

# 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

"ANOTHER WAY."

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 25th, 1932.

(Stenographically Reported—Broadcast over CFRB, 690 k.c., as is every Sunday evening service of Jarvis Street Church, from 7 to 9 o'clock)

"And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."—Matt. 2:12.

Prayer by Rev. W. S. Whitcombe.

We rejoice, O gracious Lord, that we have heard the voice of an angel speaking good tidings of great joy which is unto all people; and with those shepherds of old, who first heard that message, we would join in adoration of Him Who was born in a cattle shed, and laid in a manger. We would come with them to-night to adore Him:

"Join all the glorious names  
Of wisdom, love, and power,  
That mortals ever knew,  
That angels ever bore:  
All are too mean to speak His worth,  
Too mean to set my Saviour forth."

But we would not tarry by His cradle: we would hear Him speaking to us from the mount of blessing; we would see Him as He restores sight to the blind, as He bestows upon men the richness of His blessing in body and soul. We would stand under the shadow of that bitter cross to which He was nailed for us. We would stoop together with the disciples of old, and look into the empty tomb. We would stand with them as He says, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. We would hear once more the voice of the angel saying, This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Our hearts rejoice to-night in such a Saviour, in such a perfect salvation. May the spirit of Christmas, may the meaning of His birth, His coming into the world, be made real to us to-night. May we not miss the meaning of this great message from on High, that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

So shine with the brightness of Thy glory in our hearts to-night, as to dispel the darkness of sin, and to bring peace and joy in believing. May we, too, have the mind of Christ in us, appreciating more of the greatness of His love Who laid down His life for us! May we, too, be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren! May the power of Jesus Christ be made very real to us this hour! May He, indeed, come into our hearts in all His fulness!

Make this a night of salvation. May the entrance of Thy word give light, for we ask it in our Saviour's name, Amen.

There never was such preparation made for the advent of any life into the world as the preparation that was made for the coming of Jesus Christ. It was not until "the fulness of time was come" that "God sent forth his son". Not a cottage, nor yet a palace, but a world, unconsciously, was awaiting His advent. That being so, all the circumstances attending His birth, even to the minutest detail, are worthy of the closest examination. The wise men, the star, the shepherds in the field, the angels and the angel choir, the inn with its thoughtless throng, Herod upon his throne, the priests and the scribes who examined the scriptures, and the mother, whom all generations have called "blessed"—all these need to be studied for any adequate explanation of the enduring wonder that God was manifest in the flesh.

And yet this Christmas story has been told thousands upon thousands of times. Through all the centuries of the Christian era, it has been a theme of interest, and the inspiration of all that is best and most beautiful in life. One wonders sometimes how to re-tell it with any measure of freshness. Is there any facet of this diamond that may be made to sparkle with new light? Is there any stop in this great organ, or any new combination of stops that may be discovered, or of the seven fundamental tones which make up this harmony—is there any master that can draw therefrom any new music? I do not know that it is necessary we should seek after that which is new. I find that if we sing the old tunes here in Jarvis Street we hear from a great many people who tell us they love the old tunes. They seem not to desire to learn any new tune. Certainly this is an old, old story, and I do not hope this evening to discover any new truth therein. Still we must come to it and find what we can for the instruction and refreshment and inspiration of our spirits.

This is the story of the wise men who, having come to the inn and discovered the Babe lying in the manger, and having presented to Him their gifts in loving adoration, and worshipped Him as their King, "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod"—for you recall Herod had said to them, "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also"—"they departed into their own country another way." Therein lies a great principle imbedded in the whole disclosure of God in this Christian revelation.

## I.

This evening we therefore shall begin with this simple observation, THAT COMING TO CHRIST IN THE ANCIENT TIME AND NOW ALWAYS INVOLVED AND INVOLVES A HUMAN RESPONSE TO DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

The wise men sought and found Him, and beholding Him, life for them was changed. So may men seek and find Him still. And whoever finds Him in reality, and not merely as a theory, whoever really finds Him will be changed in his whole outlook upon life. How did they find Him? How may anybody find Christ? How may we get through all the externals, and things that are extrinsic, to the truth itself? How may we get to the heart of things, and actually find Christ, so that He shall become to us more than a Doctrine, more than an Ideal, more than a Character of history, or a Portrait? How may we get to Christ so that Christmas may mean something more to us than hanging up a stocking, and feasting, perhaps well but not wisely? How may we get beneath the surface of things and down to the basic principles, and discover what lies beneath, at the foundation of all? How may we get to Christ?

We may get to Christ as the wise men did, and in no other way. *No man ever did or ever can find Christ for Himself.* There are clever men who think they can; but He is a God Who hideth Himself, and "no man hath seen God at any time". No microscope, no telescope, can discover Him. No reason in its mightiest exercise, nor imagination in its farthest reaches, can apprehend God; but Christ was God manifest in the flesh.

How the Babe was thronged with human personalities! The inn was so full that there was no room for Him, and nobody knew He was there. He was near to the palace of Herod, but Herod could not find Him. Even the leaders of religion, the priests and the scribes, though they had their books, and their sacred scriptures, even they never gazed on the infant King. Thousands of people came up to Jerusalem for the taxing and their names were enrolled; but in the census that was taken by the authority of Caesar's decree, the name of Jesus was not included. His address was not to be found. It was an important Name; it had been given Him before His birth. You find it really anticipated in the Old Testament. It means the same as Joshua. But His Name was not on Caesar's list.

You cannot find Jesus by reading a book only. You cannot find His Name in the telephone directory although He has a telephone. You cannot find His address in the city directory, but He has an address. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" someone cries. And He may be found. It is quite possible for men to find God in Christ, but never of themselves. The wise men did not so discover Him. They were wise; they were magicians; they were, perhaps, astrologers,—they were versed in

many of the occult sciences, and they knew much that other people did not know. But they did not know where Jesus was; and they never found Him for themselves. You cannot find Christ in Oxford any more than you can find Him in Toronto. You cannot find Him by any earthly address. Oh no!

*Nor does He ever disclose Himself to a negative attitude of mind,*—just simply to hope that somehow or another you may stumble upon Him, when you are not very particular whether you do or not. "Those that seek me early shall find me"; "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." He is worth seeking. Though you cannot find Him of yourself you must seek Him. It is ever His way to withhold and to conceal His presence until He has so wrought upon the spirits of men that they desire Him and seek Him; then He unveils Himself to those who are looking for Him.

The wise men said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" The wise men had seen His star. But I point out to you *the combination of the subjective and the objective in this mental search for Christ.* The wise men had never recognized the star but for the subjective operation of the divine Spirit upon their own hearts, but for the subjective illumination teaching them the meaning of the objective light. You must never divorce the subjective, however, from the objective. You may go in the wrong direction if you do. You must not assume that you monopolize the mind of the Spirit, and that because you have certain impressions they are necessarily and inevitably and indubitably of God. Your subjective illuminations must ever be tested by some objective revelation, and that which God has wrought in your heart will find its complement in the star which He has hung in the skies. You will, therefore, see, how these two are complementary to each other, and that you can never have the subjective without the objective, any more than you can have the objective without the subjective.

I think, perhaps, I may have told you of a man who some years ago was a member of my congregation, not in Toronto. He was well informed in many ways, a very excellent man. But he wrote me a letter once which reached me, I suppose, Monday or Tuesday; and it was to this effect, "I was present in your service Sunday evening, and I greatly enjoyed your discourse on the text, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief'. I think you put the way of salvation very clearly before your congregation, but in my humble opinion you spoiled it all by the prayer which followed the sermon, for then you asked the Lord to save the people." And he went on to say, "I wondered what the Lord had to do with it. You gave them the plain statement of the word of God, and that ought to be sufficient. What has the Spirit of God to do with any man more than that?" He was a man who viewed the objective without the subjective, who thought the scriptures, without the operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind and heart of man, would be quite adequate. No, no! my friends, the wise men had both a subjective illumination and an objective guidance.

Then you will observe that these men—perhaps you will almost charge me with being heretical when I use a common phrase, a phrase perhaps often on the lips of our Modernist friends, with whom I have no sympathy whatever, except that I should like to see them saved—these men "followed the gleam". They did not know much, but the little they knew they reduced to practice; they

"followed the gleam"; they followed the light they had; they had not the full light, but what they had they obeyed.

Sometimes the Lord Jesus bursts upon men as He did upon Saul of Tarsus, when a light that was above the light of the sun shone upon him and struck him to the ground, so that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he was convicted. He heard a Voice, he answered and was saved. That is how God saves some people. And I suppose if it were your doing that is how you would do with everybody, because we are so mechanical. We are usually incapable of varying our methods; we are under the necessity of wearing the same face all the time! If we could only make ourselves something other than we are, sometimes, instead of being so monotonously the same, what a relief it would be at least to others! Perhaps that is why some of us are given such variable dispositions, so that if we cannot change our faces we can at least be rather peculiar in our ways. But God is a God of variety (although in His essential Person eternally immutable); He never wrought any two miracles in precisely the same way; and He saves men according to the constitution of their own mind. He never does violence to a man's mind.

Have you ever seen a man going through some great building where there are many cupboards locked against strangers? He takes from his pocket, or perhaps from his belt, a bunch of keys. And he has a key to every door. Or, perhaps, he may have a master key that will open all doors, though others may need different keys. But he does not wrench them open as though he were a burglar: he just inserts the key in the lock and turns it; and the very fact of his possession of a key establishes his right of entrance. Our God does not do violence to the constitution He has made. He reveals to us little by little as we are able to bear it. He is the greatest Teacher of all. We in our blundering way sometimes set a lesson for a kindergarten child that would perhaps tax the wisdom of a doctor of philosophy—or more often the reverse; we talk in the language of the kindergarten to those who know better. The Lord said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He does not give us the full-orbed revelation of Deity all in a moment. We could not endure it, and we have no capacity to receive it. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby". Be thankful for an appetite for milk, and plenty of milk to satisfy.

There is somebody here who says, "Sir, I have been coming to your services week after week for months, but I am not a Christian yet." Quite so, and some others have come and have been saved the first time they came into the church. Why were you not saved thus suddenly? Just because you were not the other person; and because God has His own way of doing things. He saves us all by the same principle, all on the basis of the same infinitely meritorious atonement; but in His method of unveiling His glory to us He does not deal with us all in precisely the same way. All the wise men had was a desire to see the King, and some preintimations within their own spirits communicated by the Spirit of God that if they followed the star they would get near where He was.

The wise men had seen His star in the east, and they came and worshipped Him. When they got near they went to certain religious leaders and they said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." And do you know what the religious leaders did? They did not—

no, they really did not—take a pad and pencil—they did not have any pencils in those days—and sit down and wait for guidance. Not at all! *They turned to the holy scriptures to find out what was written.* And they found it all there, that He was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod heard of it, and became interested, and he said, "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." Now you see the wise men had the illumination from heaven, and they had the inspired Book beside, and the goings of God, as Bunyan was wont to say, upon their own spirits, and "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

I do not know what the star was. It was not one of many stars, although He made them all, for it is expressly said, "He made the stars also." But it was "His star", His own peculiar star; differentiated from all other heavenly luminaries, it stood out in some mysterious way as the heavenly guide to the Babe that was born. "It came and stood over where the young child was." We may not see the star in the heavens, but if any man or woman, boy or girl, will really set out in search of Jesus, yielding himself or herself to the operation of the divine Spirit, and opening this holy Book for instruction, it will not be very long before he or she will find his or her way to the place where the young Child is.

Thus the wise men found the way to Christ. No one will charge me, I trust, with belittling this Book:

"Holy Bible, Book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine."

If I could not get another I would not part with this Book for all there is in the world, or for a million other worlds like it. I know of nothing comparable in value to this inspired record which God has given to us of His Son. And yet I am well aware that a man may have the Bible, even as they had the sacred scroll in those days, and never find Christ. How many ministers there are who have Bibles which are only text-books! It is the proper thing to have a text on Sunday. And there are certain elevating passages in the Book, there are certain passages which manifestly involve great principles that are wonderfully suggestive, and so the man who believes only a fraction of the Book takes a text from the Bible, and seems to be very religious. But he may never have found Christ. I fear you may say I am consorious. I do not presume to judge any particular person; but I fear there are ministers in the pulpit who have never been found of Christ. They may be wise in other matters, but they have never come to the place where they have found and worshipped Him.

These wise men, with all the help of Heaven, simply responded to what God did for them, and yielded themselves to the light that He threw upon their pathway, until they got past all obstacles to the Person of Christ. And that is my question of you, my friends, Have you come to a personal Christ? Do you know that He was not only a Babe in the manger, but that He is a King upon His throne? Do you know that He lives? Oh, that we may hear His voice! Push past all externals, and come and worship Him.

## II.

AND WHAT FOLLOWS WHEN A MAN FINDS CHRIST? What difference does it make when a man finds Christ, or is found of Him? I wonder! You have a picture in your house. You fancied it, and you bought it. Or, some-

one having a fair idea of your taste, made you a present of a picture, and you hung it up in a place of prominence. You admired it, you loved to look at it. It was a thing of beauty. It may have been a picture in which much was involved; its truth and beauty were not all on the surface; it required study to understand and appreciate it. Hence you like to sit before the picture and study it minutely.

When I was a lad my father used to take me to the opening of the Royal Academy. He was an amateur artist, and I think he could always see far more even than he expressed, though he expressed it well. And I remember how he used to get the guide book and sit down before some great picture and invite me to sit beside him—which of course I did. And I expected to see it all in a minute or two. There it was. I looked at it,—and I had seen it! Did you ever visit places of interest in Europe, in England, or on the Continent, and stumble upon a Cook's Tour party? Did you ever go into the British Museum, or into one of London's art galleries for instance, or into the Louvre in Paris, where there was one of those experts lecturing to a company of people, and talking like an auctioneer for just about two or three minutes before the work of some great master? And then on they went. They had seen it! No; they had not seen it! Well, I used to be invited to sit down before such a picture, and I confess that my youthful mind tired because I could not see in it what my father saw.

Some years ago I visited in the home of a man who had been a professor. He was a doctor of philosophy, and his special subject was Greek. He had a family of boys, lovely children. I had a talk with one of the boys one day, and I told him about his father's Saviour, and urged him to an acceptance of Christ. I tried to use every argument, among other things reminding him that he was a minister's son. "I know all about that", he said, "I know dad is a good man, and all that." And then he told me of a holiday he had once spent with his father. He said, "We went to Baltimore, and to the Johns Hopkins University, and into the library. And where do you suppose my father took me? Into a room that was lined with classical works, works of Greek. Greek! And he expected me to enjoy Baltimore!" Well, I do not blame the boy for not enjoying it very much. He had not developed sufficient capacity to enjoy the classic lore in which his father delighted. I was a little like that when I looked at those pictures.

But I fear there are some people who look at Christ as a picture. They study Him, and talk about Him, and preach Him. But after all, He is ever objective to their view: He is but a picture on the wall, great as He may be. Not only the greatest of all humans, He may be divine to such. You may have the clearest conception of the Deity of Christ theoretically, and yet He may be nothing but a picture, not a real Person. But oh, if He is real, if you see Him, you must worship Him!

Is there anybody here who does not worship Jesus Christ? Do you never bow and worship Him prostrating heart and intellect before Him Who is infinite wisdom, power, and grace? "Oh" you say, "I greatly admire Christ." Then you have never seen Him, my friends; you have never seen Him if you merely admire Him. No one has ever really seen Jesus who does not worship Him. Really to see Him with the eyes of the heart is to recognize Him as God, and to fall before Him, as Thomas did,

saying, "My Lord and my God"; or as the wise men did: when they saw Him they worshipped Him.

And, *having worshipped Him, they could not consent to anybody's doing anything else.* Herod said, "Let me know and I will go and worship also." But "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

Our friends of the Oxford Group seem to speak as though it were a new thing, for people to be "changed" as a result of seeing the Lord Jesus Christ. You have never really seen Him if you have not been changed. I do not believe any man can ever be exactly the same again after having once, by faith, seen Jesus Christ. Everything is different. You are bound to go back to your own country another way. He marks the fork in the road; He is The Great Divide; He is "the way, the truth, and the life"; and seeing Him is to find the only way that leads to God.

*You cannot see Jesus without thinking of God in another way.* That is what He came for. Men, of themselves, did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and therefore their foolish minds were darkened, and they were given up to vile affections. Then they began to try to paint pictures of God, to imagine what the unseen God was like. And out of their consciousness they evolved no image of God, but they "changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds"—coming down the scale—"and four-footed beasts and"—by and by "to creeping things"—(not much evolution there, Brother Whitcombe?) Men do not know who God is, nor what God is like until they have seen Jesus. And when they come to Him, and find God manifest in the flesh, they must ever think of God in another way.

I like to put these passages together. One is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"—as though God had said, "Thou shalt not try to paint My portrait; thou shalt not try to make a representation of Me, because nobody knows what I am like." And this other: "The express image of his person". And this: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus Christ, in effect, said, "You must always think of God in terms of My disclosure of Him." The only God we know is the God that we find in Jesus. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

We must go back to our own country in another way. *It ought to change us in relation to our fellows.* If you are not changed in relation to your fellows then there is something radically wrong. A man, whom by accident I admitted into this pulpit once, quoting this text: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses", said, "That has nothing to do with you; that belongs to another dispensation." Oh, how some people would like to believe that it does! But it belongs to this dispensation; and it is true that if you do not forgive other people their trespasses, God will not forgive you. Somebody says, "But that is works!" No, it is not. The evidence that you are forgiven, that grace is in your soul, will be found in "the other way" in which you treat everybody that does wrong to you.

A dear brother wrote me a letter last week—I do not know whether he had been to the Oxford Group, or where he had been; but I was glad to receive the letter—telling me that a year or more ago he had written me an offensive letter. He said, "I am very sorry, and I ask you to forgive me." I was glad to be able to write back

and say, in effect,—I do not remember the exact words, "My dear brother, I suppose your letter must have been received; but it has so completely slipped from my mind that I have not the slightest recollection of it. But I am glad you wrote me, as it provides me with an occasion of telling you that you are freely, and fully, and abundantly forgiven." I cannot understand any man, who calls himself a Christian, being able to lay his head upon his pillow and close his eyes until he is absolutely sure that he has fully and freely forgiven every man on earth. I could not. Go to your own country another way.

That does not mean that we must not rebuke people when they do wrong, that we must condone evil. But so far as any personal animus toward anyone is concerned, if Christ is in your heart, that will have to go out. And if you have any feeling of that kind against anybody, oh, get rid of it before you sleep. That sort of thing is enough to give anyone a nightmare.

I knew a man once who nourished a grudge against someone for many years. I had been an arbitrator between two professedly Christian brothers, and I used my best judgment in the matter, and had to decide in favour of one man, and against the other. Many years after that the latter came to me and wanted me to re-open the case. He said he had been carrying it in his mind all that time, and he was quite sure that he was right, and that the other man was wrong. I said, "Oh, but it is so remote that I do not remember any of the details, and I am sure the other brother does not." I said to him, "I do not wonder you look as you do. I do not wonder you have indigestion, if you have nourished that thing all these years. And I was not surprised to learn after a while that he had to be sent to a sanitarium. Malice of that sort is a mental poison. Get rid of it! Live "another way"!

Having seen Jesus, go home another way. We ought to be changed, new creatures in Christ Jesus, right with God through the precious blood, and right with man because by His grace, for His dear sake, having been forgiven so much, we have been constrained to forgive everybody who has ever trespassed against us.

Try that remedy this Christmas evening, will you? It will do you more good than your Christmas dinner. I can promise you it will help you to sleep, and take some of the wrinkles from your brow. And as for you ladies, it will keep you young. It will make you better looking to cherish nothing but the love of God in your heart for all for whom Christ died. Come and worship, and go home another way.

Let us ask His help:

Once again, O Lord, make us worthy of Thine infinite Gift. So bestow Thy grace upon us that we may be enabled, as was Thy servant Paul, to say, the Grace which is bestowed upon men is not in vain. For Thy name's sake we ask it, Amen.

### GIDEON.

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, December 22nd, 1932.

*Eighth in a Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on Biblical Theology (the fifth on the Book of Judges) which is included in the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson Text: Judges, chapters 6 to 8:21.

We shall begin with the sixth chapter of Judges—and conclude where we can. The first paragraph of this

history, of which Gideon is the central figure, reads very much like other historical portions with which we have already dealt. After Deborah had passed, lacking her leadership, the people lapsed into idolatry again, and "did evil in the sight of the Lord". We have frequently observed in our studies that that was the rule in Israel's history: declension, deterioration, degeneration. Obviously, apart from divine grace it is a law of life. There may be some who have persuaded themselves that there is a good deal of native goodness in the human heart, but human nature left to itself always declines. It never goes up: it always goes down. It never becomes more godlike, but always increasingly does it become ungodly.

And invariably the same disaster overtakes those who turn away from God: "The Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." That is not ancient history. It simply means that in this evil world about us there are always things, and persons, and principles, and principalities, and powers, sufficient to overwhelm us if we have not God with us. And when God departs, when His Spirit is grieved and withdraws Himself, inevitably disaster follows.

Some of you young men will become pastors of churches, and will find yourselves in difficult situations. You may find yourselves in a small town where no gospel is preached. You may find the religious organizations about you, called churches, full of worldliness, and possibly of positive unbelief. They will have a deadening influence upon the religious consciousness of the community, so that religion of any sort will be at a low ebb, and be lightly esteemed. You will be inclined to say to those with whom you are intimate, "I have a very difficult situation. The fact is, I am surrounded by Midianites." You will be half inclined to wish that the postman would bring you a letter containing a call to another church, so that you might bravely escape from your difficulties, and find entrance upon a happier and easier sphere of labour. Will you try to remember this principle? It always abides, whether for the individual church or the individual minister, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

I believe we have scripture for believing that if there be no departure from God on our part, if we abide in fellowship with Him, and the Holy Spirit is regnant within, then no matter whether Philistines or Midianites surround us, God will make us, as individuals, or as churches, to overcome in the power He gives; we shall be more than conquerors. When you or I—or this church, or any other church—fail, the reason is never without: it is always within.

The Israelites were overwhelmed by the Midianites, but it makes no difference whether you call them Midianites, or Modernists, or Mormons; there are always enough in this evil world to overcome us. All God needs to do is to withdraw His Spirit, and the collapse will follow. But He said, "All authority"—not some—"is given unto me." He does not send us warfare at our own charges. I believe it is possible so to relate ourselves to Him that we may have power to overcome.

It may be that God sometimes gives us lean periods that we may learn lessons that cannot otherwise be learned. But sooner or later the people of God will do what Israel did on this occasion, cry unto the Lord. They prayed. Prayer is the Christian's vital breath. Our breath may seem to be suspended for a while, but if we are genuinely the Lord's, I believe in the hour of crisis or trial God's people invariably call upon Him. "For this shall everyone

that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee."

They received a strange answer, only a prophet. When we really pray to God we shall always find that He will speak to us. I have many letters back in my files—oh, how I wish they would answer themselves! They say if one leaves them long enough they will. But it is extremely difficult to answer letters that involve perhaps pages and pages in order to answer the questions that are propounded. They are not business letters. Sometimes I fear I appear to fail in courtesy to Christians because I do not get the letters answered quickly enough. I know it is a mark of the good executive, as well as of courtesy, that all letters receive an immediate reply. That is all right in theory, but it becomes difficult in practice.

But what I meant to say is that God always answers our cry. If you send a letter to heaven, you will get an answer back at once. Perhaps not the answer you expect. Not a soldier at first, but only a prophet. *We* do not need a special prophet. In fact, I am suspicious of prophets when they come to me with a new discovery that nobody ever heard of before, especially if it is apart from the Word. I have no interest in such alleged revelations. There are people who imagine they have special revelations from God. When this Book was concluded God spoke His last word, and He will speak to us now in harmony with the Word by interpreting it to us. All that the prophets were to God's people in those days, the Bible is to us now: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

In the measure in which we earnestly pray to God, to that extent we become interested in listening to God speak out of His Book. If you find your interest in the Word of God declining, you may be sure that you have not been writing Home very often. You had better call upon God earnestly, and the prophet, like a postman, will bring you an answer. It is a truism that prayer and a study of the Word, an understanding of the deep things of God, always go hand in hand. As we pray, God will speak to us.

And He may say something that is not very pleasant. These people went to the Doctor to find out what was the matter, and He immediately told them the cause of their trouble was not their geographical or political situation, nor any decline in material wealth, nor yet any special increase of power on the part of the Midianites; but that they had disobeyed the voice of God.

It is of great importance that we should have a correct diagnosis of our trouble. When you or I get into real difficulties—I do not mean that we shall not have tribulation. We shall have plenty of that, and should glory in it—but when we are overwhelmed by trouble, and are morally defeated, invariably it is because we have shut off the power of God by our disobedience. "Ye have not obeyed my voice." So ought we to study the Word of God, not merely that we may find the promises of comfort, but that we may hear the rebukes of Scripture, that our hearts may be searched, that by the "washing of water by the word" we may be made clean in His sight.

At the eleventh verse we come upon the story of Gideon, a very interesting character. He does not appear, in the beginning, to have been cast in a very heroic mould.

He was assisting his father in threshing the wheat. Go back into that first paragraph and see how wise these Midianites were. They waited until Israel had plowed, and sown, and cultivated their fields; then when the harvest was ripe down they came and reaped the fields and carried the fruits away.

I wonder if we have not had that experience? We have plowed, and cultivated, and sowed. We have laboured most strenuously, but full oft we have failed to reap the reward of our labour. We did the plowing and sowing, and the Midianites did the reaping; or the locusts came and stripped our fields.

Gideon tried to outwit the Midianites. His plan was hastily to thresh the wheat and hide it from the enemy—with no thought of removing the menace of Israel's prosperity. Gideon, like all the rest, had come to accept the situation as inevitable; just as many people to-day see worldliness and sin on every hand, and the cause of Christ declining, and make no attempt to stand in the breach, saying, "It all belongs to the age in which we live. If we get a few converts so that the church does not die out, and hide them from the Midianites, we shall be thankful." But the idea of an aggressive campaign against Midian in the power of God never enters the mind of the modern Gideon.

Yet there may be plenty of Gideons whom nobody recognizes as mighty men of valour, who, if divinely called to serve, may do heroic things in the name of God. Gideon on first introduction is not an impressive personality. He reminds me of Obadiah who hid the prophets by fifties in caves. You must not blame Elijah for thinking he was the only one who served the Lord, for all the rest had securely concealed themselves. He was at least the only person in evidence.

Gideon was going to hide his few bushels of wheat, and be thankful that he had enough for his needs. That is an exhibition of not particularly admirable qualities. But the angel called him, "Thou mighty man of valour." Does not the Lord expect us privately, as He comes to us, to accept His word at its face value and cast ourselves upon it? "Thou mighty man of valour"! Nobody ever dreamed it, least of all, Gideon. Notwithstanding, God so named him, and, therefore, a mighty man of valour he was.

You have heard the story of Napoleon's reviewing his troops? It is an old story, I fear to repeat it lest it be hackneyed, but it will serve as an illustration. As Napoleon was reviewing his troops his horse broke loose and galloped down the lines. A private caught the horse and brought it back to where the Emperor was standing. Napoleon said, "Thank you, Captain." The soldier saluted and said, "Of what regiment, your Majesty?" The Emperor was so pleased at being taken at his word that he said, "Of my guards." The soldier was not even a subaltern, but when the Emperor said, "Thank you, Captain", and was answered by such a display of faith, he said, "Of my guards."

"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." I do not wonder that Gideon was surprised. Would you not be surprised if anybody called you that? We should look around wondering to whom he was speaking.

Then Gideon gave voice to that age-old question, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?"

So often I have tried to impress upon you the importance of keeping clearly in view the perspective of history. We look back upon apostolic days, for instance, and read of the miracles wrought then. We look back upon days of refreshing, of great revivals, when thousands were swept into the kingdom of God, and we say, "That was years ago. That is not to-day. That day is past." The clever expert tells us that there is no use to expect such miracles to-day. Gideon lived in a time when there was nobody found anywhere who had seen a miracle. No miracles had been wrought in the view of that generation. They had settled down to a humdrum life of servitude, accepting the predominance of the Midianites as inevitable in the circumstances. As for miracles! They were past. It was of no use to expect them. When Gideon heard this voice saying, "The Lord is with thee", he said, "I see no evidence of it. Where be all his miracles? Where are the wonders our fathers saw? We see nothing of it to-day."

"The Lord looked upon him." Who was it? It was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ Himself. It was none other than the Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate state, the Angel of the covenant, the very same One Who said to the church, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth", Who said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might."

There is no reason why God should not say that to us. There is no reason why we should not witness great works of God as did our fathers. I have no sympathy with people who say that the days of revival are past. I confidently expect to see as great a revival as this world has ever witnessed. There is nothing in the Word of God that I have been able to discover that writes all the wonders of grace in the past tense. Our God is the same to-day as He was in the days of old.

Gideon said, "Wherewith shall I save Israel?" It is all very well to be looking for blessing elsewhere, but it may be that the Lord will lay His hand upon one of us and say, "Go in this thy might. I will use you as My instrument on this occasion." Then Gideon said, "My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." But the Lord answered, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

"Shew me a sign that thou talkest with me." I fear Gideon was not a man of mighty faith. There are some people who talk of signs as though they were the marks of superior spirituality. Whereas signs and the desire for signs belong to the infancy of faith. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe"; "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." I do not believe Gideon had very much faith in the beginning, but God in infinite mercy condescended to his low estate and nurtured his faith, such as it was, and gave him a sign. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed", said our Lord. Surely we do not need to ask for signs.

But let us see what this sign was. "Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented

it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes."

God answered by fire again and again. There was that element in the revelation of God to Abraham; when the Hebrew ritual had been established and the altar set up, there came forth fire from the Lord and consumed the sacrifice. On this occasion the Lord indicated His presence by fire. When Solomon's temple was dedicated, the fire fell. And there is the outstanding instance in which Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a test, saying, "The God that answereth by fire let him be God."

"The angel of the Lord departed out of his sight." I believe there is something in what people say about "following the gleam". The Lord does not come to all of us in precisely the same way. He has made mighty men of men who naturally were anything but mighty. Though we have but little faith, and though we have—and properly so—a very modest opinion of ourselves, as Gideon had, and though the divine programme as opened up before us seems to be an utter impossibility, we can at least put ourselves in the hands of God and say, "If this be Thy plan, O God, I am willing to go all the way." If we do that, God will not ask more than we are able to supply; and if we need encouragement for our faith, He Who calls us will supply the grace that will enable us to say, "It is easier for me to believe-to-day than it was yesterday."

Have you not had that experience when God has led you day by day, step by step? You can say, "Once of a day I should have been troubled, but I have learned to trust Him in every emergency."

Gideon lived in a time when the fear of the Lord was not before the eyes of the people. God had to begin with him in the kindergarten class. He met Gideon as he was, and built up his faith little by little. Gideon built an altar which he called Jehovah-shalom, "the Lord send peace". You remember he was troubled because he had seen an angel of the Lord face to face. I wonder if there is in this a preintimation, a foregleam, of that great truth that He should come in a later day to Whom one would say, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us", and Who would answer, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" We could not look upon God and live, but we can gaze upon Him Who is the "express image of His person". The flesh in which He veiled His Deity at once concealed and revealed God, and made it possible for us to see Him. Do you not think that is there? And Gideon's prayer, Jehovah-shalom, "the Lord send peace," is answered in Him Who said, "My peace I give unto you."

"And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." "Jehovah-shalom", the Lord send peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Observe that Gideon is required to begin his work of reformation in his own house. That is a hard place to begin. There was an altar to Baal in the household of Joash, Gideon's father's house. I think I am right in saying he was not a mighty man of faith, for there was an altar to Baal in his father's house. The Lord told him

to build an altar to the Lord his God, and to tear down the altar of Baal. We read in the twenty-seventh verse that because he "feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night". Well, that needs no application. It is so much easier to pray in prayer-meeting than before your own children, so much easier to tell what the Lord has done for you in an assembly like this than where you work. It is especially difficult to do it in your own house, and to pray in the presence of your own people.

This man who was to smite the Midianites was yet afraid of his father's household. I suppose he was afraid of his family. However, he did it. "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."

There are some people who profess to have found a way of getting through life without making enemies through their testimony, of witnessing for the Lord without offending people, of finding no controversy or opposition anywhere. I have not found such a way, either experimentally or in the Book. Gideon began his work, under God's direction, in his own household—and they tried to kill him for it. But his first convert was his father, for he said, "Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."

Gideon is launched then upon his career. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet." There was a gradual increase of strength in Gideon. I think sometimes we fail to recognize that. We want to become giants overnight; able to do but little for the Lord, we expect to be over mighty in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Invariably we have to take a step at a time as Gideon did. Begin at home. Fight your battles there. Overcome in the presence of your own household. Testify in the presence of the men of your own city, your father, those who know you best. They know who you are, and you cannot deceive them.

"And all the Midianites, and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together." Every man divinely called to a great task must expect to be opposed, not by a single enemy, but by a confederacy of evil powers.

As he obeyed God, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He blew a trumpet, and "Abiezer was gathered after him." That means his own people. It is generally vain to expect Zebulun or Naphtali to follow you, if Abiezer scorns your trumpet call. Begin at home. All through Manasseh he sent messengers, then to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up. After he had assembled all these men Gideon was still a little tremulous. Did you ever feel like that in the pulpit? I sometimes wonder why pulpits were invented, but I think probably it was that the preacher might have something to hold on to! I know I have found it of great service on more than one occasion.

But notwithstanding the way in which God had blessed Gideon thus far, and the response of the tribes to his trumpet call, when the responsibility was placed upon his shoulders to launch a campaign against the Midianites, he said, "I wonder if I am right? I wonder if the Lord will give me a sign?—If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said"—and the Lord condescended to give him a sign. "He thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water." Yet Gideon said, "I am not quite sure; once more, Lord. Let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew." And the Lord heard him in that. I do not say we are to emulate Gideon's example. It may be you have passed the fleece stage long ago. It may be you know where God is, so that you have not to do as Gideon did; that on the teaching of God's Word you know you are divinely commissioned to do something for Him—if so, go and do it.

Then you have the story of the gathering of the people, thirty-two thousand of them, and of their separation. That is an old story. I wonder if there lives a preacher who has not preached on that text? When you are hard up, when you cannot think of a thing to say, when this thing that is supposed to be a thinking-machine serves you about as usefully as a block of wood—do you ever feel yourselves to be blockheads? I do. My thinking-machine very often gets out of order—indeed it is generally like a car with one or two flat tires, and no spare. I do not know why, but somehow it will not work. I suppose we all have experiences like that,—well, when you are very, very hard up—and you young men will have such experiences as ministers—the Lord will often supply you with help in these chapters about Gideon; because if you cannot preach about Gideon, with that seventh chapter before you as a text, go out of the ministry. We have all had Gideon's experience.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands . . . whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead." And of the thirty-two thousand who responded to the trumpet call, all but ten thousand went home to their mothers! That was the proper place for them!

I wonder if we were to sift out our churches like that what we should do? I have in mind now a man. He has encouraged me often, and has afforded me a world of amusement. It is more than thirty years since I knew him. He was a deacon of the church of which I was then Pastor, and somebody said something in a business meeting of the church that offended him—as somebody is very apt to do in business meetings, especially if the somebody is a nobody! But it offended this great deacon. Two or three days after he came to see me, with a nicely written document, nicely folded. He sat down while I read the document, and I found it was his resignation as a deacon of the church.

"What is the trouble, Mr. So-and-So? Why are you resigning?" I enquired. He explained that he could not endure what passed at the business meeting a few evenings ago. "What happened?" I asked. "Do you not remember?" he asked in astonishment. "No", I replied, for it had passed from my mind. I did not know what the dear brother was talking about. He explained what the



other church member had said, and I assured him that in all probability the man who said it, and those who attended the meeting, had all forgotten it. "But I cannot stand anything like that," said the resigning deacon. "I know there are some people who are cast in a coarser mould, but I am of a very refined and delicate nature. Those things hurt. They hurt me terribly. I am very sensitive!" By this time I had my bearings, and said, "I see the situation now. You are not sensitive, Brother So-and-So: you are just touchy."

Did you ever have a bit of proud flesh anywhere?—a gathering on your hand? If you ever have had, you have discovered that it is sure to get hurt. A spirit of that kind is always getting hurt.

There are people who are very brave when they are in the majority, they are ready to march in the procession when the trumpet blows, they bring out their bugles and march with buttons shining—but they do not know what it is all about. Someone needs to challenge their courage: "Do you know what you came for? This is not a Convention: this is a battle. If you are afraid we will give you a chance to go home"—and away they go.

I have seen that in our controversy here and in the United States. About ten years ago when a campaign was launched against Modernism, I remember the men who brought out the brass bands to make the Midianites run. I can see a man now in his field-marshal's uniform. He was a whole army corps in himself! But when the Midianites did not run, as somebody had to do some running, he ran—and with him a great many others. They all went home to their mothers, if they had any—they went home anyway, and they have been running from the Midianites ever since.

Then you remember the other test. He brought them down to the water. Who would have thought of that? If you were going to test people for the war, would it ever occur to you to observe the way they drank? Some of the Israelites made a cup of their hands, and lapped the water like a dog; the rest got down on their knees, put their lips to the water, and drank. Those who drank out of their hands were only three hundred. Gideon was directed to send the rest home; for the Lord said, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand."

The principle of the story is both old and new: God is not particular about what kind of instrument He uses, but it must be one that is wholly surrendered to Him.

Then you remember the lamps and the pitchers and the trumpets. Every man a pitcher, and a lamp within, and every man a trumpet. Gideon was still a little fearful, so the Lord said, "If you are still afraid I will help you out once more. Go down and listen to what the enemy says about you." Did you ever hear the enemy say anything about you? I can humbly say that I have received great encouragement from the enemy many times. What a strange place to look for encouragement!

"And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along." And somebody said, "I know what that is. That is Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host." So when people say nasty things about you, when they talk about you, thank God for it. Do not worry about it. The devil never

wastes time discussing a nobody. If he finds fault with you, it must be because he knows God has chosen you for something, and is going to use you.

Then follows the story of knocking the pitchers together, breaking them all at once, so that like a flash the three hundred lamps flared forth. I suppose that would not strike terror into the heart of an army in this day of searchlights, but it did in that day. When the three hundred men "brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon", the enemy ran. They turned their swords upon each other and were wholly discomfited.

I shall not detain you with a discussion of the eighth chapter, nor shall I come back to it again next week, but I call your attention to one or two things in connection with that chapter. After the battle was fought and won, the men of Ephraim who had not responded to Gideon's trumpet call came to Gideon and said, "What do you mean, sir, by fighting without us? Why did you not send for us when you went to fight the Midianites?" Did you ever have anybody talk like that after the thing was done? You would have supposed the Ephraimites would have said, "Hallelujah, the Midianites have been overcome, and we do not care who won the battle so long as the Lord has the glory."

I often admire Britain's diplomacy. John Bull has a way of doing a thing, and letting somebody else think he did it! But John Bull does not care who gets the credit so long as the job is done.

But here is the principle. After Gideon has won the battle, Ephraim comes along and says, "Why did you not invite us?" The obvious answer might have been, "You knew the Midianites were there, why did you not invite yourselves?" Some people never ask for an invitation until the fighting is over!

I admire the spirit of this man Gideon afterwards. Gideon said, "We will not fight about that. What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaming of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that." What children they were! They could not even see his irony.

Do not be Ephraimites in that sense. Get into the war. Carry your own share of the burdens. Fight it out with others. You must fight.

Gideon came to Jordan, "faint, yet pursuing". There is a text for you. Gideon might have turned back and failed to reap the fruits of his victory, but he pressed the battle to the gate. He found other men of the same calibre as the Ephraimites who said in effect, "When you have Zebah and Zalmunna in your hands, then we will help, but not till then. It would not be safe."

The philosophy of the eighth chapter reads to me like a chapter of Baptist history. The men of Succoth and Penuel are waiting to see who will succeed. Were you ever in a Convention when the Moderator said, "Those in favour will please rise"? Immediately some man begins to look around to see how others are voting. If he sees a majority standing, he rises; and if not, he remains seated—behind a post! The men of Succoth and Penuel are not dead. Go on as a minority, and see what happens. He came back with Zebah and Zalmunna, and said, "Behold

(Continued on page 12)

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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No. 1

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 3                      January 15th, 1933  
FIRST QUARTER

### GOD DELIVERS ISRAEL THROUGH GIDEON.

Lesson Text: Judges, chapters 6 and 7.

Golden Text: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"—Judges 6:14.

#### DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—1 Samuel 13:1-7.

Tuesday—Job 31:1-8.

Wednesday—Daniel 10:1-9.

Thursday—Daniel 10:10-21.

Friday—Luke 24:36-53.

Saturday—Hebrew 11:32-40.

#### I. THE CONDITION OF ISRAEL, (6:1-10).

In this lesson there is another record of the disobedience of the Israelites and its sad consequences. They "did evil in the sight of the Lord". The nature of this evil is not stated but it probably was idolatry with the various sins which accompanied it. For thus forsaking the Lord they were punished by being delivered "into the hand of Midian seven years", (v. 1). These were years of great oppression, leading the Israelites to make dens in the mountains, and caves and strongholds, (v. 2). This is in great contrast to the condition of the people on their entrance into the promised land, when their conquering armies swept all before them, but thus sin reduces strength to weakness, and confidence to fear. Instead of boldly facing their foes, they hid from them in terror. In further testimony of their sad condition we are informed that after they had sown their fields their enemies came and encamped on their land, and "destroyed the increase of the earth till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass", (vs. 3-5). This meant a famine condition with its accompaniment of suffering and misery, Israel being "greatly impoverished". A clear illustration of the truth that the way of transgressors is hard, (Prov. 13:13), and that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, (Gal. 6:7). Note the folly of sin, and the inevitable consequences attached thereto, here and hereafter.

The suffering of the children of Israel caused them to cry unto the Lord, and their cry was heard, (v. 7). God may chastise, but He does not forsake His own; His ear is open to their call. And He "sent a prophet unto the children of Israel", who reminded them of past deliverances from their enemies by divine power, of the fact that they had been given the land by the Lord, and that they had disobeyed His command in reference to the gods of the land, (vs. 8-10). The cause of their distress was sin, and this

the Lord made known before delivering them from their enemies. The cause must be understood if the lesson is to be effective and the remedy appreciated. There is always danger that the presence of sorrow in a sinful life may be due to the effect of sin, and not on account of the sin itself. It may simply be remorse, instead of repentance. Conviction of sin therefore is necessary to real conversion.

#### II. THE CALL OF GIDEON, (vs. 11-40).

For the deliverance of His people God raised up a man named Gideon to lead them against their enemies. In every crisis when a man is needed God knows where to find him, as Noah, (Gen. 6:8), Joseph, (Gen. 41:14), Moses, (Ex. 3:1), David, (1 Sam. 16:11), Elijah, (1 Kings 17:1), Paul, (Acts 9:3), and many others in the course of the church's history. In connection with Gideon's call several things are stated, as, the visit of the angel, and Gideon's location and occupation; (v. 11). Note the sidelight on Israel's condition in the latter. There is also the salutation of the angel, (v. 12), Gideon's reply wherein he questions the presence of the Lord with His people, (v. 13), the command of the Lord to go and save Israel, (v. 14), the humble response of Gideon, (v. 15), the promise of God to be with him, and enable him to smite the Midianites, (v. 16), and the request of Gideon for a sign, (vs. 17-24). The sign related to the presentation of the meal offering unto the Lord, resulting in the building of an altar, named by Gideon, "The Lord send peace". An act of worship ended the interview. In reference to the call, note that it was divine, necessary, urgent, direct, encouraging, purposeful, designated, individual, special, and demonstrated.

Gideon's acceptance of the call being manifested, his obedience to the will of the Lord was tested by the twofold command to throw down the altar of Baal, and build an altar unto the Lord, using the wood of the grove for the fire to consume the offering, (vs. 25, 26). This meant conflict with the forces of idolatry in his own neighbourhood, open war with sin, and the taking of a decided and public stand for God. Note the necessity for that then and now. We should not hesitate to let it be known which side we are on, and such action will mean war with the enemies of God, but the victory is certain for the followers of the divine leader, (John 16:33). The consequences of Gideon's action are soon manifest, first in relation to the men of the city, who are roused to anger by it, and demand his death, (vs. 28-30), and then in the case of his father Joash, who was enabled to take a stand against idolatry, (vs. 31, 32). A brave stand for God will arouse the enmity of some, but it will encourage others to adopt a similar attitude.

One victory leads to another, and faithfulness is recorded with greater opportunity and responsibility. The Midianites and the Amalekites were gathered together in the valley of Jezreel, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he summoned the Israelites to gather unto him, that they might go up against them, and they came at his call, his own people being among the

first to follow him, influenced, no doubt by his courageous stand, due to the presence of God with him, (vs. 33-35). Gideon had come successfully through the test in his own home, among his own kindred, and therefore was ready for a victory of a larger nature abroad. If we are not true to God at home, we cannot expect to be used by Him among strangers. His work for us begins at home, (Acts 1:8). To make doubly sure of the divine purpose Gideon sought a sign from the Lord which was granted, (vs. 36-40). The sign was unmistakable in its implication, and left no doubt in the mind of Gideon concerning the action which he should take. It should be noted in respect to the general subject of signs that this request of Gideon's was really not necessary, the Lord having clearly made known His will previously, and while it was answered, despite Gideon's fear of the possible anger of the Lord, we need not follow his example in this matter. Let us live close to God, and study His word faithfully, and He will lead us in the way we should go, and always in accordance with His revealed will. Note Gideon's promptitude in obedience, and courage in action.

#### III. THE VICTORY OF GIDEON, (7:1-25).

The victory of Gideon was clearly a victory of God. Several things are worthy of attention in relation to it. First, Gideon and his army "rose up early". It is surprising how often this is stated concerning the Lord's servants. They did not lie abed and waste the precious morning hours when there was work to be done. Rising early they pitched their camp not far from their enemies, (v. 1). Then came the divine message concerning their numbers, (v. 2), intimating the possibility of Israel's claiming the glory for the work of the Lord. We should be careful to give God the glory for all victories gained. To avoid the danger and reduce the numbers a twofold test is put into operation, first, respecting the proclamation, (v. 3), and then in relation to the drinking of water, (vs. 4-8). In the former the "fearful and afraid" to the number of twenty-two thousand returned home, and as a result of the latter those who were alert and ready to the number of three hundred were retained for the service of God. Note the three companies, the fearful, the unready, and the ready. The test was divine in origin, and necessary in operation. God uses those who are prepared. Numbers are not essential to Him, provided men are right with Him.

Before the battle there occurred the night visit of Gideon and his servant to the camp of the enemy, (vs. 9-15), which gave him assurance of victory. The strategy used in the attack was bold and wise, creating confusion and panic in the ranks of the enemy, leading to a decisive victory, (vs. 16-25). The victory was clearly from the Lord, but Gideon and his men co-operated to the best of their ability. Note the faith, boldness, wisdom, obedience, energy, and willingness of Gideon, and the fact that he and his men were divinely chosen, led, and sustained in contending against the enemies of God.

# The Union Baptist Witness

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## MORE EXCERPTS.

### The New Church.

We have received a letter from Miss Florence Stacey telling us of the opening of the new church building at Geah Bar Zondo Station, Liberia. Miss Stacey writes:

"Last Sunday (November 13th), we opened our new church and that surely was a great day for us. We had a lovely service and every one seemed to enjoy it very much. There was quite a number out and a real interest seemed to be shown throughout the whole service. It was nice to be able to have a service without people getting up and going out and without being disturbed by others passing along the path. These, and many other things, we had to endure when meeting in the native kitchen. Our desire is that our new church may prove to be a place where many who cross its threshold will find Christ and will go out sinners saved by His grace."

### A Church Supper.

"On Friday night, we had the church members here at the house and had a supper for them." (One might introduce the name "Church Supper" and apply it to such a gathering and thus the church a Geah Bar Zondo will have fallen in line concerning an established custom of the church at home). "How everybody did enjoy that meeting, and there was a real spirit of fellowship. After supper was over we had a business meeting and it was lovely to see our little band of native Christians so interested in the things of the Lord."

### Suffering Persecution.

"This last week or so some of our Christians have been suffering persecution. It seems that for some time now the Chief has been making things hard for his head wife, especially so since she openly confessed Christ in one of our meetings last March. Since that time things have been anything but smooth for her and last week she ran away. At once the Chief put the blame for this upon her mother, and her mother and her two brothers are members of the church and are real Christians. Because of this they have found little favour in the eyes of the Chief. Therefore, on this occasion, he called the mother and two brothers and told them that they were to see that his wife came back to him. Gawdua, the older brother, thereupon went to the town where his sister was supposed to be, but the people in that town would have nothing to do with him because he came from the Chief and finally they set upon him and beat him cruelly, just how he escaped with his life is a mystery to us and to him, and his own testimony is that the Lord helped him and spared his life. The Chief was very angry because he did not bring the runaway back and so he put the whole family out of his town."

### Separated Again.

The following is an explanation and story as from recent letters—

It will be remembered that the two girls who were permitted, even while in

the Gri-Gri bush camp, to attend the services at the Mission, and confessed Christ immediately they were released, are engaged to Gawdua and his brother and will marry as soon as arrangements can be made. Recently, however, the Chief sent one of the sisters away to another town, claiming that she was betrothed to a man there. After much palaver, the poor girl who had been carried off by force, was returned, but only to face more trouble, for the Chief says he will not allow the girls to marry the brothers and that he will take them for himself. This is a real sorrow to the girls and one can imagine what a perplexing situation is faced by our missionaries. They are hopeful, however, that the Chief will relent and that all will yet be right.

### Prospects for the Bible Class.

One cannot but think of the similarity of work in Liberia to the work at home when he reads of the persuasion that is necessary to get some of the people to attend Bible Class and Church. Miss Stacey writes—"You will remember that I told you about one of the mothers of one of the Gri-Gri bush girls who had never attended services here. Well, we managed to get her to one of our special Monday night Bible Class meetings and now she is coming fairly well to our Sunday services and so has her mother, an old woman who seems to be nearing the end of this life, for she becomes more feeble each day.

"Last week there was an old man here for the first time, and Mrs. Mellish told him about the Lord Jesus and gave him a Scripture calendar. To-day he came to Sunday School and church and brought his calendar with him. He is so old and feeble that it is very hard for him to walk, and it takes him a long time to sit down, or get up. He is very old but I just wish you could have seen him as he listened to the Word. There are so many old people here who do not know anything about Christ and so many of them will not listen and seem so indifferent about their future, that it is sad indeed."

Herein we have given just a few items from Miss Stacey's most recent letter, are they not a clear call for prayer? Think of those two young women who despite the Gri-Gri bush experience and the customs of their country, have openly confessed Christ; think of the trial of the young girl as she is torn from those she loves and rudely taken to another town and told of having to marry an old man there. Remember what such a situation would be faced by our missionary, Rev. Gordon Mellish, and the diplomacy which would be required to deal with the Chief. Then think of the release of the young girl and her home-coming marred by the subsequent happenings.

All these things constitute prayer burdens which must not be shirked and they are but illustrative of the problems of the work.

## A FORTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY.

### Stanley Avenue.

The Stanley Avenue Regular Baptist Church, Hamilton, Ontario, recently celebrated its forty-third anniversary in a very suitable way. Probably the largest gathering in the history of the church was held on Tuesday evening, December 13th, when the work of the church was reviewed and the members of the church, congregation and friends, enjoyed a time of fellowship. First of all there was the splendid supper, prepared by the decesses, and following this there was an impromptu programme when many members of the church spoke, bringing brief messages. There was a joyous sing-song and other musical numbers, and then Mrs. R. E. Frid, one of the charter members of the church, gave reminiscences which were of much interest. The church was first established on Herkimer St., and from thence moved to the corner of Melbourne and Locke Sts., later locating on Stanley Avenue.

During the meeting two new members were received into the church and letters of remembrance were sent to a number of those who were not able to be present because of age, distance, or illness.

Rev. H. S. Bennett of Immanuel Baptist Church, brought greetings from his church and made some very appreciative comments concerning the Pastor, the church and the work.

It was gratifying indeed to listen to the splendid report presented by Mr. C. A. Challen, the church clerk, for this report showed that there had been added to the church during the year twenty-one members by experience and seventy-seven members by baptism. Financially the church has maintained its position well, in spite of the strain during the past year, and \$9,002.95 was reported as being received from all sources.

During the year four hundred and forty persons were dealt with in the church and of these some one hundred and twenty-four definitely confessed Christ and eighty-nine were baptized.

"The Pastor of the Church, Rev. Clifford J. Loney, is now in his eighteenth year as pastor of the church and the splendid achievements are largely due to his untiring, strong and sympathetic ministry, the whole object of which is to point men and women, girls and boys, to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour", writes the clerk.

## BELLEVILLE.

Occasionally it does us good to peek in at one of the smaller churches and see just what is going on. At the Belleville Regular Baptist Church we will find a happy people with an aggressive, earnest Pastor, and much enthusiasm. The Pastor, Mr. John Armstrong, writes, "The more I see of Belleville, the more I feel the importance of really hard work. We have ten thousand people in this city who do not attend church and when one gets into conversation with these people, he finds many who are

longing for the truth of the gospel. I was talking to a lady just this afternoon. She goes to one of the other churches here and as I was talking to her, she said, "Our churches do not say anything about being saved". Later she confessed that she was very much dissatisfied with her own church (it, of course, is very modernistic) and she manifested a real interest in her soul's salvation. About three weeks ago, I had the joy of leading a man and his wife to the Lord right in their own home. I am looking for and expecting to see an awakening some time soon."

The children's work at Belleville is an interesting and encouraging department. The average attendance at the children's meeting is fifty-seven, maintained for a period of fifteen weeks.

#### PRaise HIM!

We are so grateful to receive expressions regarding the Missionary Bulletin from time to time because those who prepare it are sometimes assailed with misgivings concerning its service. It is prayerfully prepared and the endeavor is to make it of real service, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and weaving into its pages something that will help those not able to become familiar with the work, through other channels, to keep in touch.

The following notes from Bulletin readers have thrilled us and we praise Him that the Bulletin is here and there dropping a word of comfort, and binding a people together in love and encouraging them to press on in the work of evangelization, by prayer strengthening our missionaries' hands and raising up a band of intercessors.

A Pastor writes: "I want to thank you for the Bulletin just to hand, especially for 'Things for which we give thanks'. It so clearly expresses the position today and comes as a message of encouragement. I thank God for the vision and grasp it reveals of the conflict and victory in many of our churches. It is good to know it is going into the

hands of many of our members who will share in the couragement and assurance it carries. I can almost feel it used of God to confirm the faith of many who are tried and perplexed.

"May God richly bless its message to many dear ones."

And then from down in the States we receive a word of appreciation and a gift for one of the Home Mission causes spoken of in the Bulletin.

Do you wonder, reader, that your prayers are continually solicited?

From one of the aged saints, we have received this beautiful message — "I have just received the Christmas greetings from those who prepare the Missionary Bulletin. You have my hearty thanks for the greetings and also for the Bulletin that comes every month. I am interested in the work you are doing and the Bulletin gives me news of the different churches of the Union, their progress and the need, which I am glad to know as I can more intelligently pray for each one. I am in my ninetieth year and I do not get out to church. My hearing is poor and I have to reserve my strength in order to keep up and around. My heart is full of thankfulness and praise to God for His wonderful love and care over me."

"I have just finished reading the Missionary Bulletin and it is good", writes another, "I believe that if you could send a few up for distribution it would be well worth while."

Within the past few weeks we have also had the pleasure of hearing from Rev. John Greening again. Mr. Greening is now Pastor of a church in Galway, N.Y., but he never forgets the work of the Union and liberally contributes to its missionary interests from time to time.

We enter this note in the "Witness" pages because we know there are many who will be glad to hear even such a passing reference to one who, though serving in a different field, is not forgotten for His work's sake and for the contribution which he made in the early days of the Union's organization.

#### FRENCH EVANGELIZATION.

That work which is steadily prosecuted among the French-Canadian people in the city of Montreal must never be forgotten. Only long association with the French people can give one an understanding of them, but our two missionaries, Rev. Arthur St. James and Rev. Jules Dautheny are both Frenchmen. They understand the people with whom they work. They know the demands of their religion and the fear that is the child of Romanism. We should be very thankful that such missionaries are our portion, but we must not forget that Mr. St. James is a veteran and that Mr. Dautheny is no longer young. And speaking of Mr. Dautheny, he finds expression in the English language rather difficult, but his work is steadily progressing and soon there is to be another baptismal service in the St. Paul's Church, that speaks for itself.

In this time of severe depression, let us remember the courage which it takes for a Frenchman to confess Christ publicly and sever his connection with the Roman Catholic Church. Will we not support our missionaries, too, in every way possible as they labour among their people, training them, teaching them, helping them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

#### TRENTON.

The work at Trenton is well sustained and the Pastor, Rev. H. E. Buchner, tells us of conversions. Two weeks of special services have recently been held, the first week the Pastor was assisted by Rev. F. Wicks and the second week by Pastor John Armstrong, of Belleville.

At Trenton, that splendid Bible school which so attracts those who visit the work is now remaining in a body for the morning service of the church. That is as it should be and the Lord will bring many to Himself, we feel sure, through such an arrangement.

#### GIDEON.

(Continued from page 9)

Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary?" Then they were willing to do anything for him. Nothing succeeds like success.

You must be prepared to break the yoke of Midian without the help of Ephraim, and to capture Zebah and Zalmunna without the assistance or even encouragement of the men of Succoth or Penuel. You must be ready to climb the hill without anyone to shout Hallelujah, but I hope you will not be ungrateful for the congratulations that will be showered upon you after you get over the crest. Remember a really strong man, like Gideon, must learn how to fight his battle alone with God, if need be. Then when you have won the victory, be thankful for such appreciation as an after-the-victory-is-won courage may express if you receive it. But if you get nothing but Ephraim's complaints, do not be little enough to return his grumbling in kind.

The remainder of the eighth chapter finds its complement in the ninth chapter; so that we shall leave that for the next lecture.

#### THREE HUNGRY, HEALTHY CHILDREN ASK FOR MORE.

##### THE GOSPEL WITNESS FUND.

This paper goes to about 60 different countries and is sent, on request, to hundreds of ministers and missionaries who cannot pay, free of charge.

It is supported in part by its subscription price \$2.00 a year, but chiefly by the gifts of people who regard it as a missionary enterprise.

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