

The Gospel Witness

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IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

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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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The Office of the Prophet

The true prophet, like the true pastor, is the father of his people. When Joash addressed the prophet Elisha as his father he did more than employ a formal term of respect. The king was greatly moved (II. Kings 13:14) and "wept over his face" as he said, "O my father, my father"; and no doubt meant what his language implied, that Elisha had been the father of his people.

There is a common mental attitude which is inhospitable to the parental word, or to any word weighted with time and experience. There is a quality of mind which, though it may enlarge with the years, does not mature: it is a house with an eastern prospect and no back window, which sees the sun rise, but never observes its setting. It lives in the present and the future, and is without even a nodding acquaintance with the past. Such a mind develops a temper like Rehoboam's, which welcomes only the counsel of youth and inexperience. It assumes that life is one long, unclouded Saturday afternoon. It is a mental garden in which there are no perennials, and in which that which grows quickly because there is no depth of earth. The spirit of such a life is characterized by an enthusiastic readiness to manufacture things quickly, but is impatient of everything which requires time to grow. The only heavenly characteristic of such a life is, that it will have nothing to do with any kind of tree which does not yield its fruit at least every month.

To all such—and who of us does not recognize some aspects of his own disposition in the picture?—the prophet must come with the enlightening, steadying, experimental word of a father. He must set the segmentary and incidental events of the individual life in the light of universal experience. He must bring the present into the light of the past, and throw the light of the eternal upon the temporal, and thus give to life a true perspective. He must be a father to the orphan mind, which, child-like, is so engrossed with its temporal toys, it has never enquired whence it came, and therefore is ignorant of its true relations.

"Where there is no vision the people perish." So perished Pharaoh and all his hosts. "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph." Had there been an Egyptian prophet to bridge that gap, and to inform the king of his indebtedness to the past, he had been worth more to Pharaoh than the chariot of Egypt and the horsemen thereof. And the true prophet must be a father to the new kings which know not Joseph, to teach them not to contend against, but to ally themselves with principles which climb from pits through dungeons to a throne.

As years are multiplied and experience is deepened and extended, a man may summon courage to offer counsel to his juniors. But it is not of naturally acquired wisdom we speak; for the richer his own experience the less inclined a wise man is to obtrude his advice upon others. Nor was it solely natural capacity or widely varied knowledge which made Elisha a father to his nation.

A man who had known Spurgeon well, told us that as he reread his early sermons he was led to marvel chiefly at the maturity of their thought and the wealth of experience they implied. He said he could not understand how so young a man as he was then had attained the mental stature of a sage.

We ventured to reply that we believed there was but one explanation, and quoted the Psalmist's saying: "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." For it was on this ground that Elihu presumed to speak. He said: "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Harken to me. I also will shew mine opinion."

The prophet is a messenger. In the New Testament meaning of the term he must be an expositor of the great principles of the Bible. And the expository preacher may come to his congregation with the authority of years, and the benefit of unlimited experience. He is wisdom's mouthpiece, saying: "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? . . . Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. . . . The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandments: when he appointed the foundation of the earth: then was I by him as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways."

The prophet is a father to his people only as he voices the ageless message of this Book, and speaks the word of the Eternal Father. Then, without apology or presumption, he may cry in the hearing of the world: "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not".

"A LITTLE MEMBER."

It is commonly said that words are cheap; whereas the truth is that nothing in the world is more costly. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." The tongue is the most difficult of all our members to control; and we are told "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . . the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison". There is not one of the readers of *The Witness* who has not proved these words to be true. Sometimes wrong is done by other members of the body; but the tongue is the guiltiest member of all. Made to be occupied with God's praises; designed to be engaged in a ministry of love; too often it is employed as a messenger of Satan. Christian churches suffer much from the inconsistencies of conduct on the part of their members; but the principal damage to the cause of Christ is done by unsanctified tongues. The writer has been asked to sit with many church councils when trouble has arisen in a church, and in the majority of instances such trouble may be traced to an unruly tongue. It is extraordinary that many apparently good people, who would count it a crime to defraud another of a five-cent piece, or to inflict upon another the slightest bodily injury, yet seem to have no compunction whatever in robbing another of his reputation, or in inflicting upon the sensitive spirit wounds which years cannot heal.

But the worst of this habit is that it is usually done in the dark. Men privily slander their neighbour with their tongue. When the man whose character is besmirched is not present, or the woman whose motives are impugned knows nothing about it, an unkind word is spoken which sets on fire the whole course of nature. The command "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" is just as much a part of the decalogue as "Thou shalt not kill", or "Thou shalt not steal". The blessing of the Lord is prevented, and many a Christian life is stripped of its beauty and fruitfulness and power, by the pernicious habit of speaking evil of other people. There is perhaps no instrument which the devil uses with more deadly effect than the human tongue; and who of us dares to assume that we are safe in this particular? We need to pray constantly to be preserved from evil speaking; and this may be only as our conversation is always with grace, seasoned with salt.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.

We have in mind an ideal family circle. The father is a professional man of eminence, the author of several books of importance. But he is chiefly a father, and loves to have his children about him. On a certain evening the family might be seen assembled in the living-room, all interested apparently in the same thing. But they are not listening to a learned lecture by the head of the household, nor to a musical performance by the oldest daughter: they are listening to the baby learning to talk; and by the smiles which irradiate all faces it would appear that the greatest entertainer would have to look to his laurels when in competition with his majesty the baby.

Thus should it be in the household of faith. Among the members of the family there should be some who are deeply learned in the mysteries of the gospel. The older children should be leaving the first principles, and going on to perfection. But where love reigns the household will feel a special interest in and responsibility for the younger members of the family, especially for the babes; and every member of the household will help to teach the baby to talk and to walk.

The church prayer-meeting should hear the voice of mature experience in prayer and testimony; but it ought also to be the place where the babes learn to talk. Nothing is so stimulating to faith as the prayer and testimony of new-born souls. Pity the church which is a stranger to the music of the prattle of new-born babes!

Moreover, the household of faith ought to learn to look after itself. How uncomfortable a guest would feel in a home where all the older children were content to sit around in idleness, while one pair of hands did all the work! Each member of the family should carry a share of the household burdens. And a growing church should be like a growing family, where the work is equally distributed among the stronger children.

We know a church where these ideal conditions increasingly obtain; where an ever-increasing family love to listen to the lisping of the new-born, and where all the children are learning so to work together that no one is overworked, and what is more unusual, few are under-worked.

Always

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

Always is a key word. It tells of the breadth of the claims of Christ. Human nature does not like this. It likes times of outbreak, times of semi-madness when all restraints are thrown off. Some religions allow such times. If the Lord Jesus would only make room for them, many more would become "Christians". But Christ's word is "Always". He makes no exception, no, not for one moment. His own Presence is with us "always": "Lo, I am with you always",—all the days and all the hours of grief and of joy. We could not bear it if it were not so. Our Lord is never absent. He never leaves us alone: He never loses sight of us. And so His word for us is "always".

I.

"*Always*" covers all our inner life. It controls conscience. We should always have "a conscience void of offence", (Acts 25:16). We should act as in sight of the judgment seat of Christ. We are weak if conscience is not clean; but if that voice has nothing against us we are strong. So we must have it purified by the blood of Christ and then kept pure and "void of offence" by communion with Him. "Always" reaches the *intellect* too. Peter writes in order that we may "have these things always in remembrance". If you ask, "what things?" then first Peter, chapter one, verses five to fifteen will tell you. We are "always" to have in earnest remembrance the momentous and precious truths of Christ. The things that matter most, we must have always in memory. "Always" covers our *emotional* life also. We are to "Rejoice in the Lord always". (Phil. 4:4), and "as sorrowful yet to be always rejoicing", (2 Cor. 6:10). "Always" applies thus to our world of mood and feeling. Whatever our condition, or age, our circumstances, our emotions are to be kept in hand, kept "always" rejoicing. Nor is our *will* to be omitted from the control of "always". We are to be "always confident" (2 Cor. 5:6). By a deliberate act of the will we must refuse to doubt God—whatever our trials. All of us know something of a sinking of heart and hope, but we can be confident concerning the issue. The wildest seas must only toss us more completely upon the bosom of Christ. So we should will never to lose faith, but to be "always confident". This "always" reaches to the whole of our inner being.

II.

"*Always*" covers our *devotional* life. "Men ought always to pray", (Luke 18:1), to "pray always", (Luke 21:36). So says our Lord. Paul is like his Master urging the Christian warrior to be "praying always", (Eph. 6:18). So thrice the word comes to us. Our devotional life is not to be a matter of fits and starts; but to be maintained under all conditions. Nothing must be allowed to hinder prayer. We are never to let it flag; but to get into the delight of prayer and get to see that it is the channel of all blessing; that it is "the Christian's vital breath". We must be always breathing if we are to live. Let "always" mark our devotional life on all days—busy days and holidays. It is of supreme importance. If we pray "always" we shall always be pure and strong and ready.

III.

"*Always*" covers our *speaking* life. "Let your speech be always with grace", (Co. 4:6), always "in grace" as its very element. The contrast is seen in first John chapter four, verse five, "they speak of the world". The smallest leaf on the tree of our life is to be full of the sap of the Holy Spirit, full of "grace". Such "speech" may not always be pleasing, but whatever its tone, it is to rise out of grace. We are to become "golden mouthed". We are all prone to catch the style and accent of the country in which we dwell: if we live "in the heavenlies" with God we shall speak "in grace". "With salt" says Paul. That does not mean wit, but with the power that shall banish utterly out of our speech the impure motive, and debasing allusion. Salt preserves, and if this element is always put into our speech it will keep our talk from rotting: kill the frivolous, the dreary gossip, the ill-natured, and idle speech. Salt gives savour and slays insipid generalities. Speech should "always" be suitable to the case in hand, (Col. 4:6).

IV.

"*Always*" covers all our *active* life. We are to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord", (I Cor. 15:58). Then is there to be NO rest? Christ came as the rest Giver: and once "being wearied He sat thus", and rested. It was then the work of the Lord to rest. He was also doing the sublimest service all the time, (John 4:26). Work is believing: "This is the work of God that ye believe in him." The work of God is doing the Will of God, and in first Corinthians, chapter fourteen, verse fifty-eight, that looks to be active service.

Let us not do as little as possible, but be "always" at it. "Always abounding"—heart and hands always full of it. Always abounding because our Lord's presence is ever near. "Always having all sufficiency in all things" we may abound to every good work, (2 Cor. 9:8). So because we "always have all sufficiency", "always" can mark all our life and keep it always fresh and strong and beautiful and abounding in heavenly fruitfulness.

THE RADIO FUND
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Three thirsty children

Who always want a "djink".

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

HOW GOD MADE A PRINCE OF A SUPPLANTER.

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto.

(Stenographically reported.)

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him."—Genesis 32: 1.

Two weeks ago we were engaged in a study of the character of Esau, described in the Scripture as "a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." And we observed that while Esau had many amiable characteristics, the distinguishing feature about him was that he found no place for God in his life. He was of the earth, earthy—a man who lived without holding converse with the Skies.

And now this evening we have the character of Jacob before us. A great deal is said about the influence of heredity; and on the ground of the operation of the laws of heredity, there are those who would excuse almost any and every evil as being an inevitable fruit of some natural predisposition for which the individual is not responsible. The eugenists, on the other hand, would obviate the necessity of regeneration, of a second birth, by effecting the perfection of the natural birth. In spite of these contentions, our story serves to show that the operation of the laws of heredity are very uncertain; and that it is extremely difficult to foretell their influence upon human character. For here are two men who are not only the sons of the same parents, but they are twin brothers—and yet they are as unlike as it would be possible for two human characters to be.

I.

Our text tells us that as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. And when they met Jacob—**THEY MET A MAN WITH A RECORD**—and it was a record of which no one could justly be proud. It is useless to try to excuse Jacob. If you read his story carefully, you will conclude there is ground for Moody's famous saying, that "we are a pretty bad lot".

It is a most interesting story, which illustrates the possibilities of divine grace. But certainly Jacob after the flesh was not a very promising subject. His whole history illustrates the truth of a verse of one of our hymns:

"Ah, grace! into unlikeliest hearts
It is thy boast to come;
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home."

If divine grace, at last, made a prince of Jacob, changing his name from Jacob to Israel, and making him worthy of the inheritance to which he had been called, there is hope for the very worst of us; for it would be difficult to find anyone whose moral future was less promising than that of Jacob the supplanter.

To begin with, *Jacob was an untruthful man.* I have heard ingenious expositors try to prove that Jacob

told the truth after all. But such casuistry dishonors God's word. There is this difference between biblical biography and biographies written by uninspired men: When an inspired pen writes the record of a man's life, it does not hesitate to tell the truth about him. And in the stories of the lives of Abraham, and Moses, and David, and of all those in whose lives God was pleased to magnify Himself, you will find that there is always a place for divine grace to triumph. And the biographer does not hesitate to tell the very worst.

The truth is that Jacob was a liar of the first order; and when you say that of a man you say the very worst you can say of anybody. Because it is of no value to say that a man is amiable; that he has many attractive qualities; that his personality is extremely winsome; and that in many of the relationships of life he is an exemplary sort of person, if he has this one serious defect—that you cannot believe a word he says. When you say that of a man, you declare that his character has no ethical foundation; because a man who is not truthful cannot be a good man. And that was true of Jacob. In the story he told to his blind father, he told an unvarnished, unmitigated lie. There is no possibility of explaining it away. And yet, I propose to show you this evening that God made a place for Himself in the life of even so evil a character; and ultimately transformed him, and made him worthy of the new princely name He gave him, and of the covenant to which he was made an heir.

And, if I may communicate to you a little secret, I want to tell you that Jacob is strangely like you and me! We are not much better. "I said in my haste," said David, "all men are liars." And you have all heard the old Scotsman's comment, that "if he had lived in our day, he would have said it at his leisure."

And you will find that society is organized on the assumption that men are liars. That is a strange thing to say, but it is true. You will find that all the checks and balances of business are provided to prevent the modern Jacobs from taking advantage of the modern Esaus. That is why you require your contracts in black and white. The highest compliment you can pay to any man is to say that his word is as good as his bond. Jacob's word was not. He was untruthful at heart. He told that which was not in accord with the facts of the case.

Furthermore, *Jacob was actuated by dishonest motives.* I suppose there are degrees of culpability in this matter of untruthfulness. Oliver Wendell Holmes has an essay, it is long since I read it, but I think its title is "The Ethics of Lying", in which he endeavours to show that Nature herself is a bit of a liar; that the tree-toad is one of the arch-deceivers; and that the chameleon

is by Nature equipped to deceive everybody by taking the color of its surroundings. And dealing with the medical aspect, he justifies the doctor who, when a very neurotic patient says, "Now, doctor, tell me the truth. Am I going to die?" gives him an evasive answer.

Be that as it may, Jacob lied for his own personal advantage, and without necessity. He declared himself to be his father's first-born, when he knew he was not, in order that he might supplant his brother, and appropriate his father's blessing.

Well, I am afraid that if we—any of us—were to put our character side by side with Jacob's, we should find there are spots in our history which would make no better reading than that of Jacob. And when you read this story—now listen—when you read this story, and pass unmeasured criticism upon the action of Jacob, just take time to be thankful that your life's story has not been written down by an unerring pen, so that all men might read it. And at the same time, remember that by the Hand that wrote this story, the history of every life is being written, and that some day we shall be "judged out of those things which are written in the books." Perhaps these biographies are intended to serve as advance notices of the stories that will be read on the day when God shall open His books. For remember, we are speaking now of a single act in Jacob's history; and it is unfair to judge a whole life by a single utterance, when the man is in a bad mood; when he is not quite himself; when he is specially stirred to an unworthy action. For God will judge us with a true knowledge of the relation of one act to another, and of the quality of the life as a whole.

We may observe further that *Jacob was as wide awake to the attractions of this present world as Esau*. Two weeks ago this evening I tried to explain to you that on one side of his nature, Esau was responsive to every appeal—that to the world of things Esau instantly made response; but there never was from him any response to the spiritual. Jacob loved the world of things as Esau did; and managed to secure a good share for himself; for I read that the land was unable to bear them. Jacob and Esau had to part company just as Abraham and Lot did, because their riches in cattle were so great. Jacob was just as well off, just as rich, as Esau was. And when we say that Esau "for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," we must never forget that the "morsel of meat" for which he sold it, was Jacob's, and that he bought it at the highest possible price.

Somebody says, "There are people in the churches to-day who are just as keen business men as you can find anywhere; and I know multitudes of professing Christians who say they look 'for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God,' but they are as keen in their race after the dollar as any man I know." That is perfectly true—and some of them are a little more keen. Jacob was. He was a shrewd business man; and he has a good many successors, after the flesh, in this city in which we live.

I would have you, therefore, weigh these two characters in the balance. Measuring Esau on the natural

plane you find him a generous and considerate son and brother; that he is possessed of many qualities which call forth your admiration. The one thing about him is that he never bows his knee, that he makes no response whatever to God. He is a profane man; he is essentially a man of the world. But as you study the character of Jacob you will observe that, while in the beginning he is just as worldly as Esau is, and that he lacks many of Esau's attractive qualities, in spite of it all, he is awake to another world. And it is of that awakening I want now, in a word, to speak.

II.

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." WHEN JACOB MET THE ANGELS OF GOD, HE RECOGNIZED THEM, AND MADE RESPONSE TO THEIR APPEAL. And this is true of every man—that as we go on our way the angels of God meet us. The Bible is full of the stories of the ministry of angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." "Angel" means messenger. And we all meet, at some time or another—somewhere along the road of our pilgrimage—we all meet messengers from the other world. It is true of every man, and of every woman, and of every boy, and of every girl—that as we go on our way, somewhere the angels of God will meet us. Not that they necessarily appear in any supernatural way. The messenger of God may be a godly mother, or a godly father, or a pious wife, or a spiritually-minded husband: the messenger of God may be a little child just dropped down from the purity of heaven: the messenger of God may be a doctor, or an undertaker, or some devastating plague: the messenger of God may be a faithful preacher, or a Sunday-school teacher, or a tract-distributor, or some strange providence that orders your life in a particular direction. But remember this, "God leaves not Himself without witness." He will be justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges; and every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. But He will not allow any man, or any woman, to go on his way without sending an angel to meet him, to tell him the way in which he should go. God will leave, I say, every one of us without excuse for assuming that this present material world is the only world. He will see to it that some messenger comes to us from beyond, to tell us of that which lies behind the veil of sense—of a life which is more than the life of the body; of a life which is not bounded by the grave. God's messengers will come. And when they came to Jacob, Jacob recognized them.

Jacob's family history had been written by the angels of God. His grandfather, Abraham, had "entertained angels unawares"; and ere they left his tent they made him a promise that a son should be born. And in due time Isaac, that child of laughter, the child of promise, came to bless Abraham's life; and by the fulfilment of that promise, Jacob himself lived. And at a later time, when Isaac was laid upon the altar, and Abraham had stretched forth his hand to slay his son, it was the voice of an angel that said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." And still later it was an angel of God who went before Eliezer into the far country to

seek the woman whom God had appointed to be Isaac's wife, and to bring Isaac and Rebecca together.

Jacob's history had been written by the angels of God—and so has yours. If we could but read the pages of the past, there is not one of us here this evening who would not see that we owe our very existence, this moment, to the intervention of messengers from another world. God has intervened; He has proved again and again that He is God, and beside Him there is none else.

Could we not sing this evening?

"O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led:
Our vows, our prayers, we now present
Before Thy throne of grace;
God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race!"

There are men and women here this evening who would say, "Sir, I know something of the religion of Christ. I heard it at my mother's knee. I was taught it in the Sunday School. I heard it at family worship." And in that day when you went on your way the angel of God met you! And I am here this evening to ask you, how far your life's story up to the present is parallel to that of Jacob? Have you recognized the angel? Have you listened to God's call? Have you made any response to the appeal of the spiritual world?

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold.
Peace on the earth, good-will to men,
From Heaven's all-gracious King!
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing."

"Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lonely plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing."

Have you any ear for the heavenly music? Will you respond to the appeal of the angel?

I suppose the angels of God met Esau. He could not live in his father's house where the altar had been built, and where Jehovah's name was honored—he could not live in his father's house without being met by the angels of God. But, as I told you a week or so ago, Esau was fast asleep. He was a "profane" man.

But when Jacob listened to the angels of God, when he recognized them as such, *he began to part company with Esau*. That was the hour in which his selfish, scheming, unlovely soul began to be changed. And his face was set toward the things of Heaven in the day that he met and recognized the angels of God.

And that is the day in which we all begin to be different; when first we make response to the light, the appeal, the call, of the spiritual world.

Let me try to show you *where Jacob first recognized the angel*. He was going away from home, and he had a dream. Do you ever have dreams? Most of them are not worth writing down; many of them are attributable to the errors of the kitchen, very probably. And yet, after all, perhaps they cannot be wholly ignored. I remember reading somewhere of one godly man who was wont to analyze his dreams, and to humble himself before God if he found any element of evil in them; because he argued it could not be woven into the visions of the night if it had not found a place in his thinking. And he believed it was out of memory's store that in the hour of unconsciousness dreams were made. I do not know how correct he was, but at all events Jacob's dream was of the other world. Whether we have dreams by night or not, I suppose we all have dreams by day. And what do we see in our dreams? What picture do we conjure up before the mind? What castles do we build? What do we see in these experiences? Is it a dream of greater conformity to the image of Christ? Is it a dream born of an earnest longing to be God-like? And out of that, do you imagine the possibility of ascending the skies? And do you anticipate the day when you shall be presented "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy"?

What was Jacob's dream? In his dream he saw "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven." In his dream Jacob saw this world related to another: he saw a way out of this life into another. And in his dream he heard a voice, for God stood above it and He spoke down the ladder to Jacob, and made him a great promise. And He said, "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." It was as though He had said: "Jacob, to-night is the beginning of a severe discipline. To-night is the beginning of a new life, and I am going to do something for you. I am going to keep on, and on, and on, and I will never leave you until I have perfected you according to my plan." He was a poor sample to begin with; he was a poor character, I grant you; but that was God's word to him.

Have you seen "the ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reaching to heaven"? How many are there here this evening who really know how to get from this world into another? How many have heard One speak, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? The ladder was but a type, a symbol, a prophecy of the Cross. And Jesus said to Nathanael, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." In other words, He said, "Nathanael, I am Jacob's ladder; I am the way to God; and the angels will minister to you through Me."

Have you seen heaven open? You may be conscious of the earth and all that is in it, just as Jacob was! But if you have seen heaven open; if you know the way to God—that is conversion; that is the beginning of a new life; the angels of God have met you; and you have recognized them as divine messengers.

III.

So far, so good! Now, just a word or two to show you that THE ANGELS OF GOD NEVER LEFT JACOB, UNTIL THEY HAD BROUGHT HIM TO THE ANGEL—the Angel of the covenant; none other than the Lord Jesus Himself. And they never left him until that Angel, who is the Angel, had had His way, and had changed him from the wretched, ignoble, supplanter, into a prince, who had power with God and with men.

Is there a discouraged Christian here this evening, who says, "I have made so little progress. I once thought I was a Christian; but I still discover defects of character are with me; and I wonder sometimes if ever I shall be able to put off the old man, and put on the new"? I want to tell you in Old Testament speech how God works in the lives of His chosen.

The angels had rather a difficult time with Jacob. He was an unpromising lump of clay; and he required a good deal of kneading with the fists of God before he was fit to yield an instant response to the delicate manipulation of the fingers of the Divine artist. But there came a time when this hard, unyielding, man of the earth became really as the clay in the Potter's hand; and He moulded him exactly to His liking, and made him at last what He wanted him to be.

And I suggest to you that we must not be discouraged if we have great difficulties. I knew a man some years ago, who was over sixty. He had been a professing Christian for about forty years. He was a righteous man. So often when I dealt with him—for he was a deacon of the church of which I was pastor—when I dealt with him, I thought of that Scripture, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." He was righteous rather than good; and it was a kind of righteousness that was not very attractive. He was hard and unsympathetic. Sometimes when we had a deacons' meeting, and when we would have the membership of the church before us—it was not this church—perhaps some deacon would say, "Well, there is Mrs. So-an-So, she has not been to church for some time." And somebody else would say, "Well, you know, she has a family of little children." "That should not make any difference," said my righteous friend, "my wife had a family; they were brought up in the church; we were never absent from church." He could not understand why anybody should be absent. Strangely enough, he had had no sickness in his family. The children, up to that time, had caused him no anxiety. He had lived a secluded and sheltered life. There came a day, however, when God struck him. There came a day when God laid him low; He began to knead him, to break him up, and mix him up like a lump of clay. And I saw that man, in two or three years, grow more than he had grown in forty years. O what a change there was when the Angel took him in hand, to make a prince of him! He is still living, and with every year you can see more and more of the tenderness and graciousness of Jesus. He is becoming more and more princely all the time.

Well, now, conversion is not the end, my friend—it is the beginning. In Old Testament language, conversion is the time when the angels of God take hold of a man, and undertake to make a prince out of a

supplanter. In New Testament language, conversion is the time when a man's sins are forgiven; when they are washed away by the blood of Christ; when he is justified from all ungodliness, and declared righteous in Christ; and when the Spirit of God begins the long work of sanctification, of transforming him into the image of the Lord Jesus.

But when the angels met Jacob, the net result of their first meeting with him was to secure a promise of the tenth. After the great promise of the covenant was made, and God had said, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee", Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." After the sermon, you see, the angels took up a collection; and all that they got was a tenth. And that may be more than the angels get from some of us! But there was a recognition of God even in temporal things. Jacob began to take God into his business, as a result of that first meeting with the angels.

Follow him to Padan-aram yonder; study the story of his years with Laban; and until he comes back again to meet his brother, Esau. Through all those years Jacob has been really a different man. He was far from being an idle man. He was still a shrewd man of business. He knew how to make a bargain, and how to advantage himself in every situation. He was still wide awake to the material world about him, and yet you find Jacob bowing his knee to God; pleading the promise; believing in the covenant; looking for the blessing—he was a strange mixture! And could you have seen him in some stages of his history, you would say, "I do not want a religion like that: I do not want to be like Jacob at all." Ah, but you must not look at the character of Jacob until God has finished with him. See what God can make out of a man like Jacob. Possibly you and I need that lesson. It may be that we are no lovelier than he; and that grace will have just as difficult a ministry making us over into God's pattern.

And there comes a time when Jacob, in response to God's call, turns his face homeward. Back there is the brother he had wronged; there is the man from whom he stole the blessing; there is the man whom he cheated by a lie—and he is going back to meet him. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." They have not left him. O, the marvel of it! They never left him. "And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host; God is with me still." And then he hears that Esau is coming to meet him; and he is filled with fear. He has an idea how he would feel if he were in Esau's place. And so he gets down before the Lord, and he begins to pray that the Lord will deliver him, and the mother with the children, from the hand of Esau.

But remember, Jacob has made some progress during his absence; for if you read the story you will find that as he spreads his complaint before the Lord, and urges his petitions upon His grace, he says, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the

truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."

And grace has done something for a man who thus recognizes God. The angels have done something for a man who, when alone with God, exclaims, "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies."

The rest is settled over the ford Jabbok. The angels bring him to the place which God had planned long ago; and he finds himself alone in His presence. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him (not he with the man) until the breaking of the day." And the Man was the Angel of the covenant—none other than the Lord Himself.

And the meaning of the story is just this: It is as though God had said, "Jacob; I have been waiting for you a long time; I have sent my angels; I have given my angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: thou hast been prospered in a thousand particulars; and now, at last, Jacob, I have something to say to you. I have come to meet you here to determine who is going to be Lord." "And there wrestled a Man with him." We often turn to that story as an example of prevailing prayer. I know that Jacob said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." But have you observed how Jacob got the blessing? All those years Jacob had been walking in his own way, and putting his will against God's; and God had been dealing with him. But now the angels are succeeded by "a Man," and the grip of Omnipotence is laid upon him; and God demands, "Surrender! Surrender!" Jacob tried to wrestle, but when the Man saw that he prevailed not against him He touched the hollow of his thigh, and Jacob's thigh was out of joint. And the limping Jacob prevailed!

"And now," said the Lord, "I will change thy name. Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince, hast thou power with God, and with men and hast prevailed." The way to be sovereign in the spiritual realm is to surrender to the only Sovereign; the way to be a conqueror is to be a subject; the way to be a king is to be obedient to the King of kings.

And I must tell you why. He does that for all of us before I close. Sometimes it is in the hospital; sometimes it is in a business crisis, and sometimes somewhere else—but sooner or later, every true child of God comes to the place where the Man meets him; and it is determined whether his will or God's shall be done.

Did it make any difference? Look at this bargain-driver as he leaves him, halting now, limping on his thigh, a lame man—but yet a prince!

"And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, Esau came." And he said, "What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?" And Jacob said, humbly, "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord." But the generous Esau answered, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself."

I am not surprised that Jacob should send those presents to buy favor with Esau! He knew how purchasable he had always been. But that is not the line of the story. I want to emphasize. Rather, it is this: "And he urged him." Did anybody ever before know

Jacob to urge anybody to take anything from his hand? But now that God has conquered in his life, his hand is open, and his heart begins to love somebody else than himself; and generously he wants to share his wealth with another.

Read at your leisure the sequel to my story, in part at least—the thirty-fifth chapter. You will find that Jacob is walking and talking with God. He now lives in communion and fellowship with God. The angels are with him; and his eyes are open all the time; and while his feet are upon earth his spirit is in heaven. In New Testament language, he is now in the heavenly places; "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

And now just a glimpse at the sunset scene when Israel comes down to Egypt. Joseph brings his sons before him—Manasseh and Ephraim. "And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger." And you all remember his testimony: "And he blessed Joseph and said, God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long until this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Viewing his life in retrospect, he says, "The Angel has been with me all the time; I recognize that every good and perfect gift cometh down from above." And at last when he pronounced a blessing upon his own sons, he said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." And, like his father Abraham, "he rejoiced to see Christ's day: he saw it and was glad"; and said—I think, in his heart—"Now I know the meaning of the ladder: now I know that Someone is coming from the skies, to redeem them that are under the law, that we may receive the adoption of sons."

I have spoken thus to make it clear that it means more than putting up your hand in a meeting to be a Christian; that it means far more than making a religious profession—it means yielding ourselves to the hand of the Potter; giving ourselves to the Angel of the covenant, that in His own time, and in His own way, He may redeem us from all evil.

What is the difference between Jacob and Esau? Only this, that Jacob recognized the angels; he listened to the messengers from the skies, and gave himself to their ministry; while Esau heard nothing but the voices of the world. And that is all the difference between ruin and redemption; between death and life; between hell and heaven. When the Angel meets you, and the voice of the gospel comes to you—what answer will you make?

LAST SUNDAY AND NEXT IN JARVIS STREET.

The attendance at the School last Sunday morning was 1,519. Dr. Stockley's messages were characterized by deep spiritual power. Three responded to the invitation at the morning service, and five in the evening.

The Pastor, who has been in Oklahoma City for two weeks, will preach next Sunday morning and evening, reaching home in time for the Saturday evening prayer service.

The Union Baptist Witness

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337 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Canada.

W. GORDON BROWN, Editor.

SHENSTONE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH.

Preceded by a week of prayer and beginning Sunday, October 26th, two weeks of special meetings have been held in Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church, Brantford. Rev. W. F. Mesley, of the South Zorra Church, preached on the first Sunday evening, and each succeeding night of the week following. With much power he delivered God's message to the people with attending blessings. One young man confessed Christ as Saviour and God's people were encouraged and strengthened in the faith.

The following Sunday morning Rev. A. J. Lewis, our returned missionary, spoke to the Bible School concerning his work in Liberia, and brought the message at the morning service. At the evening service, and again on the following evening, Rev. W. J. H. Brown of Annette Street Church, gave a stirring message. On Tuesday Dr. T. T. Shields, of Jarvis Street, delivered a masterly address on the value of prayer. The Lord was present at that meeting in great power. At its conclusion almost the entire audience went forward for consecration and an inspiring prayer service followed. On Wednesday evening, Rev. James McGinlay, of Central Baptist Church, London, spoke on "Gideon's Three Hundred", showing how God can use a few chosen ones to do a mighty work. Rev. T. J. Mitchell, of Wortley Road Church, London, taught the Bible School lesson to the teachers and later gave a great message on revival. On Friday evening the pastor, Rev. F. A. McNulty, brought the closing address of this series of services. Great blessing has followed this special effort. Since the conclusion of the services, two more have taken their stand for Christ. On Sunday evening, November 16th, following a heart-searching Gospel appeal delivered by the pastor, another young man came forward confessing Christ as Saviour. In the morning of the same day an interesting event took place, when for the first time in the church's history an out-going missionary brother gave his farewell message. Mr. Gladstone Franklin was heard with great interest and at the conclusion of his talk was presented with a cheque for seventy-five dollars by the members of the church.

BOSTON.

Friday evening, November 14th, a largely attended missionary rally and farewell was held in the Boston Regular Baptist Church, Rev. W. E. Atkinson, of Toronto, presided. The speakers were Rev. Gordon and Mrs. Mellish and Miss Minnie Lane, our missionaries-elect to Liberia, Rev. A. J. Lewis, and also Mr. Gladstone Franklin, of Brantford, who is soon to leave for work in Central Am-

erica. Hearts were touched as these missionaries brought words of inspiration and encouragement. Representatives were present from Hartford, Walsh, Scotland, Burtch and several other centres.

On the following Sunday evening, at the close of a powerful sermon by the pastor, Rev. A. J. Loveday, on the "Crucifixion", a young husband and wife responded to the invitation. The church is praising God for the fact that four have responded to the Gospel message in the last four weeks and is looking to our God for still further blessing on the ministry at Boston.

ESSEX.

The church at Essex received a special blessing on Wednesday evening, November 12th, when Rev. James McGinlay, of Central Church, London, was present and delivered a stirring and inspiring Gospel message. Two persons professed Christ as Saviour and the members of the church received fresh inspiration for the work. On the following evening Rev. T. J. Mitchell, of Wortley Road Church, London, was present and gave a great message on revival. The Lord blessed the word spoken with the salvation of another soul. On Sunday evening, Nov. 16th, the church at Essex had another day of renewed fellowship and spiritual growth. The pastor baptized five people, among the number a young boy and his father. The Lord is surely blessing the work in the church here.

MOUNT ALBERT.

A recent report contained the news of encouraging services which have been held at Mount Albert during the past few weeks by Pastor W. S. Whitcombe, of Baker Hill and Second Markham churches. Some time ago a baptismal service was held at which one person from the Sixth Line Church and five from Baker Hill and Mount Albert confessed Christ according to His command. Those from Mount Albert united in membership with the Baker Hill Church. The attendance at the services has been most encouraging, and while no large numbers have professed Christ, nevertheless a real work has been accomplished during this series of services. It is planned to continue a Sunday service during the coming months. Let us pray that God's abundant blessing may rest upon this endeavour and that He may continue to do a saving work in the hearts of those who gather.

ST. PAUL'S, MONTREAL.

Recently Pastor St. James, of St. Paul's Bi-lingual Baptist Church, Montreal, took a well earned respite and visited the Hespeler Conference and the London Convention. He also renewed

his friendship with the members of the church in Stryker, Ohio, where he was pastor some forty-three years ago. On October 19th, Pastor St. James took the services in this church and on the following day lectured on Roman Catholicism. The Lord blessed the meetings and the people were rejoiced by the messages given. The rest of the time of Pastor St. James' absence from his church was spent in creating interest among our churches in the work among the four million needy French at our door. Most of the churches visited will take an offering to help meet the financial burden of St. Paul's Church. Pastor St. James, as opportunity affords, will gladly come and address our churches.

November 16th was a full and great day at St. Paul's. At the morning service Rev. J. Danthony preached and eight were baptized, six of these being recent converts from Romanism. They will unite with the Beneficent Church. The Sunday School was the largest which has assembled in the new building. At the evening service an urgent appeal was made to all to dedicate themselves and all their talents wholly to the service of the Master.

On Thursday evening, November 27th, the last Canadian farewell meeting to be held for our three out-going missionaries to Liberia will take place in Montreal. The three Regular Baptist Churches of that city will unite in St. Paul's Church building for this service.

ORDINATION SERVICE.

Runnymede Road Baptist Church, Toronto, was the scene of an interesting service on Tuesday, November 18th, when our out-going missionary, Rev. Gordon Mellish, was ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry. A good crowd gathered in the afternoon to hear our missionary give his statement of faith, which was accepted by the council. In the evening our brother was publicly dedicated to the special work of Christ's ministry. This service took the form of a farewell to Rev. and Mrs. Mellish and a great gathering crowded the church to hear these young people bring their messages of consecration and appeal. May God's blessing rest upon them as they go forth to be our messengers to those who sit in darkness.

MAPLE GROVE.

On the first Sunday in November, Rev. W. E. Atkinson accompanied Student-pastor C. S. McGrath to the Maple Grove Baptist Church where they had the joy of giving the right hand of church fellowship to five new members. Of these three were baptized in the recent special meetings, one woman came by letter and one man joined on experience.

REMEMBER.

Our Missionaries, Rev. Gordon and Mrs. Mellish and Miss Minnie Lane as they embark on the Alaunia on November 28th. Pray for them as they say good-bye to their loved ones; pray for journeying mercies; pray that all baggage will be safely carried; pray that arrangements may be comfortable and that the necessary shopping in England will be facilitated.

COMING CONFERENCE.

Remember the Conference meeting to be held at Mitchell Square on December 5th for the benefit of the churches of the Mitchell Square district. Speakers from Toronto and other places will be present. Because of the importance of the Conference to our people and the influence it may have in the community let us remember it in prayer, and let as many as possible be present to enjoy this spiritual feast.

MR. AND MRS. DAVEY.

Mr. and Mrs. Davey replied to the cable sent from the Convention and authorized by it in the following words: "Greetings reciprocated. Rejoice good news. Preparing houses." Reading between the words we know with what joy the word was received by our missionaries that reinforcements were coming.

ALTON CONFERENCE.

The district conference held at Alton on Friday afternoon and evening, November 21st, was a time of great spiritual uplift and refreshing to the delegates. The afternoon was largely devoted to prayer and praise with a short talk by Mr. James Bell, of Orangeville, on the Christian's separation from the world. Following the afternoon service the ladies of the Alton Church provided supper, and this gave opportunity for a time of social fellowship.

For the evening service the church was filled and the meeting was marked by a spirit of earnestness and power. Mr. O. L. Raymer, of Toronto, led the singing, and spoke briefly. Members of the Hillsburg Baptist Church provided special music. The main address of the evening was given by Rev. W. J. H. Brown, of Annette Street. Pastor Brown outlined the purpose of these district conferences and gave gleanings of the recent Convention held in London. He then impressed upon his hearers the pressing spiritual needs of the hour, a spirit of humility and of prayerfulness, a true knowledge of the only saving Gospel and a burden for souls. Those present felt that this conference should indeed mark the beginning of a spiritual forward movement in the Orangeville and Alton district.

HARTFORD CONFERENCE.

A conference of the churches of Boston, Scotland, Burtch, Medina, and Hartford was held at Hartford on Thursday, November 20th. The morning session, under the leadership of Rev. A. J. Loveday, of Boston, was devoted mainly to prayer.

An address was given by Rev. W. T. Farr on the deepening of the spiritual

life. In the afternoon the song-service was led by Rev. Melchie Henry, and a heart-searching address was given by Rev. J. H. Peer, of Woodstock, on the church at Ephesus. Then followed prayer and a testimony meeting.

The evening session was of an evangelistic character. Rev. A. Milligan, Hamilton; Rev. W. Dodds, Hamilton; and Rev. J. H. Peer, of Woodstock, took part, while the special address concluding with an appeal to the unsaved was given by Rev. C. J. Loney, who spoke from Hebrews 12:13, 14, on "A Well-Spent Life." A special feature of the evening service was the singing, in their native language, of the Indian brethren present. Each Church was well represented and the evening congregation practically filled the building. These meetings must surely prove a great stimulus and a source of blessing.

HUGHSON STREET ANNIVERSARY.

The Hughson Street Regular Baptist Church, of Hamilton, last Sunday celebrated its forty-third anniversary. Rev. W. F. Mesley, of Zorra, brought two powerful messages. Large congregations were present morning and evening. In the evening one soul came back to God and many were under conviction of sin. In the afternoon Rev. W. F. Mesley brought heart-searching messages to those who gathered at the Sunday School service. Members of Hughson Street feel that the results of these services are just the first-fruits of a rich harvest of precious souls. Next Sunday evening three will follow their Lord in baptism. Hughson Street reports also encouraging results in the children's meetings which are held every Wednesday afternoon by Misses Cole and Gadsby. The work on the Guelph highway at Bridgeview, in charge of Brother R. Potter, is also being blessed. Souls are being saved and the friends of the work are asking the Lord for funds to erect a mission house. The church asks an interest in our prayers for these worthy causes.

WORK IN B.C.

Word has been received recently from Mission City, B.C., where the Regular Baptists have a church under the ministry of Rev. George R. Dawe, a former student of the Toronto Baptist Seminary. The church at present has a membership of thirty-nine, but there is a good opportunity for further extensions of the work in the town and surrounding district. Two church services are held each Sunday and there an active Sunday School is carrying on its regular work. On Sunday afternoons the pastor ministers at another Baptist Church at Nicomen Island some ten miles distance. This church has a membership of five only but the attendance averages between thirty and forty every Sunday with a Sunday School attendance of about the same number. This work is carried on among the farmers of the Island, with no town within four or five miles of the church. God has been greatly blessing the cause here of late, and the people are expecting definite decisions for Christ. Special prayer is needed for this branch of the work.

Recently a new work has been commenced among the Japanese in a district adjoining the Mission. The Sunday School held in connection with this ministry has grown during the past month from an attendance of five to an attendance of twenty-seven, for which the workers praise our God.

During the week the pastor conducts a prayer meeting at Nicomen Island on Tuesday night, with a prayer meeting in Mission on Wednesday; a Bible Study Course for the young people on Thursday night; and a young People's Society in Mission on Friday night. The young People's Society is especially encouraging, having an active membership of about thirty-five. There is also a young people's meeting at Nicomen Island on Thursday evening.

The pastor asks special prayer for another work in a town about two miles distant, where the minister expects to leave at the end of the year and there is talk of closing the church. This is a Swedish Baptist Church, and our British Columbia friends are endeavouring to secure it for the Regular Baptist Convention of B.C. They will try to carry it on (with the help of a lay preacher) in conjunction with the Mission City field, Matsqui, where this work is situated, is quite a large settlement with no other Gospel testimony. The arrangements with respect to this ministry are as yet in their elementary stages, but the people of Mission are praying that God will definitely lead in this matter and that they may be used in bearing a continued Gospel testimony in this place.

Change of Address.

Rev. H. S. Bennett is at present residing in Toronto and may be addressed c/o 58 Gormley Ave., Toronto 5.

THREE URGENT APPEALS

The "Gospel Witness" Fund

Toronto Baptist Seminary

The Jarvis Street Sunday

Evening Radio Fund

WHOLE BIBLE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON COURSE FOR 1931

Genesis, chapter 28 to Leviticus, chapter 5.

Issued by

THE BAPTIST BIBLE UNION OF NORTH AMERICA

We publish below an outline of the Sunday School Lessons in the Baptist Bible Union Whole Bible Course for 1931, prepared by Dr. Oliver W. Van Osdel, of Grand Rapids, Mich. The Comments for the senior classes will be written for *The Gospel Witness* by Rev. Alex. Thomson, B.D., as for the past three years.

		Chapter	Golden Text
1. Jan. 4th—Jacob's Ladder	Genesis	28	v. 15
2. " 11th—Jacob and Laban	"	29	v. 20
3. " 18th—Jacob at Bethel	"	30, 31	30:27
4. " 25th—Jacob at Mahanaim	"	32	v. 28
5. Feb. 1st—Jacob's Snare	"	33, 34	33:4
6. " 8th—Jacob and Jehovah	"	35, 36	35:11
7. " 15th—Joseph, the Joy of Jacob	"	37, 38	37:3
8. " 22nd—Joseph the Servant	"	39	v. 2
9. Mar. 1st—Joseph in Prison	"	40	v. 8
10. " 8th—Joseph's Exaltation	"	41	v. 44
11. " 15th—Joseph, the Preserver	"	42	v. 21
12. " 22nd—Joseph and Benjamin	"	43	v. 29
13. " 29th—Joseph's Revelation	"	44, 45	44:33
14. Apr. 5th—Jacob's Last Journey	"	46	v. 3
15. " 12th—Jacob's Exaltation	"	47	v. 27
16. " 19th—Jacob's Farewell Message	"	48	v. 16
17. " 26th—Jacob's Prophecy	"	49	v. 10
18. May 3rd—Jacob's Funeral	"	50	v. 20
19. " 10th—Israel's Bondage	Exodus	1	v. 12
20. " 17th—The Birth of Moses	"	2	v. 10
21. " 24th—The Call of Moses	"	3	v. 14
22. " 31st—The Excuses of Moses	"	4	v. 11
23. June 7th—Pharaoh Defies God	"	5	v. 1
24. " 14th—The Conflict	"	6, 7	7:5
25. " 21st—Moses Refuses to Compromise	"	8-10	9:16
26. " 28th—The Passover	"	11, 12	12:13
27. July 5th—What God Required	"	13	v. 3
28. " 12th—The Salvation of the Saint	"	14	v. 13
29. " 19th—The Song of the Saved	"	15	v. 2
30. " 26th—The Manna from Heaven	"	16	v. 4
31. Aug. 2nd—The Rock in the Wilderness	"	17	v. 6
32. " 9th—Jethro and the Jew	"	18	v. 9
33. " 16th—From Liberty to Law	"	19	v. 18
34. " 23rd—The Law of Moses	"	20	v. 20
35. " 30th—The Judicial Law	"	21-24	24:17
36. Sept. 6th—The Tabernacle	"	25	v. 22
37. " 13th—The Curtains of the Tabernacle	"	26	v. 1
38. " 20th—The Brazen Altar	"	27	v. 16
39. " 27th—The Garments of the Priests	"	28	v. 36
40. Oct. 4th—The Consecration of the Priests	"	29	v. 44
41. " 11th—The Altar of Incense	"	30	v. 8
42. " 18th—The Sign of the Sabbath	"	31	v. 3
43. " 25th—The Broken Law	"	32	v. 26
44. Nov. 1st—The Prayer of Moses	"	33	14, 15
45. " 8th—The Renewed Commission	"	34	v. 23
46. " 15th—Liberal Giving	"	35, 36	35:5
47. " 22nd—The Ark of the Covenant	"	37, 38	37:9
48. " 29th—The Tabernacle Erected	"	39, 40	40:38
49. Dec. 6th—Christ, the Burnt Offering	Leviticus	1	v. 2
50. " 13th—Christ, the Meal-offering	"	2	v. 9
51. " 20th—Christ, the Peace-offering	"	3	v. 17
52. " 27th—Christ, the Sin-offering	"	4, 5	5:15

Baptist Bible Union Lesson Leaf

Vol. V. No. 4.

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR.

Lesson 50 December 14th, 1930.
Fourth Quarter.

ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

Lesson Text: Genesis, Chapter 25.

Golden Text: "And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Gen. 25:32.

I. ABRAHAM'S GENEALOGY, (vs. 1-11).

Several things are worthy of note in this section. The first is that of Abraham's marriage to Keturah. "Then again Abraham took a wife and her name was Keturah", (v. 1). The time of this marriage is not stated, but it must have occurred some considerable time before the death of the patriarch, as the sons of this union were old enough to be sent away before his death. The names of these sons are given, (vs. 2-4), making clear the fact that this union was more fruitful than that with Sarah. But Isaac the fruit of the former union was the one specially designated in the covenant. This we have noted in previous lessons, and it is here made manifest in Abraham's attitude concerning his property. "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac", (v. 5). Isaac was the direct heir of his father, and the channel of blessing for the ages. The others were not to be left out, however, and unto them gifts were given, and they were sent away from Isaac, while Abraham was yet alive, (v. 6). They were thus dealt with justly and wisely, and future trouble was avoided concerning the distribution of the property on the death of Abraham.

The death and burial of Abraham are then recorded. No details are given of the last days of the patriarch. Such information would have been interesting, but it is not essential to the lesson, and scripture is sparing in such descriptive matter. We are informed, however, of the age of Abraham; he was "an hundred, threescore and fifteen years", and he "died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people", (vs. 7, 8). Note his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre," (v. 9). Death brings together persons of diverse views and dispositions, and for the time being, and sometimes permanently, its influence settles disputes and restores friendships. In this case Ishmael, the one who had been cast out of the home unites with Isaac, the one on whose account he had been cast out, although possibly this was only out of respect to their father, and did not imply anything deeper. After the death of Abraham God blessed Isaac. The son of Abraham was now the head of the covenant family. And he "dwelt by the well Lahai-roi (v. 11). Note the faithfulness of God and the working out of His plan. God's sovereignty and man's free will are seen together.

II. ISHMAEL'S GENEALOGY, (vs. 12-18).

The consideration of names is not always interesting, but a study of this

kind may not be devoid of profit. In relation to Ishmael we were before informed, (17:20, 21:13) that God had promised great things for him. He was to become fruitful, to be multiplied exceedingly, twelve princes was he to beget, and he was to become a great nation; and this genealogy enlightens us concerning the fulfilment of God's word. The princes and the nations are mentioned, and evidence is given of the fact of Ishmael's posterity, their independence and greatness, and all attests the faithfulness of God's word. He is a God Who is omniscient and omnipotent. He is the God of the impossible. Emphasis may be laid upon the necessity and blessedness of trusting Him implicitly and of believing His word at all times.

III. THE GENERATIONS OF ISAAC, (vs. 19-34).

Birth of Esau and Jacob, (vs. 19-34). Isaac was of mature age when he was married to Rebekah, being forty years old, (v. 20). And Rebekah was barren, (v. 21), a very severe disappointment to both of them no doubt, and a condition which led to prayer. "And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." It is of interest to note that both Sarah and Rebekah, the chosen of God for the perpetuation of the covenant people, were barren, and that in both cases God wrought specially in bestowing the necessary power. Before the birth of the twins God made a remarkable statement concerning their future, (v. 23), which was fulfilled in the nations of Israel and Edom. The birth is then described, (vs. 25, 26). The future character of Jacob is here seen in type. The age of Isaac at this time was three score years, so that these sons were born twenty years after his marriage.

Home life of Esau and Jacob, (vs. 27, 28). We are not given much information concerning the home life of this family, but that which is stated leads us to believe there was a division of affection on the part of the parents, and this always means trouble, and causes unhappiness. We are first informed of the growth of the boys, and their occupation. Esau was a "cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents". At birth there was a contrast; in occupation there was the same; and in their general attitude and actions a difference is also seen. Note the characteristics of these two occupations, and the implications of the statements. The division of parental affection leaning to favouritism is denoted in the statement that "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob". Sometimes children take after one parent more than another, manifesting the characteristics of that parent to a greater degree than the other and that may have been the case here, leading in great measure to this favouritism; for the giving of venison to Isaac on the part of Esau cannot be the full explanation of the incident; other matters would also enter in to it. Note the evils arising from this division of affection in the home. All members of the family should receive the same treatment.

Selling the birthright, (vs. 29-34). An interesting and well known incident is recorded in these closing verses in which there is portrayed the character of each of Isaac's sons, and from which there may be derived some valuable lessons. First, in reference to the nature of the transaction: "And Jacob sod pottage; and Esau came from the field and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me I pray thee with that same red pottage; for I am faint. . . And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright." (vs. 29-31). And Esau sold his birthright that day unto his brother Jacob. The transaction seems simple, yet it had serious and far-reaching consequences. The birthright implied the eventual headship of the family, religiously, and socially, and meant also the receipt of the larger portion of the inheritance. The birthright therefore was of real significance, and of great value. The birthright was Esau's on account of his priority of birth, but he deliberately forfeited its privileges in this transaction. It is not likely that this action altered his manner of living, or even affected his position in the home. Doubtless that which Jacob sought was not the material advantage, but the spiritual blessings which was attached thereto in line with the covenant promise.

Little things betray character, and in this transaction the same is disclosed in reference to both young men. Esau is seen as the man of the world, carnal in his outlook, seeking to gratify his fleshly appetite at the expense of his spiritual nature. We are told that he "despised his birthright", and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament designates him a "profane person", (Heb. 12:16,17). He evidently realized the folly of his conduct later, but it was too late to avert the consequence. He had sold his future blessedness. He is a type of the worldly person who is bartering away his spiritual blessing for the fleeting things of time. Jacob is of an opposite character. He is rightly named "supplanter". He is a schemer, yet he has an eye to the spiritual. He is a man of faith. It had been prophesied concerning him and his posterity that they would be served by the older branch of the family, and undoubtedly God meant him to gain the blessing of the birthright. But he was not directed to gain it in this manner. He valued the blessing, but he ought to have waited and received it in God's way. He is a type of the persons of faith who seek to bring blessing through fleshly efforts and schemes.

In the application of the lesson these two young men may be taken as types of classes of persons in the present day, and the transaction itself may be instructively used as typical of an experience in the spiritual realm. Many persons are bartering away their spiritual birthright for something that is of less worth than a mess of pottage. They are putting the flesh before the spirit. Note the price being paid in appetite, pleasures, and sins, and the consequences now and hereafter. The lesson may also be studied from the standpoint of the testing of the spiritual man, with the temptation to the flesh to intervene in spiritual matters.