

# The Gospel Witness

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Editor: T. T. SHIELDS.

Associate Editors: T. I. STOCKLEY, ALEXANDER THOMSON, W. GORDON BROWN.

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

Address Correspondence: THE GOSPEL WITNESS, 130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada

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## Who Holds the Keys?

By Rev. T. I. Stockley, D.D., Dean of Toronto Baptist Seminary.

Our Lord and His disciples were at Casarea Philippi. They were in the midst of scenery, "of cliff, and rock, and ruined castle, of cyclopean pieces of rock cut out and chiselled in immense symmetrical masses fit for foundation stones, masses connected with buildings that had been reared in times long anterior to those of Herod", when a conversation of immense importance took place. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" And Peter answers, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Peter was now in a very exalted condition of mind. He was specially under the divine influence, and swept by divine inspiration. Peter had many dark and sad periods in his life; but at this moment his soul was under the gracious influence of the Divine Presence. There are always delightful results from such experiences as his.

### I.

Our Lord immediately gives some sublime teaching. He says, "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Notice this sublime teaching was given after Peter's great confession of Christ. The order here is very suggestive. There is first Divine inspiration. This leads to a glorious confession of Christ; and this confession is followed by sublime teaching. The great words recorded in verse eighteen of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, follow the whole-hearted confession of verse sixteen. We must halt a moment here to learn this lesson, namely, that Divine teaching follows whole-souled confession of Christ. When the Lord gives to us in His word some manifestation of Himself, as He gave to Peter, there should

be an open confession of His truth. Then the way will be prepared for some further unfolding of His glory. If, on the other hand, we try to hide the revelation of Christ which has been given to us through His word, we thereby hinder the Lord in His gracious desire to make known more to us: we must make known what we know of Christ, either by lip or by life, or better still, by both, and so make way for a fuller manifestation of Christ to the soul.

Have we received no new word from the Lord lately, no fuller unfolding of Himself to the soul, no new message from His truth to give to others? How is this? The answer possibly lies here, that there has been a withholding of what the Lord had already given. Pass on what of Christ you have already seen in His word, and so make way for fuller knowledge. No Divine truth is given us for self alone; no experience of Christ is to be for our own personal, secret, use only. Truth is *light*, and we are not to curtain it round for our personal enjoyment only: it must be allowed to shine forth; or, like a river, our knowledge of Christ will widen as it flows out in open life and speech. And this teaching of our Lord is personal and direct. Mark the words, "I say unto thee"; "I" to "thee". Jesus speaks directly to Peter without any human medium. This was a glorious privilege; but it may be ours, too. Listen to the Apostle John: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things." We may be in such real fellowship with Christ that His Word shall be nothing less than His own Divine voice sounding through the soul.

When our Lord spoke thus directly to the Apostle, He said, "Thou art Peter"—Petros, a stone. When Andrew at the first brought his brother, Simon, to Jesus, the Saviour, knowing his heart, and knowing what He intended to make of him, said, "Thou shalt be called . . . a

stone". Feeling his own weakness, Simon, perhaps, had often longed to be rocklike in character. And Jesus then said he should be so some day. "Thou shalt be . . . a stone". Now Jesus says the realization is come: "Thou art Petros, a rock, a stone! thou, being under the special teaching of God, under the powerful influence of His Presence, thou art realizing the divine purpose: thou art a stone." And it is only thus that any of us can realize the divine purpose in our life.

Our Lord's teaching here is profoundly suggestive. He speaks about His Church. This is, so far as we know, the first time the great word "Church" drops from the Saviour's lips, and the teaching which He gives is profound indeed. "My Church!" What is the Church of Christ? Is it "a voluntary association of persons united together for the purpose of worship, and the observance of the ordinances of Christ"? Such a definition is altogether too poor and faulty. The Church is the *ecclesia*, the outgathering, made by the Holy Spirit to constitute the body of Christ, united vitally to Christ, the Head, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Church consists of all who are in vital union with Christ, whether they be within the organized churches or outside of them. Many have their names on a church roll; but the vital question is, Are they in living union with Christ? And in speaking of the church our Lord speaks of its foundation. He says to Peter, "Thou art Petros, a rock, a stone, and upon this rock Petra I will build my church." It is important to notice that we have here two different words; one is "Petros", and the other "Petra". Peter was "Petros" a piece of rock, or a stone; Petra is more, it is bedrock. It is not on the Petros, but on the Petra that the Church is built. "The designation 'Rock' or 'Petra' is never given to men in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is appropriated to Jehovah; 'He is the Rock.' 'Who is a Rock save our God?' 'The Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages.' 'God only is my Rock.' 'He is the Rock of our salvation.' 'Is there Rock beside me? Yea, there is no God, I know not any.' God only then, God in Christ, or Christ in God is the everlasting Rock on which the Church shall be built. No other rock indeed is rationally conceivable. Peter's person, or Peter's faith, and Peter's confession, are really altogether out of the question." Our Saviour thus speaks something of vast significance when He says, "Upon this Petra I will build my Church." To Peter He expressed a fact lofty in honour when He said, "Thou art a noble piece of the true Rock; thou hast been hewn out of the Rock of Ages; and thou shalt have an important place in the foundation of the temple which I am about to rear on Myself, the Everlasting Rock."

We should remember, too, that Christ is called the "Petra" by Peter himself in his First Epistle, chapter two, verse eight; and in First Corinthians, chapter ten, verse four, Paul says, "And that Petra was Christ." Peter had just made the grand confession, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." God as revealed in Christ is the substance of that confession. And Jesus said to Peter, "This is the foundation; the Bedrock on which I build my Church is God in Christ." "We are built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone." In the first course of stones in the city of God are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, (Rev. 21:14). The apostles underlie us in order

of time; but we all rest upon the Bedrock of God in Christ. And this foundation is firm and abiding.

Moreover, Jesus adds that He Himself is the Builder of His Church. "I will build my Church." The Church of Christ is His own handiwork. As the glorious arch of heaven, with its myriad lights is God's work, so the Church is His workmanship; every stone taken out of the quarry of nature is hewn and shaped, and placed upon the foundation by His own power. We read in the Acts, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved." We, who are His servants, may be instruments, tools in His hand, but He is the great Builder, as well as the Divine Architect.

And so we have a sublime phrase, "My Church!" What Jesus builds is His own: He is the Lord of His own Church. And we need to bear in mind these sublime truths in all our thinking and service for His Church. How vast is the sweep of truth thus revealed to Peter in connection with the Church!

Our Lord's teaching is also grandly encouraging. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What does Jesus mean by these words, "the gates of hell"? The "gate" was in every city the spot where the rulers took counsel and did judgment. "The Sublime Porte"—that is the gate—was the expression used for the government of Turkey. Gates, therefore, mean powers. And as "hell" here is Hades, the unseen world, we have the declaration that the powers of the unseen world, however dark and destructive, shall not prevail against the Church of Christ. How sublime was the Saviour's confidence! The Church of Christ is open to attacks from powers visible and unseen, but the attacks shall utterly fail. "The gates of hell with all the multiplied terrors of death and destruction shall not prevail." This, however, is not said of "churches." "Churches" may be swept to the ground. Mohammed swept through Arabia, and Syria, and North Africa, and withered up "churches" there with an awful blast. The "Greek Church", the "Latin Church", the "Armenian Church", or the "English Church", may be utterly swept away; but "against My Church", Jesus says, "the gates of hell shall not prevail." What joy this should inspire amid much that might distress us! In Revelation, chapter twenty-one, we have a glowing picture of the Church, the Bride, the City of God, after all her anguish and struggle, rising in her glory to shine resplendent forever more.

These were some of the great truths revealed to Peter in the hour of his noble confession. What encouragement they contain for us to speak out, and to live out all that we know of Christ!

## II.

We have a *word of special honour*: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Notice here the uppermost meaning of this word. Keys were symbols of authority. (See Revelation, chapter one, verse eighteen.) And the keys of the kingdom were given to Peter. What needless controversy has stormed around these words! We cannot waste time even to notice it. But we know that to Peter was given the honour of opening the kingdom of heaven to three thousand souls—probably Jews—on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius at Cæsarea. Jesus seemed to say to Peter, "It shall be your honour to open the door of the kingdom to Jew and Gentile. To you first of all

I commit this authority and trust; and as you act in the Spirit of this confession, under the inspiration which you now enjoy, your ministry on earth shall be ratified in heaven." Peter's great confession had secured to him this great honour.

But there is an inner thought underlying this word. No man, or church, can hold the keys, because of "any hereditary descent, or ecclesiastical position, or mechanical contrivance, or superior patronage." They are not given to any man because he has been placed by someone into a particular office, but only because he is controlled and mastered by the Spirit of God. It is that inspiration which carries the keys. When a man is swept and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, he has the keys of the Kingdom. The influence, the power to unlock, to bind, and to loose,—all these keys are his. We cannot take them from him: he has them by divine right. Some of my readers have realized this. In those sublime moods of the soul, when earth has faded from their vision, and heavenly things have filled heart and mind, and they have been especially under the control of the Spirit of God, they have known the power of the keys. Difficulties have unlocked; doors have opened; and, like Peter on another occasion, they have had but to follow the angel.

Is not this so in all regions of life? Take the man of business: it is the man to whom business is an inspiration who holds the keys. Other men may see no way, and sit down and fail, while he opens doors, and goes forward to prosperity and wealth. It is so with the statesman. The dry politician with his cold commonplaces, and empty platitudes, does nothing; but the inspired statesman has the keys to the nation's heart, and to power. It is the same in the realm of music: to inspired men like Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven, you cannot do other than listen. Or in the region of art: to men like Ruskin, to whom art was an inspiration, all the secret beauties and lovelinesses seem to unfold. If in these lower things the principle holds, how much more in the realm of the spiritual! Here to-day if any man will give himself up to the Holy Spirit of God, or if a church will submit itself utterly to the overmastering power of the Divine Presence, that man, or that church, will at once possess the keys. Whole-hearted sympathy with God, and sympathy with men are the master-keys of the kingdom of heaven.

This honour is open to all true servants of God. In Matthew, chapter eighteen, verses eighteen to twenty, a wonderful truth is taught, that spiritual authority is the privilege of all who gather in the Name, that is in the character, in the Spirit, in the Presence, of Christ. Such groups of Christians have the keys. It makes no difference who they are, educated or uneducated, any community led and mastered by the breath of God has the keys. And so with the individual. He may be a miner, like Evan Roberts, or a farmer's wife, like a Mrs. Jones, who in the great Welsh revival was so mightily used. But let us remember the lesson that if we drop down from the high experience of whole-hearted devotion to God, we at once lose the keys. It is not the filling of the Spirit which we enjoyed a month ago, but the fulness of power known to-day which will secure to us the keys to-day. Let us see then that above everything else, above financial prosperity, above material strength, the supreme need of the church, and of the individual soul, is the mighty inbreathing of the Holy Spirit of God.

#### A FRIENDLY TALK WITH THE LADIES.

There is only one way to talk with the ladies. We must be friendly, or we are in danger of not *being* at all! We have a great deal of sympathy with a certain preacher whom we once heard say: "I am for the ladies. I am for the ladies all the time, right or wrong—for the simple reason that I have to be."

In the matter we have, at the moment, in mind, it requires no effort to be "for the ladies". We recognize, and acknowledge with gratitude, the large and influential place women have always taken in the work of the Lord. The Old Testament is replete with stories of their sacrificial service; the New Testament record shows that from Bethlehem to Calvary women were conspicuous in their devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. They also had their share in Pentecost, and in all the subsequent history of the Christian church as recorded in the New Testament. Among the martyrs to the faith there have been many women; on the honour roll of valiant missionaries of the Cross are to be found the names of many illustrious women. Every pastor who reads these words is aware that there is scarcely to be found a church in these modern days which does not depend for its spiritual vitality more upon its women than upon its men.

Our particular subject of discussion in this article is The Women's Missionary Society of Regular Baptists of Canada. And of all the women's organizations we know, we believe this is the best. We believe it is efficiently led by its great President, Mrs. C. J. Holman. It has been the privilege of this writer to be Mrs. Holman's Pastor for more than twenty years. We have never had a more loyal personal friend. We have never known a truer supporter of her Pastor; and we are, as we write, in the happiest fellowship with the President of the Women's Society.

Generally speaking, the writer and Mrs. Holman find themselves in hearty agreement respecting the work of the Lord. In the more than twenty years of fellowship in Jarvis Street Church there has never, for one moment, been the slightest discord between us. We think it is a high compliment to Mrs. Holman to be able to say that it is possible for anyone firmly to disagree with Mrs. Holman without disturbing his or her friendship or fellowship for a fraction of a moment. This is as it ought to be. We believe the President of the Women's Society is a woman of a thousand, and is a distinct gift of God to the church to which she belongs, and to the other churches with whom that church is associated in missionary endeavour.

We have said all this in order that there may be no misunderstanding on the part of any of our readers as a result of what we have yet to write.

The Women's Missionary Society was organized Thursday, November 25th, 1926. We believed then, and we believe now, that its organization was necessary, and that from then until now it has rendered most valuable service to the cause of Christ.

On the January following the organization of the Women's Society, namely, January 12th, 1927, there was organized another missionary society known as, The Regular Baptist Missionary and Educational Society of Canada. This latter society continued for a year, and was then merged in the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the relation of

the Women's Society to the Union of Regular Baptist Churches. In doing so, we humbly acknowledge that we have not the prescience which enables us to judge events before they come to pass. It is the Christian's privilege to seek direction of God, and to use the best judgment God gives him to meet the circumstances of the day as they arise. We do not believe any human organization is perfect. Even the law, with all the Hebrew ritual which accompanied it, though given of God, had to give way to that which was a fuller Revelation, and was therefore better, a better covenant established upon better promises. Thus men and women, seeking the mind of God, may take a course which is perfectly right at the time, and which may wisely meet the exigencies of the day; but as circumstances change, even the most devout people discover the necessity of changing their course in order to meet them.

We draw attention to the fact that when the Women's Missionary Society was organized, there was no organization of churches standing for the same biblical principles as the Women's Society was organized to conserve and propagate, with which that women's organization could co-operate. A little later, as we have said, a general missionary and educational society was organized; but that, like the Women's Society, was an organization which was rather an organization of individuals than of churches—or perhaps it would be more correct to say that it was an organization of both churches and individuals. But at the time these two societies were organized, all the churches from which they derived support were still considered a part of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. When the Convention of Ontario and Quebec amended its Constitution by parliamentary authority, so as to give it power to exclude from its fellowship churches that were determined to stand for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints, there remained nothing for faithful churches to do but to withdraw from that Convention and form another Convention that would stand true to the faith. When that step was taken, the Regular Baptist Missionary and Educational Society was, very properly, merged in the new Union of Regular Baptist Churches, and, as an organization separate from the churches, very properly passed out of existence. But the Women's Society continued. We have called attention to these principles in order to show that an entirely different situation obtains to-day from that which obtained when the Women's Missionary Society came into being.

The question we now ask is, What relation does the Women's Missionary Society sustain to the churches which comprise the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec? The local Societies, called Auxiliaries, have been formed exclusively, we believe, certainly almost exclusively, within the churches of the said Union. Individual gifts may come to the Women's Society from persons outside these Auxiliaries, and from outside the churches of the Union, but ninety-five per cent. at least, so far as we certainly know—it may be one hundred per cent., but we say ninety-five per cent., in order to be within the mark—of the revenue of the Women's Society is derived from the churches which comprise the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec.

We draw attention to the fact that these Auxiliaries, by their very Constitution, are independent societies; that is, societies that are independent of the church within

which they operate. The women meet together and organize an Auxiliary, and appoint their officers, and they function as a separate, independent, society, without even asking the consent of the church as such. We do not mean to say that their presence within the church is in any sense unwelcome, nor that its membership is at any time antagonistic to the church's interests. We bear willing witness to the fact that the honoured President of the Society does not fail, in season and out of season, to enunciate the principles for which Regular Baptist Churches stand. And one of those principles is the autonomy of the local church; and the importance of every person, whether man or woman, who is a member of that church, being loyal to the church to which they belong, and to the work which that church is endeavouring to do.

We are discussing now merely a principle of organization, and by that principle these societies are entirely independent of the church. They handle their own money, they have their own treasurer; and while they report to the church, the Constitution of the Society does not require that it is subject at any point to the church's control.

Of course, as a matter of fact, every Baptist church is sovereign, and if it so wished, it could, by vote, dissolve any such society, in the same way as it could do away with its Sunday School if it wanted to, or with any other organization holding meetings within its building,—but we are speaking of the organization of the society.

What is true of the Women's Auxiliaries is equally true of the Young Women's Auxiliaries. In Jarvis Street Church, the largest church in the Union, the only organizations having any connection with the church which do not pay their funds into the general treasury, thus recognizing and acknowledging the church's supremacy, are the Women's Auxiliary and the Young Women's Auxiliary. We presume the same condition obtains in all the churches of the Union.

The local Auxiliaries, we believe, almost without exception, have adopted the suggested Constitution issued by the Board of the Women's Society. The mere fact that it is called a "suggested" Constitution does not make it less binding when once it has been adopted as the Constitution of the local society. And that Constitution has been adopted in almost every case, and few have discerned what principles lie dormant in that instrument.

One provision of that Constitution is that the Auxiliaries must send all their funds directly to the treasurer of the Women's Society. We believe that principle is wrong, and we frankly say that it ought to be remedied—and must be remedied if we are to avoid difficulty. There is no good reason why the Women's Auxiliary, any more than any other society, should operate entirely independently of the church to which its members belong. Any auxiliary in any church should be auxiliary to that church and its work, and not to some other society over which the church, as such, has no control.

We come now to consider what disposition the Women's Society makes of its funds. Most emphatically we desire it to be understood that we have no criticism to offer respecting the disposition of this society's funds *per se*. We have no doubt that every dollar of its money has been wisely spent. We have sometimes inwardly objected to the gentle boast of the smallness of this Society's operating expenses. If a man should have a house of his own, and should contrive to obtain for himself and his family numerous invitations to dinner and other meals outside

of his family, for which other people must pay, it would scarcely show good grace on his part to boast of his economy in the matter of his household expenses. And if the Women's Society were to pay, as other societies must pay, for many of the things which are done for them at the cost of other organizations, they would at least show a slightly larger percentage in their overhead expenses.

But granted that every object to which the Women's Society has given grants is a worthy one—and we grant this, not for the sake of argument, but because we believe that is actually the fact of the case. It is still germane to the question at issue to enquire, What proportion of the funds received by the Women's Society, from Auxiliaries operating within the churches of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec, is devoted to objects for which that Union has accepted responsibility?

We have not the figures for the Women's Society for this year, but last year the Women's Society received from all sources, according to the report published in *The Regular Baptist Call* for December, 1929, a total of \$11,763.05. Of that amount, \$619.01 passed into the treasury of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec; but only \$256.99 out of the \$619.01 was actually voted by the Board of the Women's Society for Union objects. The balance, \$362.02, was designated by the donors for Union objects, but passed through the treasury of the Women's Society. So that of the total amount of \$11,763.05 received, only \$256.99 was, by actual vote of the Board of the Women's Society, given to Union objects. That is to say, only 2.18 per cent. of all the monies received by the Women's Society from the churches which comprise the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec was; by vote of the Board, devoted to objects for which the churches of the Union, through their representatives at the Union meetings, had accepted responsibility.

But if we take the larger amount, including the \$362.02 designated by individuals or churches for Union objects, together with that voted by the Board, making \$619.01 in all, still there went from the Women's treasurer for objects for which the Union was responsible, only 5.26 per cent. Therefore, taking the larger figure, 94.74 per cent., or the smaller figure, 97.82 per cent. of the money received by the Women's Society from the churches of the Union, was spent for objects entirely beyond the Union's responsibility.

It may be argued that this is not only legitimate, but expedient, and leaves room for the exercise of the liberty of the Spirit. To that we reply that the Constitution of nearly all the local Auxiliaries, certainly of all who have adopted the "suggested" Constitution, says that the monies received by the Auxiliaries must be sent to the Treasurer of the Women's Society. We were informed by several who had heard the President's address at the Ottawa Association, that Mrs. Holman frankly and emphatically informed the Association that the Women's Society was absolutely independent of the churches, and that in the course of her address she urged all the Auxiliaries to send their money, undesignated, to the headquarters treasurer, so that the only liberty permitted anywhere under the Constitution is in the Board; and the Auxiliaries are not left the option, constitutionally, of following anybody's guidance, but must send their funds to the Board.

At this point also we call attention to the fact that Section One of Article Eleven of the Constitution of the Women's Society—which Article deals with "Alterations in Constitution"—reads as follows:

"All proposed alterations in this Constitution shall be presented at the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Board and such as are recommended by the Board shall be published at least three months before the Annual Meeting, but Articles 2, 3, 4, and 10, and the clauses in Article 5, setting forth the statement of faith, the purposes and principles of the Society, and the qualifications necessary to obtain and retain membership or office in this Society, shall never be changed, as we regard them as fundamental and essential to the maintenance and purity of the Regular Baptist position."

An examination of this will show that no Convention of the Women's Society has any power to amend its Constitution, but "all proposed alterations in this Constitution shall be presented at the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Board". Then let it be remembered that only "such as are recommended by the Board shall be published" etc. Therefore, if the Board does not recommend the proposed alterations, the Constitution cannot be altered. We confess we do not see that this leaves any room whatever for the exercise of the liberty of the Spirit.

It is common knowledge that we are not now introducing a discussion of this question for the first time. It has been discussed by both the Executive Board of the Union, and the Board of the Women's Society; and the question was introduced at the Convention in London by Mrs. Holman herself. It has thus become a matter of general interest among all our churches, and a matter that should be fully aired, and in the friendliest spirit possible freely and frankly discussed. Only by such discussion can progress be made.

It has been said that we should not presume to raise objection to the method of operation of the Women's Society on the ground that it was cradled in prayer, and that by criticizing the Society we are in danger of taking up an attitude of opposition to the Holy Spirit. Against the principle of that objection we desire to protest with all our might. If that were admitted, it would put an end to all discussion, and shut us up to a kind of infallibility which Protestants cannot possibly accept. We believe in divine guidance. We believe the Holy Spirit can, through the Word of God, so communicate the mind of the Lord to an individual believer that that believer may be absolutely certain of the will of God respecting his own conduct. But we do not believe in the infallibility of any sort of vicarious guidance. We believe in the right of private judgment, and that every individual is answerable to God alone. A man may, through the goings of God upon his own spirit, sometimes be required to take a position at variance with the judgment of all his brethren; but when he does, he must accept the responsibility of so doing, and his only legitimate means of silencing opposition is an enlightened, thoroughly-informed, presentation of his case. If he fails to convince his opponents, he has no right to say, "Stand out of my way because I am being guided by the Holy Spirit." We cannot agree that any individual or organization has any just right to claim immunity from criticism on the ground that he or it is under the special direction of the Spirit of God.

But further: assuming, as we are ready to do, that the Women's Society was brought into being by the leading of God, what then? It was the only thing to do at the time. But we contend that from the moment a group of churches, believing the very things for which the Women's Missionary Society of Regular Baptists of Canada stands, organized themselves into a union for the prosecution of missionary work, the whole situation changed, and what was legitimate and expedient in November, 1926, may not—and we believe is not—wise, or even right, at the present time. We shall not be deterred therefore from exercising our right to propose means of improvement of any organization with which we have to do, even as we expect others to exercise their right in criticizing us and our work.

Once more: we confess to having been utterly amazed by one point made by our fellow-labourer, the highly-esteemed President of the Women's Society, at the London Convention. Mrs. Holman explained that the Constitution of the Society, making it entirely independent of church control, was deliberate; and that it was done because the churches of the old Convention had gone astray, and she wanted an organization that would not go astray. The fact is, there never was a human organization, or an individual—and never will be this side of the millennium—that could not, or cannot be led astray. We all do well to sing,—

“Prone to wander,—Lord, I feel it,—  
Prone to leave the God I love:  
Take my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it from Thy courts above.”

But the amazing thing to us was that the President of the Women's Society should expect a purely human organization, for which there is no direct, specific, scriptural warrant, to be more likely to conserve the truth of the gospel than the divine institution, the church itself. The first temple erected in Jerusalem was built by divine order, but because of the backsliding of the people, and the pollution of the temple itself, it was, by God Himself, destroyed. But what followed? In due course another temple was built, which was equally of divine construction. And that has been God's method through all the course of human history.

We have no delusions on the matter. Human nature in the churches of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches is the same as human nature elsewhere. We hope that the members of these churches believe the Book, and are determined to stand by the Book. But we do not know of a member of any one of the churches, or of a deacon, or of a pastor, who has not a little bit of the “old man” in him; and wherever the old man is found he is likely to be heard from sooner or later, and he will be subdued only as the power of the Spirit is present in the life of the individual or of the church.

The churches of the old Convention of Ontario and Quebec were once thoroughly orthodox. Many of them are still orthodox, but are not sufficiently discerning to see the danger of their association with others who are drifting from the truth. They will come to their senses by and by, and will either separate from the old Convention, or will drift with the tide and become as bad as the rest. It is our daily prayer that we may be saved from the errors which have crept into McMaster University, and through that institution to the Convention. McMaster

University itself was established for the propagation of the truth. Receiving its portion of goods, it took its journey into the far country. Toronto Baptist Seminary has been established to do the work that McMaster University ought to have done—and ought now to be doing. With our present Faculty, we have no question of the orthodoxy of Toronto Baptist Seminary. We are taking every precaution to make it impossible for it to go astray, so far as it is humanly possible, but we cannot guarantee its soundness forty years from now.

And so of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches. There is not an infinitesimal atom of Modernism about us just now. We pray there never may be. But because churches have failed, we do not propose to abandon churches. We propose to organize new churches on New Testament principles, and begin all over again, just as God did when He built the temple a second time. But if the Union should depart from the faith, we pray that God will destroy it and raise up something better in its place. And so we venture the assertion that the truth of God is more likely to be conserved by churches established on the principles of New Testament ecclesiology, than by any other institution that men can invent—or women either.

We cannot accept the argument that the Women's Society is more likely to remain true to the faith because it is independent of the churches, than it would be were it subject to the churches. So long as the present President lives and presides we may be sure the Missionary Society will be kept in the straight and narrow path, but Mrs. Holman can no more guarantee what will take place after she has surrendered the helm than any of the rest of us. Men may be fickle, but we are not aware that women, as a class, are very much more stable! We said at the opening of this article that the Bible is replete with stories of the sacrificial service rendered by women, but it is equally true that some of the most deadly perils that afflicted the people of God in ancient time were introduced by women. And furthermore, nearly all the heresies that afflict the church to-day are of feminine origin: Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventism, Pentecostalism, Theosophy, and we know not what else. We believe the promises of God were made to His church; and that the church is the house of God, the pillar and stay of the truth.

Under some circumstances there might be some sort of reason for the present principle of operation of the Women's Society. If the Union of Regular Baptist Churches were a great organization made up of strong and wealthy churches, if money flowed like a Niagara into the Union Treasury so that it required all the wits of the brethren constituting its Board to know how to disperse it, we can conceive of there being some advantage in having a women's society to divert at least one-quarter of the stream to other channels. But what are the facts of the case? Simply that the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec has a total membership of not more than about ten thousand. The churches of which it is composed, for the most part, are financially weak and small in membership. Many of them, indeed, are new, and not a few of them have not so much as a roof over their heads which they can call their own.

How have these churches come into being? Many of these newer and smaller churches are being supported by



the funds of the Union. Many of them could have had no existence at all if it had not been for the funds entrusted by the churches to the Executive Board. But the moment these young churches are organized, an Auxiliary Society is formed. Almost everywhere the women are in the majority in the membership of the churches. Among the women there will be some business women, who, like the men, are unable to command their time, and can give only evenings to any meetings that may be held. But the majority of the women are housewives. Societies that are made up of young business women are the Young Women's Auxiliaries which meet in the evening. The regular Auxiliaries hold daytime meetings. It is possible to generate a missionary interest, and to effect an efficient organization among the women such as is utterly impossible, in the nature of the case, among the men; for while the women are thus meeting, their husbands are attending to their daily toil. It follows therefore that the Auxiliaries of the churches, composed of women who are in the majority of the membership of the churches, represent the major missionary interest in the church; and so it comes to pass that the Executive Board of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches is a well-digging corporation. Their business is to sink wells; and as soon as they have done so, the Women's Missionary Society puts in a pipe-line—and they are the well-pumping corporation, and in some instances they well-nigh exhaust the missionary support which the churches are able to give. That leaves the Executive Board of the Union free to assume responsibilities, but without any legitimately guaranteed support for their proper discharge.

The total income of the Executive Board of the Union for the year ending October, 1929, was approximately \$35,000.00. We have pointed out that the income of the Women's Society for the same period was \$11,763.05, or a little over twenty-five per cent. of the total amount contributed by the churches of the Union for missionary objects; or one-third of the amount received by the Union treasury for missionary objects.

We believe the Union ought to be a missionary organization. In fact, we cannot see that there is any other reason for its existence. The churches, as such (that is, such churches as now exist), might conceivably go on by themselves by the churches uniting their contributions, through the Union treasury for the purpose of doing missionary work. But we do not believe that the Union is sufficiently strong, as yet, to be able successfully to carry on its work under present conditions.

We should not, however, think of offering these criticisms if we had not some constructive proposal to make. The Editor of this paper believes that the local church should be the unit of organization in all spiritual work. We believe that the church is a divine institution. We believe that no organization or society should be permitted to function within the church that is not entirely subject to the control of the church.

There is no motor-car that could go on the road organized as the average church, with four wheels out of alignment, and each of them trying to make opposite points of the compass at the same time, and yet keep together! As a certain celebrated advertisement had it, "It can't be did"!

Here, then, is our proposal: let us have, if not a new thing under the sun, at least a new thing for this day and

generation. Let us who call ourselves Fundamentalists get right back to the New Testament plan and magnify the local church, and let all our activities centre in that local church, and from that local church, through such agencies as that local church may appoint, to the uttermost parts of the earth. Let the Women's Society, as such, follow the course of the Regular Baptist Missionary and Educational Society, which merged in the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec. Let us then organize every church to the last member, men and women, boys and girls, for missionary service at home and abroad, bringing them all together for the study of God's Word, bringing them all together that unitedly they may witness for Christ with a view to the salvation of souls. Let us bring them together. Meetings could be held for the dissemination of missionary intelligence. Let us endeavour to get every single member of the church, not only to give to the support of his own church, but to give definitely to missions at home and abroad. Let us have our missionary prayer meetings, and other missionary meetings, which belong to the whole church and not to a little section of it, for which the entire church would be responsible, so as to develop, not missionary societies, but missionary churches made up of the entire membership.

Then let us have one missionary Board. By all means, let us have women on the Board—equal representation, if it is desired, of men and women; to be elected as now the members of the Board of the Union are elected, by the messengers of the churches, so that the women on the Board will derive their authority, not from some section of the church, not from some society within the church, but from the church itself; and then they will act in behalf of the church, as the men must do. And let us show what can be done by a sound, sane, principle of organization, an organization that is fundamentally centripetal instead of centrifugal.

This principle should apply to the missionary activities of the church, the Sunday School's activities, the Young People's activities, and the activities of every other organization within the church. We are convinced that in this direction lies the largest possible measure of success.

As we close, there occurs to us another argument which has been brought forward. Perhaps it is a little out of place here, but we may as well say it here as anywhere. It has been said, "Has not the blessing of God rested upon the women's organization?" To which we should reply, Undoubtedly it has. We have already said much good has been accomplished. On the other hand, has not the blessing of God rested upon the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec? Have we not established a large number of new churches? Have not many people been converted? Can we not show, as a matter of fact, in the matter of conversions, far greater results, if it be legitimate to institute a comparison, than can be shown by the Women's Society? But we do not on that ground argue that our organization is perfect. We shall welcome any suggestion that will enable us the better to carry on our work.

Furthermore: if the blessing of God rested only upon organizations that were so perfect they could not be improved, then who of us could expect any blessing at all? And such blessing as has attended both organizations, has

rested upon them, not because of, but in spite of their human defects.

We heard of a certain man who built a large apartment-house. He selected for his architect a man who was a member of the same church with himself. The block was built, the apartments were rented and occupied, and the establishment operating, if we mistake not, for two or three years before the owner discovered that the architect, when putting in the steam plant, had run a secret pipe from his employer's apartment to his own house, which was not very far away; and he had been heating his own house at the expense of the owner of the apartment-house for several years before he was discovered.

That, we submit, was a most economical method of heating. No application of the parable is necessary!

We desire all our readers to understand—we repeat it for the sake of emphasis—that this article is intended as a friendly little talk with the ladies!

### "UNTO THE END."

Final perseverance may well be regarded as one of the crowning gifts of divine love. It is the Kohinoor among the jewels of mercy. It is an attainment which will test to the utmost the noblest graces, and display the grandest attributes of God. Perseverance in itself is admirable, but carried on to the last hour it will be glorious. Happy and honoured will he be who endures till the end.

Men in middle life are best able to judge of the strain involved in being "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." To mount up with wings as eagles, and even to run without weariness, are by no means such attainments as to "walk without fainting" from year to year. It may be true that "it is the pace that kills", but for our part we find it no small test of life to continue in the race from youth to age. "Having done all, to stand", is such a thing as God alone can work in us, even the God Who for ages has sustained the heavens and the earth.

The element of "stay" is a fine one, and if it be altogether lacking in a man's character its absence is fatal. Often have we seen the best intentions, the most earnest resolves, and the most sensible schemes dissolve into thin air because patient endurance was not called into action. The new minister, when he took the pastorate, projected a grand enterprise, started a journal, opened new rooms, delivered courses of lectures, gathered various classes, commenced a crusade, inaugurated several societies, and did—well, everything possible and impossible—upon paper. Where are his projects now? Where the societies, the classes, the journal, the aggressive movements? They survive in the radiant memories of those who live on the past because the present affords them little or no provender. A boy's crackers on a bonfire night are the fit emblems of many "a great work" which in our time has been for a moment "seen of angels", and then buried, man knows not where. Yet, is not permanency in religion the test of sincerity and reality? and may we not judge that things which have a speedy and untimely end cannot be of God? In this light the flashes of the moment and the coruscations of the hour are not so much things to smile at as to mourn

over. Have not many things which seemed to be of the Lord proved to be poor human notions, since they have consumed away like smoke, and passed from us as the morning cloud? Alas for the faded hopes and withered projects which strew the ground thick as leaves in autumn!

Surveying the wrecks of others, the cautious sailor thinks of his own vessel, and prudently considers whether his barque may not one day be added to the register of ruin. God grant that it be not so. Yet it would be no small wonder if such were the case, for who shall for ever swim where so many drown? Certainly, it will need all the strength that can be had to keep the head above water year after year. It is easy enough to stand fast for a while, but to remain as a pillar in the house of the Lord,—this is the work, this is the difficulty. A man might not find it easy to burn at the stake in a sharp fire, and yet that would be a small feat as contrasted with standing hour after hour amid the smoking faggots, and having limb by limb consumed by the gnawing fires of green wood. One might joyfully lay down his head on the block, to offer up his life by one stroke of the axe; but how different it would be to die a piecemeal death of long-drawn agony, a week of torment apparently never to end!

A great statesman, the other day, celebrated his seventieth birthday by a retrospect of his life; it is meet that old age should look back. To us, however, in the middle of the stream, it seems more natural to look around on present circumstances. Years ago, at a younger age, our tendency was to look ahead, and long for a great future; nor would we forego the habit, but still the pressure of long years, and growing burdens, and a sense of diminishing strength, unite to keep the eyes occupied with the things of to-day, and the connection of the present with the infinite and eternal. It appeared to us when looking forward that the Christian life-work would require a power far beyond our own, but now we more intensely feel the certainty of that fact, and were it not for divine help we should give up in despair. If still sustained, after all these years of conflict, grace must indeed have the glory of it, and here upon the altar of the present we would offer the calves of our lips, giving glory to the Lord, the God of our salvation. Doubtless divine love will be glorified in the closing hours of the mature Christian, but it is emphatically magnified in the stern period when the burden and heat of the day are on the labourer, when the novelty and romance of youth are over, and the nearness of the reward is not yet vividly certified by old age. Of all parts of the stream, the hardest to ford is the middle: there the water is deepest, the current swiftest, and the footing least secure. Lord, hold thou me up, and I shall be safe. This is the prayer which oftenest leaps from our lips.

"Thus saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." We have lived long enough to experience the hollowness of earth, and the rottenness of all carnal promises. Our work, though it be holy, presses heavily upon the shoulder, and we see not all the fruit of it which we expected in earlier days. Many strong helpers have been taken away by death, and the enthusiasm which made our earlier friends leap forward with their aid is not repeated to the full at a second shout of the clarion. The decline is only appar-



ent to fear; but apprehension has the eyes of a hawk, and spies out the smallest discouragement. The world grows better very slowly: we sometimes fear that it grows worse. The church relapses to her former sloth; the good are weary, and the wicked wax impudent; the times are out of joint, and evil days are threatening. What can happen better to a man than to go home? Happy is he who is taken from the evil to come, or hears the sound of his descending Master's coming ere yet the shadows of the day are lengthened to the utmost.

Thus does middle age prose when it is under the influence of its most sombre hour. The ink grows thick, and the pen is clogged, and makes black strokes and heavy. The subject should be treated in a more believing manner, and written of, not according to the flesh, but after the spirit. Doubtless length of days tries our graces, but what length of days have we to speak of? We who are sighting fifty, or passing beyond it? Half a century is a trifle in the life of God. True, there is a flagging of human energy, and the warm blood of youth cools down; but our Christian life never stood in the strength of the creature, and hence it cannot flag, since the Creator grows not old, nor is His arm waxed short. The same power which begat will preserve. Omnipotence first made the believer rise into newness of life, and until it fails his life will continue ever fresh and young. Well said the Psalmist, "All my fresh springs are in thee." What if others suffer shipwreck, yet none that sail with Jesus have ever been stranded yet. Purposes, plans, and achievements of men may all disappear like yon cloud upon the mountain's summit, but, like the mountain itself, the things which are of God shall stand fast for ever and ever. Now is the time, in the lull of natural energy, to prove the power of the Holy Ghost. The trees of earth as they pass their prime decrease the quantity and quality of their fruit: it is a mark of the trees of grace that they still bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. The faithfulness of God may be relied upon to work a growing faithfulness in His people. Never so conscious of dependence as in this middle passage, never so certain of the all-sufficiency of God as in this noontide of the day, we joy in the Lord and look for even richer mercies than ever.

Young men, trust God, and make the future bright with blessing. Old men, trust God, and magnify Him for all the mercies of the past. As for us, we mingle gratitude and expectation in equal portions, and pray to stand in this present hour, faithful to the Master in Whose grace we trust.

—C. H. SPURGEON.

#### THE HABIT OF KINDNESS.

It is possible to represent, or rather to misrepresent, God as an indulgent father, as one who never prohibits and never punishes. There is a type of mind which conceives of the love of God as being something akin to honey — all sweetness. It would be impossible to exaggerate the loving-kindness of the Lord. It is true that—

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in His justice  
Which is more than liberty"—

but we do well to remember that the fact of the Cross compels our consideration of the sterner attributes of Deity. And consistent with this view of God, and, indeed, in agreement with the whole revelation of God in Christ, is the apostolic injunction that we should "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

We think of one just now who has cultivated the habit of saying kind things. She is too wise to believe in absolute human perfection, and frankly recognizes that we all have our faults. But she has formed the habit of speaking kindly of everybody in whom any virtue can be found. What a happy world this would be—or, indeed, to narrow the sphere of our observation—what happy churches we should have, if Christians everywhere could emulate her example! It is said of some, "The poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." How easy it is for all of us to speak poisonous words, words that penetrate and poison the very springs of life! And, generally speaking, there is no fundamental justification for such fault-finding. Indeed, it often happens that the poisoned tongue venomously condemns in others the very faults which are most conspicuous in its own character. While we give attention to the great principles of the faith, we must not fail to apply these principles to ourselves. The Sermon on the Mount is by no means obsolete; let us therefore heed the Saviour's admonition: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

#### THE EDITOR IN OKLAHOMA CITY.

The Editor left Monday night for Oklahoma City, where he will spend three weeks with Dr. C. P. Stealey, conducting evangelistic meetings. We ask the earnest prayers of our readers that the services may be fraught with spiritual power. Owing to the Editor's leaving Monday, we are unable to give Sunday evening's radio sermon to our readers until next week.

**THE RADIO FUND**

**THE GOSPEL WITNESS FUND**

**THE SEMINARY FUND**

**Three thirsty children**

**Who always want a "djink".**

# The Jarvis Street Pulpit

## A PROFANE PERSON.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church.

(Stenographically reported.)

"Lest there be any . . . profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right.

"For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Hebrews 12:16-17.

These verses epitomize the life's history of one of the outstanding characters of antiquity. It is marvellous to observe what volumes God can condense into a few sentences. From the record of a life in which there was found no place for God, absolutely nothing of importance is omitted in this comprehensive summary.

It is the story of a hungry man. Esau was not hungry in any figurative or metaphorical sense: he was simply and literally hungry for his dinner. And by the gratification of his physical appetite he sacrificed forever the interests of his soul.

Esau was the first-born of Isaac's children. To him belonged the right of primogeniture; which, among the Jews, involved the right of being the priest of the household in his father's stead; all the blessings of the covenant which God had made with Abraham, and his seed after him; and the privilege of transmitting those blessings to his successors. But to the value of all these things, Esau appears to have been utterly blind. It is said of him that "for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright", with all that was involved therein.

We have here a story that is applicable to multitudes of people in our day—and very probably to not a few within these walls this evening. It is the story of a soul asleep; a soul that awakened out of his sleep; but who awakened only to discover that he had slept too long. "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

### I.

Here, then, to begin with, is THE STORY OF A SOUL ASLEEP. We all know how it is possible for one member of the body to be dormant, to be temporarily paralyzed, while the other members of the body regularly exercise their functions. It is possible for one member of the body to be unresponsive to anything from without, as, for instance, when we say the foot is asleep, while the body as a whole instantly responds to the slightest touch.

This is the story of *one element in a complex nature being fast asleep*. Here was a man who was made up of spirit, soul, and body. There was a sense in which he had to live two lives, because it was necessary that he should relate himself to two worlds. And on one side of his nature you will find that Esau was wide awake, always alert, always instantly responsive to the appeals of that world to which he belonged; but on

the other side of his nature he was asleep; he was dead; he made no response whatever to the appeal of the spiritual. He was awake to the advantages of the morsel of meat; but utterly unresponsive to the appeal of the birthright, with all that it involved.

And I venture to say that that is descriptive of the condition of multitudes of people still. When the Scripture says that a man is "dead in trespasses and in sins", it does not mean that he is morally just as bad as he may be: it does not mean necessarily that he is not a kind husband, nor a good father, nor outwardly, at least, a respectable citizen. But it does mean that he is without response to the higher things of life, to the voice of the Spirit of God.

Let us see what is said of this man Esau. First of all, he is described as "a profane person". That does not mean that he used profane language in the modern sense. I need scarcely, of course, remind you of that. The word for "profane" is a very interesting word: it is suggestive of our word "thoroughfare". You see it about the streets to-day—"No thoroughfare"—the path is reserved. Now if a Greek had wanted to put up a sign to the effect that there was no thoroughfare, he would have said, "Not profane", that is, reserved. It is a word that was used to describe the ground before the sacred enclosures of heathen temples, to differentiate that which was without from that which was within. It was not enclosed; it was not fenced; it was not reserved for that particular purpose—it was profane; it was open to anybody and everybody who desired to pass that way.

And Esau was a profane person in the sense that there was no sacred enclosure; there was no sanctuary, no holy of holies; no place reserved for God alone. His whole nature was an open plain, a marsh, a common, across which any and every vagrant spirit might pass at will; and there was no part of his nature that was fenced off, separated, and held sacred as a habitation for God.

And is not that true of many still—that their hearts are places of public assembly? There is no lock upon the door; there is no wall roundabout; but it is wide open to all the materialistic, deadening influences that play upon a human soul. There is no guest-chamber within such as the Shunammite had for the man of God when he passed that way. There is no lodging-place for any spiritual impulse, for any holy thought—for the Son of God Himself. But the man's life is like the inn at Bethlehem, every room occupied, every floor trampled by common feet, and no place in which

the Son of God may be born—no place for God to come in—simply “profane”. Oh, what a picture of multitudes of people living to-day! What a picture of many here—simply godless and materialistic, living for the things which are seen and temporal, with no thought of God at all!

Now it is not charged against Esau, that he abused the powers of that side of his nature which was awake. He was not a glutton; he was not a drunkard; he was not a man who was inordinately given to appetite: he was simply a common, healthy man who enjoyed his dinner, as any healthy man ought to do. I say it is not charged against him that he abused the powers of that side of his nature which were awake.

On the contrary, there were many things about Esau which were most admirable. He was a good son; he was considerate of the requirements of his aged father. We read that “Isaac loved Esau, and did eat of his venison”. And have you not seen it in a family? If anybody wants anything, they know which member of the family is at their service to supply it; if father or mother finds himself or herself in a difficult situation, they know which son of the family will come to their help. And Isaac knew; he had learned to lean upon Esau; and Esau had always been kind and considerate. And when the old man was out of sorts, and needed, something to cheer him up, and something, perhaps, to tempt his failing appetite, it was this generous son who came in from the hunting and prepared him “savory meat, such as he loved”.

Esau was terribly betrayed by his brother, abominably treated; and in a moment of anger he vowed he would kill him. But he made no effort whatever to fulfil his threat; and when, years afterwards, Jacob returned full of fear lest Esau should have nourished the old grudge, as soon as Esau saw him he ran towards him, and threw his arms about his neck and kissed him, and wept. And when Esau saw the presents which Jacob had sent, he said, “What are these?” And Jacob very humbly said, “These are to find grace in the sight of my lord”. But Esau, with his characteristic generosity, said, “I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself”. He had forgotten all about the past; he nourished no enmity against his brother.

It is one of the most terrible tragedies of history: to read of a man having so many admirable qualities, so amiable, so lovable in a thousand respects, and yet destitute of any interest in God! Ah, are there not men like that? You say, “Well, sir, what more do you want? You ask his wife, she will tell you the sort of man he is; ask his mother; ask those who deal with him in business; ask his neighbors; ask anybody, and they will tell you that his hand is always open to the needy, and that he is always responsive to the cry of his fellows. And as long as a man does that, what more is required?”

Is the entire obligation of the law summed up in a man's duty to his neighbor? I know that Esau ought to have been all that he was—but he ought to have been something more. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” But “the first and the great commandment”—and as I have often reminded you, the first and the great commandment is always “first”, not in

order merely, but in importance—the first and the great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God”: and that, Esau completely ignored. Esau built no altar; he never bowed his knee to God; he was a “profane” person. The only charge registered against Esau is that for one morsel of meat he despised and sold his birthright. That is the only complaint which the Book makes against him. Not that he was a thief, or a blasphemer, or in any sense a bad man, as men estimate character; but he was a man who weighed things in the balances, and his eyes were open chiefly to the realm of that which is seen and temporal. Esau had a great appreciation of the realm of the material; for the “morsel of meat” stands not merely for the indulgence of the physical—the “morsel of meat” stands for the material, for the temporal, for the things which are seen. And the “birthright” stands for the spiritual, for that which belongs to the world of the unseen, for that which is abiding. Esau weighed these two, the one against the other; and on the principle that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”, he said, “What profit shall this birthright—this thing of the future, this thing of the realm beyond—what profit shall this birthright be to me? And so, for one morsel of meat, for a dish of lentiles, for the gratification of an hour, he sacrificed his soul's interests.

And that is characteristic, I venture to say, of many whom we regard as among the best of people—the people whom we meet and respect and love; the people who in so many respects are altogether worthy; but who yet have no place for God in their lives. We speak to them of the blessings of the covenant, of salvation by grace, of the “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”; but they have no ears to hear, nor eyes to see. O that I could get the ear of some such this evening! It will pay you, my brother, to go without your dinner; to make less profit in your business; to sacrifice the pleasures of the hour; to shut your eyes to this present interesting and alluring world, and look for “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”. But Esau smiles, and says, “I really do not know what you are talking about; I do not see any city; I have no consciousness of what you call the spiritual world; I have no interest in what you call the covenant; I feel no need of it whatever. Why should I? The blood of Jesus Christ! I know nothing about it. All that I care for is the present, call it a ‘morsel of meat’, or what you will”.

## II.

Let us consider now, THE STORY OF A SOUL AWAKENED. “Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing; he was rejected.” What volumes are condensed into that one word—“afterward!” Can you schoolboys parse it? Tell me what part of speech it is. “Afterward!” Some lad will say, “It is an adverb, is it not, sir?” Yes. And what is an adverb? An adverb is a word that modifies words expressive of action or quality. And here is a word that modifies the words relating to Esau's action, which relates his later wisdom to his early folly. “Afterward!” “Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.” O the difference! “No

chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." O the pain of it! "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

"Afterward!" It is a word that is suggestive of proportion and perspective; of the distant view; of the ability to see things relatively; to get a larger view of things, and to determine thereby the true values of life. "Afterward!" If we could only anticipate the "afterward"! If a man when he drops the spark from his tongue that is "set on fire of hell" could only see the conflagration he is going to kindle; if he could see the ruin which will be wrought in the lurid glare of that fire kindled by an evil tongue, would he drop the spark? "What will ye give me?" said Judas. "And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." And you can see the miser rubbing his hands. "I have got it; I have got it; I will sell Him for thirty pieces of silver." But O, "afterward", when he has got the money, it was to him like the very coals of hell, and throwing the silver ringing down upon the temple floor, he said, "Take it! Take it! I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!" If he could have seen things as they appeared "afterward", the wealth of the world could not have tempted him to sell his Lord.

Well, Esau was asleep. Mark a *soul's awakening!* Esau has lived in a beautiful out-of-doors; Esau has trained himself to believe that there is no better light than sunshine—that there is nothing sweeter to the taste than that which an arrow from his quiver can bring to his board. He has trained himself to believe that there is no music so entrancing as the song of birds, and the ripple of the brooks, and all the murmuring music of the world of nature. He is a child of the field; and every sense is awake and alert to all the glories, to all the fascination, of God's beautiful world. And he says, "If I have that, I have everything". But there comes a time when he discovers that behind the door of the promise, within the compass of the covenant, behind the veil of sense, there is another world; and that it is a still more beautiful world than the world in which he has been living; that it is fuller of treasure and of joy. And something within Esau awakes, and he comes knocking at that door, saying, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept."

And that awakening comes in the providence of God to many—I think perhaps to all. There is a sense of the Unseen, and of the reality of the future. Here, for instance, is a business man immersed in business. He calls himself a "hard-headed business man", whatever that is. But he lives in facts and figures; he is proud of his ability to get on—and he is getting on. His home is a place in which he passes the night, and where he comes at meal time. But he says a man cannot live on sentiment. I remember going, by request of somebody in this city, to see just such a business man, in old London. I would as soon have a marble image to live with—hard, cold, unsympathetic, just a machine for grinding out business and making money. He goes from his house in haste in the morning; and some time during the day his telephone rings. He takes the receiver down and listens, and at once

his face takes on an ashen hue. He drops business, rushes out, jumps into his car, and in a moment or two rushes up the front steps of his house, and is met by one who raises a warning hand. "How is he, Doctor?" "Absolute quiet, please!" "But, Doctor, I want to know how he is. I was so busy at noon I did not even say 'good-bye' to the little fellow; did not have time to call him to my knee; and now I want to see him." But", says the Doctor, "you are a strong man, aren't you? You can bear bad news? Well, your boy will never speak to you again." "He must, Doctor! he must! I did not even say 'good-bye' to him." "Well, I have to tell you the truth; he will not speak to you again." And in a little while the crepe is on the door.

One of the managers later comes up from the place of business to see his chief about a very important matter. He makes his way into his presence, and spreads the matter of business before him. But he says, "Do not talk to me about business; I do not care anything about business." "But, sir", says his manager, "it is absolutely necessary that you give it attention". "Nothing is necessary", he says. "I thought as you do twenty-four hours ago. I prided myself on my stoicism. I said a man could not live on sentiment, and I did not know that my father-heart was sleeping; I did not know that there was another world from which my folly was excluding me. But now I am awake, and I care nothing for business." And when other years have passed, the man stands in the cemetery where he has laid the beautiful mother of his darling boy, and where he has buried his all. He has amassed great wealth; he is a man of great fortune and influence. "But", he cries, "the emptiness of it all! Now I see that it was all for them, and now that they are gone, there is nothing left." And in his impoverishment he lifts his eyes heavenward to cry, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God".

My brother, it cannot be done! The hunger of the soul cannot be satisfied with business, nor with wealth, nor with pleasure, nor with fame, nor even with wife and family. They are all mortal and must leave you. And when the soul awakes it will be to the realization that you are poor indeed, unless you have that one all-comprehensive blessing of the Father, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

### III.

The sad part of my story is that ESAU AWAKENED WHEN IT WAS TOO LATE. "Afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." There is a sense in which Esau did repent. He repented of his early choice; but he found then it was impossible to satisfy himself with that which had abundantly satisfied him before. And now "when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected"; and he finds no place in which he may again, change his mind back to his former state, though he seeks it carefully with tears.

I have never been particularly concerned as to whether the scriptures descriptive of the future state of the impenitent are to be interpreted literally or figuratively; whether hell is a place and condition in

which there is literal fire, or whether it be but a figure. All I have to say is this: that the scriptural descriptions of the final state of the lost in their least awful aspect are so terrible that they are hell enough; and as to whether the literal or figurative interpretation be the worst, I am not prepared to say. But this is certain: that for a soul to awake sufficiently to get a glimpse of glory and miss it; for a soul thus to get a view of the loveliness of Jesus, and to lose Him; for the soul to understand the possibility of salvation through the blood, and never to receive it; for a soul to get a glimpse of the happy reunions of the future and to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the hosts of the redeemed, in the kingdom of God, and himself cast out, that is hell: and it is hell enough! To see what he might have been, and to know that by his own folly he has thrown his soul away—to know that, is to taste the most terrible remorse of which any creature is capable—to feel that would be to taste “the second death”.

Do you not see it? “When he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” And the scripture abounds with teaching on this matter. “When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. You had no place in your heart for Me. There was no guest-chamber for the Son of God. There never was a recognition of the cross. There never was a spirit humbled before the Sovereign of the universe. You had no place for Me. Depart, I never knew you.” The scripture, I say, is full of that terrible truth.

“There is a line, by us unseen,  
That crosses every path;  
The hidden boundary between  
God’s patience and His wrath.

“To pass that limit is to die,  
To die as if by stealth:  
It does not quench the beaming eye,  
Nor pale the glow of health.

“How long may we go on in sin?  
How long will God forbear?  
Where does hope end, and where begin  
The confines of despair?

“An answer from the skies is sent,  
‘Ye that from God depart:  
While it is called to-day, repent,  
And harden not your heart.’”

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Remember the “afterward”! May the Spirit of God make us wise now!—now!—now! It may be now or never! There was a moment, mark you, a fateful moment of decision in Esau’s life. He had been gradually coming up to the crisis of his

life, and there came one last moment, a point of time as the twinkling of an eye, when “for a morsel of meat he sold his birthright”. At last, he simply crossed that line, and it was done forever! And there comes that moment to everyone. It may strike for you to-night, this hour—hush!—While angels bend on hovering wing about you, and God the Holy Spirit calls to you to choose between the carnal and the spiritual, between the temporal and the eternal, between darkness and light, between hell and heaven, between Barabbas and Christ—at this instant, you may stand at “the great divide”—this tick of the clock may settle your eternal destiny! What is your answer?

#### DISPENSING WITH THE GOSPEL.

Mrs. Partington uttered more of the truth than she thought when she said, “Dear me, nothing don’t do me so much good as to go to church Sunday morning, and hear a precious minister dispense with the gospel!” Yes, dear soul, that is exactly what some of them do: they give us anything and everything but the glad tidings of salvation, and then they wonder that their chapels become empty. Yet it does not do to say as much, or you will have a hornet’s nest about your ears. Of course they preach gospel, that is to say a gospel, if not the gospel. What is the difference? Only the indefinite for the definite article, only sand instead of rock, only opinion in the place of truth.

The worst of it is that hearers now-a-days put up with it. There seems to be little left in the land of the discriminating spirit. Men tolerate error in their ministers, grumbling at first, consenting to it afterwards. Many do not know chalk from cheese in these times, and so long as the language is musical and the ideas are pretty, their preacher may teach anything short of atheism and they will drink it in. What a clapping a man gets at a public meeting if he will only harp on the string of liberality and say that we are all alike, and that our views are only different aspects of the same truth: black is a shade of white, and white a milder tone of black! In times gone by a few sermons without the gospel in them would have brought down a storm about his reverence’s head; but now he is admired as a man of fresh thought, and takes leave to make up his theology as he goes along. No one challenges him, or if a bold brother does so he is called a bigot, and snuffed out.

Surely this state of things cannot last. Someone will bear his protest and create a stir, or else the whole thing will rot into contempt. If there be a gospel, let us have it and nothing else. There are not two gospels: which is the genuine article? This we demand. This we would have, not now and then, but always as the standing dish, the daily provision of the house of the Lord. If any man shall withhold the truth, or give us the counterfeit of it, he shall answer for it with his head; for by trifling in this matter the souls of men are placed in jeopardy, and the kingdom of Christ is hindered.

Blessed is he who dispenses the gospel, but cursed is he that dispenses with it.

From “*Sword and Trowel*,” 1882.

# The Union Baptist Witness

These pages, 14 and 15, are the official organ of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches in Ontario and Quebec.  
337 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Canada.

W. GORDON BROWN, Editor.

## LET US PRAY.

That the Conferences which are being planned in various districts throughout our Convention may be under the guidance of the Spirit of God and may be times of inspiration and of blessing to those who are able to attend. These conferences will be held for prayer, praise and a humbling of ourselves before God. Our people are anxious that as a result of these gatherings there may come to our churches renewed spiritual energy which will enable us to grasp with greater zeal and enthusiasm the splendid opportunity for the work of the Lord which now lies before us.

The Executive Board is calling upon the churches to observe the 19th of November as a day of prayer in the confidence that our God Who so graciously manifested His presence at the Convention held in London would have us make this a year of advancement. Let us make this day of prayer one in which we will very definitely seek the Lord's guidance and help in the furtherance of His great work.

## OUR JEWISH WORK.

A letter recently received from Rev. A. E. Glass, our missionary to the Jews, tells first of all of great blessing accompanying the messages he gave when he visited Hawkestone, West Oro and Barrie. The people came out in large numbers and showed great interest in the services and we feel sure the Word of our Lord will not return void.

The major part of the letter speaks of the encouraging results which have been manifested in the work of the Jewish mission. The work has been carried on continuously throughout the summer, but this fall, however, a renewed effort was put forth and it was most cheering to see the splendid results of the work. The opening Monday night session was marked by an attendance of forty-five; the Wednesday night session showed a larger attendance and all present stayed for the Gospel service; the week following there was a still greater increase and many more remained for the Gospel service. A good attendance, a good spirit, and a profitable study of the Bible have combined to make the Young People's Meeting of intense interest. The Children's Meetings for this fall showed an initial attendance of thirty, a number which it is expected will be doubled at the next meeting.

It is the aim of this work to spread the Gospel to God's chosen people by every possible means and in every direction. To this end invitations and Jewish tracts have been given out in large numbers. Mr. Glass and his helpers are trusting the Lord for a fruitful harvest from the seed sown, and are

looking forward to great blessings this coming winter. Let us join with them in earnest prayer for this splendid work.

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## ALTON.

Pastor Fullard, of Alton, reports times of fresh spiritual blessing at the recent services in the church there. A week ago Sunday the services were encouraging and we pray that definite results may follow this spoken word. At the prayer meeting the following Tuesday night the presence of God was most marked and the people were deeply touched as God spoke most definitely to their hearts.

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## IMMANUEL, HAMILTON.

Immanuel Church, Hamilton, joins with many other of our churches in reporting an outpouring of the Spirit of God in an unusual way on the Sunday following our splendid Convention. Pastor Dynes of St. Thomas, exchanged pulpits with Brother Milligan for the day, and gave the people two very inspiring messages on salvation, which brought a very strong appeal to the unsaved. We rejoice with Immanuel Church in the fact that they are able to have with them again Rev. Alfred Milligan, their beloved pastor.

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## SHENSTONE, BRANTFORD.

On Sunday morning, November 2nd, our returned missionary, Rev. A. J. Lewis, spoke at the Bible School and morning service of Shenstone Memorial Church. Manifest blessing and power were present at the service. In the evening Rev. W. J. H. Brown, of Annette Street, Toronto, preached with great power. Monday evening Mr. Brown again brought a message to the church. These meetings continued a series of special services which have been held recently in the Shenstone Church, and of which we hope to publish a fuller report later.

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## MEMORIAL CHURCH, STRATFORD.

Sunday, November 2nd, marked the fifteenth anniversary of the opening of the work in Memorial Church, Stratford, and its anniversary Sunday was one of such special blessing that it will be a day long remembered by those who were present at the services. The pastor, Rev. J. G. Connor, preached soul stirring sermons which thrilled the hearts of the large congregations and made them conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. The Sunday School reported an attendance of one hundred and ninety-two. The Holy Spirit is indeed working in this church and the members believe that it will not be long before they see very definite results in a great spiritual revival.

## F.B.Y.P.A. RALLY

As we go to press, it gives us much joy to report the splendid F.B.Y.P.A. Rally held at Orangeville on Monday of this week. It was indeed a glorious day both in nature and in our hearts as we gathered to keep our Thanksgiving by praising the Giver of all good things.

Two buses and numerous cars brought the young people from Toronto and nearby centres. As the time for the afternoon service drew near, a splendid number of delegates thronged the church. The meeting was marked by a spirit of devotion and enthusiasm which touched all hearts. After a rousing song service and a brief period of devotion and sweet fellowship, Mr. and Mrs. Mellish, our outgoing missionaries, brought messages spoken in the power and with the strength of the Spirit of God. Their words came with the breath of Heaven and the fervor of full consecration and all hearts were drawn out in response to the stirring challenge and appeal which they presented. With strong conviction they spoke of their eagerness to be our ambassadors to the dark land, and their implicit trust in the leading of the Lord. They concluded with an appeal for full consecration, which we feel sure cannot fall on unfruitful ground in the hearts to which it was directed.

Rev. S. Lawrance presented a most enthusiastic report of the Summer Conference. We are sure such a glowing account of the splendid camp at Fisher's Glen will impress many with a desire to be present at the 1931 Camp at Mary Lake, Muskoka.

Rev. Alex. Thomson brought the inspirational address of the afternoon, speaking from Exodus 14. Mr. Thomson pointed out the significance of the experiences of the Children of Israel as those experiences may be spiritually applied to the children of God. He made a stirring appeal for a clean-cut surrender of the heart and life to God. Any forward movement must be preceded by a period of quiet waiting upon God, that we may know His will and receive our inspiration and strength from His Holy Spirit. Therefore, let us first "stand still" and then "go forward."

A social time followed the conclusion of the afternoon service when the delegates partook of the supper provided by the Orangeville young people and enjoyed a time of fellowship, as old acquaintances were renewed and strengthened and new friendships were formed.

At the evening service, the church was filled to capacity and those who came to enjoy the spiritual feast were not disappointed. After a cheery service of song, the devotional period was led by Pastor Rumball of Oakwood



Church. The message of the evening was brought by Rev. W. J. H. Brown, of Annette St. Church. The speaker stressed the tremendous need for personal evangelism, and as he spoke, his hearers were thrilled by the stirring challenge to definite soul-winning. All present felt that hearts were refreshed and spirits moved with a desire to win the lost to Christ by all means.

Greetings were sent from the delegates present at this Rally to those gathered for similar fellowship in Hamilton and London. Reports of these other rallies which will be published later, will doubtless tell of like blessing and inspiration at these centres also.

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#### CALL TO PRAYER.

"The Executive Board of the UNION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES OF ONTARIO AND QUEBEC is calling upon the churches to observe the 19th of November as a Day of Prayer, confident that our God who so graciously manifested His presence at the Convention held in London, would have us make this a year of advancement.

"Let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a-going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then thou shalt bestir thyself." 2 Samuel 5:24.

We have surely experienced this sign of the beginning of blessing, and claim the promise which was used of the Lord in the Convention meetings through Rev. E. E. Hooper's address—

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore . . . sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Joshua 3: 4, 5.

Much prayer is needed at this time, and your Executive Board suggest that—

1. Wednesday, November 19th, be set aside as a Day of Prayer.

2. That one and two-day conferences be held for Prayer, Praise, and a humbling of ourselves before God.

Large responsibilities have been assumed by the Union—only in His strength and by the Holy Spirit's Power can we hope to meet them, therefore, PRAY

That the churches be quickened to greater concern and more sacrificial efforts for the salvation of the lost than ever before;

That hearts be searched and lives purified and our people indeed will be "a peculiar people" witnessing to the world;

That the Home Mission causes where Pastors are inadequately supported and where the financial burden is severe may have encouragement;

That Power may attend the preaching of the Word throughout the churches and that blessing will rest on the work among the French in Quebec and the Indians on the Reserve near Hagersville;

That those who have left all for His Name's Sake and are laboring in darkest Africa as the representatives of the Union may be sustained and blessed and that the three new workers going forward may have journeying mercies;

That stewardship of life and property may be the joy of our people."

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#### ORDINATION AND FAREWELL.

The Runnymede Road Regular Baptist Church, Toronto, is calling messengers to sit in council on Tuesday, November 18th, for the purpose of setting apart for the Gospel ministry Mr. Gordon Day Mellish. The service will begin at 3 p.m. and will continue into the evening when a farewell meeting will be held for our missionaries-elect, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon D. Mellish and Miss Minnie Lane.

As this will probably be the only public meeting in Toronto which our missionaries-elect will be able to attend before sailing for Liberia on the "Alaunia" on November 28th, friends in the Toronto district are urged to be present.

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#### MINER'S BAY.

When Pastor Mellish returned to his field in Miner's Bay after Convention, he found his people gathering in splendid numbers to hear the Word. He reports that it was one of the best Sundays he has had, and at the five preaching stations there were about one hundred and forty-four in attendance.

Since the announcement concerning Mr. Mellish's leaving for Liberia has been made, the people have entered whole heartedly into the work, rejoicing that they will have a direct contact with the work in Liberia and assuring their Pastor of their prayerful support.

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#### FAITH AND HOPE.

Hope Regular Baptist Church, London, is carrying on a Mission known as Faith Regular Baptist Mission. At these two places Sunday Schools and preaching services are carried on. Mr. Brackstone, who served on Thanksgiving Sunday, reports much interest shown. At Faith Mission there were some fifty boys and girls at the morning Sunday School, while the building was crowded at the evening preaching service. Mr. and Mrs. Mellish spoke at the Hope Sunday School in the afternoon.

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#### MICHIGAN NOTES.

By C. R. Peterson.

##### Newaygo.

Four were recently buried with Christ in baptism in Brooks Creek near here by Pastor Chester S. Minot. These were the fruits of pastoral work. One of the four was a man fifty-four years of age. His is an interesting example of the leading of the Holy Spirit. He had been under conviction, but refused the call of the Lord to repentance and faith. A short time ago he found himself in the hospital, ill with double pneumonia, and given up to die. While in this condition, he claims that the devil showed him hell with all of its tortures. He prayed, "Lord, save me and I will serve you." The Lord saved him, but he was unwilling to confess his faith. He was seized with sharp pains that were almost unendurable. He cried, "Lord, take away the pains, and I will testify for you." The pains went. Then he prayed, "Lord, I want to be out of this hospital in four

days." This prayer was also answered, and within four days he was out a well man. He immediately confessed Jesus Christ as Savior, and made haste to follow Him in baptism.

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#### Burlington.

This is a small church of only twenty members, situated in a village with a population of two hundred. Bro. W. H. Arnold has been the acting pastor for the past sixteen months, and is doing a good work. Many outsiders are attending the services. For three years they have had only a morning service, but recently they have begun evening services. They have a church building and parsonage all paid for. All debts of the church are fully paid, with some money in the treasury. A young man, Bro. G. L. Lyons, is preparing himself for missionary work in Africa under the African Inland Mission.

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#### Among Flint Churches.

The Edwin Avenue Baptist Church has recently experienced new life. Pastor Loren M. Gough baptized five during the month of October, and received five others on experience and restoration. They have just closed a four weeks' revival campaign, conducted by Rev. Clyde Baldwin. Seven professed faith in Christ in these meetings. This is one of our younger Regular Baptist churches.

The Berean Baptist Church, which has been conducted for ten years as a mission, was organized as a Baptist Church June 20, 1930. Pastor Robert R. Bower founded the mission nearly ten years ago, and has been carrying on since. The church has recently passed through a crisis, and seems to be on the up grade. Your correspondent was recently invited to hold a series of meetings with the church. Under the most discouraging circumstances the meetings were begun in full dependence upon the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. He has wrought mightily, and there have been a number of professed conversions. The meetings, which at this writing are still in progress, will close this week with a baptismal service.

The South Baptist Church is holding special meetings at the present time. Pastor R. C. Montague is being assisted by Pastor Archie Graham, of Mt. Morris.

The Baptist Gospel Temple, situated in the north end of the city, was organized in September, 1928. Three families constituted the organization. Pastor Jas. A. Lamb began the work, and is still the aggressive pastor. Their growth has been almost phenomenal. Twenty have been baptized during the past two months. About two hundred were baptized last year. The present membership is 279. The church is an independent Baptist Church. The state convention offered them money to help in the building enterprise, which was refused. They expect soon to have the property all paid for. The church recently presented the pastor with a new car. The state missionary of the Regular Baptists, writer of these notes, will begin a three or four weeks' revival campaign with the church on Sunday, November 30.

## Baptist Bible Union Lesson Leaf

Vol. 5

No. 4

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR.

Lesson 48 November 30th, 1930.  
Fourth Quarter.

### DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH.

Lesson Text: Genesis, Chapter 23.

Golden Text: "And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." Genesis 23:2.

#### 1. DEATH OF SARAH, (vs. 1, 2).

Death is an enemy, (1 Cor. 15:26), to the saint, of God a defeated enemy, (1 Cor. 15:57), but nevertheless an enemy. It robs us of our well-beloved, and separates the nearest and dearest, and although we know it is well with the departed one, and that we shall meet again, yet there is a pang at parting. It is an experience all must undergo unless the Lord should come in our lifetime, but it is not one which should be feared by the child of God, for the power of death has been broken, (Heb. 2:14), and absence from the body means "present with the Lord", (Cor. 5:8).

The record of death reminds us of the awful nature of sin which is the cause of it, (Gen. 2:17), and emphasizes the frailty of human nature. The uncertainty of time is also made clear and the necessity for preparation in view of the great change, for it is quite clear this life is not the end of all; there is an eternal existence before every soul. The realities of death and eternity require to be brought before all these days when there is so much carelessness concerning the things of God.

Death has claimed all the persons of the biblical ages, and many more besides, and the record is given here of Sarah's experience with it. The statement is brief, and in it there is contained particulars only of her age at decease, and the place of her departure. She was one hundred and twenty-seven years old, and died in "Kirjath-arba", "the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan". Nothing is stated concerning the circumstances of her death. Some think, by the statement that, "Abraham came to mourn for Sarah", that he was away from home at the time and while this may be a proper implication, it is not a necessary inference, as the meaning might simply be that he came to her tent, or it may simply denote the action of mourning without reference to movement. The second meaning is probably the correct one.

The age of Sarah implies long life, and that infers privilege and responsibility. Just in what measure Sarah lived up to her privilege we are not certain. Judging from certain recorded incidents we know she made mistakes; she was not perfect. But she was nevertheless a real servant of God and is included by Peter among the holy women, and held up as an example unto all women, (1 Peter 3:1-6). She was a chosen vessel of God, fitted for the Master's use, and wonderfully sustained by Him in spite

of human frailties in the carrying out of His purpose. In this there is distinct encouragement for us, in the knowledge that God is able and willing to use weak human creatures, in the fulfilment of His gracious will. Note death's nature, meaning, certainty, and consequences, now and hereafter.

#### II. MOURNING FOR SARAH, (v. 2).

"And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her", denoting the eastern custom of sitting on the ground in token of sorrow, the weeping manifesting a natural outburst of feeling. Sarah had lived a long time, she had not been cut off in the bloom of her youth, she had finished her course, and God had taken her unto Himself; yet Abraham mourned for her. There are probably some who under similar circumstances would not have shed a tear, but Abraham was not of that number. The companion of his life had departed, and he felt the pain of separation. And surely most of us can enter into his feelings. He loved Sarah, and although he knew he would meet her again, yet natural feeling was present, and could not be suppressed. It was an eastern custom to manifest grief on such an occasion, but we are confident this manifestation of Abraham was not of a formal nature. His tears were real, and would give relief to his pent up feelings. Others have shed tears, including our Lord Himself, (Deut. 34:8; John 11:35), and the child of God is enjoined to weep with those who weep, (Rom. 12:15), entering into their feelings and sympathizing with them.

It is not wrong to mourn on account of the dead, but in relation to the saints we are directed not to sorrow as those who have no hope for at the return of the Lord the dead will be raised, and there will be a glorious union of living and dead in Christ, (1 Thess. 4:13-18). In the midst of sorrow and loneliness therefore we can rejoice in hope of the blessed future. Our Lord has removed the sting of death, and made possible complete victory over it, for every one who trusts in Him. Note the significance of His death and resurrection, the nature and power of His salvation, and the blessed results of His second coming. In Christ death is defeated, and life is eternal. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

#### III. BURIAL OF SARAH, (vs. 3-20).

Unto Abraham had been promised the land of Canaan, and much besides, (15:18); but he did not actually own a foot of ground in it. He had no place to bury his dead. His first duty therefore, on the death of Sarah was to secure a burial ground, and the record is given of the business transaction attendant upon securing it. We are first informed of his application for a burying place. He "stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth". He informed them he was a stranger, and sojourner among them, and requested the possession of a place to bury his dead out of his sight, (v. 4). In this statement we are enlightened concerning the patriarch's state; he had no fixed abode; he was simply a pilgrim in the land.

The response to the request on the part of the men of the land is quite favourable, and Abraham is offered a choice of sepulchres wherein to bury his dead, (vs. 5, 6). There is in this answer an acknowledgment of the patriarch's power and influence among them: he is addressed as "my lord" and stated to be a "mighty prince" among them. There is no doubt therefore that he was a wealthy man, owning large herds, and having many servants. This we have seen in former lessons, (13:12; 14:14). We note also the courtesy of the reply, the offer is immediate and gracious; testifying probably to the friendly attitude of Abraham toward them, as well as of their's toward him. The life of the saint ought to be such that the world will respect its reality. It should be characterized by the graces which spring from holiness of character.

The offer being so graciously offered to Abraham, he stood up and made known the place of his choice. He desired the men to intreat Ephron the son of Zohar that he might give him the cave of Machpelah as a burying place, (vs. 8, 9). Possibly Abraham was not personally acquainted with this man, or it may be he only desired the men to use their influence in the procuring of this place. Ephron when appealed to very graciously offered to give the cave to Abraham, possibly on the understanding that a substantial present be given in exchange, (vs. 10, 11). Abraham declined to accept it as a gift, and offered to pay the price for it, (vs. 12, 13). The price is mentioned in a rather off-hand manner, (vs. 14, 15) but such indifference was only affectation according to Arab custom. The patriarch paid the price, and the cave and field became his, (vs. 16-18), and he buried his dead therein, (vs. 19, 20). The whole land was his by promise but this was the only spot he actually owned. He would receive the land by faith from God, but he would not accept it as a present from man. He looked forward by faith to the possession of the land, but acted on straight business principles in his dealings with men. In this he is an example to all men.

#### F.B.Y.P.A. RALLIES ON THANKS-GIVING DAY.

The four Thanksgiving Day Conferences conducted by the F.B.Y.P.A. of Ontario and Quebec and the Toronto Junior F.B.Y.P.A. were glorious meetings of inspiration and fellowship.

In the morning nearly seven hundred boys and girls gathered in Waverley Road for a great Junior Rally which was addressed by Rev. J. F. Holliday, of Fairbank.

In the afternoon and evening senior conferences were conducted at Wortley Road, London; Hughson Street, Hamilton, and in Orangeville. Nearly one thousand Regular Baptists from approximately fifty churches, attended the three senior rallies. The buildings were crowded in the afternoon and literally packed in the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Mellish addressed the rallies at Orangeville and Hamilton, and Miss Lane spoke to the London gathering.