

The Gospel Witness

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE THREE CROSSES.

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, November 20th, 1932.

(Stenographically Reported—Broadcast over CFRB. 690 k.c.)

"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

"But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

"And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."—Luke 23:33, 39-43.

Prayer Before the Sermon.

We bow in Thy holy presence, O Lord, at this evening hour sincerely desiring to be included in that number who worship Thee in spirit and in truth, and whom Thou art graciously seeking. Draw us, we beseech Thee, and we will run after Thee. Give to every believing heart, this evening a sense of Thy presence, of Thy nearness to us. Help us that we each may have a personal experience of the ministry of Thy Spirit in our hearts, as He shall take of the things which are Christ's and reveal them to us.

We thank Thee for all He has wrought in our behalf, for the great truth which Thou hast already spoken to us this evening from the pages of Thy holy Word. We rejoice in the assurance that Thou didst lay upon Him the iniquity of us all. We thank Thee that He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; and that now those whose eyes have been anointed by the Spirit from above have a prospect before them of the unfolding of the gates of pearl, of eternal residence in that city of which the Lamb is all the light.

How unfit we all are for such a future! How impossible for any one of us to enter into it apart from the cleansing of the precious blood of Christ! We beseech Thee, O Lord, to make us feel our complete dependence upon the sinner's Saviour. May He be magnified before us by the ministry of Thy Spirit. May Jesus Christ the Crucified be set forth among us. Help us to view His wounds again, as did the disciples after the resurrection when He showed them His hands and His side, and they were glad when they saw the Lord.

Perhaps some in Thy presence this evening are depressed, finding the road very rough, and the winds contrary. It may be that some of life's burdens seem to be insurmountable. The odds are so great that the battle seems likely to

be lost. Yet we know it is not so: it is for ever true that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. We thank Thee for the inclusion in that universal all of the things that seem to us to be so contrary, so galling, so sometimes almost unendurable.

We bless Thee that Eternal Love is on the throne, that God does order the steps of a good man, and delighteth in his ways. Minister, we pray Thee, according to our deepest need, to every member of this congregation. Fain would we spread our needs before Thee, but we know not how to pray. We know not wisely what to ask for. We are foolish, blind, and ignorant. We are like little children often, asking of Thee the things that would destroy us, only complaining when Love's gift is bestowed upon us.

Therefore would we remember that not only Infinite Love, but Infinite Wisdom, is on the throne; and that Thou art working all things according to the counsel of Thine own will. We bless Thee that when thus we are shut up to Christ, Thou dost make us to anticipate something of the glory of the eternal city. We beseech Thee to lift Thine own people into the heavenly places in Christ, that there they may appropriate something of the blessings that are laid up for them by Thy eternal purpose.

Bless those who share this service with us over the radio. Some are shut in, aged and infirm. About some of them the shadows of the evening gather. Some are in much pain. Some are perhaps especially and peculiarly lonely. We remember that Thou didst delight to visit the sick in the days of Thy flesh, and that Thou didst lay Thine hand upon them, and heal them. We rejoice in the knowledge that Thou art just the same. We worship a Jesus Who does not change. Thou hast carried our human nature with Thee. We know Thou canst minister as Thou didst in ancient time. Soften

the pillow of those who are weary, with infinite tenderness. Visit them as Thou didst visit Jacob when, with a stony pillow, he saw the ministering angels of God. We beseech Thee especially to let Thy voice be heard by those who hitherto have never seen Jesus Christ. What a difference He makes!

We beseech Thee to make this an hour of real salvation, when souls dead in trespasses and sins shall be quickened into newness of life, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and, hearing, shall live.

We ask this, not alone for the service within these walls, but for the occasional hearer, for the man who has turned the dial apparently by accident, who hears a strange voice, from a strange city. We beseech Thee to make the word of Thy grace a message from Heaven to the hungry heart and sin-laden soul. So let the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow thereto, come upon this assembled congregation, and upon all who hear the word from this place. Receive us all, we beseech Thee. May we all find acceptance at the mercy-seat where the blood is sprinkled, and help us all to enter into the blessedness of experiencing the truth of Thy gracious word which tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. For His name's sake, Amen.

It is well always to remember how minutely prophecy was fulfilled at Calvary: "They parted my garments"; "A bone of him shall not be broken"; "They shall look on him whom they have pierced"; "That the scripture might be fulfilled saith, I thirst"; and again, "He was numbered with the transgressors." All this surely indicates that the details of that tremendous transaction at the place of a skull were divinely ordered. Add to that the recording of those events by the pen of Inspiration, and you will have solid ground for the assumption that this was written for our learning. Here, if only our eyes are opened to see it, we shall find the fullest revelation of grace to be found anywhere. Here, too, sin is to be seen in its ugliest form; unbelief in its blindest, maddest, folly; and faith in its sublimest exercise.

I.

I ask you this evening to turn your thought first to the cross "in the midst" as A REVELATION OF DIVINE GRACE. Let me call it the Cross of Grace, the cross where grace, which is the very essence of God, is most clearly revealed.

There will be no two opinions among us, I assume, in respect to this first observation, that whatever else may be said of the Victim Who died upon the central cross, He must be regarded as a *voluntary Sufferer*. Even in this late day of the superlative inventiveness of unbelief, the worst that anyone can say of Jesus Christ is that He was only a man, and that as such He was an impractical idealist who died as a martyr to his own convictions of truth and righteousness. If He were only a man, nothing more than that, it must be admitted that the principle of the voluntariness of His suffering remains. He might easily have taken a neutral course—as, alas! both pew and pulpit take too often to-day: thus He might easily have avoided a crisis and a cross. He died voluntarily.

Then if we accept the truth of His own saying that no man took His life from Him, that He had power to lay it down, and power to take it again, it must be admitted surely that His was a voluntary death. He was not dragged to the cross against His will. He went there of His own volition, of His own choice. He actually chose, not only the time and place of His death: he chose the method of His death as well.

I think we may take a further step, and say that there could be no dispute among us as to *the virtue of the Victim of the central cross*. No one has ever been bold enough, I think, to question the perfection of His moral

character. When He said to His enemies, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" they made him no answer: and even His judge declared, "I find no fault in this man." Since that day, while His character has been subject to the critical analysis of the keenest minds of all the ages, I have heard of none who have really been able to discover the slightest flaw in His character. Whatever may be said of His Deity, all will agree that the world has never seen so perfect a human character as that which was represented in Jesus of Nazareth.

That obviously creates a problem for us, for Virtue was crucified upon a cross, and He Who was absolutely without sin died, was crucified upon an instrument that was regarded as symbolic of a curse. It is very difficult to conceive of moral perfection being crucified upon a cross, while Sovereign Holiness is upon the throne. Recognizing the sinlessness of the nature of Jesus Christ, and the indisputable fact of His death, these considerations taken would impugn the moral government of the universe. Something must have gone wrong when Perfection was subjected to such an ignominious death.

I say, there is no satisfactory explanation of the death of Jesus Christ apart from the—let me say, at this stage of our study—the hypothesis of *the vicariousness of His suffering*. He Who died upon the central cross died not for Himself alone. There might have been but two crosses at the place called Calvary. Or, had there been three, they must have been all alike. There might have been no one "in the midst" to put a difference between the other two. Then Golgotha would have been the end of life for all mankind. Then every human death had been alike in this, that it had been the falling of a hopeless night upon the soul. But the truth of the Scripture is that Jesus Christ put His own cross in the midst, that He chose Himself to be numbered with the transgressors. The cross was set up as a signpost to mark for ever the difference in the roads which lead, the one to heaven, and the other to hell. He died "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God".

When we have recognized that truth—and I need not argue it further—when we have recognized that truth, that He was not merely a virtuous man, but that He was the Incarnate God Who died vicariously for the sins of the world, when we recognize the principle that God made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all, then we have laid the foundation for an understanding of the other elements of my story. Thus, briefly, although it is the central cross, and although it is the most important, I turn to the consideration of the crosses to be found, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, because they must be studied together.

We can understand the Cross in the midst only in relation to those on either side, and we can understand the crosses on either side only as we study them in relation to the Cross that was set up in the midst.

He Who died at Calvary died as the Lamb of God Who came to take away the sin of the world, and in that laying down of the life of Incarnate Deity we have the supreme revelation of the grace of God to men.

II.

Look now at another of these crosses which I shall call THE CROSS OF UNBELIEF. I would remind you that all roads lead to Golgotha, and all lives touch "the place of a skull". There is no possibility in this human life of

escaping the cross. There is a cross for everyone. There is a cross for unbelief, just as truly as there is a cross for faith. Whether you believe or do not believe, whether you are a Christian or refuse to be a Christian, whether you accept Christ or reject Him, the road of life for you must lead at last to Golgotha.

I heard someone over the air to-day refer to what I regard as the historical record of the Deluge, as "the legend" of the flood. Say what you will of Genesis, I think it is indisputable that it is in strange agreement with all the facts of life. The thorns and thistles have come from somewhere; and no one will deny the reality of the sorrows of motherhood. Read the story of Genesis and then read any page from human life, and you will discover they are parallel. You will be disposed to say, if you are a reasonable person, that if Genesis were not in the Bible then somebody ought to write a story like that, in order to give to the world a philosophy of things as they are. The thorns and the thistles are there, and all roads lead at last to the place of a skull, to the place called Golgotha. Though you take the longest road possible, however wide the detour, you will come at last, like all others have come, to Golgotha, to the place of a skull. None can escape it.

Men have busied themselves through all the ages trying to avoid in human life the principle of the cross—but they have never succeeded. They have always come to a Golgotha at last.

This cross of which I now speak is representative of a view of life which discerns no relation between the ills of life and our sin—to use the biblical term—our moral defects, our failures. Dress it up in any euphemistic term you like, it will not alter the fact that there is something in life, which is eccentric, that is out of centre, which produces friction, which mars all the pleasures of life, which disturbs all life's relationships, and which, even in a man's quietest hour, robs him of his peace. There it is! There is suffering enough. This man suffered. He was nailed to a cross just as were the other sufferers. He was a sharer with them of the pain and the agony of it; but he failed utterly to realize that there was any relation between his sin and his suffering.

Do you discern that defect in the philosophies of our day? That suffering is here, no one will question. Pain of every description, deprivation, distress, are rampant. No one is foolish enough to suppose that any human life can be spent as a day in June. That man who seemed to be a pessimist, who after all was only a seer, who saw into realities, and represented life as it is, "the Preacher" of Ecclesiastes, said, "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many." It would be folly for me this evening to try to persuade you that life is a perpetual merry-go-round, a mere picnic. We have had our dark days. God knows we have. We have had our pain and suffering. We are no strangers, any of us, to the principle of the cross. But instead of recognizing this as having a direct relation to the sin of the world, to the sin of the individual; instead of recognizing that sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, men try to account for these moral defects, and for their accompanying suffering, on other grounds.

This man saw no relation between his sin and his suffering. Indeed; he proposed to test the Saviourhood of Jesus, and to judge Him by His ability and His willing-

ness to save him from the cross: "If Thou be the Christ, if there is anything in Thy religion, then save Thyself and us. Gather out the thorns; remove the briars; wipe away all the tears; deliver us from this life of trial and toil and pain and suffering. That is the kind of religion I want."

The Bible is written in pregnant speech. Whether you regard its poetry, its prophecy, or its history—everything will be found wrapped up in this word. The voice of the unbelieving malefactor is the voice of unbelief always: "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." There is no contrition, no repentance, for sin, no desire that sin be removed: only a protest against its consequences. Thus to-day many a pulpit is busy trying to evolve a scheme of life that will eliminate the cross. Men would tell us that war came because the churches failed to prevent it. Now many people are busy saying that the churches have failed to prevent the depression. Half the preachers of the world, it seems to me, have turned aside from their proper business, and with the ability of amateurs, and with about an amateur's measure of success, they are propounding impossible theories of economics. They are trying to invent a machine that will take away the thorns. They would, by human effort, create a paradise on earth. They say that a religion which does not provide men with a good house, plenty to eat and to wear—and I suppose a car to ride in, and many other of life's luxuries—unless religion does that, they will have none of it.

Many people grumble at the church, at ministers, and at Christians in general, because there are thorns and thistles on the earth, because there are still crosses upon which men find themselves crucified. They say, "We will not believe unless you can give us a religion without a cross, and life without suffering and pain." They sow their fields and blame God for the harvest. As a term of their faith in God, while boasting of their rationalism and nicknaming faith credulity, they demand that God shall change the very nature and constitution of things, and make thistle-down produce daisies; and the carnal mind, set at rectangular purposes to God's will—which is another name for the law of God and the nature of things demands that life shall produce no cross. This man's whole life had been set in the direction of Golgotha, and now he asks only that the effect be removed, while the cause remains.

God would have to change the nature of the whole universe. He would have to change His own nature, the facts of life being what they are, if earth could be found without a cross, or without thorns and thistles. There is a law to the effect that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. We are only reaping what we have sown. The world is reaping the fruits of its own sowing. Yet men would fain claim the right to sow their fields with any seed they like, and then growl at God when the harvest comes. That is what was wrong with this man. The cross, and all that it represented, was the inevitable result of the entrance of sin into the world. Shut your Bible if you will, and read the story of any human life, but before you have completed its history, you will find you have made your way from Genesis to Golgotha.

This man demanded that Jesus Christ should prove that He was what He claimed to be. I wonder can I persuade you to put your thinking caps on this evening,—even in church? People, as a rule, do not think in

church. The church that asks people to think, as a rule does not attract the people. If you say nothing, and say it pleasantly, the many are pleased.

Jesus Christ could not save that man from the cross and be Christ. The condition which unbelief laid down as a term of faith involved, on the part of the Christ to Whom it was addressed, a violation of His own nature. He was, and is, the Author of life: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He was the Author of the nature of things, and it was because of the nature of things that a sinner was reaping the fruit of his own sowing. They spake most truly, although they said it in mockery, "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

I remind you that *this man prayed*. This man actually asked for salvation: "Save thyself and us." There are thousands of people who pray for salvation in exactly the same way. How often have I heard it at the graveside! How often have I heard it in other places—men who read their prayers. We all want to be saved. If I were to ask this congregation who among you desire to go to heaven, every one of you would respond. If I were to ask everybody within these walls who desires to be saved, to indicate that desire, if you were allowed to put your own interpretation on what salvation involves, you would all want to be saved. We want to be saved from the cross. Men want to be saved from the consequences of their sins, without being saved from sin itself. It cannot be done. Jesus Christ came for something vastly more than to save us from the consequences of sin. He did come for that, but for something more than that.

And mark you, *there was no response from the central Cross to this prayer for salvation*. Jesus Christ gave Him no answer. The cross, with its pain, its agony, its shame, its hopelessness, its helplessness, its utter darkness and blackness, remained—and Jesus did nothing to lighten its gloom.

We sometimes speak of "the dying thief". Please remember there were two dying thieves, and only one of them was saved; the other died in his sin, even as our Lord said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

This is the solemn fact that I bring before you, that it is possible for a man to come very close to Jesus Christ, so close as almost to be sprinkled with His precious blood, it is possible for a man to taste to the full, so far as it may be tasted in this life, the fruit of a life of sin, it is possible for a man to come to a cross of his own fashioning, and to die a death which he has really ordered by his own sin, to come actually into the presence of God, and actually to address a prayer to Jesus Christ, and yet to go from the side of the wondrous Saviour straight to hell itself. Going to church will not save you. Saying prayers will not save you. Being religious will not save you. It means something more than that actually to pass from death unto life.

III.

Very well, then, look at the other cross, THE CROSS OF FAITH. The other thief died. He was not saved from the cross by his faith. He died just as did the unbeliever. This thief *accepted the cross*. His faith found no obstacle to faith in the cross itself, because he admitted that he suffered the due reward of his deeds. No man will ever believe truly in the Lord Jesus Christ until he is brought, by divine grace, to a position where he will

be able to accept the work of Christ in His behalf. And that involves a recognition of the fact that our own sin deserves the cross, that "the wages of sin is death".

I would not do anything to discourage anybody from doing his best to make this world a little happier to live in. I do not blame anyone for removing stones, or doing anything they can to lessen the harvest of thorns and briars. There may be a shortage of other products, but there is no shortage of thorns and briars. But we must recognize that life is what it is because sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Do not complain of your lot, whatever it is, however difficult your situation, for everything short of hell is mercy for every one of us. If we had our desert, we should find our way to the cross, without hope. It is only because of the Cross in the midst that the pain of the cross of the believer is mitigated, and that the thorns are changed into a crown set with rubies.

Have you come to the cross to see yourself there? I fear this will soon be deleted from some of the hymn books, but can you sing it?

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

And can you sing the second verse?

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day."

You can sing that, can you not? But can you make the next two lines your own?—

"And there may I, as vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."

This man acknowledged the justness, the justice, of his own condemnation. And, on the other hand, his faith discerned the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, for he said to his fellow-malefactor, "This man hath done nothing amiss." By the illumination of the Spirit of God he was enabled to recognize that He Who died upon the central cross was not dying for His own sins, but for the sins of others. Can you accept that?

This man was *not afraid to confess his faith in the most difficult place*. There on the cross, and in the darkness, he rebuked unbelief, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Then to the Central Sufferer he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. I am on the cross with Thee. I do not ask to be saved therefrom. I deserve it all. But there is another life than this. There is a better day than this. There is a kingdom that is to come. Remember me when Thou comest into thy kingdom."

I fear we shall have to recover the lost emphasis. While laying no less emphasis upon the profitableness of godliness in the life that now is, we must emphasize more strongly its profitableness to the life that is to come.

You do not know how near the life beyond may be; and in all probability it is very much nearer than the fortune you dream about, and the better material condition for which you long. Well may we pray:

"Be near me when my feet
Are slipping o'er the brink;
For it may be I am nearer home,
Nearer now than I think."

Our Lord Himself enjoined us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." We are admonished to "seek those things which are above".

Jesus answered with a promise of salvation. There is no necessity for anyone to leave this house without salvation. You may have it now, as did this dying thief. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Jesus Christ said, "To-day shalt thou be with me." That is the main thing. It makes little difference where we are, if we are with Christ. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.—Heaven or earth, it is all one with me if Christ be my portion, and I am one with Him. I can endure the hardness"—and so he did; and so did others who followed in his train. So did the martyrs, who went home in chariots of fire.

"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." That is a text in itself, and I shall not expound it except to say that wherever Jesus Christ is, is paradise. And that is a shorter way to paradise than the way of the economist, a quicker way to paradise than any statesman can mark out for us: the entrance to paradise is found through faith in Christ. To trust Him, to receive Him, to have Him as your Saviour, is immediately to enter into paradise. In spite of all our tears, all the deprivations of this lower life, we should be able, like that old saint of whom you have heard, who, in the cellar, with nothing before her but a cup of water and a dry crust of bread, with her face lifted to heaven, and with some of heaven's glory upon her countenance, said, "Father, I thank Thee for all this, and Christ beside."

Let us have Christ only. I know of no other way. Two weeks ago to-night there was an aged saint here, apparently in the best of health; but she had gone to be with Christ before the next Sunday. And I suppose it is certain that among those who have heard this simple message, within these walls, or over the air, some will never hear the gospel again. It will be God's last appeal to some. It was now or never with that dying thief: it had to be "to-day". It could not possibly have been tomorrow. Let it be to-day: "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Let it be now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Let us pray:

O Lord, we beseech Thee to bless us once more. Let Thy gracious Spirit accompany the testimony of Thy word. And though we may never hear of it here, when Thy great day shall come, and the books are opened, and the other book which is the book of life, may it appear that many shall have to praise Thee through all eternity for this evening's service. God be merciful to us all as sinners, cleanse us in the blood of the Lamb, and save us by Thy great salvation. Make us new creatures in Christ, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, Thine only beloved Son, for His name's sake, Amen.

THE FOUNTAIN FILLED WITH BLOOD.

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, November 17th, 1932.

(As students were writing their quarterly examinations in Biblical Theology this evening, the regular course was suspended until next week).

(Stenographically Reported)

Lecture Text: 1 John, chapter 1.

Too readily, I think, most of us assume familiarity with certain portions of the Word of God. We dare to speak of the word of the Infinite as though it had become to us a kind of commonplace, as though we had exhausted its meaning. I got a letter this week, almost an amusing letter, which displayed nothing so much as the utter ignorance of the writer. Very condescendingly, at the conclusion of the letter, he assured me that he was quite willing to give the benefit of his superior knowledge to any who desired it. It was very kind of him, I am sure! "Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm," Paul said, declaring there were some who needed to be taught the first principles. They remind one of an adult who finds his way into the kindergarten class, and, having learned stammeringly, and with some few errors, to repeat the alphabet, he applies for a position as professor of philosophy in a university.

So we are all disposed to magnify ourselves, and to imagine that we have apprehended, when it ought to be our constant and humble confession that "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". We quote verses that we have all erred in calling "familiar". It is impossible for the finite mind ever to become "familiar" with the word of the Infinite. No one is so afraid of the sea, no one respects its majesty, nor takes such precaution not to expose himself to its fearful powers, as the "old salt", as those who "go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters". Thus the more we look into the Word, the more we allow our minds to dwell upon it, the more I am sure we shall be humbled before God.

I.

Here is one verse with the letter of which we are nearly all "familiar": "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We have quoted it again and again. Sometimes we relegate it to the initial experience of the Christian life. We find it a most useful verse to quote to those who are seeking forgiveness of sin, and eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be so used; but it is a word that was written to believers, and written by one who had had a very long experience of divine grace; it was probably written at a time when he was rather an aged saint.

The blood of Jesus Christ, of course, cleanseth the sinner. We have no hope apart from that. I need not labour that: that is one of the assumptions, it becomes to the believer a spiritual axiom. It is beyond argument. We know that "he was made of a woman, made under the law", that He became a curse for us, and that thus He redeemed us from the curse of the law. We have repented of our sins. We have sought forgiveness at the mercy-seat — and we have found it. We

rejoice in the great fact, that sin in its totality, the sum of it, sin in the aggregate, so far as the life of the believer is concerned, has been laid upon Christ: "The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all." We count the life of the Lord Jesus to be of such value that when He died in our room and stead He satisfied the utmost requirements of the divine law, ministered to the divine holiness, and restored the balances, making it possible for God to be just and the Justifier of him who believes on Jesus Christ. That is our foundation; upon that we stand.

I suppose believers will occasionally be thrown into a retrospective mood. You cannot help reviewing your past, counting up your failures, and feeling how utterly you have fallen short. I hope we all indulge occasionally in that very healthy exercise, so that we may the more magnify the atoning work of our Lord.

I was converted when a lad in my teens, and sin seemed bad enough then. I saw dimly, I think, into this philosophy; but it was a superficial view, such a view as belonged to a limited experience—for what do boys and girls know of the heinousness of sin? It is bad enough. It is evil enough. We know only as it is revealed to us by the Spirit of God, and even the Spirit of God dwells with us according to the measure of our understanding. He does not put the head of a mature man upon the shoulders of a boy in his teens, but even to such it is horrible enough; and I saw enough to know that nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ His Son could cleanse me from my sins. But when we hold that in retrospect, and think of all the intervening years, the magnitude of the Cross grows upon you, and the infinite value of that great Sacrifice becomes more real and more precious; on the other hand, you become more deeply aware of your own sin—and not only of your sin, but of your sinfulness—and become increasingly amazed at the capacity of your own nature for sin. I believe it is true that—

"Those who fain would serve Him best
Are conscious most of sin within."

It is impossible to dwell in the light with Him without feeling ever more deeply the greatness of the miracle that God should have found any way by which sin could be forgiven. But He has. As thus we view that initial experience it becomes more and more precious to us to be able to say, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

I am glad my debt is paid. Aren't you? No matter what else has happened to us, no matter what our condition, to be assured that that one stupendous matter has been taken care of by the God of grace, and forever settled, is a miracle. That is the big thing. I was going to say if we could live to be as old as the oldest man, but let me rather say when we have lived to the farthest reach of the eternity that is to be, we shall never cease to be amazed at that miracle. When we get a glimpse of the divine glory, and become aware of the perfection, the absoluteness, of the divine holiness, and find that we are actually there with God in spite of our sin, what wonderful times we shall have as we discourse together of the marvels of divine grace—if it were nothing more than provision for the cancellation, the putting away, nay, more than that, the forgetting, the blotting out of our sins. Nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can do that. There is no other gospel than that.

But that is in the past, and you and I have to live in the present. Sometimes, I dare say, we wish we could be transported suddenly into the glory; but we cannot.

We must await the divine pleasure. Here we are, subject to all our weaknesses, and to all the evil tendencies of our old natures. How often—how often we stumble, and sometimes we fall. But whether we stumble or fall, the closer we come to the light the more we see of our own sin. The Bible anticipated, in the spiritual realm, the principle of the Roentgen Rays, of X-ray, that penetrates everything. The Word of God has an X-ray power: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The more diligently we study the Word, and the more we know of its principles, the more we come to understand the quality of our own nature. I sometimes wonder where people live who would magnify human nature, and try to persuade us that it is as the most refined gold, that there is no dross left in it. I have seen enough of human nature to have a bad opinion of it. I have had opportunity to study it at close hand—I do not mean yours: I mean my own. We can all pronounce an opinion upon somebody else, but it is a good thing to have a fairly accurate appraisal of ourselves. Be tolerant and charitable toward others, but be merciless to yourself. As we come to understand that, there is danger of our viewing that truth one-sidedly, not to see it in its wholeness, its completeness, to see the fault without its remedy, and to forget the tense of the verb employed, "The blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth*." It is always cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth* us from all sin." In spite, not only of our past sins, but of our present defects and deficiencies, in spite of all that, the blood of Jesus Christ is as a river that is always flowing over us.

Have you seen a bright crystal stream flowing down a mountainside? If something is thrown into it, clouding its purity, it is only a few minutes until the stream is just as clean as ever; the bed of it is as clear as before, washed clean by that ever-flowing stream. The blood of Jesus Christ is not to be viewed merely historically, as something that was historically efficacious, as something that was offered in the distant past for our sins; the blood of Jesus Christ has a voice—not that it *did* speak, but that it now "speaketh better things than that of Abel". The blood of Abel cried from the ground in condemnation of the murderer. Jesus Christ was murdered so far as human hands were concerned: "By wicked hands (ye) have crucified and slain." But even as He died He cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The blood of Jesus Christ, so far as the believer is concerned, has a voice, not of condemnation, nor of accusation: the blood of Jesus Christ speaks better things than that of Abel. It has a present value because it is continuously operative, cleansing us from all sin, and keeping us clean.

That is a comforting reflection, not only that the sins of the past may be forgiven, but that it is our privilege this very moment, as believers, to be assured that every stain is washed away, and that at this moment we are without spot before Him, reckoned so to be, "complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power".

Let me explain. Jesus Christ appears now in heaven. By all means, properly estimate the historic Jesus. Have a clear view of His death, burial, and resurrection, His Deity, and all that flows out of that. But let us remember that Jesus Christ has entered into the heavens through the rent veil of His own flesh as our High Priest. He has entered heaven itself; "For Christ is not

entered into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "With his own blood" *now* He appears. *Now* He is our Representative. He is always there, and will be always there until He shall rend the veil and appear again. For that "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ", we look.

But as you let your mind dwell upon that, and anticipate it, and by His grace become numbered with those who "love his appearing"—shall I dare to say it—be glad of His disappearance. He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." He left this world for our advantage. He returned to heaven, and entered through the veil of His own flesh into the holiest of all, of which the tabernacle was but a figure, with His own blood, there to appear, not occasionally, but to be continuously present, for ever: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost (completely, forevermore) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Jesus Christ is hourly, momentarily, continuously, pleading the merit of His own blood in behalf of His believing people before the throne of God; and that blood cleanseth us from all sin.

But are there no conditions attached to that? Oh, yes. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light." We must come into the light. We must bring our lives into the light of His Word. As we do so, whatever is in us that is contrary to His holiness will be made known to us. Not all at once. There are certain things a little boy does for which he is reprov'd. His father or his mother says, "You must not do that: you must do so-and-so." But the father, while the boy is young, does not lecture him on things which the child could not possibly understand. There are little things that will be sloughed off as the personality of the child develops, and the wise father and mother say, "We will not trouble him just now about mere childish manners that are out of place." As he grows up these things are corrected in the lad's life from day to day.

And so with us. The Lord is as tender as in the days of His flesh, when He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." The Lord does not tell us things that we cannot understand. He leads us a step at a time, as we are willing to be led. When we get to heaven, one of the things we shall be thankful for is that the Lord did not show us all that was involved in our sin at one glance. I have sometimes thought if we could know what sin is, as God knows, it would make faith almost impossible. The doctor does not tell you everything. He holds much back. Did you ever travel on a train when the train stopped somewhere other than at a station? And did you ever observe how uncommunicative railroad officials have been trained to be? How politely they can tell you they do not know anything! Riding at the back of the train you have difficulty in

finding out that the engine has broken a rod, and that there will be a delay of some hours. The conductor and the trainmen know it is well that passengers should not know too much. An official once said to me, "It is a good thing that passengers do not know the risk they take."

There are many things in life that the Lord lets us know a little at a time, as we are able to understand. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light", He will show us from time to time.

Walking thus in the light we shall have "fellowship one with another"—and not merely with each other, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ". It is true that if believers walk in the light, they will have fellowship with each other, but "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light", we shall have fellowship with Him.

And if we walk with Him, His attitude toward sin will become ours, so far as we know it. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thus day by day, and hour by hour, it is our privilege to appropriate the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, and to know that there is nothing between us and Christ.

I intended to say all that in a sentence or two, therefore the remainder you will have to think out for yourselves.

II.

If that be true, how does it condition me as a child of God? Believing in Christ, I am adopted into the divine family; I have become a child of God. Did you ever wish you had plenty of money so that you would not have to patch your clothes? Many people who never did that sort of thing are learning so to do in the—what is that familiar word?—depression. Would it not be comfortable to have such resources that you could do as you like? I heard a preacher say once that he was a member of a large family, and that he had been taught to be as economical as possible with towels. With towels! Did you hear that? T-o-w-e-l-s. The thing you wipe your hands and face with after you have washed—the thing that children use to wipe their faces with when they have not washed! This preacher had been taught, because of the large family, to regard washday, and to be economical with towels. And he said he had so formed the habit that when he grew up, and found himself as he often did, in the bathroom of a hotel, where there were towels and towels, he was reluctant to use a clean one—he kept on using the soiled one as a matter of habit.

I will let you into a secret. I have travelled a good deal, and have spent a good many hours in hotels, and a good many nights on sleeping-cars. I do not like it, but I do enjoy the luxury of using as many towels as I like,—using one, and throwing it away; using another, and throwing it away. It is a great luxury to be able to use as many towels as you like.

We are children of God. We live in a palace. We have angels for our ministers. And there is no reason why we should not be kept clean. There is no need to be economical. Every minute our hearts may cry out to our Intercessor; nor shall we ever find the line busy. You will never find Heaven's exchange saying, "Hold the line, please." There is always an instant

response: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We can wear our best clothes all the time, and be sure they will never wear out.

The implications of that work out for yourselves. I heard a man once say that it ministered to his self-respect when he got a new suit of clothes. I have had men come to me here who had been office men, men used to doing clerical work. The clothes they possessed were clothes that were fitted for such work. The man is out of work, and someone says, "But why does he not work at something—at anything?" That is very good in principle, but I have had a man say to me, "I am willing to work at anything, but this suit is all I own, and if I ruin it, what shall I do?"

Sometimes we feel ourselves to be below par. We are afraid to call ourselves children of the King. There is no reason for it. Did you ever come from a motor trip in a sandy country? I mean, where the roads were not paved? But there is something worse than that. Did you ever travel on an express train across the Arizona desert, the Southern Pacific or Santa Fe, with the sand, like snow in the winter-time, coming in every possible crevice—through the floor, through the window—until you could feel it in your mouth, on your teeth, in your hair, everywhere? After a while the steward came through saying, "Dinner now served in the dining-car", but you felt like saying, "What do I want of dinner? Give me a bath-room; let me get away from all this."

Did you ever feel like that spiritually? Who of us has not? Here it is: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then we can come to dinner. Then we can pray—never on the ground of our own merit, but we can go into the Father's presence always. There need be no barriers.

I knew a ministerial friend who gave orders, as he went to his study one morning, that on no account was he to be disturbed, that no one was to come to the study on any pretext short of a fire. While he was in the midst of his work a little toddler walked in as though he owned the whole place. His father tried to be cross, and said very sternly, "What do you want?" "Nussin'." His father put down his pen, and his majesty proceeded to climb up on his knee. "What do you mean by disturbing me? What do you want?" "Nussin'." "Then why did you come, when I expressly said I was not to be disturbed?" He put his chubby arms around his father's neck and kissed him, saying, "Just to tell you that I love you." It took all the scold out of the father. The door was open into his father's presence, and he felt he had a right there.

When this great truth is realized by us, that we have access to the immediate presence of God, even when we do not need anything in particular, only to tell Him that we love Him, that is heaven. And when we do need Him—and when do we not?—we can plead our cause with Him:

I have only thought aloud this evening of some of the things I have been thinking about to-day. They brought me comfort, and I thought I would pass them on to you. God help us to revel in the luxury of His love, and in a realization of the truth that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

FROM THE "WITNESS" MAIL BAG.

Paducah, Ky.

November 10th, 1932.

"Dear Sirs:

"You will please find enclosed two dollars for the renewal of my subscription to THE GOSPEL WITNESS. This paper, for a number of years, has shed its spiritual light upon my pathway. I feel that I could not do without it, as it seems to have become a part of me.

"I am living in the happy anticipation of hearing the Editor of this paper in the near future, when he is inclined to turn his face toward the States, and visit our church, letting the people of our congregation have the delight of some of his great messages that have charmed thousands of his readers.

Sincerely,

London, Ont.,

October 25th, 1932.

"Dear Dr. Shields:

"I am very glad to renew my subscription to THE GOSPEL WITNESS for another year. It is the most appreciated of all the papers that enter this home, and I only wish I could send a substantial donation along with the subscription. I find the church to which I belong needs most of my gifts, especially in these days of reduced wages.

"I have taken THE GOSPEL WITNESS for several years, and though I have seldom had the privilege of hearing Dr. Shields, I feel well acquainted through the pastoral nature of the paper, and I thank God for such high class fellowship. May God continue to furnish you with spiritual food for the feeding of your large flocks of readers, and in doing so, may He sustain you in all your labours, and give you joy.

"Thanking you for what cannot be paid for with money, I remain,

Kansas City, Missouri,

October 14th, 1932.

"Dear Dr. Shields:

"I am writing you for Mrs. _____, of Horton, Kansas, and enclosing cheque for \$20.00. She wishes you to use part of this to pay for your paper sent to her, and the balance to send the paper to others according to your discretion. You may know of some missionaries and poorly paid ministers, and even some who are devout Christians not in the ministry, and yet unable to pay the subscription price. She sends this that you may use it in sending your paper to any such as these, and use your own judgment in doing so. Mrs. _____ rejoices in the work you are doing.

Minister."

Manitoulin Island, Ont.

October 24th, 1932.

"Dear Dr. Shields:

"Enclosed find money order to renew my subscription to THE GOSPEL WITNESS. Thank you for the paper. It is staff and stay—and more—to me. I give thanks to our heavenly Father every day for it and yourself.

"Faithfully yours.

Hamilton, Ont.,

October 25th, 1932.

"Dear Editor:

"I enjoy the weekly messages of THE GOSPEL WITNESS very much, and seek to apply them to my own heart and life. When I am through with them I pass them on to others. "I remember you always in prayer, that His richest blessing may be yours."

THREE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

Through lack of space we have occasionally been forced to omit the Sunday School Lesson. We publish three this week in order to catch up, having had word from some of the more distant schools that use the outline appearing in THE GOSPEL WITNESS that it does not reach them in time. Only one will be printed as usual next week.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 7

No. 4

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR.

Lesson 49 Dec. 4th, 1932
FOURTH QUARTER.THE ALTAR OF REUBEN AND GAD.
Lesson Text: Joshua, chapter 22.

Golden Text: "God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the Lord our God, that is before his tabernacle."—Josh. 22:29.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Monday—Lev. 17:1-9.
Tuesday—1 Kings 12:25-33.
Wednesday—2 Peter 2:1-8.
Thursday—2 Peter 2:9-22.
Friday—Gal. 1:1-12.
Saturday—1 John 4:1-9.

I. THE TRIBES SENT HOME, (vs. 1-9).

The general conquest of the land having been accomplished, and each tribe, with or without the assistance of neighboring tribes, being able to take care of any enemies remaining in the land, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, whose elected portion was beyond the Jordan, were sent home. They had faithfully performed their duties, and received commendation for the same from their leader. They had obeyed the commands of Moses and of Joshua, (v. 2), they had not left their brethren all the time of their conflict of some years' duration, but had kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord their God, (v. 3). They were faithful to their charge. Difficulties did not deter them from the discharge of their duty. Homesickness did not make them turn back from following the Lord, their loved ones being on the other side of the Jordan, (1:14). They were neither shirkers nor quitters: they acted in accordance with the principle that having undertaken a duty they must carry it out faithfully. They therefore had the satisfaction of going through with the job, and seeing its successful accomplishment. They were good at both ends of a duty, the beginning and the ending. With similar faithfulness we should serve the Lord, (Col. 3:23), willing to endure hardness in His service, (2 Tim. 2:3), and taking up the cross, denying self, and following Him, (Matt. 16:24). Note the loss sustained by the quitters, those who begin a thing, and leave off before it is done, also the reward of the faithful, those who just keep at it.

Having directed the tribes to return to their homes, (v. 4), Joshua gives them an exhortation concerning their future conduct. He enjoins them to take diligent heed, "to do the commandment and the law" which Moses had charged them, (v. 5). This implied living in obedience to the law of God. This was their duty. It was also the part of wisdom to comply with the same. It may seem unneces-

sary to state that God knows more than man, yet there are some who act as if they had more wisdom than the Almighty. If men would obey the commandments of God they would save themselves much trouble and sorrow, and enjoy life in a better and higher manner. Note the need for following the revealed will of God in relation to life and teaching. It gives information, inspiration, and guidance, and cannot be dispensed with in the divinely regulated life.

Joshua also enjoined the tribes to love the Lord their God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all their heart and soul, (v. 5). This meant loving a real living person. While we believe in the personality of God we sometimes fail to treat Him as a person. He receives none of our affection, and we simply work in His name. Our love is exclusively bestowed upon human beings, and we think more of His service with its various duties than we do of Himself. May He enable us to be conscious of His blessed presence, and to bestow our love upon Him. There is also implied in the above exhortation, faithfulness to God, and heartiness in His service. After the exhortation Joshua sent them away laden with the rewards of service, and with his blessing, (vs. 6-8). They therefore profited from their service; and in future the Christian will receive his reward in accordance with his faithfulness in the service of God, (1 Cor. 3:14).

II. THE BUILDING OF THE ALTAR, (vs. 10-34).

On their return the two tribes and the half tribe erected an altar by the Jordan river on the other side of which lay their territory. It was a "great altar to see to", (v. 10), probably a heap of stones and earth. The general purpose of an altar related to the worship of God in sacrifice, although this one differed therefrom, being erected merely as a memorial for the benefit of future generations. This purpose was not understood by the other tribes, and thinking that its erection meant apostasy from the pure worship of God they resented the action, and gathered together to go to war concerning the matter, (v. 12). Fortunately before taking such drastic action a deputation was sent to investigate and interview the tribes concerned, (vs. 13, 14). This was a wise plan, whereby the facts of the case were disclosed and found not to be as they appeared. We cannot always judge from appearances, and it is the part of wisdom to withhold judgment until we understand the particulars of any given case. Note the identity of the members of the deputation, their positions, and the importance attached to their mission by the leaders of the nation.

On their arrival the deputation immediately charged the two and one half tribes with trespassing against God in the erection of their altar, (vs. 15, 16). They accused them of turning away from God, and rebelling against Him, and reminded them of the past apostasy of the people, and its sad consequences, (vs. 17-20). They then advised them if the land of their possession was unclean

that they should pass over into the territory of the other tribes in Canaan, where the Lord's tabernacle was, and not rebel against Him in setting up an altar of their own beside the altar of the Lord their God, (v. 19). The members of the deputation gave evidence by their words and attitude, of their zeal for the unity and purity of their worship, and they wanted no innovations detrimental to it.

There is a need in the present day for a similar zeal. The pure worship of God has been corrupted on the one hand by the ritualists who have added to the teaching of the gospel, and on the other by the Modernists who have taken away therefrom. In the face of such false teaching we are enjoined to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints, (Jude 3). There is too much indifference on the part of orthodox people to this defiling of the worship of God. Other altars have been reared and Jehovah's altar has been neglected by many. It is surely time to awaken to the serious condition now existing. We need not only to return to the scripture to find out the nature of its teaching, but we require spiritual backbone for the truth when we find it. False teaching would not exercise such an influence were it not supported by orthodox people. There should be no fellowship with it, for in giving it countenance we share in its guilt, (2 John 10:11). There is a great need for real living militant servants of God. Note our Lord and His apostles in this respect; and such men as Martin Luther, John Knox, Charles Spurgeon, and many others. May the Lord save us from a dead, compromising, complacent orthodoxy which is a curse to all who come in contact with it.

The reply of the two and one half tribes was reassuring in that they denied any intention of rebelling against God in turning away from Him in the erection of their altar, (vs. 21, 22). Their purpose was not to offer upon it any manner of offerings, (v. 23), but rather that it might be a memorial for future generations, lest the children of those who dwelt in Canaan should ask the descendants of those on the other side of the Jordan what they had to do with the Lord God of Israel, and should inform them that they had no part in the land, with the result that their children would cease from fearing the Lord, (vs. 24, 25). The altar was therefore built that it might be a witness to which future generations might point in support of the unity of the people on both sides of the Jordan, (vs. 26-29). Their intention was therefore good, and the members of the deputation, and all Israel were pleased that no rebellion against God was implied by their action. They were relieved at the fact itself, and also with its consequence of continued peace in the ranks of Israel. They would not require to go to war concerning the matter. Note that apostasy brings trouble into the ranks of the Lord's people, that the apostates are the trouble-makers, that it is the duty and privilege of all true servants of God to stand against error, and that this should be done regardless of all consequences which may ensue.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 7

No. 4

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR.

Lesson 50 December 11th, 1932
FOURTH QUARTER.

JOSHUA'S TESTIMONY.

Lesson Text: Joshua, chapter 23.

Golden Text: "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."—Josh. 23:14.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Monday—Psalm 119:1-8.

Tuesday—Prov. 1:1-9.

Wednesday—Prov. 1:10-23.

Thursday—2 Peter 1:1-9.

Friday—2 Peter 1:10-21.

Saturday—Heb. 6:1-9.

I. A RETROSPECT (vs. 1-4).

The words of an aged servant of God are always worth listening to, and particularly so if such an one has been much used of God, and is the occupant of a favoured position in His service. He is then speaking out of his experience of the divine fellowship, and his words bear the stamp of wisdom. Joshua had grown old in the service of Jehovah. He had occupied a prominent position for a considerable time; he had seen the manifestation of God's power on many occasions, and knew the divine mind better than any then alive, but his days of active service were nearing an end, and he would soon depart to be with his fathers. With the realization of his near departure from his people Joshua gave to them his testimony concerning the faithfulness of God, and exhorted them to be true to Him and to continue to receive His blessing, warning them at the same time of the consequences of disobedience. Note the significance of the message coming from such a person, and the wisdom of giving heed thereto.

In order to reach the nation, and give solemnity and effect to his words, Joshua gathered all Israel together, with their elders, judges, and officers, and addressed them, (v. 2). This must have been an affecting scene with the old patriarch in the midst of his people, and the great throng of old and young about him, and with the memories of past days brought vividly to their attention. There would be thanksgiving for that which God had wrought, sadness at the thought of losing their leader, and aspiration respecting the faithful performance of their future duties. Joshua first makes reference to his age, (v. 2), then reminds them of that which the Lord had done unto the nations because of them, for He had fought for them, (v. 3). Their victories were due to the presence of God with them, and the exercise of His power on their behalf. No one could stand before them. And if God be for us, who can be against us, (Rom. 8:31). Note the nature of God's power, His willingness to exercise it on behalf of His people, and the wisdom of trusting Him implicitly, also the benefits to be

derived from remembrance of God's goodness, in encouragement, stimulation, and increase of gratitude and thanksgiving. Consideration of our blessings is more beneficial than worrying over our troubles and trials. We are enjoined in everything to give thanks. (1 Thess. 5:18), and such an attitude is pleasing to God. Joshua also makes reference to the division of the land among the people, (v. 4).

II. A PROMISE, (vs. 5-10).

With the past as a basis Joshua gives to his people an encouraging promise concerning their future progress. First he informs them that the Lord would expel from before them the nations yet remaining, and would drive them out of their sight, and give them the land for a possession as He had promised, (v. 5). God would thus continue to make Himself strong on behalf of His people, (2 Chron. 16:9). The child of God these days also has enemies, who have not been driven out, but victory is certain in Christ, (Phil. 4:13). There is always the danger, however, that through failure to obey God defeat may take the place of victory, as in the case of Israel, and the enemy may be suffered to remain to be a thorn in the side of the defeated one. Note may be made of the fact that victory depends upon obedience to the will of God.

After the promise there follows the exhortation to be very courageous, (v. 6). Courage is a characteristic of all true servants of God, manifested in the actions and attitude of our Lord, (Matt. 23:13), and in the lives of John the Baptist, (Luke 3:7), Peter, (Acts 2:14), John, (Acts 4:19, 20), and Paul, (Acts 13:8-11), and many others, members of the early church, (Acts 4:31), and of later ages of the church, unto the present time. That in which the people were to be very courageous is then specified. They were "to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses", not turning aside therefrom either to the right or to the left. Courage was and is necessary to obey the revealed will of God. The human heart rebels against such a course of conduct, and the world is at enmity against God. The one who obeys God is therefore peculiar to those who are living an opposite kind of life, and persecution of a subtle or open kind often ensues. Courage was necessary for Israel nationally to do God's will, and the same spirit is required in the present day on the part of the one who would please God. The necessity for this observance of the law of God may also be emphasized. The Israelites were chosen to carry out the purpose of God, and the law made this known, therefore the necessity for obedience thereto. Note the duty and privilege of adhering to the word of God in the present time when there is so much false teaching, and wrong living.

The Israelites were further enjoined to remain separate from the nations remaining in their midst. They were not to go among them, nor were they to make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, nor serve them, nor bow themselves unto them, (v. 7). Such directions were given for the purpose of preventing the introduction of idolatry into Israel. Joshua

knew that if there should be associations with a heathen people, or if any countenance should be given to heathen gods, it would not be long before the idolatrous spirit would possess the Israelites, and the worship of Jehovah be neglected. Complete separation therefore was the only preventive. There can be no fellowship between God and idols in any age, therefore those who serve God must forsake all other gods, and give Him the first place in their affections, (2 Cor. 6:14, 7:1). The positive exhortation is given to cleave unto the Lord, (v. 8). They are reminded of the Lord's power manifested on their behalf, (v. 9), and encouragement is given concerning their future victories. One man of them would chase a thousand, for the Lord would fight for them, (v. 10).

III. A WARNING, (vs. 11-16).

After giving the promise relating to Israel's bright future prospect, Joshua uttered a warning concerning the necessity of obedience to the will of God, pointing out the consequences which would ensue from disobedience thereto. The Israelites were bidden to take heed that they loved the Lord their God, (v. 11). In carrying out this they would be obeying "the first and great commandment", (Matt. 22:38), which lay at the very basis of the law, (Matt. 22:40). Note how such love would lead us to right living in all the affairs of life, thus instinctively obeying all the other commands of the law, also the rightful expectancy for this on the part of God, and the way in which it may arise and be cultivated through regeneration and divine fellowship. It may be observed further that this implies love for a person, not for an organization, a belief, or a system of ethics or religion.

The warning follows that if the Israelites should go back and cleave unto the remnant of the nations remaining among them, and make marriages with them, that the Lord would not drive them out from before them, but they would be snares and traps and scourges unto them, until they perished off the land given to them by God, (vs. 12, 13). They heeded not this warning, and the consequences herein described were fulfilled. Backsliding brings its own punishment, and forsaking God means forsaking blessing. There is such a thing as the anger of God, (vs. 15, 16), and Israel felt its power in the time of the Judges, when God permitted the heathen to overcome His people, also at various times later in their history, and at the period of the exile, (2 Chron. 36:16), and later at the time of the final overthrow of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the later national disaster in 123 A.D. During all that time however, God was appealing to His people, and seeking to bring them to repentance; but they would not respond except temporarily, and had to suffer the consequences. Note the judgment which is destined to fall on sinners in the future, (Matt. 25:41), and warn that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2). See also the significance of Joshua's statement that not one good thing had failed of all that God had spoken concerning Israel, (v. 14). He is faithful that promised who also will do it, (Heb. 10:23, 1 Thess. 5:24).

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 51

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FOURTH QUARTER.

JOSHUA'S DEATH.

Lesson Text: Joshua, chapter 24.

Golden Text: "And if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—Joshua 24:15.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Monday—Deut. 34:1-12.

Tuesday—Ex. 32:25-35.

Wednesday—John 5:39-47.

Thursday—Acts 1:1-9.

Friday—2 Tim. 4:1-8.

Saturday—Matt. 27:15-26.

I. JOSHUA'S RETROSPECTION, (vs. 1-13).

As in the previous chapter, so in this one, Joshua cites some facts of history in substantiation of the goodness of God to Israel on which to base his exhortation to his people. We noted in our last lesson the benefit to be derived from thus contemplating the goodness of God, such an attitude resulting in comfort, encouragement, gratitude, and incentive.

We note first the gathering of the people, (v. 1). This was a national assembly, solemn in character, and prepared before the Lord to hear the divine message. It would be well if the Lord's people would gather in this manner before Him when they come to worship on His day. They would then receive the utmost benefit from the service. Preparation for such a service is necessary, beginning at least on Saturday evening. The solemn character of this service would be emphasized by the knowledge of the fact that this was Joshua's last national message, and last words are always worthy of attention, (2 Timothy 4:6-8). It may be further observed that Joshua delivered God's message on this occasion. He began his address with the important announcement: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel", (v. 2). He had been God's mouthpiece throughout the period of his leadership, and he remained that to the last. The privilege and responsibility attached to this may be pointed out, also the fact that each divinely-called preacher and teacher is in the same category. Those who teach should therefore make sure that they are giving forth God's message, and seeking to please Him, and not men, (Gal. 1:10).

In his address Joshua relates important events in the history of Israel as proof of God's goodness, beginning with Abraham in his Mesopotamian home, (v. 2), relating to his call to leave the same and journey to Canaan, then mention is made of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, (vs. 3-4), of the deliverance of the nation from Egypt, (v. 5), their arrival in the land of the Amorites, (vs. 6-10), their entrance into Canaan, (v. 11), and of their possession of the same, (vs. 12,

13). One is impressed with the fact that all the blessings of Israel were due solely to the grace of God. They received because He bestowed upon them His unmerited favour. They were not worthy of His goodness, either in character or works, yet He freely gave unto them. God acts the same these days in relation to salvation. It is all of grace, and not of works, (Eph. 2:8, 9). God's faithfulness is also manifest in this recital of His works. Israel failed but He always remained faithful, (Heb. 10:23).

II. JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION, (vs. 14-28).

Based on the record of the divine goodness the exhortation was given with power, and evidently greatly stirred the people. Several things are worthy of note respecting its nature and effect. First, it called upon the Israelites to fear the Lord, (v. 14). Without such an attitude there can be neither blessing nor divine service. There must be godly reverence and whole-hearted submission before anyone can please God, and the person is wise who manifests this attitude. (Prov. 15:33). Service is the next thing mentioned, to be done "in sincerity and in truth". Such is the only real service, whole-heartedly performed unto the Lord, (Col. 3:23). Lip service is unacceptable, (Is. 29:13-14), and hypocrisy is an abomination.

The Israelites were next enjoined to put away all other goods and to serve the Lord. God will not share a place in the heart, or in the service with another god. He must have the whole heart, and the whole service. Such teaching is made known in the moral law, (Ex. 20:3) and is clearly manifest throughout scripture. His people must be separated people, putting away all that of which He disapproves. Note the right of God to demand this of men, as He is the only true God, the Creator and Redeemer of men. Following the injunction to serve the Lord, the people were requested to choose the service they desired. If they thought it evil to serve the Lord, they were enjoined to choose whom they would serve, the choice relating to the gods of the heathen. But whichever way their choice went, Joshua made it clear that he and his house would serve the Lord, (v. 15). Note the courage of such a declaration, and the faithfulness to God manifested therein, bearing testimony to the fact that our individual service of God should not be, and is not, dependent on the actions of others. No matter what others may do, each one is personally responsible to God for life and service. Note further that this choice called for a decision which was public, definite, necessary, immediate, and far reaching and momentous in consequences. It called for the exercise of the will. See the choice of Moses, (Heb. 11:24-26), the choice of Carmel, (1 Kings 18:24), and the way of salvation, (John 8:16).

The reply of the people is satisfactory. They realize their obligation to God, and state their decision to serve Him, (vs. 16-18). Joshua tests them concerning the sincerity of their decision by placing before them the character of God in its essence of holiness, and portraying the divine service in its most severe light. God was holy, He was jealous, He would

not forgive their transgressions or their sins, and if they forsook Him He would do them hurt, (vs. 19, 20). Possibly there were some whose opinion of the Lord's service was expressed in this way, and who counted it an evil service, and Joshua was but setting before the people that which some believed, to see if their resolution to serve God would be as strong in the face of the difficulties and dangers of the way, considered from their worst aspect, as in the light of the mere ideal of service. This statement was also to be taken as a warning that God would not overlook sin, and as a caution against a hasty and unthinking decision to serve God. Note the New Testament teaching in this respect, (Matt. 8:19, 20; 16:24). The people reaffirm their decision to serve God, (v. 21), they are reminded of the fact that they were witnesses to their decision, (v. 22), and they are enjoined to put away the strange gods from their midst and incline their hearts unto the Lord God of Israel, (v. 23). A decision to be real must manifest itself in action, sentiment alone is unacceptable. God expects a clean life, and nothing else will satisfy Him. The people again reaffirm their decision to serve God, (v. 24), and a covenant is made in relation thereto, (v. 25), the words are written in the book of the law of God, and the stone of witness is set up, (vs. 26-28).

III. JOSHUA'S DEATH, (vs. 29-33).

"And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old", (v. 29). It was the privilege of Joshua to serve the Lord in an outstanding position, and to be the recipient of the divine favour in many ways. His faithfulness was outstanding, and his success clear and indisputable, but his devotion was insufficient to retain his presence on this earth forever. One hundred and ten years was the limit, then he died. He went the way of all flesh. And it is well that we should bear in mind the fact that we also must die, and pass from this scene. Few indeed are permitted to live as long as Joshua, the average span of life being very much shorter. We should live continually prepared for this end, making the most of every opportunity. The place of Joshua's burial is stated, his body being laid away on his inheritance, according to the custom of those days, (v. 30).

A significant comment is then made concerning the conduct of the people. They "served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel" (v. 31). After the death of these good men the people did evil in the sight of the Lord, and brought upon themselves the divine judgment, (Judges 2:7-14). This implies the great influence exerted by godly leaders, and the necessity for personal knowledge of God on the part of all who serve Him. Those who know Him not cannot serve Him. The need for the dissemination of the knowledge of God, under true leaders in church and state, is manifest herein. Note the source and nature of such knowledge. The book concludes with the record of the burial of Joseph's bones, (v. 22), the consequences of faith, and the death and burial of Eleazer the son of Aaron, (v. 33).

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THE EXECUTIVE BOARD.

In the October 27th issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS, under the Convention report, the names of the newly-appointed members of the Executive Board of the Union were listed. It has been called to our attention that the list as printed was not complete and herewith we make correction. The Tentative Constitution of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec provides for an Executive Board composed of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Union and sixteen members. The names of Rev. James Hall, of Ottawa, and of Mr. A. J. Layzell, Toronto, were inadvertently omitted from the list given in our Convention report. May we ask those who are keeping records to note the corrected list:

Rev. C. M. Carew, Fenelon Falls, Ont., President; Mr. O. L. Raymer, Toronto, Vice-President; Rev. H. S. Bennett, Hamilton, Vice-President; Rev. David Alexander, Toronto; Mr. Abner Baker, Stouffville; Mr. W. C. Boadway, Toronto; Rev. F. W. Dyson, Dalesville, Que.; Mr. Stanley Goldsworthy, Lachute, Que.; Mr. G. A. Gruetzner, Hespeler, Ont.; Rev. James Hall, Ottawa; Mr. J. E. Jennings, Toronto; Mr. A. J. Layzell, Toronto; Rev. Clifford J. Loney, Hamilton; Rev. P. B. Loney, Toronto; Rev. C. E. Scott, Courtright; Rev. H. C. Slade, Timmins; Rev. W. E. Smalley, Mount Albert; Rev. T. T. Shields, D.D., Toronto; Rev. Alex. Thomson, Toronto, members of the Executive Board.

ALTON ANNIVERSARY.

The Alton Regular Baptist Church held special services on Sunday, November 20th, to mark the completion of its seventh year. The establishment of the Alton Church in the year 1925 under the pastorate of Mr. James McGinlay will always be reviewed with thanksgiving. Throughout the years, it has stood for the things which are eternal and at the present time, under the ministry of Pastor R. LeDrew, the church is making steady progress.

Rev. W. E. Atkinson, Secretary of the Union, was the guest speaker at the Anniversary services. In spite of bad roads and unfavorable weather, many visitors were in attendance and Mr. Leonard Hearne, of Buffalo, N.Y., was present and sang at both services. Mr. Murray Burnett, of Hillsburg, and Mr. Hearne sang an impressive duet at the evening service.

A PRAYER MEETING FOUR HUNDRED STRONG.

There are few churches in Canada, or elsewhere, that can depend upon as many of their members being in attendance at

Prayer Meeting as can the Central Regular Baptist Church, London, Ontario. It is of the greatest encouragement to their Pastor to know that the many weeks which he has had to spend in the hospital have seen no abatement in interest and the prayer meetings have continued to be times of blessing. A note from one who recently attended the mid-week service at Central reads: "We were at London last night and had a fine time with the folk there. The fellowship is rare indeed. It was by far the largest mid-week service we have ever attended."

A LETTER FROM MR. HANCOX.

A letter from Mr. Hancox bearing the date of September 1st is just a story of life on the Mission as it is experienced day by day and will surely help the home folk to appreciate something of what it means to be a missionary. Jottings from it are given:

"It has been raining nearly all week making it dark and unpleasant. The darkness is greater indoors because of the overhanging roof and it is quite cold. The children are complaining of it.

"When Mrs. Mellish was going back to Geah Bar Zondo, we went about three miles up the path with her and coming back I tried to cross a stream on a wet log and without notice, I found myself sitting in the water beside the log.

"After September is out we shall have lovely weather again and gradually increasing warmth.

"Just at school time yesterday, the discovery was made that Driver Ants were swarming in millions behind our house. The girls were set to work bringing shavings and starting little fires across the ground. Newspaper sheets were twisted into torches and the parade of ants was gradually turned back and down the hill. It is interesting to watch their antics. They are more feared than any other pest in Africa. The ants can put an elephant to flight and can, if they overtake him, make a hearty meal of him. The huge snakes keep out of their way and before they swallow the deer or goat which takes weeks to digest and leaves them in a state of torpor, they scour the country for miles in search of the Drivers and if they are found, the snake prefers to go hungry rather than become a victim. When the Drivers are on the march, they fall into line, about a dozen or two dozen abreast with soldiers parading up and down on either sides keeping guard. Scouts also run out here and there looking for food, or watching for enemies and when either appear, the line breaks and the ants scatter on the hunt, or to fight. There are so many of them that the whole ground is black. I passed a column of these fellows crossing the

path one day and the next day they were still crossing, a column two inches wide. After they have passed over, a ditch can be seen where they have been marching."

NOTE FROM EDMONTON.

The work in Western Canada ever has a claim upon our interest and the establishment of a church in the city of Edmonton and the progress which has been made in that place is especially interesting because the Rev. Gordon Searle is another pastor who was trained in Toronto Baptist Seminary, and Mrs. Searle is well-known to many members of our churches in Toronto.

From a personal letter from Mrs. Searle, we hear something of the work at Edmonton and of the new building in which the church is worshipping.

Mrs. Searle writes — "I suppose you will be busy just now preparing for the Convention. How I would love to be there with you and enjoy the sessions! It is so interesting to read the news from the different fields from both 'The Witness' and 'The Bulletin', and before I forget, we do want you to continue to send 'The Bulletin'.

"We have been kept busy since our Convention in July and have had little rest. During the latter part of that month we were one hundred and seventy miles north of Edmonton, holding two weeks of special services. We had a blessed time and there was a good attendance at the meetings but there were no visible results. We feel, however, that our work was not in vain.

"The Lord has been blessing our work here in Edmonton and we are thankful for His goodness to us. The first Sunday in August we moved into a real church building with a seating capacity of one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five. It is a great improvement on the other little hall and it came as a direct answer to prayer and we have surely been able to see the hand of God through it all.

"There have been some twelve conversions since we took possession and we expect to have our first baptismal service in the new church on Sunday. Our membership now stands at one hundred. The Lord is adding unto us such as are saved and our work is steadily growing.

"We have started a Dorcas Society and would like a list of the things suitable for sending to Liberia. How I do wish we could have a peek at Mr. and Mrs. Davey and baby Daniel! How our people would enjoy hearing them and learning of their experiences in Liberia. At a time like this, one realizes how far the East is from the West."