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# The Gospel Witness

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

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## JOTHAM'S PARABLE OF THE TREES

The Bible is full of parabolic teaching; and one of the most interesting and instructive of the parables of the old Testament is the parable of Jotham, found in the ninth chapter of Judges from the eighth verse to the fifteenth:

"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

There is often a great difference between a man's estimate of himself, what other people think of him, and his real worth. The centurion said of himself, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof". The elders said of him, "He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue". But Jesus said, and His is always the true estimate, "I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel".

Gideon was a quiet unassuming man who entertained a very humble opinion of himself: "My family", said he, "is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Popular estimate accorded him a position scarcely higher than his own humble judgment

of himself. But the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him as he threshed wheat by the winepress, and said, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And this man, the least in his father's house, was one of God's chosen mighty ones, whose record gives proof of that which is written, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

The story of how God, by the hand of Gideon and his three hundred, delivered Israel from the combined strength of Amalek and Midian, and all the children of the East, is familiar to every student of the Word. Following his great victory the men of Israel said unto Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you."

After Gideon's death Israel returned to their idolatry again, and "remembered not the Lord their God . . . neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel;" but very soon Abimelech, a son of Gideon, conspired with the men of Shechem, and he went to his father's house, and slew his brethren, the sons of Jerubbaal—seventy persons, upon one stone. And Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, only was left.

The city of Samaria lay in the valley between mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, from which, respectively, the blessing and the curse were pronounced when the people entered into the land. And Jotham, when he had heard all that Abimelech had done—how he had slain his brethren, and made himself king—stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice and preached to the people in the parable we have quoted.

The old question as to who shall be king is one that frequently recurs in all realms of life. We have not yet got beyond asking, "Who shall be greatest?" A

vacant throne, or a vacant office, will always prove a temptation to someone. Indeed, though the throne be already occupied by a worthy ruler, there will never be wanting a potential usurper in the neighbourhood. And if the request preferred by the parliament of trees, "Rule thou over us" is still made, it is not because of a dearth of candidates for positions of honour; but only because of a lack of persons who are qualified to fill them. Jotham's parable, therefore, may still warn us to be on our guard. He represents that a crown went begging because there were some who had such a humble opinion of themselves that they considered themselves unworthy to wear it.

## I.

The reply of the olive tree to the invitation to reign is full of instruction: "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" The fatness of the olive in the oil of olives was used in the anointing of the priests when they were consecrated to the service of God; and was typical of the anointing by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, which our Lord Jesus received, and which qualified Him for His mediatorial work. We shall not unduly strain Jotham's parable if we regard the olive as saying, "I would rather have a share in bringing about the exaltation of God's anointed than go to be promoted over the trees. It were far better to honour God than to be honoured one's self."

Do we not all need to learn that lesson? There is no employment so holy, neither is there any that will so certainly contribute to our own wellbeing at last, as that which has for its supreme end the glory of God. We may well choose to be olives, endeavouring to bear fruit by which our Lord shall be honoured. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit", said Christ.

The fatness of the olive was used also to give honour to men. Even the anointing oil, while it honoured God, conferred certain honours upon those whom it set apart to the holy office of the priesthood. It was with this oil the kings also were anointed—Saul, and David, and others. Thus the olive preferred to give honour to others, than to be honoured itself. That is a noble example, difficult to emulate. What heavenly comfort the lower seat provides for those who voluntarily take it! The happiest place this side of heaven is the place that is left when we have given another the higher place which we might have had ourselves. What luxuries are wrapped up in the quality of unselfishness! If we knew the joy of Him Who would not save Himself because He was determined to save others, there would be a holy rivalry among us to secure the lowest place; and only with the greatest difficulty could we be persuaded to leave our fatness wherewith both God and man are honoured, to go to be promoted over the trees.

Olive oil was used also for light. "Pure oil olive beaten" the people were commanded to bring for light. Thus the olive would rather be a light than a legislator. For mortals there is something better than sovereignty, and that is service. A believer, who is made of true gold, would rather be fashioned into a candlestick than into a crown: he would rather be a

candle upon a candlestick, giving light to all that are in the house, than a king upon the throne. He would rather be an oil-producing olive, than, having great power, spread himself like a green bay tree.

## II.

Let us hear the fig tree's reply: "Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" Thus the fig tree tells us that it is better to sweeten the world than to rule it. Sin has made life bitter enough for the best of us, and it must ever be a pity for any one to forsake his sweetness. Yet there have been those who, like Saul, when in humble walks of life have done much to sweeten the lives of others but who, when promoted over the trees, have made David and his Adullamites every one "bitter of soul". The men of Jericho said to Elisha, "Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth, but the water is naught and the ground barren". There are many lives like that which are in some respects pleasantly situated, but which are spoiled by some bitter spring—perhaps by a cynicism that is born of many disappointments. If only we are willing to forego promotion over the trees, we may hold to the quality of sweetness and play Elisha's part in sweetening the springs of other lives.

Naomi means *pleasant*; and when she returned from Moab and Bethlehem, the people said, "Is this Naomi?" And she answered, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me". But if you read the story you will find that no one ever called Naomi "Mara", nor did she ever request it again. On the contrary, the story tells us, "So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest". Naomi never called God "the Almighty" again, for it was not long until she learned to say, "Blessed be the Lord!" And it was Ruth, whose name means *friendship*, who extracted the bitterness from her life, and by the sweetness of her faithful friendship gave Mara back her rightful name, Naomi.

There are many who call God "the Almighty". They know He is that, for they have felt as they think the ungentle touch of His hand; and they are disposed to call themselves Mara, only because they do not know God. Perhaps we can be a Ruth to some Naomi. It may be it is in our power

"To heal the wounded heart so sorely bleeding  
And teach mayhap those widowed hearts to sing".

Those who are willing to forego promotion may make faith in human friendship possible to those who have met more Judases than Johns; and to those who murmur at the bitter waters in the wilderness, they may under God be the branch that shall make the waters sweet: for life is far more in need of sweetness than of rulership.

But the fig tree had more than sweetness to lose: "Shall I forsake my good fruit?" We need the strength of sustenance. There can be no sweetness indeed without good fruit. Therefore, the fig tree chose the better part, to be a caterer rather than a king; for we all remember One Who, being hungry,

came to a fig tree for good fruit but found "nothing but leaves". It is better to minister to the Lord than to wear an earthly crown.

### III.

But what was the vine's reply? "Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" We cannot help remembering that Jesus said, "I am the true vine"; nor that He Who thought it not an usurpation to be equal with God, Who had the right to the throne and the crown, yet made Himself of no reputation; and this He did in order that He might minister, may we reverently say, to the heart of God, and bring salvation to men.

What is the wine which comes from the fruit of the true Vine? What is the very essence, the life-sap of the true Vine? Surely there is but one answer: "God is love". And we can minister to the Lord only by loving Him, and equally, love is the only wine that really maketh glad the heart of man. Love is at once the greatest and the scarcest thing in the world. In the Holy Spirit's analysis of love, we may hear the olive, the fig tree, and the vine all speaking: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own". Hence love is better than lordship. If any of us find ourselves desiring promotion over others, let us try the experiment of loving them instead. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown", but happy, happy is the heart of him who loves.

### IV.

Hear now what the bramble has to say. The bramble needs no persuasion, but readily consents to become a king: "Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon." There are some heads that are always waiting for crowns, some hands always grasping for a sceptre. Such people unfortunately get into the church. Their conception of the church is not that it is an olive yard to produce oil for Christ's anointing; nor that it is a garden of figs into which the Beloved may come and eat His pleasant fruits; nor "a vineyard of red wine" where Christ and His friends enjoy the fellowship of holy cheer; but a place for some Abimelech to be crowned, where he can prove his brotherhood by bossing.

It is worthy of note also that those who aspire to rulership are usually the least fitted for it. It is ever the bramble that says, "Yes" to the invitation to wear the crown. It is natural for the bramble to wound and scratch. Abimelech is always cruel to the sons of Jerubbaal, to the very man who in the days of Israel's extremity had proved to be their deliverer. Depend upon it, Abimelech will be far more anxious to reap the fruits of Gideon's victories than to share Gideon's peril or use Gideon's sword. He will be much more in evidence after Amalek and Midian are put to flight than when they are threatening Israel with destruction.

It is never difficult to identify the bramble. The men and women who have the bramble spirit in them are they who wound and scratch. "The poison of asps is under their tongue". They are never heard to speak a kind word of anybody. We have all been forced into their company at some time or other, and leaving it we have felt like one who had emerged from a bramble patch, scratched and bleeding everywhere. One is never so treated by one related to the olive, the fig tree, or the vine. The bramble is not anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, or if he attempt it, he must needs tear the bandage from another broken heart and leave it bleeding. Brambles are generous only in this respect, that they say kind things of one person only in order to afford them an opportunity of saying something cruelly cutting of another. They seldom speak without making somebody bleed, and on every hand inflict wounds which many years can scarcely heal. Such people think a church is like the House of Commons—not complete without an Opposition. They conceive it to be their sole duty to find fault with all that others try to do. They are of the class to which a certain candidate for eldership in a Presbyterian church belonged, who on examination proved that his only qualification for the position was that he could object. Such people are masters of the bramble trick. You had been in the woods, and when you came home you found a long, deep scratch on your hand or face. You did not know how or when it was done. It did not hurt you at the time; but the bramble did it, and you feel it when you get home. Such is the effect of contact with bramble men and women. Their words come back to us, always with a stab. They are determined at all costs to be a king, and they have no crown for any other head unless it be a crown of thorns.

But here the bramble is associated with fire. It not only scratches, but its work is to devour the cedars of Lebanon. Bramble men and women are experts at making fires. It was bramble men who crucified the Lamb of God; and there is nothing so likely to kindle a fire, so likely to lead the faithful in Zion to exclaim, "Our holy and beautiful house is burned with fire", as the presence of the bramble spirit in the church. A useless bramble may destroy the mighty cedar in Lebanon.

### V.

In closing this article, it may be wise to write a word of caution and of counsel. The attitude of the olive, the fig, and the vine, is most commendable, but it may be carried too far; and their refusal to occupy the throne may afford the bramble its opportunity. When men are specially qualified to hold office in the church, they should be careful how they refuse to take the position their brethren desire them to occupy and which God calls them to fill. We have often seen this occur in a church business meeting. A number of talented men successively decline office, and then the most incompetent person in the church is nominated in their stead. When the olive, the fig, and the vine refuse to serve, the bramble is often elected by acclamation! Thereafter wounds, and scratches, and fires, are the inevitable result.

We should seek safety in the cultivation of Gideon's spirit who said, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you." As we desire the fatness of the olive that we may honour God, and cultivate the sweetness and fruitfulness of the fig that our Beloved may not be disappointed when He cometh seeking fruit thereon, and seek the life-cheer of the vine, we may also stand in readiness to serve at God's call. As we abide in the true Vine and are by His abundant life made fruitful to the glory of God, we may obediently remember the words of Him Who humbled Himself and Whom God hath therefore now highly exalted and given a name that is above every name, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren".

### "BEAUTY FOR ASHES."

The scripture which forms our title is found in Isaiah's prophecy, sixty-first chapter, and is a part of that scripture which our Lord read in the synagogue at Nazareth when He began His public ministry, and when "he found the place where it was written", and concerning which He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." That fact brings it at once into that realm where "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord".

But while the Spirit of Christ which was in this prophet "testifieth before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow", the prophet's word must surely have been designed to bring some message of comfort to the people to whom he then spake. Hence it is not without significance to us. But with respect to this particular passage it must be remembered that while our Lord read its context, before He came to the words we have quoted, "he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister and sat down." Therefore we may well believe that "the glory that should follow" upon His sufferings must far excel anything that mortal eye hath seen as yet. But between these two aspects of Scripture, its historic origin and first purpose, and its ultimate, full-orbed, glorious, prophetic fulfilment, there must lie the day in which we live, and through which our gracious God must pass in the outworking of those plans which are weighted with eternal glory.

#### I.

Here is a promise of tokens of favour for symbols of rejection: "To give unto them beauty for ashes." Not as the kindly ivy covers the ruins of some ancient temple; nor as Nature casts the beneficent mantle of her verdure over the naked wounds of war; this is a richer promise than that.

"Ashes"! What is the significance of the metaphor? It represents the last result of sin; the utter moral bankruptcy of our human nature. It signifies the resolution into their elements of all the fair fabrics of our dreams, the castles of our building, our ambitions, our hopes, the ruins of palaces wherein we dreamed we should find pleasure, of marts wherein we thought to obtain riches, or of temples wherein our souls might find rest and refreshment: now all reduced to "ashes". It is, too, the end of the creations of our affections. Love comes to where her treasures were stored, as David came to Ziklag, only to find the choicest things of life, the joys of friendship, the delights of home and family, all turned to "ashes".

But most of all it symbolizes the decay of moral character itself, when the holy and beautiful house is burned with fire; when the temple's beautiful gate of the will, and its holy place,—its reason, and judgment, its intellect; and its holy of holies, the place of the affections,—when all these are turned by sin's consuming flame to "ashes."

Thus of the idolater it is said, "He feedeth on ashes". And who of us does not know from experience how all the glories of life, and the things in which we supremely delight, may become as ashes between our teeth?

In certain circumstances men and women clothed themselves in "sackcloth and ashes", symbolizing their state of desolation. Thus Tamar "put ashes on her head" in symbol of her defilement and shame and rejection. When Mordecai heard of the doom appointed for his people he put on sackcloth and ashes in token of the destruction of his kindred. When Job was overwhelmed by multiplied calamities he "sat down among the ashes". When judgment was pronounced upon Israel it was said, "O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes." Under the figure of the ruined and wasted life of a rejected woman the condition of the nation was portrayed.

But here is "beauty for ashes", a garland for the unworthy, a bridal wreath for the rejected. And that is the programme of grace always. Though we can bring nothing but "ashes"—a spent and wasted life, grace will transform it into a thing of beauty. Though there be upon us only the marks of the destroyer, our gracious Saviour will garland our brow with evidences of His favour, and put the betrothal ring upon our hand.

#### II.

The second metaphor in the scripture we have selected as a title suggests the substitution of a sceptre of power for the shackles of servitude. This metaphor is used in the forty-fifth Psalm. It is undoubtedly a Messianic prophecy, for the New Testament so interprets it. Its promises are for the true followers of the Messiah who are one with Him, and, in lesser degree, relate to those principles for which Messiah's kingdom stands; for while we believe in the spirituality of the kingdom of God, there is, if we may so say, an outward court of application for the principles of the gospel. By that we mean that while they have their primary application to a regenerated society made up of regenerated individuals, he has learned to read history very imperfectly who does not see the hand of God in national affairs and in great world movements, fulfilling His will.

In the forty-fifth Psalm we read: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath an-

ointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Thus the love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity bring the anointing of the oil of gladness, and the oil of joy for mourning. Therefore it is a conqueror's coronation the psalm celebrates. It is the joy of power and competence for the mourning of helplessness.

Have we not known the bitterness of such helplessness in our own individual experience,—when the strong man armed kept his palace, when sin reigned, and we had no power competent to dispute his sway? We remember being in homes in Belgium but a couple of weeks after the signing of the Armistice, where the enemy had regularly thrust his unwelcome presence. The people said, "What could we do? They came, and we were helpless. We have had to endure the long nightmare of the enemy's hated presence. But now!—" Thus the oil of joy would flow.

What did it mean? It was the joy of conscious power, of competence for a worthy task, of ability to resist,—the joy of power for the mourning of impotence. And it is God Who gives it. He gives it to individuals; He gives it to nations. Sooner or later, upon the heads of those who love righteousness and hate iniquity, the oil of gladness shall be poured.

And akin to this, on the positive side, it means the joy of conquest and victory for the mourning of defeat and consequent impoverishment. Who of us does not know something of the bitterness of defeat, when we really faced the foe, and tried to stand, only to find ourselves driven back and defeated at every point? Then we contemplated our ruined plans, the failure of our utmost resolution,—and in that hour our cup was filled with wormwood and gall. But when at length we were reinforced from heaven, and the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against the enemy who had come in like a flood, behold, the trench was held, and the enemy's stronghold was taken, and we were more than conquerors through Christ—then we were given the oil of joy for mourning.

We remember to have seen that strikingly illustrated in France. While the war was still on, but the enemy was in full retreat, we motored through many towns and villages of France which had been occupied by the enemy. But he had been driven out, and the people were returning to their homes. Many of the houses in these parts had been only partially destroyed, and the people were there in the streets with wheel-barrows and hand-carts of every sort, making their way back to their homes. Their few belongings were piled upon these vehicles,—sometimes a chair or two, occasionally a table. The more fortunate ones were leading a donkey or a pony pulling a heavier load. But at best it was a dreary prospect. The weather was cold. In nearly all the houses the windows were broken. But the people were as happy as princes. "Look", they said, "there is our house." And there was the enemy's mark upon it, a white square, and upon it the number of persons who had been billeted there. But now the enemy was gone, overwhelmingly defeated; and these poor stragglers came back with a song of victory in their hearts and the oil of joy for mourning upon their heads.

Does it not also suggest the joy of liberty for the mourning of bondage? Did we not ourselves cry, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name"? When the shackles give place to a sceptre, the oil of joy must flow.

Then, too, our scripture promises us the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Is there one of our readers who does not know something of "the spirit of heaviness"? It belongs to those experiences in life when the fire has burned out, and the hearth is without warmth or welcome; where there is only a heap of cold gray ashes. It wraps us about in our times of helplessness and defeat and bondage. When we cannot do the things that we would, we are bowed down with a spirit of heaviness, of dulness, of mental and moral stupor and inertia.

But this gives place to the garment of praise. I saw both these things exemplified in London: in wartime, at night, when blinds and shutters were drawn, and street lamps were shaded, when there was but light enough to make the darkness visible. But when the war was over, how quickly all the shades were thrown up! And the world's metropolis thrilled with gladness. When victory was assured the spirit of heaviness departed. The effect of the news of the signing of the Armistice in London was like the breaking of a dam. The streets were instantly filled with a rushing stream of happy humanity; and at night Old London put on her beautiful garment and shone as with jewels of light. We saw it in Paris, when hundreds of carrier pigeons were released bearing the news on swift wings to French town and village. It was akin to the joy of angels.

But that is nothing to the joy that fills the soul when Jesus takes the throne. And what shall it be when the white horse and his Rider come down the skies, when the "kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ"? When the last great war is ended, and He shall give his redeemed people beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, there shall ascend from all creation the mighty shout, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

#### THE WEEK END IN JARVIS STREET.

Last Sunday in Jarvis Street was a good day. There was nothing of the proverbial "red letter" about it, but just an ordinary, average, good day, with cooler weather and greater comfort both in the pulpit and in the pew. The attendance at School in the morning was 970. There were great congregations at both services. Three were baptized in the evening; the sermon appearing in this issue was preached; and several came forward confessing Christ. There was the usual great service out-of-doors at the close of the evening service, when the Pastor preached on the text, "And as they went they were cleansed."

#### TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY.

The fall term of the Seminary will open for registration September 29th, and for lectures September 30th. A good number of new students have already indicated their intention of attending. We should be glad to hear from others as early as possible. Application forms will be sent on request.

# The Jarvis Street Pulpit

## GOD'S GRACIOUS CALL TO THE BACKSLIDER.

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, August 10th, 1930.

Broadcast from Station CKGW 690 K.C. 434.8 Metres.

(Stenographically reported.)

"Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."—Mark 16:7.

### Prayer before the Sermon.

Hear us, O Lord our God, as we invoke Thy presence and blessing in His name Who is our Mediator. We thank Thee that we have a sure standing ground in Him. On Christ the solid Rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

In this assembly this evening there is not one who can afford to miss Thine evening benediction. Whatever our circumstances, whatever our dispositions whatever the peculiar besetments of life to which we are exposed, we need God; we need to hold commerce with the Skies; we need access to the heavenly Storehouses. We come that our Joseph to-night, Who at the cost of His own pain, at the price of His own blood, has filled the storehouses, may satisfy us. Thou hast thrown wide Thy doors to all the hungry of the earth. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

May Thy presence, O Lord, be more real than that of those who sit beside us this evening! May the voice of the Holy Ghost be heard more distinctly and more penetratingly than that of the preacher! Thou hast power to quicken the dead; Thou hast power to make Thyself heard across the mountains and over the plains and on the great and wide sea. Make men to know that God is calling them. Oh, the multitude of people who are trying to do without God! How many there are who once professed and called themselves Christians, who have wandered far from Thee! Yet they have no rest. Perhaps in their hearts they are crying,—

"Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?"

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill."

May they be more conscious of the ache to-night than they have ever been! Turn their hearts back again to Thyself. Thou good Shepherd Who dost delight to restore our souls, wilt Thou not find the lost one this evening? Stretch forth Thy crook and save him from the precipice, bring him back home again,—perhaps not only to Thyself, but to his wife or his mother. O Lord, surprise somebody to-night, someone who listens and who never expected to hear God. May the Wind that bloweth where it listeth, Whose sound men hear though they cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, may that heavenly Wind waft the message of the gospel to places and to hearts that are not seeking for it! O Grace, how wonderful thou art! How thou dost seek us, find us, and save us, in spite of ourselves! Thou sovereign Saviour, exercise Thy mighty power this evening.

Bless us in our meditation upon Thy truth. May the sacred page be illuminated by a light that never was on sea or land, that is beyond all human knowledge, beyond the utmost stretch of any human imagination! Do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to Thy power that worketh in us; and to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, we will ascribe the glory world without end, Amen.

"Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

Last Sunday evening I spoke to you on the scriptural doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, showing you from the Scriptures that when the good Shepherd finds His sheep He gives them eternal life, and pledges His honour that they "shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand". During the week I have heard from not a few who had wandered away from God, and who had written bitter things against themselves, but who have been led to rejoice in this great truth, and whose faces are set toward home again. One wrote me anonymously saying that God had spoken through this subject. I have therefore felt specially moved to speak to you in a simple fashion this evening on God's call to the backslider, how God calls His people home.

I shall endeavour—as I trust I always do—to be simple; but if possible I shall speak still more plainly than usual this evening, so that even little children may understand. I have long since passed the time when I conceived it to be a minister's duty to prepare and deliver sermons so called. The best sermon is a simple message from God, so applied to the heart and conscience of the hearer as to lead him in penitence to God.

Years ago when speaking in Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London, one Sunday when I met the deacons in the vestry they were having a hearty laugh. As I came in one of them said, "We have just been laughing together about a distinctive Spurgeonic utterance by Mr. Thomas Spurgeon (who was then alive). The one deacon who was the spokesman said, "I was passing Mr. Spurgeon's home one day this week, and he was outside walking up and down for a little exercise. I stopped and talked with him and said, 'We had a great service last Sunday morning.' Mr. Spurgeon replied, with a merry twinkle in his eye, 'So my wife reported to me when she came home, but I told her I should be in a better position to judge of the real value of the sermon after I had lived with her another week!'" Then the deacon added, "That was genuinely Spurgeonic. Mr. Spurgeon was bound to have his little joke."

But after all, that is the test of our ministry. I was in a certain station, I think it was in Cleveland, Ohio, where I heard a man calling the trains. (We are heard in Ohio, and if anybody hears this in Cleveland, I would not suggest that you try to put that man out of his situation.) But he called the trains, to tell people when certain trains were ready. There were a few names with which I was familiar that I managed to discern in a long list of names that might almost as

well have been uttered in a foreign tongue. I caught the name of Nu Y-a-u-k, or Ch-g-aa-go, or something like that; but how any stranger who did not know his way about could be directed by that sort of thing, I do not know. A minister must call the trains, he must tell people what train to take to get home; and that is why he should study to speak simply, so that the most unlettered cannot misunderstand.

Could one have anything simpler than this message, spoken by one who is described as "a young man sitting on the right side" of the sepulchre, clothed in a long white garment. He was an angel, and I rather think had he willed to do so he might have graduated with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. But he was there for a particular purpose, and he said to the affrighted disciples, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

"His disciples—and Peter." Why was Peter especially mentioned? Let us think a little while of his history.

### I.

And first of all, of THE DAYS OF HIS EARLY FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SON OF GOD.

He was brought to Jesus by Andrew his brother. There was no doubt about the reality of his meeting with Jesus. Somebody hears me to-night who was similarly introduced to the Saviour. You know that you met Him; you have not the shadow of a doubt about it. You think this evening of the first time that with eyes of faith you beheld the Lamb of God, and you have never doubted since then that you have had personal contact with the Son of God.

Matthew numbers Peter as the first among the apostles: "First Simon, who was called Peter." Evidently Peter was early recognized as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again, when Jesus asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Peter, as usual, was ready with an answer, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." "But", said Christ, "whom say ye that I am?" To which Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in heaven." Put beside that another great word of the Master's, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. . . . All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

We have the authority of the word of the Lord Himself for saying that *Peter had been divinely illuminated*. He had a revelation from God; he had learned something which was not discoverable by any natural processes. Flesh had not revealed it, but the Father Who was in heaven.

Do you remember that day, my backsliding friend, when God came to you, when something occurred in your experience which was superhuman? It was a voice perhaps that was not the voice of a man. It was a touch that touched not your body but your spirit, and you knew that God had touched you. Out of the heavens there fell

a word which assured you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Others have doubted it, some have denied it; but in your heart of hearts, since first that heavenly visitation was your joyous experience, you have never questioned the essential Deity of Christ; nor have you doubted that He was sent into the world to be the Saviour of men.

*Peter was one of the inner circle.* When Christ went to the mountain-top and was transfigured there, He took with Him Peter, James, and John, and was transfigured before them. When later this same Peter writes his epistle he says that Christ "received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He declared that they had not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty.

So have you been. I speak to some this evening who have utterly lost the joy of salvation. But you once had mountain-top experiences when you too wanted to make tabernacles and abide. You would, if you could have done so, remained in such a frame, as you said, as that to "sit and sing yourself away to everlasting bliss." But long since you came down from the mountain, and have wandered not only in the plains but in the valley. You feel yourself this evening to be far, far away from God.

*Peter had witnessed many of the miracles of Christ.* He was one of the three whom Jesus took with Him to the house of the ruler of the synagogue when He raised his little daughter from the dead. He had also seen Him still the waves. And many a backslider has had similar experiences of divine power, and has had opportunity to observe its exercise, so that all the books that could be written could not destroy your faith; notwithstanding your inconsistencies in the externals of life, the faith that is really in you cannot be destroyed.

*Peter had been very bold in his confession,* for when Jesus said that all men would deny Him, Peter declared that he would go with Him to prison and to death, that he would lay down his life for His sake. It is a fearful tragedy, my friends, when those who have been so bold and courageous in their advocacy of the claims of Christ, and in their witness to His Saviourhood, become numbered with the scoffers who have abandoned all profession of religion. Peter's case was particularly sad for that reason.

There are some who hear me to-night somewhere who have been preachers of the gospel, or teachers of the Word, or singers of the old, old story of Jesus and His love; fathers whose voices have been heard by their children in supplication at the family altar; mothers, perhaps, who once were seen by their family reverently pouring over the pages of God's holy Word, who now have abandoned all religious profession. Think, my dear friends, of the solemn responsibility which rests upon any man or woman who has taken so prominent a position, who has been so outspoken in profession of faith, when such an one departs from Christ! What occasion they supply to the enemies of the gospel to blaspheme the name of our holy Lord! O Peter! Peter! I wish I could awaken some holy memories in your heart this evening that would turn you back again toward God.

### II.

What about THE PERIOD OF HIS DECLENSION? How did it happen? Very simply.

I call your attention to the commonplace, that *he permitted a distance to come between him and his Lord*. The Scripture tells us that "he followed afar off". Few people are led suddenly into sin. Few believers leave the Master with a leap and a bound. Spiritual declension is usually effected gradually,—just a little loitering, just a little looking in at the world's shop windows, just a little pause to talk to somebody who is not in step with God, and, behold, there is a distance between the soul and the Master, and the spouse exclaims, "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he gave me no answer." Neglect of the Word of God, neglect of daily secret prayer, failure to bear witness to Christ as opportunities offer,—these are but simple things, but they are the commonplaces over which true believers stumble, and by which even so bold and heroic a soul as Peter is brought at last into the dust. Keep close to Him, my brethren. Be afraid to take a step without Him. In our lesson this morning we learned that Noah walked with God; in the midst of abounding iniquity he walked with God. There is no other way of safety. To permit an hour's breach of fellowship is dangerous in the extreme.

Then, *Peter kept bad company*, for he sat with the servants in the high priest's palace. Many a man has gone wrong by walking out with some young lady of excellent character, of lovely spirit, of great talent, but who does not know God. Many a young woman can trace the first breach of fellowship when she permitted herself to become interested in the conversation of a man who knew nothing of converse with God. Many a workman has stumbled because, in the office or shop, he has permitted some scoffing remark to pass without rebuke, and has taken rank with those who are opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You had better be careful of your company.

*Peter selected the most difficult place in the world in which to confess Christ, there among Christ's enemies*. What do you expect, man, when the house of God is neglected and the place of prayer is unattended, the door of the secret closet is not opened for commerce with Heaven, and the heavenly manna remains untasted, and you consort with those who know not God,—what else can be expected than that in the hour of crisis you will stumble and fall? "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." There are the steps which the backslider invariably takes: walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, sitting in the seat of the scornful. Oh, what a fall! This heroic spirit who hears a servant girl ask a question, "Art not thou also one of his disciples?" exclaims, "No!" Peter has classified himself; he has put himself without the circle of discipleship; he has declared that he does not belong to Christ.

And will you mark this simple truth, that *when a man takes one step it is very easy to take the second and the third*. Having denied Christ in the presence of His enemies once it was difficult to reverse his position in the hearing of one to whom he had already denied him; therefore when asked the question he repeated his denial; and having denied Him twice, it was almost inevitable that he should deny Him thrice.

Let me remind you, my friends, that when you are silent in the workshop, in the office, or any place where

the name of Jesus Christ is dishonoured, if you hold your peace the first time it will be difficult to break the silence the second. Once start downhill, and you will proceed with ever-increasing acceleration. Let us avoid the first wrong step. There cannot be three denials if there is not a first. Thus Peter entered into the darkness, and got out of fellowship with Christ.

### III.

Let me tell you *WHEN HE BEGAN TO COME HOME AGAIN*.

He "*remembered what Jesus had said unto him*". The word was fixed in his memory. I think that is why our Lord had said: "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." When the third time he had denied the Master "*immediately the cock crew*", and the backslider saw the word of God fulfilled in his own experience.

So have you. You have fed upon ashes. You have tasted the bitterness of wandering from God, if so be you have wandered; for just as truly as those who walk with God are able to put to the proof the promises of grace, so those who wander from Him experience His chastisements and verify the Scripture in their own experience. Somebody who hears me says, "That is true, sir. I never can forget the experience of the Master's speaking to me out of the holy pages as I studied them. My memory is stored with it, and often as an echo from the past I remember the days of old." That is a good thing; it is an evidence of grace; it is proof of the fact that the Lord does not leave us alone.

Then another thing: when Jesus looked upon him, immediately *Peter went out and wept bitterly*. Judas did not. He was filled with remorse, and threw his life away as he had thrown away the pieces of silver. But Peter went out "*and wept bitterly*". Your wife does not know it, but after you went to church with her the other day, here or somewhere else, when you got home you went away by yourself—and your eyes were not dry. You never told anybody, but you have said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him; that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." Blessed be God, for the tears of the penitent. May the Lord break some rocky hearts this evening, and cause the tears to flow!

Then on the third day *Peter was among those who went to the sepulchre*. I have known many backsliders haunt the place where believers meet together. They come in here and sit in the back seat, or lose themselves in the gallery, saying, "Nobody will see me in the crowd"—forgetting that Someone has commissioned us to "go tell His disciples—and Peter." Peter scarcely knew what he believed, or what he expected, but early in the morning he went to the sepulchre, for he knew others would be going there.

Why did you come here to-night? You did not intend to come first of all. Why are you here? "I just happened to be here." No, you did not! "I thought perhaps I might hear something that would give me hope. But oh, sir, the aching void is there. I have to acknowledge it. I cannot comfortably stay away from the place where the name of Jesus Christ is honoured, for I have to confess that although I have been such an unfaithful disciple I have never been happy since I lost sight of His face. Every day I have asked myself, "I wonder will



He ever bring me back again?" He calls His own sheep by name—and He is calling you!

*There came a message from the sepulchre.* They came, and they said, "We were at the sepulchre, and we saw a young man in white raiment; a visitor from the other world. The sepulchre was opened, and he bade us look. He said, 'He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.' We saw it. We saw the napkin folded in a place by itself, and the linen cloth folded together also; but Him we saw not. And the angel told us to go and tell His disciples." Did Peter hear that? I know what he answered if he did, "Oh well, He heard me that day when I said I am not His disciple. He looked at me, I remember, and He knew what I had said. So He sent a message to 'His disciples', and I am not included. There was a day when He used to say, 'James, John, and Peter, come with me.' He called us by name, and we used to go off together. Many a night we have been in the mountain praying with Him. I have been in heaven. But I said I am not His disciple, and He does not want me any more." Oh no; the Master knew it all. "Go and tell His disciples, those who have never denied their discipleship. And find out that other man who said he was not My disciple. His name is Peter. Tell him I am going before you into Galilee, and shall see him there."

How wonderful when God speaks out of His Book in such a way that I know He is speaking to me! I scarcely ever preach that somebody does not come and say, "Why did you speak on that subject? What led you to describe my case this morning?" I did not do it: it is the Good Shepherd calling His own sheep by name. You had better answer Him.

"And Peter"! And then the curtain falls, and something happens which the Holy Ghost did not permit anybody to write down. *Peter somewhere met his Lord when no one else was present.* He had a private interview with Christ, and the controversy was settled between them. Blessed be God, Peter needed no priest to stand between him and his Lord. He had direct access to Christ. Later he told people about the interview, for when the two disciples on the Emmaus road who had had a Visitor Who was known to them in the breaking of bread, returned that same hour to Jerusalem, they found a company gathered together and saying—what? Listen: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." He saw Him himself.

Ask Him to come to you, and "there shall ye see him". *Make a rendezvous with Christ to-night!* Go to the old trysting-place, and you will find your Lover waiting for you there. Then say to Him over again,—

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high;  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide,  
Oh, receive my soul at last!"

He will take you in; no matter what your record, He will take you in. He will forgive all your iniquities, and blot out all your transgressions, and heal your backslidings, and you shall be happy in the Lord to-night.

Yes, and you will have plenty of opportunity publicly

to put right that which you have done wrong. I have always been glad of that story in John which tells us of how Jesus Christ three times permitted Peter again to make his confession: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He repeated the question, and repeated it the third time, that three times Peter might make confession, at last saying, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

Then He spoke a particularly tender word, as though He had said, "Peter, on the other side of the Cross you said you would lay down your life for me—and I think you meant it. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. But I am going to let you have your way. When thou wast young, thou girded thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." And Peter has his opportunity at last.

Someone says, "But, sir, I began my Christian life with so much promise of usefulness, but I have wasted the years. I have done nothing. I have denied Him so often. Is that all there is for me? Must I be saved yet so as by fire, with no sheaves to offer, no fruit to bear?" I delight to remember *what followed upon Peter's restoration.* You know it. You know how that when he had seen his Lord go into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, he was among those who went to the upper room and continued in prayer day after day until "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." You remember how the Holy Ghost came. And when people asked what it meant it was Peter who stood up with the eleven. Contrast that with his sitting among the servants in the palace of the high priests. It is better to stand up with the eleven than to stand in the way of sinners. Now Peter is with the eleven, and standing up with the eleven and says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel", and under the power of that testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ three thousand souls were swept into the kingdom of God.

I have an idea that among them there was a servant girl, a maid who had heard this preacher deny his Lord; and when she heard Peter preach on that occasion she must have been filled with wonder, asking herself, "Is it the same man?" Persuaded that it was, she marked the change. But whether or no, clothed with power from on high, Peter became one of the chiefest of the apostles and one of the mightiest of all God's instruments to bring men to the feet of Jesus Christ. "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." He will bring back the captivity of Jacob. He will crowd into one pregnant hour the blessings of a lifetime if need be, and will use you yet as a messenger, as His instrument to bring men back home.

O backslider, if ever you have known Him, and have been made partaker of the grace of Christ, you are His for ever; He is married to you, and He will not permit a divorce. Come back home; come back now.

Let us pray: O Lord, we thank Thee for the open gate,—not on the latch, but thrown wide, over which it is written: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Call every backslider home, and glorify Thyself for Thy name's sake, Amen.

# The Union Baptist Witness

This page 10 is the official organ of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches in Ontario and Quebec,  
337 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Canada.

W. GORDON BROWN, Editor.

## "A NEW CREATION."

This is the time of year when thousands of people take advantage of every opportunity to enjoy the beauties of nature. How glorious indeed are the wonders of the world of which our blessed Lord is the Creator! Yet how few of those who enjoy the wonders of creation see behind them the hand of that One by whom all things were made. How few of them realize that it is possible for each one who will believe in Him to be himself "a new creation in Christ Jesus."

It is for this reason that the reports of many open-air services held by the churches of our Union are particularly encouraging. We pray that as the multitudes pass up and down the Word of life may be planted and spring up in hearts that will henceforth, as new creations in Christ Jesus, view the wonders of the physical creation in the light and glory of a living, vital knowledge of the Creator.

## NEW MEMBERS AT MITCHELL SQUARE.

Rev. A. T. Finlayson, pastor of Mitchell Square Church, has written that he expected to receive five new members on Sunday, August 10th. It gladdens our hearts to hear of this increase in the number of the Lord's workers there. While on holiday, Mr. Finlayson had the privilege of upholding Jesus Christ in a Presbyterian Church whose members enjoyed the message and invited the speaker to return again.

## PASTORS' AND PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE.

The Pastors' and People's Conference of the Hamilton-Brantford District was held at Walsh last Tuesday, August 12th. Rev. W. F. Mesley, of South Zorra, gave an address at the morning prayer session and in the afternoon the Bible study was led by Rev. Melchie Henry, of Medina. At the evening service Evangelist Ritchie, of Hamilton, brought a Gospel address. We expect that a fuller report will bring us word of a very happy time of spiritual fellowship and uplift.

## ORANGEVILLE.

During the Pastor's absence while on holiday, the Orangeville Baptist Church is being blessed by the ministry of a number of young men whom God is leading into definite service for Himself. On Sunday, August 3rd, Mr. H. C. Hawkins, one of our Seminary students, took the services both morning and evening. The day's services were blessed of God and at the evening meeting, which was held in the Park, a searching message on "One Thing Thou Lackest" brought to the hearts of those who listened an appeal to yield themselves in full surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last Sunday the services were in charge of the Pastor's brother, Mr.

Douglas Brown, who has been assisting in the work this summer, and Mr. Donald McGinlay, of Hamilton. Both young men brought touching messages in song and Mr. McGinlay spoke to interested congregations. In the evening service a strong spirit of conviction was present, as about one hundred and twenty-five people listened to his earnest message from the text: "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man." (Proverbs 8:4). During the next two Sundays the Pastor's brother will bring the messages.

## MINER'S BAY.

The Miner's Bay Regular Baptist Church has been reorganized under Pastor Gordon Mellish. There is a resident membership of twenty-three and eleven have been baptized on confession of Faith since Mr. Mellish took charge. Others are waiting the performance of the ordinance at an early date.

Student Charlie Hardie is assisting Mr. Mellish during the summer months and exercising a faithful ministry. Seven services are conducted each Sunday by these two young men.

The Miner's Bay Regular Baptist Church has recently been received into the fellowship of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec.

## BAYVIEW.

The Bayview Regular Baptist Church, Rev. John Dodds, Pastor, is holding Anniversary services on August 24th.

## NORTH BAY.

Pastor James Forrester has had the assistance of Rev. W. J. H. Brown for two weeks in special services at the North Bay Regular Baptist Mission.

It was also possible for Rev. W. E. Atkinson to visit the work en route for evangelistic work in Kirkland Lake.

## KIRKLAND LAKE.

Encouraging results followed the preaching of the Word by Mr. Atkinson in this Northern town, and Pastor W. J. H. Brown of Annette St. Baptist Church, Toronto, will continue meetings for two weeks. Pray for this much-needed testimony in the mining district.

## FRENCH EVANGELIZATION.

The Office was visited recently by one who had been to the services held in the new building which is housing St. Paul's Bilingual Regular Baptist Church. He expressed amazement that the new building was now a reality. The Churches of the Union have shared to a large extent the making of this building possible.

Rev. Jules Danthey of Beneficent Regular Baptist Church (French) writes under date of August 2nd—"Sunday, the

27th of July, was a day of rejoicing for our people. The evening service was held at the St. Paul's new church. I preached the sermon and Brother St. James baptized two persons of my church, a man and a young lady. Three other men wanted to be baptized also, but as they were working out of the city for a while, they could not come back for the service. As soon as their work in the country will be done, they shall be baptized and received as members of the church.

Wednesday last several Roman Catholics attended our prayer meeting and copies of the Scripture and tracts were given to them. They promised me to be present at the Sunday services and bring some of their friends with them.

We thank God, His work is going on, the French Canadians open their eyes now and the Truth will prevail before many years."

## FOLDING ORGANS.

From time to time the Office receives inquiries concerning the obtaining of reasonably-priced organs for open air work. Through the kindness of one of our Pastors we now have full information covering a very satisfactory organ at a very moderate price. Anyone interested may have particulars from the Office.

## WESTPORT.

Pastor John H. Garbig writes that while the Baptist Church has a proportionately better attendance than the other Protestant churches, that he is not satisfied and is praying that the Lord will revive His work in their midst.

The Sunday School has been doubled in attendance and three open air meetings are held each week.

## MABEL, QUE.

Rev. A. Penman, assisted by Pastor Thomas McClure and his friend, Rev. H. J. L. Hunter of Ireland, held meetings at Mabel, Que., which were blessed with five converts. Mr. Penman will endeavour to carry on a Thursday evening meeting each week.

Mr. and Mrs. Hancox would like to take a portable gramophone with them to Liberia. Probably someone has a machine for which they have no further use and would be glad to let our missionaries-elect have it.

## FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Mrs. Davey writes that life does not always run smoothly at the Station. Recently two of the girls objected to working part of the time. (Mrs. Davey sympathetically states that she, herself, strenuously objected at their age). These two girls registered their protest by running away to their homes, but were wisely sent back again and it was rather pathetic to see the two crestfallen children returning to start over again.

# Good News from Windsor

## Many Respond to Appeal for

# AMBASSADOR CHURCH

In response to a number of requests from *Gospel Witness* readers who sent contributions to the fund now being raised to purchase the magnificent church property for the Ambassador Baptist Church at Windsor, we are glad to report that the prospects for securing it are very bright indeed. \$500.00 was received from those who read *The Gospel Witness* in the last two weeks, and a number have promised to send a contribution before August 23rd, including Churches and Bible Classes.

Contributions have been received from *Witness* readers in response to our appeal for Windsor from Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, London, Grand Rapids, Mich., and San Francisco, Cal. These contributions ranged from \$2.00 to \$100.00.

We remind our readers that the Ambassador Baptist Church has an option on the property they desire to purchase until August 23rd. The price is \$13,000 cash, or \$14,000 if time is required, in which case the cash payment must be \$4,000.00.

### A TOTAL OF \$3,000.00 NEEDED BY AUG. 23rd.

We do not know the exact amount received to date, but at least \$2,000.00 is needed by Aug. 23rd, to secure this magnificent property which would be cheap at \$30,000.00. Some Ottawa Baptists who have inspected the

property, express the opinion that the property is virtually a gift at the price asked.

### RESPOND TO-DAY.

Many of our readers are "going to" send a contribution to Windsor, but please do it now, or the opportunity may be lost if you wait until after August 23rd.

### HOW MUCH?

Perhaps some one can send \$1,000.00, or \$500.00, or \$100.00.

### IF SO, SEND IT TO-DAY.

Or if you can send \$75.00, \$50.00, \$25.00, \$10.00, \$5.00 or only \$1.00,

### SEND IT, BUT SEND IT TO-DAY.

Send it to the Treasurer of Ambassador Baptist Church, Mr. D. E. Temple, 926 Pelissier St., Windsor, Ontario, or if more convenient, to *The Gospel Witness*, 130 Gerrard St. East, Toronto, and your contribution will be immediately forwarded.

### MANY CONVERSIONS.

It will interest our readers to know that thirty-eight persons have professed conversion in the open air services of the Ambassador Church in City Hall Park, during the last three weeks, a number of whom have since attended the regular services of the church.

### THE RADIO FUND.

During the summer months a radio does not reach so far as in the winter, nor, on account of the better weather out-of-doors, is the radio used by so many people. Hence it is more difficult to meet the expense of this far-reaching ministry. We are grateful to many friends who send us their help, but we need much more than we are now receiving to pay our way week by week. Even the smallest offering will be welcome, but are there not some who will send us hundreds, or even a thousand dollars or so?

### REMEMBER THE SEMINARY IN YOUR WILL.

Have you made your will? If you have, have you provided for the Seminary? If not, add a codicil today. There is only one Toronto Baptist Seminary, so that there can be no confusion if that institution is named in your will.

Of course, there is a better way than that: send us a donation to our funds now. We have no endowment, and are dependent wholly upon the gifts of

God's people. We require at least a thousand dollars a month. Do not forget us when distributing the Lord's tenth!

## REMEMBER

### THE RADIO FUND

### THE GOSPEL WITNESS FUND

### THE SEMINARY FUND

Three thirsty children

Who always want a "djink".

## Baptist Bible Union Lesson Leaf

Vol. V.

No. 3

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR.

Lesson 35. August 31st, 1930  
Third Quarter.

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.

Lesson Text: Genesis, chapter 9.

**Golden Text:** And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." Genesis, chapter 9:11.

#### I. THE COVENANT (vs. 1-17).

The subject of a covenant is one of interest and importance whether in the secular realm or the religious, for in such an agreement a definite promise is declared concerning a certain object or objects. A Scripture covenant is of special importance, for therein is revealed God's will concerning men. Several covenants are found in Scripture: the Edenic relating to man's life before the fall (ch. 1:28-30); the Adamic, governing man's life after the fall (ch. 3:14-19); the Noahic, found in our lesson, dealing with life after the flood; the Abrahamic, relating to the chosen family (ch. 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8); the Mosaic, regulating the life of Israel (Ex. 20:31); the Palestinian, relating to life in Palestine (Deut. 30:1-10); the Davidic, proclaiming the establishment of David's house and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:8-17); and the new which speaks of blessedness based on the work of Christ (Heb. 8:6-13).

In the Noahic covenant there are several clauses. The first of these deals with the transmission of life. Noah and his sons were enjoined to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (v. 1). This is a repetition of the command given to Adam (ch. 1:28), and reveals God's purpose concerning the peopling of the earth. It also implies great power given to man, with consequent privilege and responsibility. Such a subject is worthy of more and greater consideration than it ordinarily receives. All too often the responsibility attached to begetting the species is not realized, and mere sensual gratification is uppermost in the mind.

The second clause in the covenant relates to man's dominion over the lower order of creation. "And the fear of you and the dread of you", it is stated, "shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered". (v. 2). The dominion accorded to Adam (ch. 1:26) was probably one of love and real understanding, but this is one of fear and is what we observe in the animal world these days. The beasts of the field generally seek to keep out of man's way. This denotes his superiority over them, and also reveals the presence of sin, for if sin had not entered there would have been complete understanding between the lower and the higher orders of creation. In the millennial reign this will be so (Is. 11:6). Caution should be given concerning the proper treatment of ani-

mals. They are all God's creatures and possess feelings of pleasure and pain.

In the third clause direction is given concerning the sustaining of life. Noah and the members of his family are permitted to eat flesh. "Every moving thing that liveth", the Lord states, "shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But the flesh with the life thereof which is the blood thereof shall ye not eat", (vs. 3, 4). Man may have eaten flesh before, without the command of God, but there is no record of it. Adam was directed to eat the herbs of the field (ch. 1:29), and this is the first command of God relating to flesh as food. They are cautioned in connection therewith not to eat flesh with blood in it. Attention to this would insure against cruelty to animals and help to keep distinctly in mind the sacrificial teaching that life was in the blood.

The fourth statement informs us of the institution of human government. Previous to the flood there had evidently been no organized form of government affecting the whole of society. This is now effected, and constitutes a new trial of man. The command is brief and clear: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (vs. 5, 6). Several things are worthy of note in respect to this: first, the origin of civil government; second, its purpose; third, its necessity; and fourth, our duty in relation to it, (Rom. 13:1-3). The value of human life is also involved in the subject of capital punishment. Man is the highest order of God's earthly creation, and as such a high value is set upon him by His Maker. Man is expected to have the same view, and when life is taken, so serious is the offence in God's sight, the murderer is condemned to pay the extreme penalty of the law. In these days, when the subject of abolition of capital punishment is being discussed and an extreme leniency toward criminals is being shown it is well to study the scriptural viewpoint. In the statement before us the extreme penalty receives divine sanction, and must therefore be in the highest interests of the race. It is an admitted fact that in lands where this law is in operation and where law-breaking is dealt with swiftly and justly, there is less crime than in countries where a decided leniency is to be observed. The abolition of this law has not decreased crime. It has a tendency to increase it, in that the criminal knows that no matter what he does, or how serious his law-breaking may be he can never suffer the death penalty, and although he should have to go to prison there is always a hope of getting out again, even before his sentence has run its full course. The world needs a government, fearless and just in the administration of its duties, and law requires to be put into operation in a sympathetic manner, but never with sickly sentimentality. Emphasize the necessity of acting always in accordance with the word of God.

At the conclusion of the statement, the Lord informs Noah of the establishment of His covenant with him and with his seed after him; and again assures him that there should not any more be a flood to destroy the earth. Note the

encouragement and comfort of such statements. In addition thereto the token of the covenant is given, in the rainbow in the cloud. Such a token implies remembrance by God of His covenant the faithfulness of His word, His living consideration for men, and His desire for their highest welfare. The time and frequency of the appearance of the rainbow should also be noted.

#### II. THE PROPHECY (vs. 18-29).

The second occurrence in the life of Noah after the flood pertained to the future threefold development of the race as manifested in the character of his sons. Noting the incident as recorded, there is stated: first, the names of the sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, each name prophetic and fulfilled in the conduct and position of the members of each division of the human family; and second, we are informed of the over-spreading of the whole earth through these sons. Such a threefold division of the race is recognized these days.

A sad incident in the life of Noah is then recorded, the fact of its record being an incidental proof of the veracity of the history. Hitherto nothing but good has been stated concerning him, and it might have occurred to an author, having another motive, that the recording of such a character blemish was not necessary, and most people would have agreed with him. But such is not the way of the word of God; the truth must be told, and nothing is glossed over. Men do not appear greater than they are and we are warned by their failures and encouraged by their successes. In respect to the fall of Noah, it is stated in simple terms, he began to be an husbandman, he planted a vineyard, he drank of the wine, he was drunken, and he was uncovered in his tent, (vs. 20, 21). The circumstance of the occasion are not mentioned, but we can readily see in what an easy and simple manner the fall may have occurred. By this we note the possibility of a good man falling into sin, and we are warned of the danger of looking on the wine when it is red. (Prov. 23:29-35).

The full consequences arising from Noah's sad condition are not stated, but we may be sure that grief on his part was not lacking. Through his own action he had been placed in a humiliating position before his family, and therefore sorrow would fill his heart on account of the deed itself and because of its effect upon others. One consequence full of meaning is disclosed in relation to the sons, in which the character of each is made known, and leads to the pronouncement of prophetic declarations by Noah. Note the grave disrespect of Ham (v. 22), thought by some to have sprung from an unbelieving and sceptical nature; the respect and modesty of Shem and Japheth (v. 23). The prophecy may not have been given immediately on Noah awakening out of his stupor but possibly some time later. It is threefold, describing the lowly position of Ham's descendants, fulfilled in the Canaanites and Africans, etc.; the blessing of Shem, seen particularly in Jewish history; and the enlarging of Japheth, realized in the spread of his posterity throughout Europe and their sway over subject nations pertaining to Shem and Ham.