October.

Several questions will naturally suggest themselves. Why did the Executive of the Convention decide to move the place of meeting from Windsor to Toronto? It is not yet quite three years ago since the Convention was held in Western Ontario at a beautiful little city called London. It was at London that McMaster University asked the Convention for a vote of confidence, and, for the first time in the history of the University, that vote of confidence was refused. It was at London, after a debate which lasted from two in the afternoon until eleven at night, the following resolution, moved by the Editor of this paper, seconded by Chancellor Whidden, was passed:

"Whereas discussions have arisen from time to time within this Convention regarding the action of the Senate of McMaster University in granting certain honorary degrees, therefore be it resolved, that, without intending any reflection upon the Senate, this Convention relies upon the Senate to exercise care that honorary degrees be not conferred upon religious leaders whose theological views are known to be out of harmony with the cardinal principles of Evangelical Christianity".

McMaster authorities were terribly humiliated by this reverse, and beyond the shadow of a doubt Professor Marshall was imported in order that the battle might be renewed, and fall out around a personality instead of upon principle. Perhaps McMaster University has never forgiven Western Ontario for its refusal to express confidence in the University. Or perhaps—which is still more likely—the representatives of the University, like so many political agents, have reported that if the Convention were held in Windsor, there would be such a large Western Ontario delegation as to render it probable that the use of Haman's gallows might be interfered with. Perhaps they were afraid that some Queen Esther might be found in that part of the country. Be that as it may, they have moved the Convention to Toronto.

But why such haste? Why summon a poor, hard-worked, heavily-burdened, pastor back from his vacation in the midst of August to attend a business meeting? Why disturb the repose of our esteemed brethren Stillwell and Warren, and compel them to get up early in the morning and attend a Deacons' meeting far removed from their place of residence, before the morning service? Why hold a church business meeting in the month of August, when so many people are away on holiday, to sanction the holding of the Convention in Temple Baptist Church? What was the reason for this haste? Have the authorities of the Convention heard of the ferment in Walkerville, Chatham, Wheatley, and a great many other churches? Or perhaps there was another reason: it may be that many of the smaller churches in the East, to whom proxies were provided by certain Toronto churches last year, have had to be taken into consideration.

A resolution was passed last year that in future delegates must be members of the churches they represent. Of course, there is a way out of that difficulty: it would be possible to canvass these churches and say, "If we pay the expenses of your delegates, will you be sure to send them?" And, of course, if their expenses were paid, they would be expected to vote for those who paid their way. It would cost much more money to send these Eastern delegates all the way to Windsor than to Toronto.

Incidentally, we would set our people on their guard in another direction. Of course, no honest people would do the thing that we now suggest may be done; but we are not dealing with an honest foe, but a foe that is utterly unscrupulous, and which will stop at nothing to gain his end. It would be possible for a hundred people in Toronto temporarily to transfer their membership to small churches all over the country, with the understanding that they be appointed delegates to the next Convention. There is nothing in the Constitution which would render their vote illegal. They would be there to carry out the will of McMaster, and everybody recognizes that if the iniquitous Bill once becomes a part of the Convention Constitution, its powers would immediately be invoked to decapitate any who would propose a change in the Constitution, for any such proposal would be taken as an evidence that the proponents were "out of harmony with the Convention". Therefore, the Modernists now on the rampage in the Convention must, by hook or by crook, secure the incorporation of that Bill in the Constitution.

Once they have done that, they will be able to silence every objector, and convert the institutions and organizations of the Ontario and Quebec Convention into a Unitarian stronghold, and it will be impossible for anyone to prevent it. Certainly this new move looks as though the sinners in Zion were afraid, and fearfulness had surprised the hypocrites.

But we have been informed that the representatives of the Executive appearing before the Deacons of Temple Church told them that other churches had been inspected—what then is the matter with other churches? College Street is a much larger church than Temple Church. Why did they not select College Street? Was it because they feared the influence of the distinguished naturalist who graces the pulpit of that church? Did they fear that in the address of welcome they might be treated to a further dissertation on the habits of toads?

And, once more, what is the matter with Walmer Road Church? Walmer Road is a fine building, and certainly for such an occasion it would not be too large. Did they fear, in this connection, a further unveiling of Dr. John Mac-

Neill? Or was it because we proved to a demonstration that Dr. MacNeill was much less expert in reproducing Convention Constitutions than he was in reproducing other men's sermons? Personally, we should have had no objection whatever to attending the Convention in Walmer Road.

So far as Park Road is concerned, we have greatly admired the building from without, and we should have been most happy to have this opportunity of inspecting its interior. The one objection there would be that there is no room to park a car, as it is situated on the corner of two very narrow streets.

But whatever be the reason, the Convention is to be held in the Temple Baptist Church on Dewhurst Blvd.

But why Temple Baptist Church? First Avenue Church, the place of meeting last year, was altogether too small. Even the delegates were crowded almost to suffocation to get in—why choose a still smaller church this year? Does the Convention Executive expect a smaller delegation, and if so, why? Is it because there are to be no proxy votes? Does the Executive then admit that they accomplished their will by the help of proxies? Or, on the other hand, is it because the Executive Committee are just as much ashamed of their prospective programme for this year as they were of the programme of last year? Or, happy thought! have they been touched by a generous impulse? Have they decided to exclude the general public from the bloody exhibition they have planned? Have they reached the conclusion that public hangings are not decent, and should be observed only by privileged spectators?

These and many other questions suggest themselves, but it is never wise, nor in good taste, to criticize any course of action unless one is able to propose an alternative course. And a suggestion, as we dictate this article, instantly leaps to our mind—why not choose Jarvis Street? Here would be an opportunity to inflict a crushing blow upon the hated enemy. Why not hang him on his own platform, and in the presence of his friends? Why not deepen the crimson of the carpet with his own rebellious blood? So far as the spectators are concerned, Jarvis Street would afford them much more comfortable seats than Temple Church.

Moreover, the grime of many years has all been removed, and the Jarvis Street auditorium shines like the proverbial "new pin". It has been rewired and relighted; and the lights are of such an order that it would ensure that the hanging should not be done in a corner! Other rooms in the building have also been put in first-class order; the Lecture Hall has been redecorated; the services of the Office Staff would be gladly placed at the Convention's disposal. Within the last year or two, Jarvis Street has spent about twelve thousand dollars in ladies' and gentlemen's wash-rooms which are equipped in style equal to that of the best clubs in Toronto; and on the north of Jarvis Street Church is our new building used by our Seminary classes. We would very gladly dismiss the classes for the duration of the Convention, and place the magnificent class-rooms at the disposal of the Board of Governors of McMaster University for their deliberations.

We believe no Baptist church in Toronto has superior equipment for Convention purposes, and only one, Walmer Road, even approaches it. Jarvis Street Church is hereby placed at the disposal of the Executive Committee of the Convention. If they will come, we will promise them such entertainment as they have never had at any Convention yet. We think we can organize such matters, and should be glad to place the entire building at the Convention's disposal. With such a magnificent auditorium as Jarvis Street, with all its historic associations, at the very heart of the city, why go to a comparatively out-of-the-way church like Temple Church, with its very limited seating capacity?

There is one other suggestion, which perhaps may be even better than that of Jarvis Street as a place of meeting, and that is the Coliseum at Exhibition Park. Certain we are it would be none too large. If that should be taken for the Educational Session of the Convention, or for that session of the Convention when the Constitutional amendment is to be discussed, we think we could safely promise to fill the building to capacity.

But to adopt a more serious tone, if the Baptists of Ontario and Quebec

do not rebel against the action of the Executive Committee, then the McMaster chloroform must already have done its work, their consciences must be drugged to sleep.

McMASTER HAD BETTER LOOK OUT!

Pastor James McGinlay, of Alton, returned from Glasgow about a week ago. He was followed by a letter from Pastor Findlay of St. George's Tabernacle, Glasgow, in which church he had preached for a number of weeks. This letter was received by Rev. W. J. H. Brown, of Annette Street Church; and in that letter Mr. Findlay said some very kind things about Mr. McGinlay's work in Glasgow. Some of these excerpts were put together in a note announcing Mr. McGinlay's return to Canada, and sent to the Editor of *The Canadian Baptist*. The Editor, however, printed only the following—presumably for want of room:

"James McGinlay, pastor of the Alton Church, has returned from supplying St. George's Cross Tabernacle, Glasgow, for a month."

But we have heard good reports of Mr. McGinlay's work in Scotland, which have only confirmed our opinion that he is a young man of whom much will be heard in the future. Mr. McGinlay, while in Scotland, preached in his own home town from the pulpit of the Established Church. There was present on that occasion a distinguished professor who, but two or three weeks before, had been presented to His Majesty, King George. The professor sat in the front seat and listened to the sermon. When the sermon was over, the learned professor remarked to the minister of the church, "What a blessing the church got hold of that young man! He would have been a danger to Great Britain if the Bolsheviks had got him"! This would indicate that Brother McGinlay is "a man o' pairts". Some of McMaster's professors may not share the high opinion of the professor in Scotland, and be inclined to believe that Brother McGinlay was captured by the church—and the Bolsheviks too!

But again, to be serious, for, frankly, we are in a holiday mood to-day, we have no doubt that Brother McGinlay will wield a good sword in the cause of Christ, and that the enemies of the Book will not be permitted to ignore his testimony. The Editor of this paper rejoices that Brother McGinlay and a number of other magnificent young men whose voices will be heard proclaiming the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, have found Christ in Jarvis Street Church. We rejoice that these young men have become trophies of grace, and that they are consecrated to the task of preaching the gospel to lost men.

WHAT IS A BAPTIST?

(The following letter was received by The Editor, Aug. 15).

"It may be of interest to you to know about an experience which I had about three weeks ago:

Travelling on a steamboat on one of our beautiful rivers there came aboard a number of high school girls of say sixteen or seventeen years of age. Engaging their attention for a time I found that the party of ten or twelve belonged to a Sunday School class and were being chaperoned by their teacher.

In answer to my query as to the denomination to which they belonged, I learned that it was the Baptist. Then I put the following questions, viz: Question: What is a Baptist? Answer: A Baptist is a follower of John the Baptist; Q. Who was John the Baptist? A. He was the "beloved disciple"; Q. What did he do? A. He wrote a book; Q. What was the name of the book? A. The Gospel of St. John; Q. What did John the Baptist say of himself? A. No answer; Q. Did he not say that he was a "voice", etc? A. (With hesitancy) Yes; Q. What did our Lord say about John the Baptist? A. No answer;

Q. What is the Kingdom of Heaven? A. The place where people go when they are good; Q. How do people become good? A. No answer.

The steam whistle warned us that the boat was approaching a wharf which was sufficient to cause the dispersion of the class of high school pupils attending a Baptist Sunday School in one of our important Canadian cities."

BAPTIST BIBLE UNION SENIOR LESSON LEAF

Vol. II.

T. T. SHIELDS, Editor.

No. 3.

Lesson 11.

Third Quarter.

September 11th, 1927.

JUSTIFICATION APART FROM LAW AND ORDINANCES.

LESSON TEXT: Romans, Chapter 4:9-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13).

In the previous lesson, justification was seen to come through faith. This lesson, continuing the subject of justification through faith, shows that such justification must be independent of all ordinances, and of all law observances. The greatest of all the ordinances given by God, or at least estimated by the Jew to be the greatest, was the ordinance of circumcision. Circumcision became the name in the mouth of the Jewish teacher for all other commands of the law put together. The belief and teaching of the Jew in the time of Paul had become to be that the nation was accepted in God's sight because they were circumcised; that the ordinance itself brought them into covenant relationship with God. Paul, in his argument to prove that justification is by faith, points out in the history of Abraham that the imputation of Divine righteousness could not possibly be by circumcision, because righteousness was imputed to Abraham on account of his faith, previous to the command to circumcise. Circumcision was given because Abraham had believed God, and through that faith, had already the righteousness of God imputed to him. It is described by Paul as the seal of the righteousness already possessed, not in any sense the means of procuring that righteousness. The chief opponents of Paul in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ were the Jews who said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved". Thus they made justification or salvation to be dependent upon circumcision and all that circumcision stood for. Paul therefore, in writing to the Galatian church, states that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation, and that if they be circumcised, Christ shall profit them nothing. We have ordinances in the church to-day, and the same mistake is made in relation to these ordinances as the Jew made in relation to the circumcision. The observance of them is made the ground of acceptance with God, whereas God has given them to us to represent the justification, that is, the imputation of Divine righteousness, which has become already our possession, by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

In this sense is Abraham spoken of here in this lesson as "the father of all them that believe"? Believing Abraham is the father of both Jew and Gentile who believe in Jesus Christ; circumcised Abraham is the father of the circumcision who, in addition to their circumcision, walk in the steps of that faith which Abraham possessed prior to his circumcision.

The lesson then goes on to speak of the keeping of the law having no part in justification: "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect", therefore it is of faith. The faith of Abraham is presented to us as a pattern of the faith which we now exercise in the crucified and risen Christ. The one particular in the faith of Abraham which is emphasized in the lesson and pointed out as being also peculiar to the faith

which we now exercise in Jesus Christ, is that of the belief in the resurrection. Abraham, having God's promise, "and being not weak in faith, considered not his own body now dead * * * neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb". He believed the promise of God that he would have a son in his old age. Later in his life he gives a still clearer evidence of his belief in the resurrection, when he was about to offer up Isaac in obedience to the divine command. He believed then that God would raise him from the dead, and fulfil his promises through him. Scripture states that he did receive him back from the dead in a figure. Now the belief which brings to us justification and the righteousness of God, is like the faith of Abraham,—a belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead". Our faith is in the Christ Who was crucified, buried, and rose again from the dead. We believe that He was delivered for our offences, that He bore the punishment of our sins, and rose again for our justification; that is, without our sins, having put those sins completely away by the sacrifice of Himself. Being justified, the righteousness of God is imputed to us, and this salvation is apart entirely from the law; it is by grace through faith.

It may be of use to note the "nots" in the argument of the Apostle; to n-o-t-e the n-o-t-s. In verse 19, the faith of Abraham which is held out to us as a pattern, is stated to be "not" weak. It is also stated that the strength of his faith is shown in that he considered "not" the impossibility which lay in the way of the fulfilment of the promise God made to him. Faith does not consider the difficulties or the impossibilities, but considers the power of God. It is pointed out that he staggered "not" at the promise of God. Staggering at the promise comes through unbelief, like the sinking of Peter when he saw the waves boisterous, instead of keeping his eyes on Christ and considering His power. The man who is fully persuaded that God is able to perform what He has promised, rests everything upon the Divine Word and staggers not, and to him his faith is imputed for righteousness. Now this history of Abraham's faith is "not" written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe. Therefore the imputation of the righteousness of God to us, is by faith alone.

REV. W. M. ROBERTSON IN JARVIS STREET.

Rev. W. M. Robertson, of Toxteth Tabernacle, Liverpool, who was with us during the month of July last year, and whose ministry was so richly blessed, will preach in Jarvis Street morning and evening next Sunday, August 21st. It is expected that the Pastor, who is in Des Moines this week for the Commencement Exercises in connection with the Summer Session of the University there, will be home, and will preside at both services; and preach from the open air pulpit at the rear of the church at 9 o'clock.

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