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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"RIVERS OF DAMASCUS"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, June 14th, 1931

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(Stenographically Reported)

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."—II Kings 5:12.

Prayer Before the Sermon
By Rev. W. Gordon Brown

As we have just been singing with our lips we join in heart to petition Thee that Thou shouldst draw nigh unto every one of us. We are conscious, dear Lord, of Thy presence in this place, among Thy people, and at this hour, but we desire a deeper, higher, broader, and more intense realization of that Divine Presence which is blessing itself. Draw us near, O Lord, to Thee at this hour; near to Thee in life; very near to Thee in death; and then in the world beyond we shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

Give us, O Lord, a realization and a fresh vision of Thy power as we see it in nature, as we read the records of it in Thy Word, as we see it in the resurrection of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

Teach us Thy holiness, O God. How high Thou art! How far Thy ways are above our ways, and Thy thoughts above our thoughts! Show us Thy glory. Let us understand that Thou are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Then, dear Saviour, reveal to us Thy tenderness; help us with full meaning to call Thee our Father. Comfort us as one whom his mother comforteth, we pray Thee.

Reveal Thyself to us, O Lord, in our hearts and minds as Thou hast given that full revelation in the glorious face of Jesus Christ. Let us see Him as the mighty Christ to Whom nature and man and demon were subject. Let us see Him as the stainless Christ, Who did no sin, Who knew no sin, in Whom was no sin. Let us see Him as the tender Christ, to Whom the children were gladly brought, in Whom sinners, no matter how degraded, found a Friend when they repented. But above all, O sovereign Lord, reveal Thyself to us in the gracious Saviour Who has drawn salvation's plan, Who has purchased salvation at the cost of Thine own blood, and Who doth offer it freely to all who will believe. Hear us in this hour. Give us such a vision of Thyself as will draw us nearer to Thee.

Come in salvation to-night to the waiting hearts, waiting at the sound of Thy word, in the singing of the hymns. May those who do not know Thee, find Thee, the Rock of Ages which alone can protect the soul. Come in Thy restoring grace to those who have wandered from the God Who bought them, and Whose love they once acknowledged. Bring them

back to the fellowship of the Father's house where there is plenty, and where there is joy.

Visit us with comfort, we pray Thee. Many among us are broken of heart. Minister to them, O Lord, as Thou alone knowest how to do. Bless the sick and the afflicted, many of whom are doubtless listening at this time, and joining with us in this prayer. Where it be Thy will to heal, let them see Thee as the Great Physician of the body; but above all, let them know that Thou are the Physician of the soul.

Remember Thy word wherever it is preached, whether in the humble mission, on the street, in the great cathedral, over the air, at home, or abroad—anywhere and everywhere where Christ is lifted up, let the Holy Spirit follow it with His own glorious power. Hasten the dawning of the day, we ask Thee. The night is dark, the night is far spent. Come, Lord; come soon, and receive us unto Thyself, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

Let me at the outset this evening frankly avow my purpose: it is to give you the alphabet of grace, to make the way of salvation as simple as it is possible for human speech to do. I have selected this story as being perhaps one of the most familiar portions of the Old Testament. Everybody who knows anything about the Bible at all is familiar with the story of the cleansing of Naaman the leper.

Mr. Brown read you the story this evening of a man who was "great with his master, and honourable," a man who had been marvellously used by divine providence as an instrument of deliverance to the nation to which he belonged, a man who was valorous of spirit, captain of the hosts, and worthy of high honour among the people to whom he belonged; but notwithstanding all these advantages, beneath his splendid military uniform there was a fretting leprosy which threatened to bring to a premature end the career of this illustrious man.

A little maid in his own house, waiting upon his wife, told the story of a great prophet of Jehovah who was in

Samaria, and expressed the conviction of her childish heart that if only her master could visit the prophet he would be healed of his leprosy. When this news came to the ear of the king of Syria he resolved to take advantage of this suggestion, but, like many another, he spoiled the simplicity of the little maid's testimony, and sent his servant with a letter of introduction, not to the prophet, but to the king; arguing, very probably, that if the prophet were a great man, the king must be greater still. When Naaman came to the king of Israel he interpreted his approach as an effort to make mischief between these two nations which were, at that time, friendly to each other, for, said he, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

When Elisha heard what had occurred he sent a messenger bidding Naaman come to him. When he came, instead of going out to meet and greet him in recognition of his rank, of the position he occupied in the nation from which he came, Elisha sent a humble messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

Naaman was angry at the simplicity of the message, and expressed his own thought as to what ought to have been done. Then he asked this question, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage"—as many people have done from this house of prayer.

I should like you to examine that story, not that I may bring to you anything new this evening, but that I may stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and endeavour to emphasize the great fundamental principles which underlie evangelical faith.

I.

Let me begin with this question, WHY DID THIS MAN NAAMAN NEED TO BE WASHED IN THIS SENSE AT ALL? He was a very important man, with many worthy achievements to his credit—but he was a leper. His leprosy, as yet, had not impaired his mental vigour: it had not incapacitated him for distinguished service to the nation: it had not relegated him to the side-lines; it had not necessitated his resignation from his high position. He was still captain of the hosts of the King of Syria. No one could blot out the record of service which he had rendered. Perhaps next to the king himself he was regarded as the most prominent man in all Syria. But notwithstanding all that, beneath his splendid robes, and in spite of his unusual record, there was that in his body over which he had no power. Though he had subdued many enemies without, he was powerless in respect to the enemy within. Though many acknowledged his authority in lands that were not his own, he was not even master of his own fate; nor could he further direct his own course. He was a leper!

This disease that we call sin—and leprosy is frequently used in the Scripture as a type of it—is of a very subtle nature. It is not always easily diagnosed. It cannot be discerned by any sort of X-ray examination. It is something that is beyond the skill of human physicians to detect.

I have known of some people being taken ill, and being taken away to the hospital for examination. They have had consultations of many physicians, who have said,

"This disease does not belong to our climate. It is a disease that belongs to some other part of the world. It eludes us; it baffles us. We cannot readily identify it. It is beyond our skill to say what is the matter with the man."

So is it of this moral malady, this thing that brings down not alone the body, but the soul as well, into the pit of corruption. It is something that requires more than human judgment to discern. Only the divine Physician can diagnose it, only the divine power can convict a man of his sins.

But there are many like Naaman,—men who have worthy achievements to their credit, men who have wrought serviceably in state, or in the business world, or in professional life. They have made a real contribution, at least to the material and physical well-being of men, and yet, notwithstanding that ability, sin lurks within. It does not follow, dear friends, that because a man is a sinner he loses his power of intellect. He may become a great scholar. He may be a master of men. He may become a national leader of repute. He may be looked upon as one of the greatest servants of the nation. And yet, in spite of that, it remains written, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There is no exception to that universal "all." Distinguished as the man may be, he is, in the spiritual sense, unless he has been divinely cleansed, a leper.

This man occupied a position of great prominence. He stood head and shoulders above his fellows. He did not belong to the ranks of the humbler citizens of Syria. He stood perhaps next to the king himself. Notwithstanding his leprosy, he had climbed the ladder, he had entered into the palaces of kings, he was a man of great prominence and importance. I know the poor have the gospel preached to them. There are many who find it comparatively easy to bear witness to the poor. But there are some who hear me this evening who would not come to a church where the old-fashioned doctrine of sin and salvation is preached. There may be men of prominence in Toronto—and I have heard of not a few of them—who in the privacy of their own homes listen to the message of this pulpit. I congratulate you, my friends, if you have got on in the world. Personally, I like to see men make progress even in the things of this world. I do not think the religion of Christ puts any premium upon indolence or incompetency: it requires the best of all of us. If there are some like Naaman who have wrought useful service to their fellows, and who have attained to positions of importance as a result thereof, they are to be commended if they have wrought legitimately.

But what I am trying to make clear to you, my friend, is that no elevated station, no position that is applauded by men, to which is attached some measure of the world's glory, can possibly effect a cure of that which is a part of your nature, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." That moral leprosy is there, that thing which unfits men for the service of God, and disqualifies them for dwelling in His presence, is common to every one of us.

Of course there are degrees in its development. You remember the directions that were given in the book of Leviticus for the recognition of the symptoms of leprosy. Very often it was but a small spot which would pass the observation of ordinary people, and that could be discerned only by the trained expert, that showed that the man was a leper. So there are many people of admirable personal

qualities, like Naaman, whose leprosy does not show without. If I were to speak of drunkenness, and lechery, and theft, and blasphemy, many people would recognize these as evils. But they say, "You would not charge us,—men of respectability and prominence, men occupying an exalted station in life—you would not charge us with being guilty of these things, would you?" Not by any means! But though there be no outward sign, the thing that is in itself, in its very nature, opposed to divine holiness dwells in every human heart; and whether the symptoms are sufficiently pronounced for recognition and accurate diagnosis, we have the word of the Book for it that it is in every one of us.

A man may be as Naaman was, a useful public servant; he may be, as I fancy Naaman was, an exemplary husband. He seems to have had an attractive home life. Even the little maid was filled with sympathy. Who knows but he had spoken many a kind word to her? She had talked with her mistress about the ailment from which her master suffered. Oh yes, I have seen many a home from which Christ was excluded, where natural affection displayed itself to the full, where a man was a good husband and father, passionately devoted to his family and to all their temporal interests, and yet utterly blind to his own spiritual state.

There may be some man who hears me to-night whose children are at home, or out yonder in the garden. He watches them with pride; he speaks with appreciation of his wife and of his home life, and imagines it to be a veritable paradise. Perhaps it is. No harsh words are spoken there; no unkindness is ever displayed there. But in spite of all that, this deadly, malignant, plague is at work in heart and conscience; and though the man may be proud of his wife and children, and finds some measure of satisfaction in the position in life to which his industry and perhaps his superior natural powers have enabled him to attain, notwithstanding it all, there is something within him that has put between him and his Maker a mighty gulf which no human power can cross.

This man was a man of reputation. He was "a great man with his master and honourable." It is well when people are well spoken of by their neighbours. It is well to have one's neighbours say, "I have lived beside that man for a long time, and I have always found him to be most considerate and kind." It is well that a man should have a good reputation in business, so that those who work for him say, "He is just to those whom he employs; he is not among those whose business dealings are open to any sort of suspicion; he is an honourable man, a man of reputation among his fellows. Surely nothing more can be demanded of a man than that he should walk as that man has walked?"

How blind we are to the great truth that we are related to two worlds, and that the standards which obtain here cannot possibly govern hereafter, and that that which is highly esteemed among men is very often abominable in the sight of God, and that which men call honourable is the very opposite in the divine esteem! It is only when the Divine Physician examines us, when we are brought into the light of this Word, as it is used by the Holy Ghost to show us what we are, that men learn that in spite of all their good reputations among men, their standing as honourable men among those who know them best, the leprosy obtains.

Who is there here in this house, or who hears me by radio, who, if he will be honest with himself, will not be

compelled to acknowledge that beneath all that appears to men there is in his own consciousness a moral defect, the working of a spiritual malady which somehow or another alienates the mind from God, so that the Bible is unpalatable, prayer is undesirable, the place of worship is very often objectionable. Standing well before men, the man knows that he has no standing whatever before God.

What should we do for such an one as this? It was for this reason that Naaman needed to be washed, and it is for this fundamental reason that we all need to be washed in the "Fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." I have no doubt that Naaman had many friends in Syria. A man of his position must have had a great army of admirers who were ready to exemplify the principle that "to him that hath shall be given." Thus they would have ministered to his greater honour, and have assisted him to still larger achievements, and have helped him to a higher position still.

But there was a little maid in Israel who had more discernment than all the great men of his land, for she said, "What my master needs is not more medals, not greater honour among men, not a higher position at court,—what my master needs is that he should be washed and made clean." Oh, in this sin-cursed earth, is there no place left for a purely spiritual ministry? I know we have hard times. I have heard as much as you have of the depression. And so, forsooth, the church of Christ must become expert in the science of economics and must concern itself with the redistribution of the bread that perisheth. I have no objection to these ministries as useful adjuncts and by-products of something of greater and of vastly more importance, but I have no doubt in my mind that in spite of what economists have to say, in spite of all that this church and that church says and does, and the encyclical of the Pope, true and useful as they may be—in spite of all that, the great desideratum, the great need of this sinsick world is something, some power, that will heal it of its underlying leprosy.

If men could be cleansed in heart, if there could be such a radical cleansing as is effected by the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, a transformation of character, and if I may say so, a transfusion and indwelling of the Spirit of God Himself, it would go far toward the readjustment of conditions which make life to-day so hard. I venture to sound that peculiar note, and to say that the ministry of the little maid is peculiarly and uniquely the ministry of the church. If so be we have knowledge of a Prophet Who can cleanse the world of leprosy, our business is to make Him known, and to bring the Naamans into such relationship to Him as will cleanse them from their leprosy. That is the need of the world. That is the need of every man and woman, boy and girl, who hears my voice this evening. Above everything else we need, not the bread that perisheth, for though a man be without that, important as it is, if the soul has been regenerated, if he has been cleansed by the blood, he shall come at last to the Father's house where there is bread enough and to spare.

II.

Let me ask the question, WHY DID NAAMAN PREFER SOME OTHER REMEDY THAN THE ONE THAT WAS PRESCRIBED? He came to Samaria for the specific purpose of being healed. He was not among the number who did not know their need of healing. He knew it, and, knowing it, he came to Samaria that he might be healed.

I have no doubt that this simple message of mine is heard by hundreds and thousands of people who know they are sinners; they know they need salvation, they know they need something done for them, and in them, that no human power can accomplish; and yet, like Naaman, they refuse to accept the remedy divinely prescribed, and are always ready to propose some other way of salvation than the way which God Himself has ordained.

Why is it? Why this human perversity? Why this native antagonism to everything God proposes? Why can we not come in simple faith? Why come to the king of Syria and spoil the simplicity of the message of this little girl? What is the spiritual psychology, what is the underlying reason for this natural and almost universal opposition, even on the part of those who know they need something, to the remedy which God Himself prescribes?

If you could go to India you would find millions of people who, while not recognizing sin as sin in the biblical sense, still know that they are suffering from a moral plague. They labour to improve themselves, and to relieve themselves of their spiritual disease. That is the philosophy of all pagan religions. They all recognize at bottom that there is something wrong with human nature, and yet they invariably prescribe for their own ailments, and choose their own way, rather than the way of God. Why is it?

Very simply, look at this story. *The means of healing prescribed by the prophet took no account whatever of Naaman's exalted position.* It treated him as though he were an ordinary, everyday, commonplace, leper. It did not recognize the service he had rendered to his country. It took no account whatever of his splendid robes, and of his semi-royal position. The great prophet who was God's representative sent an unnamed messenger to him who said, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." That was all! Naaman refused to accept, or to be obedient to such a prescription.

Most people are like that. They expect that God will be a respecter of persons, that He will take some account of their record. I have had men come to me, asking me if I could assist them to a position. Very often they put their hands in their pockets and draw therefrom a package of papers, testimonials, stating they worked for a certain firm for a number of years and left at their own will in order to improve themselves. They put that down and say, "That is what I am, and on the ground of what I have accomplished, is it possible that you can recommend me to somebody?"

Most people come to the Lord with their pockets full of testimonials, as though the Lord would recognize what important people they are! Some man says, "My father was an elder in the church." Or another, "My father was a minister of the gospel. I was brought up in a godly home. Our home was the rendezvous of Christian people. I have done no wrong. I have got on well in business. Here is my card showing where I live and where I carry on my business. I am an important man. Of course, not everybody recognizes it, but my wife does! And I have a shrewd suspicion that I am myself!" As though that sort of thing weighed with God! Oh, no! The way of the gospel is this,—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

Leave your recommendations behind. God knows more about you than you do yourself anyhow, and that of which you are so proud may be written down in God's book as part of His account against you. The very things which you esteem as virtues may be in His holy eyes vices, and may be but outward symptoms of the leprosy within.

Then another thing: *this way which the prophet prescribed made no allowance whatever for Naaman's native pride.* There are some people who have something of which to be proud, from a worldly point of view. As a rule, however, they are found to be humble men. I have travelled a great deal, and I think I have said it to you before: I have heard such wisdom expressed in the wash-room of a pullman car as ought to be sufficient to settle all the problems of the world! I have sometimes wondered why there should not be ten thousand candidates for the Presidency of the United States, for there are plenty of men who are competent to advise the President of the United States! They could settle all the economic problems! But if you ask them what they have done, even for themselves, in many instances you will find they have been distinguished not, like Naaman, by their successes, but by their failures. Yet notwithstanding the collapse of the whole structure which their imaginations have constructed, they are still as proud as Lucifer of their ability to bring things to pass.

There is no salvation for the man who will not humble himself. The salvation that is of grace and of grace alone, leaves no place for human pride. As long as you pride yourself on what you have done, or even on what you are, you will be full of opposition to the divine prescription.

Naaman objected because *the way of healing divinely ordained was not in accord with his own preconceived notion.* Naaman came with his own ideas of how he was to be healed. "Behold," said he, "I thought." Then he drew a picture of what the prophet would do. As soon as he heard that the captain of the host of the king of Syria had arrived, he would "come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." "I thought!"

Not once, nor yet a score of times, but hundreds of times when I have tried to point some man who acknowledged his sinfulness, and confessed some desire for salvation, who, like Naaman, came to Samaria for healing, to the simple way of life revealed in the Bible, he answered, "Oh yes, but then I thought!" Or, "The way I look at it is like this"—never mind how you look at it. If your thinking can heal you, then heal yourself. If you are competent to subdue this fatal, this malignant plague that is within you by your own power, then go and do it. But if you have come to the end of your resources, and have discovered your impotence in the face of this dreadful malady, then cease from your thinking.

Somebody says, "That is the way with you evangelicals"—or, Fundamentalists, as we are called. "The mind of a Fundamentalist is static; he does not think! The preacher of the old gospel always bids men to accept without thinking." Not at all. What I ask you to do is to accept a revelation of the divine thought. Let me ask you a question: Were Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, here in physical presence, standing on this platform where I am standing, ready to speak to sinful, suffering, dying, men, would it not be the height of presumption for Brother Brown, for me, or anybody else, to stand up in

His presence and say, "I will tell you what I think"? Would you not instantly say, "Sir, let us hear the voice of Eternal Wisdom. We do not want to hear what you think"?

I say, if Jesus be God—and He is; if the Bible be the Word of God—and it is; if the salvation here offered be a salvation that is of God—and it is; if this Word be inspired of the Holy Ghost, and if its every word is the voice of Eternal Wisdom, is it not a man's highest honour humbly to bow before God and say, "Let me have Thy thoughts instead of mine"?—"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Let us learn that man is never so wise as when all his powers of intellect are exercised in thinking God's thoughts after Him.

Is not that what you do when you go to human experts in matters of law? Because you are not versed in law, you ask your lawyer. If you are ill, you go to the doctor, and you ask his judgment, because you believe he has a wisdom superior to your own. If you would build a house, you call in an expert architect. You do not know anything about the carrying power of steel, and all the rest of it. You must have some man who has made it a life study, to erect that building for you. Indeed, if you even go to have a suit of clothes made for you, you have to let the tailor make them, because you cannot make them yourself,—or, if you did, your wife would not walk down the street with you!

Are we not always submitting ourselves to the superior wisdom of experts in every department of life? You get on a train, and the engineer is the expert. You get on an ocean liner that will move out from the dock at midnight, and you go to bed and to sleep without a care, because there is someone on the bridge who has a higher wisdom than yours. Surely if we can trust men to be our guides in matters of lesser moment, we ought to have sense enough to put these poor diseased souls of ours into the hands of the Divine Expert, and say, "Lord, do with us as Thou wilt!"

III.

The crowning difficulty of Naaman was that **WHEN HIS PRIDE WAS OFFENDED HE BECAME ANGRY**. How many people there are like that! Somebody told me some years ago of a man going down this right aisle, bitterly angry one night. He went out saying, "I will not be whipped into the Kingdom of God." People are often angry, made angry by the Word. There are two notable instances in the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost they were pricked in their hearts, and repented, and were saved. When Stephen preached the people were "cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." They stoned him to death. When people are cut to the heart, they repent of their sins and turn to God, or get angry at the minister.

It is useless to talk with an angry man. I always say, "Go away and cool off, brother. Go and try to regain your composure. When you have done that, we can talk." It is about as useless to talk with an angry man as with a drunken man,—I believe more useless, because I have known of people being saved when drunk.

Naaman was very angry, but he did cool off at last as we shall see presently. *In his anger he failed to recognize that he reduced the operation of salvation to the natural plane.* I suppose had there been chem-

ists in that day, he would have asked that some expert provide him with an analysis of the constituents of the waters of the Jordan. He wondered what special qualities the Jordan had that would heal a man of leprosy when the waters of Abana and Pharpar could not. He said in effect, "I resent the implication. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

I have heard of some American tourists visiting London. They went out on the Terrace of the House of Parliament. Those of you who know London, know how it looks over that muddy river called Thames. John Burns, the Labour member of Parliament, was their host. Now of all the muddy streams in the world there is nothing to compare with the Thames when the tide is out. When Mr. Burns led them out on this terrace beside the Thames, almost a continuation of what is known as The Embankment on the other side of the bridge, they looked at it scornfully and said, "And do you call that a river?" Mr. John Burns replied, "No; it is only a stream of liquid history." If you measured it by its volume of water, it could not compare with our own magnificent St. Lawrence, but what significance it has for those who know the history that has been enacted on its banks!

Are the waters of the Jordan better than those of Abana and Pharpar? No, not a bit! They are as powerless to heal a leper as the waters of Abana and Pharpar unless God, in His mercy, is pleased to use them. Naaman, in his madness, imagined that this healing was a natural thing, and that it is to be effected by water. Many people imagine that still. They like to see the minister with his robes and his official position, having been called into some place of distinction, as though he had in himself some authority to pronounce absolution, as though the water sprinkled on the forehead of a baby had any virtue, as the minister or priest says, "Wherefore seeing that this child now regenerate."

I have read of people bringing back a bottle of water from the river Jordan to christen the baby. I do not think it is any better than the water out of your tap, and would do no good because it is not scriptural. Salvation does not come that way.

IV.

HOW DOES SALVATION COME? How did it come to Naaman? *He at last was wise enough to let a servant talk to him.* There are some people who imagine they never can get into heaven unless they are ushered in by an archbishop! An ordinary minister would never do! As for the street-preacher, or the tract-distributor, or the woman who comes in to wash the clothes, or perhaps the servant who waits upon the table—the idea that a person like that might have a word of wisdom is utter folly! You had better listen to the Christian in your house. You would be wise to let your servants talk with you. If they know the Lord Jesus, they probably have more wisdom than your preacher who has been spoiled at some theological college.

Will you suffer us, without offence, to speak to you? "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" When it is so simple that anybody can do it, that you do not need a further

course in your military college, or to sit at the feet of any of your teachers, why not do it? All you need to do is to obey the divine command issued by the prophet. The water of Jordan will not heal you. Neither will the waters of Abana and Pharpar, but God can. Get clear in your mind the difference between the instrument and the power behind it, and if God chooses Jordan, then obey Him, yield to Him, and He will do the rest.

This great man came to his senses. It is very probable that in a military campaign after he had heard the words of wisdom from his chief-of-staff, if a private soldier came to him from the enemy's country, telling him how he might win a victory, the general would listen to him. Naaman listens to his servant. He says, "That is wisdom; I will go and do it."

He went to Jordan and dipped himself seven times. The first time he was still a leper, and the second, and on to the sixth. He might have said, "Inasmuch as I have dipped myself six times and there is no improvement, I see no profit in doing it the seventh time." But *he did exactly as he was told*, and as he emerged from the water of Jordan the seventh time, behold, "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved"; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness";

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Will you do as you are told? Will you be like a little child, and trust Jesus Christ? He died for you, He was buried in your behalf, and when He rose from the dead, you came out of prison. That is what this ordinance of baptism which you witnessed to-night means. That young girl looked to Jesus, and she saw in Him herself dying on the cross. When He was buried, she saw in Him herself buried; and when He rose again, she saw in Him, the risen Christ, herself coming out of prison with all debts paid.

Will you come? Will you trust Him wholly? And the word of God that cannot lie for it, "Thou shalt be saved."

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND RELATED EVENTS

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. SHIELDS.

Seventeenth in a Series of Week-Evening Lectures on the Doctrines of Grace

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, May 21st, 1931.

Lesson Read: Matthew 24: 29-51; Acts 1: 6-12.

We have been engaged for a number of weeks—in fact, it must now be a number of months—in a study of the great doctrines of grace. We come now to think a little of the doctrine of last things, the coming of our Lord Jesus and the events related thereto.

I.

It is surely unnecessary for me to spend much time this evening insisting on the fact that **THE LORD IS COMING AGAIN**, although only this week I received a letter from one who is apparently an intelligent Christian, asking me if I really believed that Christ was to come again in person, if we are to understand the promise of His second advent literally, as a promise of His personal return. She went on to tell me how her minister had explained that these things had already taken place. Thus it may be necessary to spend a few minutes in refreshing our memories on that point.

There is an analogy between the first and second advents. If our Lord's coming in the first instance was a literal, personal, advent to this planet, there can be no doubt whatever as to the fulfilment of the

promise of His second coming. He will come again in person.

He Himself promised that He would come. I am aware that He said to His disciples, "I will not leave you alone; I will come to you. I will not leave you orphans." There is a sense in which some of His promises in respect to His coming to abide with His people were fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit; for it is true that we do not serve an absent Christ. Christ is formed in us the hope of glory. He has come in the person of the Holy Ghost to stand by us, to abide with us; and in His Great Commission He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." There is a sense, therefore, in which the Lord Jesus is with us now. He is with us in the person of the Holy Ghost. But He has promised that He will come again, and His second advent is to be like the first. He is not to send a deputy, but He will come Himself.

There are many scriptures which tell us that His coming will be visible. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." In the passage we have

read from the first chapter of Acts we are told that He will come "in like manner" as He was seen to go. I think we may assume, then, in this place, that it is unnecessary to argue that point.

But I believe that our Lord's coming will not only be visible: it will be audible. I have repeatedly told you that I find myself compelled to dissent from the position which would imply that Christ is to come for His saints and with His saints. I believe there lurks in that doctrine a grievous error. I do not think it is a fundamental of the faith, and I have always said to you that I shall not quarrel with you on that issue; but I think it is a matter of historic truth that in all the history of doctrine you will find no suggestion anywhere of three comings of Christ,—of His having come once, and is yet to come for His saints and with His saints.

That doctrine was first set forth by Edward Irving, the founder of the Irvingites, or of the Catholic Apostolic Church as it is usually called. Mr. Irving did not propound that view as having any scriptural warrant at all: he gave it forth as a special revelation communicated to him. On that ground I have nothing to say except that I do not believe in special revelations. But if it is to be defended on that ground, it must be defended on that ground alone. I am positive it cannot be defended from Scripture.

Let me remind you at that point that it is very easy for us to read into the Bible our own preconceptions. In the course of my ministry I have met hundreds and hundreds of people who were Presbyterians, or Methodists, or Anglicans, or some other denomination, who were devout Christians, who loved the Lord, and who believed the Bible to be the word of God, who yet believed that the sprinkling of babies was scriptural baptism. Why did they believe it? Because they had not read their Bibles? No! Because whenever they came to a reference to the ordinance of baptism in Scripture, instead of reading out of the Scriptures what the Scriptures teach, they read into the Scriptures what they have been taught, and so pass it over and take for granted that it is true.

It is an amusing thing how few people carefully observe what they read. If you want to test it, when you go home tonight glance at the evening paper—or, if it suits you better, look at a morning paper—then find somebody who has read the same paper and ask him if he has read a certain item in that paper. If he says, "Yes," enquire what it said. In nine cases out of ten such an one will get it upside down or inside out, or out of proportion somehow. Sometimes people read the paper and they do not know whether a certain thing happened in Vancouver or Halifax—and they think it makes no difference, even though they are three thousand miles apart!

Some of you people use a book-mark in your Bible. You would not need a book-mark if what you read entered into you and became a part of mind and heart. You would meditate upon that passage all day, and look forward to the time when you could resume reading. But that is how some people read their Bible—especially if it is a Scofield Bible, and what they find there is the end of all argument. From absolute ignorance of the Bible to oracular certainty, to a position where a person knows all there is to

know upon a certain thing, so that they know it beyond all contradiction, all that is necessary is a Scofield Bible and three months! A person who knows nothing may become an authority in three months—not knowing that they are dealing with subjects that require a lifetime of study, and even then that they are reading the word of the Infinite, and that it ought to be approached with humility of spirit. What I warn you against is that superficial study of the Word that results in a dogmatism that is obnoxious to the last degree.

Somebody wrote me last week about a certain subject, saying, "The Greek says so-and-so." Greek! The person who wrote that letter would not know a letter of the Greek alphabet if she saw it. In the first place she cannot write English.

The famous Pastor Russell undertook to set all the expositors of Scripture of the world right, telling people what the Greek said, and what the Hebrew said, about certain things. Brought to task in Hamilton a few years ago, and being on the witness-stand under oath—he had sued somebody for libel—the lawyer handed him a Greek Testament and said, "Will you please find such-and-such a passage?" Pastor Russell turned the pages without avail. "Find it," said the lawyer, "if the Greek says it." He could not. The lawyer found it and said, "Will you read that, please?" He could not read it. Then the lawyer said, "Read one word," and he compelled him to admit, great exegetist as he was, that he did not know one letter of the Greek alphabet from another.

Then the lawyer handed him a Hebrew Bible and said, "Read me a portion of that." When asked how he presumed to set everybody right in a matter of that sort, he admitted he was dependent upon Young's Analytical Concordance—which you can buy for a few dollars down-town.

Do not misunderstand me. A person who does not know much English may know this Bible; being divinely taught of the Spirit of God, he may know more about its sacred secrets than the greatest Greek or Hebrew scholar in the world. I am not insisting upon intellectual scholarship merely, but I say these subjects are vastly bigger than some people suppose. The more we delve into them the more cautious we are about being positive about these prophetic matters that relate to the future.

I say, as I study the Bible that is my view. The coming of Christ wherever it is referred to is a visible coming. He will not come secretly: "Every eye shall see him"; "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him"; "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The coming of Christ is the "glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ". His coming, then, is manifest and audible. The great rapture passage itself says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

I believe the second personal coming of Christ is indispensable to the completion of our redemption. He came once to die for us: He will "appear the second time without sin (without a sin offering) unto salvation." At His coming the whole scheme of redemption will be completed. Let us rejoice in this promise.

I pause to say that I think the teaching of Scripture is very specific on this point, that no one can possibly know when the Lord shall come. I know there are many devout people who, in spite of the plain statements of Scripture, try to wrest that secret from God, and estimate when the Lord shall come. Let us learn to hold this doctrine in relation to all the other truths of Scripture, in its proper place, and avoid that lopsidedness and fanaticism that leads so many people to go off at a tangent.

I think I have told you of a dear friend, a man whom I greatly love in the Lord, the author of the book, "Jesus is Coming", Dr. Blackstone. He must be nearly ninety years old now. I saw him a couple of years ago when he was eighty-seven or eighty-eight. Dr. Blackstone is Chairman of a certain committee to whom were entrusted more than a million dollars to be expended in gospel work. Brother Blackstone thinks he knows when Christ is coming. He has set the date several times, but it did not work out: He did not come, and Dr. Blackstone had to go back to his reckoning. He has it fixed now for 1934 — it cannot possibly be later than 1934!

Dr. Blackstone, not only knows when the Lord will come, but where! He has allowed his mind to dwell upon this, and to speculate about it, until I fear in his later years he has made the doctrine of the Second Advent an absurdity. He believes when the Lord shall come great persecution shall develop, and that the Jews particularly shall suffer. He has spent thousands of dollars in having Bibles printed in Yiddish, that are packed in weatherproof cases, and those cases are at this hour stored in the rocky recesses of the prehistoric rock-hewn city of Petra. Dr. Blackstone is sure that in the great persecution which will fall upon the Jews in the Great Tribulation, they will all run for refuge to Petra, and he has thousands of copies of the Bible in Yiddish in these weatherproof containers stored away marked, "For Use of the Jews in the Great Tribulation."

Can fanaticism go farther than that? I think the devil loves to turn people off the track. It is so important that we hold these doctrines in relation to each other, and get the comfort and joy from them that the Lord designed they should bring to us, without allowing ourselves to be led into such extravagances as that.

I give you this bit of advice; I care not if he profess to be as wise as ten Solomons, whenever you hear any man, anywhere, so-called Bible teacher or what-not, presume to tell you when Jesus Christ will come, have done with him. I would not waste five minutes listening to any man who will go right in the teeth of Scripture and profess to know what our Lord said was withheld from the knowledge of the angels. More than that, as though to warn us away from that folly, He said there was one thing that was put within the Father's own authority, that even the Son had, so to speak, closed His mind against one

thing, namely, when He shall come again. There are some people who are wiser than the angels,—and all that in the name of Christian orthodoxy, turning people aside from the great matters concerning which the Book was written to make us wise!

II.

WHAT WILL BE SOME OF THE ACCOMPANIMENTS OF THE LORD'S COMING? There are some people who are thoroughly versed in the programme of the millennium. I confess I am not. I believe the Scriptures teach that there will come a time when righteousness shall universally prevail upon this earth, when the "kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." This world is some day going to be a beautiful place in which to live. Even now we sometimes sing of the earth as a place—

"Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

But some day righteousness will universally prevail.

The dream of a golden age is more than the baseless fabric of a vision. There will be a golden age. I believe that. But I cannot see that the Scriptures teach that that golden age will precede the coming of Christ. Those who believe in the personal return of the Lord, and in a reign of righteousness on the earth, are sometimes classified as post or pre-millennialists. Those who believe the Lord will come after the millennium, and that the millennium will be brought about by some other means than by His personal return, and before His return, are described as post-millennialists. Those who believe in the pre-millennial coming of Christ, that Christ shall come first and the millennium after are called pre-millennialists. I confess myself a pre-millennialist. I can see, from the teaching of Scripture, no hope whatever of the cleansing of this earth, and the establishment of righteousness, this side of the coming of Christ.

Let us be careful there. There are some of our post-millennialist friends who believe in the Bible just as truly as we do. They believe in the personal return of the Lord as certainly as we do, but they believe that the millennium may be brought about through the preaching of the gospel. I have heard it said sometimes, "Is it not impossible that the kingdom should be set up in the absence of the King?" As a matter of fact, the kingdom is set up now. I am not a futurist in the sense that the kingdom of God is something that is literally to be established. "The kingdom of God is within you." "Grace reigns through righteousness." Jesus Christ already sits upon a throne. He is even now King. But I do differ between a kingdom that is spiritual and that is largely invisible, and the manifestation of the kingdom with the King when Jesus Himself shall come again. But remember, if it were in the plan of God, surely this whole earth could be converted by means of the preaching of the gospel. If God willed it so, not only thousands, but millions, could be converted in a day.

If we believe that the world was created by the word of God, we must surely believe that it could be re-created if it were God's will. It is not what God could do we are concerned about, for with Him all

things are possible; but it is what God has said He will do. The question is, What is His plan?

Surely it is perfectly clear that when the Lord Himself shall return to the earth He will not return to an earth where righteousness prevails. There are two periods mentioned in the Scripture when sin had reached such a climax that God intervened in judgment. One was in the days of Noah, when man had corrupted his way upon the earth, and was so vile, that God said, "The end of all flesh is come before me." And He visited the earth with judgment. The other case is that of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain. You remember the story of how God Himself came down to conduct a personal investigation, and then rained fire and brimstone from heaven and blotted out those cities.

Our Lord said that when He shall come the second time He will find the earth in a condition analogous to the days of Noah. He said that people will be doing the same things when He shall come again that they were doing when the flood came and took them all away. And certainly the flood did not break upon a world that was enjoying any sort of reign of righteousness. He said that it would be as it was in the days of Sodom when He shall come again. He also asks, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

If you read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew you will find that He predicts there will be false prophets. Error will be everywhere, and "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Then if you come to those great passages in Thessalonians, you will find it is there predicted that before Christ comes there will be a falling away, a universal apostasy that will find its climax in the revelation of the man of sin who "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." When evil has thus gathered itself up in that colossal personality, and the whole world is subject to the reign of Antichrist, upon that condition of life the Son of man will break in His glory. Thus these things will come to pass before the Lord comes, and that day shall not come except there be a falling away.

There are many who see in the present condition indications, as they think, that we are in the last days—and I suppose we are in the last days. But then, when you think about that, do not forget that this is the word of One to Whom a thousand years are as a day. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and said, "This is that which was spoken," he quoted this scripture: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, said God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." That term, "the last days", obviously refers, not to the few years which belong to the culmination of things at the end of the dispensation, but to this whole dispensation of grace. We are in the last days. We have been in the last days since Pentecost; and the prophecies relating to the last days begin to be fulfilled at Pentecost.

There is an article in *The Gospel Witness* this week, written by one of the most distinguished scholars on this Continent. I am sorry he asked me to publish it without his name. He wrote me a letter respecting a sermon he had read in *The Gospel Witness*, expressing his entire agreement with the position taken. I wrote him and asked if I might

publish his letter. In his reply he said he would like to amplify it a little if it was to be published. He prepared this brief article on the Great Tribulation, and suggested that he would prefer it to be published without his name, in order that people might read and study it for the value of the truth itself without any influential name attached to it.

This scholar takes the position that while there is some reason to believe that that period of suffering described as the Great Tribulation will be intensified toward the end of the age, he sees no reason why the Great Tribulation should not be understood as extending over the whole Christian era, worldwide and gradually intensifying toward the end.

Certainly some such conditions will obtain when the Lord shall come. He will come upon a world that greatly needs Him, for this dispensation will close with His coming, and evil will reach its climax when it is headed up in the person of the Antichrist.

III.

Now when Jesus Christ shall come, WHAT WILL FOLLOW HIS COMING? What will it mean? The Scripture is perfectly clear that *the resurrection of the just shall take place at His coming*: "Our citizenship ("our conversation", our version has it, "our manner of life") is in heaven"—that is where we belong. We are citizens of the spiritual Kingdom—"from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body (the body of our humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." That is one of the things that will accompany the Lord's return.

Go back to the rapture passage: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." There will be a first resurrection, and at the coming of Christ those who sleep in Christ shall rise first; "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Let me point out to you that redemption is not completed until it applies to our bodies. Some of our friends talk much about divine healing—and I believe in it. I believe the Lord preserves us in health, and I believe when sickness overtakes us, sometimes without means at all, He may restore us to health. Sometimes it may please Him to use means; but, whether with or without means, He is "the Lord our healer". But even our friends who claim miraculous healing, I find, do not remain for ever well; and some of them need to be healed as often as there is a divine-healing campaign held in the city. They get healed over and over again. It does not look to me as though it were specially the Lord's work. But I want to be so well some time that I shall never be sick any more.

The difficulty is, we still have these mortal and corruptible bodies. Sin is inseparable from the body. Man is a trinity, spirit, soul, and body; but what one does the other does. We said to a man one day, who was very ill. "How are you?" He said, "I am too well." "What do you mean?" I asked. "I fear," said he, "this old tabernacle has too much vitality, and that my agony will be prolonged." We need new bodies.

I heard of a minister once who met a certain woman of his congregation, and said, "I have not seen your husband at church recently." "No, sir," said she, "he has not been there." "What is the matter with him?"—he imagined that he had been disaffected doctrinally, and named over all the "isms" he knew. He wanted to know if the man had fallen a victim to this "ism" or that "ism." "It is worse than that," said his wife. "It is? What do you mean?" "It is rheumatism."

These bodies are not wholly exempt. "We that are in these tabernacle do groan." But we shall not always do so, for at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be given new bodies. I do not know what they will be like. I suppose we shall be better looking than we are now! And certainly we shall be more charitably disposed toward each other. We shall be more disposed to regard other people as being passable, at least, than we are today. I hope I shall not be like I am now. Do you want to be just like yourself? Come now, do you? Why do you let the photographer touch up that negative, and make you better looking than you really are? Why not have a lifelike photograph and be done with it? We all need improvement, do we not?

Here is the wonderful truth of Scripture that when Jesus Christ shall come we shall have bodies that will be "fashioned like unto his glorious body"—not like yours, or mine, or somebody else's, but like His. We shall be like Him. There will be a real resemblance to Jesus Christ. We shall be done with all our aches and pains when we have our resurrection bodies. There will be an end to all the limitations that now surround and hamper us.

I am rather glad that we do not know too much about that. It is one of the things that we can look forward to. We shall discover when we have those new bodies, new viewpoints. I was calling upon one of our members the other day, and she told me that her mother insisted that we should not need wings soon, but would be able to fly without an aeroplane, and be able to talk to the world without a radio set. We must learn to talk, if that is the case, for that would inflict a real injustice upon people if we all had broadcasting power. I believe there is no harm in dreaming of that glorious resurrection day when we get our new bodies.

The coming of the Lord will mean rest and reward to all His saints: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you and to you who are troubled rest with us"—When? When the Lord Jesus shall come secretly? No!—"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire." That is when we shall have rest, when He comes down the skies. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." And that rest will be enjoyed when Jesus shall come again.

There will be rewards for His people. That is certain. I do not think we give enough attention to that; because we are so zealous for the truth that salvation is of grace, and of grace alone, we forget sometimes that over and above the gift of life there will be rewards for the faithful. It is like a little boy whose father says, "If you do well in the next

examination at school I will give you a watch." The boy is his father's son. He has not to work for that. His relationship to his father is determined by the fact that he is born into the family. He is there. He can never be anybody else's son. But, being a son, his father says, "If you behave yourself, and are faithful, I will reward you for your faithfulness." That is the teaching of Scripture.

You remember Paul said, "As a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." That is the Foundation, that is our hope of eternal life; but on that foundation we are to build a superstructure. And Paul says, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon . . . if any build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Paul said he was living for that day, that he cared little for what people said of him now, but that he was living for a better day. A friend of mine said that he thought certain scriptures should be brought up-to-date. Speaking of a certain preacher he said, "I think he is building wood, hay, and newspapers!" It was just a facetious remark, but it is possible for people to be important in the public eye, and appear to be successful, when they have merely reared a structure of wood, hay, and stubble. The gold, silver, and precious stones, are likely to be less manifest, smaller in bulk, and not so readily recognized; but when the fire comes we shall all be tested, and the genuineness of our work shall appear. Are you not glad it is coming?

Then, remember, *it is a time of judgment for those who still live at His coming*, for He comes to "take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." His coming will mark the destruction of Antichrist: "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." So that Antichrist must be revealed before He comes, for he will be destroyed with the brightness, the epiphany, of His parousia. Do not speak about a difference between those words. They are three aspects of the same thing.

Then afterward comes the millennium. I know little about it, and will leave the explanation to my wiser friends. In the twentieth of Revelation there are three or four verses which tell us that the devil is going to be chained. The devil is not in hell now: he walks about "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." You may stay away from church next Sunday morning, but he will be here. When the sons of God come together he is always among them. He goes about tempting people. He is not in the heavens now only: he is present in the lives of men and women on earth, going about seeking whom he may devour.

It is not hard for me to believe in the existence of a real devil. I could not explain many things if the Bible were not clear on that point, that there is a real personality trying to destroy the sons of men. But the Bible tells of a day when He will be cast into the bottomless pit. May I be there to see it! Would you not like to see him in the bottomless pit? A friend of mine said he would love to be Pastor of a Baptist church when there was no devil. I shall not be dogmatic about it, but I believe there are many passages in the Old Testament that have not been fulfilled. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." I believe that some day we shall have a garden without a weed. I believe we shall have fruit-trees without a worm. The curse will be removed from the earth, as it will be from us "in the regeneration", whenever that is; when the Son of man shall sit upon His throne in glory we also shall set upon thrones. This old earth is going to be regenerated some day: "Instead of the

thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." The lion shall eat straw like an ox; the very nature of the beasts of prey shall be changed.

I am glad to believe that human nature will be changed too, the same as the nature of the beasts about us. Righteousness shall everywhere obtain. I frankly say that I do not know why the devil should ever be let loose again, but he is to be. God knows why. Then the final summing up of all things will take place. The last two chapters of Revelation tell of a time when all shadows will pass away, when there shall be no more tears, no more sorrow, and no death. There will be no night there. There will be no sun nor stars nor moon there. There may be, but they will not be necessary, because the Lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land. There is a great future before us. Everything is bright,—the prospect of some day living and reigning with Christ, sharing His glorious victory.

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LACK OF INFORMATION.

Although "knowledge has increased" and "education" has become a snare to many, and the god of those who, parrot-like repeat what they have learned from others who have become slaves of an idea, or theory, unproven and unreliable, it is still a fact that ordinary "common sense" is at a premium and should be courted unceasingly, for it is not the product of schools, of colleges, but is God given reasonableness, the outward symbol of a sound mind and the essence of "orderliness and carefulness"; the ability to consider a matter in the light of experience and direction as found in the Book of books.

In spite of our privileges in Christ Jesus, our heritage, and the counsel we have from Him, it is sad to see how many mistakes are made by God's children, and Satan is the temporary victor, because it would seem that many are ready to believe the worst. They are ready to jump to conclusions, follow initiative, pass judgment and come to quick decisions with only meagre information. How often there appears to be a tendency on the part of some to set themselves up as criteria in matters of procedure and with a boastful "I, I, I," talk about their direction, their leading, their feelings, their judgment, their spirituality, their discernment, when they have often refused to weigh the matters, or obtain full information.

Since the so-called Convention of the F.B.Y.P.A. in Woodstock a few weeks ago, how many have said, "Had I known," "Had I had all the information, I would have acted differently."

A letter received in the office told of a decision made by a church some time ago, in which they pled newspaper reports as their source of information. Imagine

making a decision of the greatest importance without all the information; trusting to garbled, ofttime prejudiced newspaper reports for information bearing upon the work which the Lord has entrusted to our fellowship of churches—depending upon newspaper reports and rumors, rather than seeking full information! Truly just ordinary "common sense" is as rare a jewel as consistency.

* * *

MILITANT MINISTERS

If it is not necessary to wage a fierce and steady battle against the power of darkness, then a militant ministry is not necessary and those who are fearlessly warning sinners of their peril and endeavoring to "by all means save some" are wasting their energy and striving as "one that beateth the air." We are, however, persuaded that IT IS NECESSARY to wage war. The day is drawing well to a close and Satan is blinding the eyes of people to their need of a Saviour, a Saviour who is very God and very Man, a Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin. We praise God for fearless, militant ministers, who will in the Name of the Lord arouse the slumbering, self-satisfied church and bring them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Rev. William Fraser is startling Windsor. That city, like many others, is an abomination with its worldly church members and its churches without a living message. From a pamphlet issued by Mr. Fraser, we quote, the following—

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE CHURCHES IN THE BORDER CITIES?

No honest or intelligent person, no matter how charitable they may claim to be, can deny the fact that there is

something radically wrong with the majority of our churches in the Border Cities.

The Present Depression

has undoubtedly been brought upon us as a judgment from Almighty God chiefly because of the sins of the preachers and the churches in turning people away from God and the Bible by the accursed teaching and preaching of Modernism as a substitute for the Old Time Faith, and the consequent loss of spiritual power, together with the paralyzing and damning curse of worldliness which is sweeping through our churches like a plague.

Pray for Mr. Fraser as he labors alone in the midst of many who name the name of Christ and are afar from Him. When in Windsor visit the Ambassador Baptist Church, 207 Curry Ave. Souls are saved there.

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COURTLAND.

The fifty-sixth anniversary service of the Courtland Baptist Church was celebrated on Sunday, June 7th, and Monday, June 8th. Three services were held on the Lord's day when Rev. W. E. Atkinson and Pastor Leander Roblin assisted Rev. R. D. Guthrie. The afternoon session gave opportunity for a talk on the Foreign Mission work and Mr. Atkinson gave an illustrated lantern talk.

On Monday evening, the church was happy to have Rev. James McGinlay of Central Regular Baptist Church, London, Ontario.

A fuller report will doubtless be received from Mr. Guthrie a little later. The Lord has greatly blessed his servant at Courtland and the work goes on to His own glory and honor.

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WHAT GOD REQUIRED.

Exodus, chapter 13.

Golden Text: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten." (13:3).

I. THE FIRSTBORN SANCTIFIED, (vs. 1, 2).

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." To sanctify means to set apart unto the Lord, and is a recognition of the claim of God upon that which is sanctified. The Lord had redeemed the firstborn of Israel when He judged Egypt, and, therefore, they were His; and this command was right and reasonable. It would no doubt be responded to out of a sense of gratitude at the marvellous deliverance effected, and the firstborn would be accepted as the Lord's. It reminds us of the claim of God upon the redeemed ones of the present day. Their Redeemer has done a great work on their behalf: they are expected to glorify the One Who has done so much for them, (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Note some of the implications of acknowledgement of God's claim affecting: the members of the body, the gifts, material, intellectual and spiritual, the disposal of one's time, the sacrifice of one's comforts, and the making of one's plans. In every sphere of life the saint is affected. Explanation should be made of the nature of God's claim, the necessity of recognizing it, and the blessing attached to such recognition.

II. THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE DAY OF DELIVERANCE, (vs. 3-10).

"And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib," (vs. 3, 4). The day of their deliverance was not to be forgotten by the Israelites, nor the source of that deliverance; and strict instructions are given concerning the manner of the celebration. Man is proverbially of short memory in relation to his benefactors, and requires to be continually reminded of his indebtedness and obligation thereto. Particularly is this the case in relation to God. The Lord has done much for all men, and our duty is to live henceforth for Him, (2 Cor. 5:15). The Christian has experienced a real deliverance from the bondage of sin, and his heart should rejoice and give praise to the One Who has done such a wondrous work on his behalf.

The manner of the celebration is of interest, "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread," is the Lord's command. "And in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord," (v. 6). In a previous lesson we have noted the typical significance of leaven as applying to that which is evil, and the spiritual implication here is the putting away of that which is evil, (v. 7), in order to obey an observance of the Lord. There must be real separation unto God on the part of all those who worship Him. He expects holiness of character, (Heb. 14:14), and makes it possible for us to give obedience, (Rom. 3:22). The month Abib, the time of the exodus from Egypt, (v. 4), was the time of green ears and the best time for travel into the desert. Note the fact of this ordinance, its nature, and its purpose; also the Christian ordinance of the Lord's Supper which was instituted at the time of the passover feast, (Matt. 26:17-30), and commemorates the act of our great deliverance in the death of our Lord.

III. THE FIRSTLINGS OF ANIMALS SET APART UNTO THE LORD, (vs. 11-16).

As in the case of the firstborn among men, the Lord claimed every firstling as His. The firstborn among men and unclean animals had to be redeemed, and the firstborn of clean animals were devoted to God, and offered on the altar unto Him, (Num. 18:14-18). In the case of men and unclean animals the principle of substitution is recognized, the lamb giving itself in the place of another; which reminds us of our great Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, (John 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:6), Who gave Himself for us that we might be redeemed from the power of sin. And being redeemed by Him we are His. Note the nature of our redemption, the purpose, consequences, principle, and price paid for the same. Our redemption is divine, almighty, eternal, complete, suited to every need and accessible to all.

IV. THE JOURNEY OF ISRAEL. (vs. 17-22).

The direct path to Palestine lay through Philistia, but to go that way meant fighting of a serious nature with a strong foe, and the Israelites on emerging from Egypt were not prepared for such a conflict. They would probably have become discouraged if serious opposition had been met at the beginning of their journey. They required the desert training to fit them for the arduous duties attached to national existence. God knew the best way to take, and led His people in it. Such a way seemed roundabout, and it was the longest, but it was the one most suited to the people. It is true to state that God always chooses the way for His people; sometimes it seems hard and long, but it is chosen with our condition and needs in mind. He knows the way, and understands us, and is steadily leading us toward the ultimate goal. Explanation may be made of the tender consideration of God for His people, and of His pity for them, (Ps. 103:13, 14), also of His Omniscience, His wisdom, His loving purpose, of the duty of full

surrender and obedience unto Him, and of the blessing now and hereafter of such a submissive attitude.

The orderliness of God is seen in the way in which His people left Egypt, (v. 18). They went up by five in a rank. They did not come out as a mob; each particular tribe was in its place, and each family in each tribe. A small company in order to make satisfactory progress must be properly organized. Much more is this the case in relation to a large company. God is not the author of confusion, (1 Cor. 14:33), and desires His people of the twentieth century to be orderly in their journey toward the Promised Land. They are expected to be orderly in private life, living holy and just before God. (Eph. 1:4), and collectively as members of the church they are required to be in submission to the order governing the same. These are days when many of the Lord's people are manifesting a lawless attitude toward God's order in the church: they refuse to do their duty, they rebel against the considered decisions of the church, and they decline to abide by the word of God. Disaster is the outcome of such conduct, and many are called to suffer in consequence. Wholehearted conformity to the order of God brings blessing, (Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24). Note the need for order, private and public, the purpose of it, and its beneficial nature, also the evil consequences of disorder.

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." Joseph died in faith believing that God would fulfil His promise, and lead His people out of Egypt, (Gen. 50:24, 25), and God is always faithful to His word, (1 Thess. 5:24), and never fails His own. His promises at times may seem impossible of fulfilment, but no difficulty is too great for Him to overcome, and He is able and willing. Emphasis may be placed upon the necessity and blessedness of trusting God even in the darkest days, remembering that all things are possible to those who believe, (Mark 9:23).

Continuing their journey the Israelites left Succoth and "encamped in Etham in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people," (vs. 20-22). God not only chose the way for the people, but went with them on the journey and led them each step of the way, giving both guidance and light. The pillar of cloud was the symbol of His presence, and in accordance with its movements the children of Israel moved or rested, (Num. 14:9, 17). It is a fit type of the Holy Spirit Who came on the day of Pentecost to be with the Church, (Acts 2:1-4), and Who is in all things the Leader of the church, (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 6:3; 13:2, 4; 15: 28). Explanation may be made of His personality, His purpose, and His work, and our duty and privilege to be possessed by Him and to obey Him, (Eph. 5:18). The great need of the church these days is spiritual power, and He is the source of that, (Acts 1:8).