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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 GOD THAT ANSWERETH BY FIRE"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 29th, 1933.

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"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

"Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

"Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

"And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken."—1 Kings 18:21-24.

There is a very general prejudice against everything that savours of controversy in religion. I do not know why people should so strenuously object to religious controversy when they welcome controversy in almost all other realms. The fact is, we live by controversy. Truth is established by the discussion of it. If you attempt to buy a new motor-car you will be sure to be plunged into controversy as to the respective merits of the cars the salesmen want to sell to you. When two candidates put themselves up for office—of course, solicited to do so by their friends—when by some means or another they are induced to stand for office, and they appeal for your suffrage, there is inevitably a controversy as to which of the two candidates is the worthier man. You cannot touch politics anywhere but you find people engaged in controversy as to the merits of respective political policies.

The same is true of science. The scientists of our day are chiefly engaged in telling the world what simpletons their predecessors were. They spend their time endeavouring to correct the mistakes of those who have gone before them. It is quite right that they should do so.

Thus it is inevitable that among thinking people—and we ought to think—it is inevitable that among thinking men and women there will be differences of opinion upon every matter of interest to human life. Of necessity therefore, there will be differences of opinion in matters of religion.

There were in the days of Elijah. The majority were on the side of Baal. Therefore Elijah proposed that a certain course be taken in order that the controversy might be settled. He proposed that they should each offer a sacrifice, that the sacrifices should be presented in precisely the same way, that each should pray to his God, and the God Who answered by fire should be the God of Israel. And the people said, "It is well spoken."

I take this text this evening for the sake of the principle that is wrapped up in it, rather than as a ground of discussion of the particular historical incident to which it belongs.

I.

I shall begin the discussion of the principle here involved this evening by the remark that IN NOTHING IS UNCERTAINTY SO HAZARDOUS AS IN THE MATTER OF RELIGION. We can better afford to be mistaken in any thing else, in any other interest in life, than in the matter of religion. Certitude in religion is of supreme importance. It is necessary that we should distinguish between religion—I do not say, Christianity: I use the broader term, the term, religion, which includes every sort of religion—I say, we must distinguish between religion and the various media of its expression, the way by which that religion manifests itself, the externals, the trappings, the garments in which it clothes itself. They all have their place, but they are something apart from religion itself.

We may entertain different opinions as to the respective merits of certain churches. I have no sympathy whatever with people who say it makes no difference what church you join—for some churches are right, and some are wrong. Some are true, and some are false. Some teach the way to God, and some fail utterly to teach it. It does make a difference. But human opinions in respect to these matters are entitled to respect and consideration.

But religion is a far deeper thing than the avenue through which it finds expression. Whatever may be said of the church, we cannot afford to be mistaken in respect to that deeper principle which is indispensable to life here and hereafter. It is all-important that we should determine what is right in these matters, but I would lead you past the outer court into the inner sanctuary this evening, beyond the externals, to that which is intrinsic, to that which inheres in religion itself.

The doctrines of religion are of vast importance. Only a superficial thinker makes light of doctrine or of dogma. "As (man) thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our characters are determined by the things we believe,—not by the things we profess to believe, necessarily, but by the faith that is in us, that lies at the heart of things. What a man really believes in his heart, that he is, whatever he may profess.

I say, the doctrines of religion—of Christianity,—let me narrow our consideration for a moment—are of importance—but they are not all-important. The form of truth, the creedal expression of it may change, as a person changes his coat, but the truth itself will remain. Verbal expressions of truth may alter, while truth remains unchanged.

Your attitude toward the Bible is of great importance. It is difficult to conceive of anything much more important. The Bible is the source of all Christian doctrine; yet I must remind you that people were religious before the Bible was written, and that there are millions of people in the world who are very religious who have never seen the Bible, much less read it. They have a religion of a kind,—and it is of great importance to them.

We do not believe it to be possible, but if it were possible utterly to destroy the last copy of the Bible, that would not eradicate religion from the earth; for man is incurably religious. He has been described as "a religious animal". That he is an animal there can be no doubt, and that he is religious is surely indisputable. You have but to go to the idols of the heathen, to unearth the ruins of ancient temples, and you will find that from the beginning of human history men have worshipped. They have been religious.

What is religion? It is the consciousness of immortality, the awareness of another life that is beyond this, the deep conviction that there is some other world, and that over and above it all there is somewhere a Supreme Being to Whom we are answerable. You cannot eradicate a belief in a god of some sort. I doubt whether there is anybody who does really disbelieve in the existence of some Supreme Being, call Him the First Cause, call Him the Great Unknown or the Unknowable, call Him the Almighty, but there is within man that consciousness of His existence, altogether apart from the operations of the Holy Ghost.

Belief in the immortality of the soul, and of the soul's relationship to another world than this, is not distinctively Christian. It is a universal instinct. It is well-ignom-

possible to find a race of men anywhere which does not believe in a future life.

Notwithstanding what some of the moderns would fain teach us, that religion chiefly has value in this life, I venture the affirmation that philosophically, at the root of things, the chief function of religion is so to prepare men in this life that they will be happily related to the life that is to come. Of the Christian religion, of course, it is true that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come". So I say, religion has to do with our future, a future that is not to be measured by years, nor counted by the months of the calendar, nor by the rise and set of sun; but a future beyond all things physical and temporal, where the soul must live on and on interminably.

In the autumn one can see the birds gathering in the trees, and preparing for their flight to a southern clime. They have never been to school, nobody has taught them geography, nobody has taught them the science of meteorology, a knowledge of varying winds and temperatures; but instinctively in their breasts is the knowledge that there is another land where the sun is always shining, where winter's storms are unknown, and in anticipation of the coming of winter they gather, apparently in council, and then spread their wings for that sunny, summer clime. That instinct in birds is no more real than the instinct in the human breast in respect to a future life; and religion has to do with that.

Religion deals *with matters of transcendent value*, and I repeat that we can better afford to be mistaken in anything than in the matter of religion.

Sometime you have taken the wrong turn at the cross-roads, and have found it greatly inconvenient when you had to retrace your steps and go back to the place where you went wrong, and make your journey in another direction in order to reach your desired destination. But that was a mistake which was subject to correction. Many of the affairs of life are important—all of them, in fact, when viewed relatively. We cannot afford to be mistaken in anything. Notwithstanding, I say we can better afford to be mistaken in anything—and everything—than in religion, because religion has to do with interests which transcend in value everything that this world contains.

I do not know whether there are any here who have wished that they could have known four or five years ago what they know now. If you had known you would not have made investments in certain directions. You have wished you could recall the day when you foolishly—although wisely, as you then thought—when you foolishly, as events have proved, invested all or part of what you possessed in an enterprise that has since crashed, and your money with it. It is a sad thing when people lose their life's savings. I am always sorry for them. You cannot discount the tragedy, when people have laboured for many years in the hope of having a competency in old age, and have it swept away by some apparently slight error. I do not wonder that it disturbs their peace of mind.

But if you lose all your money, and all your property—everything you have—there is still something of value left in life. You may make mistakes at a point which may be corrected, you may begin once more and build again the thing to which you gave the best part of your life.

I know of no place in life where a mistake is likely to issue in such dreadful consequences as at the marriage altar. To be mistaken there is to make a terrible mistake. And yet even that mistake may not necessarily mean the

absolute ruin of life. It may necessitate an endurance test for the rest of life, but if the man or woman, as the case may be, be strong, he may rise above his error and live usefully in spite of that tragedy.

But to make a mistake in religion, to be wrong there, to take the wrong path from this life into the next, is to make the greatest of all mistakes. Therefore I say we do well to discuss religious matters. We do well to engage in controversy if need be; because it is of first importance that we should know the truth in respect to this matter, because we cannot afford to be wrong.

That life is not over when it reaches its termination here is a matter of universal observation, and sooner or later of universal experience. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." Nothing is more sure than that here we have no continuing city. We are here to-day, but God only knows how many of us will be here a week hence—or twenty-four hours hence.

What of the life beyond? "I think", says someone, "we may possibly have a chance to correct the mistakes of time in the larger space of eternity." You "think" so—but are you sure? On whose authority dare you say that you are sure? And what if you should not have the opportunity? What if it should be a case of now or never? What if it be imperative, divinely imperative, that you take the right road now? And what if there is only one, and you miss it, and you discover when it is too late that it is impossible for you to correct your error? Away with that nonsense that religion is a matter for Sunday, that it has no vital relationship to the affairs of life! I tell you it is the biggest thing in life, of vastly greater importance than a man's business, than a man's domestic relations, than a man's citizenship in this country, or in this world—it is the most important thing of all, to be right religiously, to be sure we are making no mistake when at last, as perforce we must, we bid good-bye to the things of time and sense, and our soul-ship shall be launched in the direction of that bourne from which no traveller returns.

That is my major premise, that in nothing is uncertainty so hazardous as in matters of religion.

II.

My next proposition is this, THAT CERTAINTY IN RELIGION IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY APART FROM DIVINE WARRANT. You can be certain of nothing religiously which is not divinely certified. You examine a piece of silver to see, whether it is mere plate, or actually sterling: You look for the "hall mark". If it is stamped, you accept that as a guarantee of its integrity; that is to say, that it is silver all through, and not on the outside only. Pick up any book, and on the fly-leaf you will see the title of the book, and the name of the author; and you value the contents of the book in the measure in which you estimate the competency of the author to discuss the questions there treated.

In matters of religion we need some hall mark, some certification that the thing is true. Surely I need not tell you that there is no church council of any sort that ever functioned, or that could now be convened, competent authoritatively to make a pronouncement on questions of religion. They are all composed of fallible men. They may be mistaken, no matter how heartily they may ap-

prove of a certain course, or a certain doctrine; they may be wrong.

There is no church of any name—I care not what pretences it may make—clothed with such authority as to be able to tell you what is the right way to go—not one. Nor is there any preacher, I care not what his scholarship. He may be the most learned of all men; he may be the embodiment, not only of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, but of all encyclopaedias, and of all lexicons and commentaries, and all the rest of it, but that does not clothe him with authority. There is no one who can pronounce upon a question of religion with ultimate authority, with finality, among all the sons of men—not one.

In this particular case *Elijah did not argue*. I am sure, had we lived in his day, his opinions would have had great weight with any of us. I think we should like to have had Elijah's opinion of a great many things—and he was seldom backward in expressing them. But in this particular instance this solitary prophet of Jehovah did not argue his case. He said in effect, It is useless for me to argue with you. I am one against four hundred and fifty. The logic of majorities is with you. What "everybody" says must be true. So it is said in our day, and though it had not been framed in such a proverb I have no doubt it was true in principle then. People have ever been attracted by the broad road along which the multitude go, and they have been—and are still—inclined to regard with some contempt the narrow path and straight gate along which and through which but a few righteous people journey. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." You may be hopelessly outnumbered, and outclassed, in learning, wealth, influence, and position. That will not make you wrong, nor the other person right.

Elijah said, "I serve a God Who is able to speak for Himself, and I shall not argue with you. I will let Him argue with you. I propose a test. We are here to talk about heaven, who lives there, who rules this world, who is the source, the author, of law and order, and to whose will we are subject. I think I know, but you will not accept my opinion. I therefore propose that we challenge Heaven to answer our cry. I will abide by the result. I will obey the god who can plead his own cause, so that there shall be no possibility of doubt." In other words Elijah said, "I want a religion that is divinely certified. I want a religion that is stamped with heaven's own 'hall mark'. I want to be sure beyond all possibility of mistake, therefore I refer my case to the Supreme Court, and I am ready to abide by the verdict, that the God Who answereth by fire shall be God."

That is a fair test, and to that test all religions, and all human opinions about religion, must be prepared to submit.

I need not speak of the religions of the heathen.

It is a test to which science itself must submit,—and science falsely so called, with all its theories that are subversive of faith and antagonistic to religion. To this test must all religious philosophies come. To this test must your opinion and mine—and everybody else's—in matters of religion be submitted.

Religion is a legitimate subject of controversy. By controversy, I mean free, frank, open discussion. Come on, my friend. Produce your cause, bring forth your strong reason. Plead for Baal, if you will; but "the God that answereth by fire, let him be God", I say to my Modernist friends who have long told us that the Bible is not

true, that they have a new theory of religion, and that they are right and we are all wrong,—I turn to them and say, "Come on, ye Modernists! Let your modernistic god answer by fire. Let us see what he can do. Let us see what he can accomplish."

Look about upon the world to-day. The tenets and principles of Modernism have taken possession of nearly all our educational institutions, of nearly all our pulpits. They are stamped upon nearly all our literature. And the man who stands for the Bible as a divinely inspired and infallible book is looked upon to-day as a man who is scarcely sixteen ounces to the pound. He is a little bit "off". He is eccentric, out of centre.

I wish my evolutionary friends would begin to show some better type of man as a result of their evolutionary processes. For the life of me, as I turn back the pages of history, I cannot find that this sordid, sorrowful, sinful, nature has emerged by a hair's breadth from the awful depravity into which it was plunged by man's first disobedience in partaking of the fruit of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe. It has done nothing for us but to work confusion everywhere.

A little while ago our modern preachers were discussing economics. A pretty mess they have made of it! Or have the expert economists refused to listen to them? I do not know much about it. I only know there are one hundred cents to the dollar—and I wish there were more. We all know that. But when I see the futility of the courses pursued by the modern church, by the modern pulpit, I feel like calling three or four hundred of them together, men who have so preached for twenty-five years, and saying to the whole crowd, "Show me one man whose life has been made anew by your doctrines." They could not do it. We have recently had a testimony of a man who said that for twenty-seven years he had preached without knowing of one person whose life had been changed by his message. It is about time something happened when that is true of the pulpit.

What are we here for? Have we a God? The only God that is of any value is the God Who can plead His own cause, Who can answer by fire.

And I dare to say that the Bible must submit to that test. I offer not the slightest objection to scholarship's questioning the authority of the Bible as a whole, or of any part of it. I see no reason why objection should be taken to that course. If it is the truth, bring on your microscope, bring on your scholarship. You cannot upset the truth. "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." I do not object to anybody's examining the Bible. I do deny the competency of the judges sometimes to pronounce upon the question.

If this Bible could not speak for itself, I would not believe it. We are to contend for the faith, lest people should be led astray; but "the faith" itself needs no defense: it will defend itself.

We used to have a deacon here who was a great book man, and he told me this story once. He was in London, and he went to the headquarters of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He saw the presses busy printing Bibles, and the shelves piled to the roof everywhere with bound copies. Shipments were going out to the ends of the earth. The Bible was being printed, if I am not mistaken, at that time in something over six hundred languages and dialects—and they were not destroying one of them. It was not a "dead" book. It never gets out of

date. Copies were awaiting shipment to all parts of the world.

My friend went from there to another religious establishment, and he saw at one end of the place a great pile of books, well-bound large volumes. Then he saw a man toss the books carelessly into a three-wheeled truck which he wheeled to a shaft that led to the basement, and upset the books into the shaft. After watching the man repeat the process two or three times he said to his guide, "What is that man doing with those books? They look to be well bound." "Yes; they are. But they are dead. We cannot sell them, nor can we give them away." "I should like to see what the book is", said the deacon. He picked one up, and found that it was a copy of Colenso, "On the Pentateuch". Bishop Colenso was one of the earlier higher critics. His comments on the Pentateuch were dead, they were sending his books back to be ground into paper—but the Pentateuch was still being printed in over six hundred languages.

The Bible stands the test of fire. Otherwise it would have been destroyed long ago. No book has been so hated; no book has been so opposed; no book has ever had such a multitude of learned antagonists. They have cut it with their pen-knives, and burned it with fire. They have tried to destroy it, to remove it from the earth. But at this good hour the Bible is the best seller on earth. The man does not live, even in this apostate age, who can write a book that can gain such popularity as the unadulterated Word of God. It can stand the test. We need not be afraid of the fire. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

What is in the Book? The story of a Man. The gospel we preach bears the name of a Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord Jesus Christ. Is He a Man? Yes. Anything more than a Man? Are you going to argue about it? He will prove it. He goes to the cross; they bury Him in the grave; they roll a great stone upon it; they come to Pilate and say, "We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead." Pilate, with fine irony replies, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can—seal it up and have done with Him." And you know how, on the third day, the grave was empty, and the soldiers were running for their lives, their masters giving them money to tell a lie about the empty sepulchre.

But a little group knew all about it because He appeared to them, showing Himself alive. By and by He ascended out of their sight, and they were given the impossible task of proving that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. What then? Suppose they invoke the Habeas Corpus principle and say, "If He is all that, if He is risen from the dead, bring Him forth and let us see Him." "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." He is gone. They cannot prove it by argument. But "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." When at last one of the disciples stood up to explain the phenomenon, you remember what he said? "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having re-

ceived of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." He has answered by fire. He has sent a message from heaven. He has certified to the Messiahship of His Son, to the efficacy of His blood, to the validity, to the divine satisfactoriness of the whole work of redemption. God has said, "Well done", to Jesus. "That", said He, "is the way I am going to save people." "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." He answered by fire and He has been answering by fire ever since.

I could call for testimonies in this meeting and say, "Men and women, do you know anything about this fire? Has it come into your life? Has it made you a new creature? Has it introduced you to a new world? In a word, is yours a supernatural religion?" Hundreds of you would rise and say, "I need no argument, sir; I am myself the subject of this refining fire. God has come to me in the person of Christ, and by the power of His indwelling Spirit has put beyond all possibility of doubt the divine authority of the Christian religion."

Very well, then, the Book and the message of the Book, have been divinely certified; and I declare on the authority of the testimony of history, on the authority of the experiences of the multitude which no man can number, on the authority of the experience of many here, on the authority of my own experience of the reality of these things, that the Bible is the divinely-inspired, infallible, authoritative word of the living God, and that every word in it is true.

And its message to you is a message from Heaven. He, my God, commandeth men everywhere to repent. You may disregard my message, my friends who hear me by radio. You may say, "I am not in church. It makes no difference, so I will just listen to this preacher a while."

I heard a man say a thing to-day that was beyond me. Some student of Einstein's Relativity declared that, according to this theory of science, every ray of light carries within itself the image of everything that it has shone upon, and that if, by any means, one could overtake the rapid flight of light, he could yet produce a picture of Columbus landing on the shores of America. I do not know whether that is true. I confess that Einstein's theories, as well as many others, are quite beyond me. But I am sure of this, that the word of the Lord comes to you this evening with the authority of God Himself.

I bring to you once again the old, old story, the simple fact that Jesus Christ took your sins upon Him, that He bore your punishment, that He was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities, that He did actually pour out his life's blood that you might be washed and made whiter than snow.

Our God is "a consuming fire"; but how graciously He has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ! You remember when John saw that One Whose hair was as white as wool, he fell at His feet as dead because His eyes were "like a flame of fire". And when the three disciples saw Him on Mount Tabor as He was transfigured before them, in the light of His awful holiness they fell at His feet as dead men — when He simply allowed the light to shine through the fleshly veil that concealed His glory.

I thank God for that veil of flesh; that He has come to us, this God Who answers by fire, in the person of

One Who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and Who speaks in our language!

"Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight,
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine—
God's presence, and His very self,
And essence all-Divine.

O generous love that He, who smote
In Man for man the foe,
The double agony on Man
For man should undergo."

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I declare that to be divine truth, God's last word to the world. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

How simple He made it when He gave to those about Him the story of the man who went down from the temple justified, having prayed the prayer of penitence, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It is a fearful thing to know the consuming wrath of an angry God. But it has spent itself on Calvary, and now in the person of Him Who is our Saviour we may hear only words of tenderness and love. How graciously He said it, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"! The Bible brings us God's last word to the world: "Last of all he sent them his son."

Will you accept Him to-night? Will you accept the divine ultimatum? Will you take the road He points out? Will you accept the salvation He offers? My radio friends, bow your heads and pray that prayer. Gather your families about you to kneel with you, as whole families turn to God to-night; and as we pray in this place, may God the Holy Spirit, Who alone can teach us how to pray, constrain you to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we adore Thee! We worship Thee with grateful hearts because Thou hast not come to us in the

thunders of Sinai, but that Thou hast spoken to us at the cross, at the empty grave, and out of the open heavens. We hear Thee saying, Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Lord, we desire to come. Some of us have come long ago, and we thank Thee for that fact. Some others, we trust, desire to come now. Some will come back again. Send us from this place, and send our radio hearers to their couches, with a full assurance of faith, able to say, I know whom I have believed. We ask it for Thy name's sake, Amen.

THE STORY OF SAMSON.

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, January 26th, 1933.

*Eleventh in a Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on
Biblical Theology (the eighth on the book of
Judges) which is included in the Curriculum
of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson Text: Judges, chapters 13 to 16.

We shall continue our study this evening in the book of Judges, chapter thirteen. In our opening study we observed that there was a summary of the contents of the entire book of Judges, telling us how the people repeatedly lapsed into idolatry, did evil in the sight of the Lord, were sold into the hands of their enemies; and that from time to time God raised them up judges who delivered them. The book is a succession of biographical sketches of the judges whom God used to deliver His people out of the hands of their enemies.

The section to which we are to give our thought this evening begins like all the other sections, with the statement that "Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord", with the inevitable result that they became the slaves of another dominant people. The principle of the sixth chapter of Romans is everywhere anticipated in this book, because it is a principle that is founded in the nature of things: "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Sin always leads to slavery; and the rejection of the divine Lordship always issues in subjection to some kind of evil tyrant.

Our story has to do with Samson. It is a very familiar portion of Scripture.

I.

In the thirteenth chapter we have AN ACCOUNT OF HIS BIRTH. He was chosen of God from his birth. He was, indeed, foreordained to be Israel's deliverer.

We are to remember that this is a story written by the pen of inspiration, an historical record of events as they appeared to the discerning and penetrating gaze of God Himself. He is described in a later portion of Scripture as a "God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed". The pen of inspiration goes always to the root of matters; it uncovers the springs of history, and shows where certain streams of influence have their rise.

Samson's extraordinary character and career are explained by the fact that *he was ordained of God before his birth to do a particular work*. There may be other supernatural events which are not supernaturally viewed, and are not recorded by the pen of inspiration, which may be parallel to this; but this may be depended upon because it is a divine record. But the coming of any

human life into the world is an event fraught with tremendous potentialities. If you recall a few of the outstanding characters of history, on the side of righteousness or unrighteousness, men who have wrought valiantly for God, and who have been divinely used for the furtherance of righteousness among men, and for the honour and glory of God; or, on the other hand, men of evil genius, of outstanding ability as workers of iniquity—we call to mind many, among them, Napoleon, Catherine, and farther back, Nero, and Ahab who sold himself "to work evil in the sight of the Lord", and Pharaoh in whom God showed His power,—they all began life as all humans begin life, born into the world as babes. And yet from these cradles what tremendous influence has radiated for the cursing or the blessing of mankind!

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul links his divine call to be an apostle with his natural birth, and seems to imply that because he was ordained to this apostleship God's hand was in his natural birth. Beyond all question he came into this world with certain capabilities which God, in His providence, had imparted from birth.

We do well to lay emphasis upon the necessity of the second birth, and to remember that we are saved by the sovereign grace of God; but, at the same time, we must not forget that there are natural aptitudes, natural capacities, which have been divinely anticipated, and which fit men and women for the particular place in the world to which God has appointed them.

I think that is true of all callings in life. We may not be Samsons, we may not be chosen for any conspicuous service. Ours may be but a very ordinary and commonplace life, and the function we exercise in the body of Christ may seem to be very small and unimportant; but you remember God hath "set some in the church". His providence has to do with our call into fellowship with God, and equally it has to do with our natural birth. It is said that poets are born, and not made. I am certain that some people have tried to make poets of themselves who were not to the manner born. There is no doubt about that! But it is just as true of preachers and teachers. Their natural aptitudes are no accident. We come into the world with certain qualities.

If you students were not foreordained to be preachers, and did not come into the world with certain latent qualities, there is no school on earth that can impart them. We must discover our particular place in life, as Samson did; but just as surely as Samson was ordained to a special service, so every one of the servants of God has been similarly appointed.

You know the story of how the angel appeared to the wife of Manoah, and how, in answer to their prayer, he appeared the second time. Manoah's wife did not know that he was an angel of the Lord. God has a way sometimes of coming to His people anonymously. Sometimes He visits them and bestows upon them His gifts, and does not mark the gift. We may know whence it came, however, from the fact that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights".

Direction was given for the care of the child from his birth. He was to be safeguarded. He was surrounded with certain prohibitions. He was to be a Nazarite, separated unto God from the beginning of life.

What a blessing it is to be born into a godly home! to have had parents, father and mother, who talked with

God about us, and who sought divine help and direction in respect to our upbringing, and the direction of our steps into our appointed career! Those of us who have enjoyed that incomparable advantage ought ever to be grateful, and to remember that we have been blessed with a tremendous advantage over those who have not been similarly favoured.

I do not think it would be difficult to identify the Angel here spoken of. He came in the form of a man. When Manoah said, "What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?" He said, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" Or, "wonderful". "His name shall be called Wonderful, Councillor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." As He predicted the birth of this child I wonder was there especially present in His view—there must have been—the visit of other angels to this world who would come both to Elizabeth and to Mary, bringing them the great news of the advent of one who should be the herald of the Lord, and of the Other Who should be the Lord of glory Himself? How full of preintimations of the ultimate glory is the Old Testament! How impoverished are they who have never learned that Jesus Christ is the key!

The key to the Old Testament, as to everything concerning this life and the next, is in the hand of Him upon Whose shoulders the Lord has laid the government, Who shuts and no man opens, and opens and no man shuts.

I think we may read this thirteenth chapter reverently, and profit as to our own advent into the world; and earnestly enquire of the Lord why we were born, what we are here for, for what special task we have been equipped, in order that we may not live our lives in vain.

There are two verses at the conclusion of the thirteenth chapter which are very suggestive of a principle which, for the want of something better, and without premeditation, I call a principle of divine perspective. Here is a whole chapter taken up with the story of the divine communication respecting God's purpose in a life that is to be, of the visitation of the angel, of the presentation of offerings to him, and how he went up to heaven in the fire that rose out of the rock.

They knew that he was the angel of the Lord. "Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

Then in the twenty-fourth verse there is the mere statement of the child's birth, his being called Samson, and the mere statement that the child grew, "and the Lord blessed him." So from babyhood to manhood Samson's history is compressed within a few words. Do not forget that the beginning of life, and the influences that are thrown about a young life in its unfolding, are of paramount importance, and that the later period may well be compressed within a few words. "And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol."

II.

Now Samson is a man, and he "went down to Timnath"—and here it is. I thought we should come upon it—"and saw a woman in Timnath"! Though his father

and mother did not approve of his choice, he was determined to have her for his wife.

I read a story somewhere of an Italian nobleman who had had a most unfortunate marriage; there was no joy in it at all. Ultimately his wife died, and left him with a little son. He became a woman-hater, and he resolved that that little son should never know that there were such creatures on earth as women. He selected a library very carefully—I do not know how he did it, but he got together books that the boy might read as he grew up in which was no mention of women. He kept him securely in his castle until he obtained his majority, with no one for companions but male tutors and the male servants of the household. His father thought he was perfectly safe, and he took him out to view the world. They had not travelled far until the boy saw a company of young women playing, having a happy time together in the open air. The boy said to his father, "What are they?" Said his father, "Do not bother about them: they are just little devils." "Devils", said the youth, "then, father, get me a little devil."

It is only a legend perhaps, but here is this mighty man smitten, and he is thus introduced to the Philistines from whom he is to deliver his people Israel. His father and mother objected: "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" But he was like all young men of modern times. It was no use to argue with him on that subject! "Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." There was an overruling providence in it, for thus he was introduced to the land of Philistia.

Turning aside from that, you have this principle, that in the prosecution of his life's work a lion roared upon him. You are likely to meet lions in the way. Our Lord did when He sought His bride. Do not say it is a type. I do not know that it is, but it may be an illustration, for as his father and mother wondered that the affection of Samson should go out to a woman of an alien race, so must the angels have wondered that the Prince of glory should ever have determined to find for Himself a bride in this rebellious planet. But so He did, and in the finding of her, as in the case of Samson, there were many lions in the way.

Whatever your task, whatever your course in life, as you set about it, you must expect to hear the roar of a lion. Life is not easy. It never was: it never will be. "The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him", as He will come upon all His chosen servants for the execution of their task. At the time when most he needed this divine anointing, God was at hand to enable him to slay the lion: "He rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand."

Then he called together all his friends and neighbours to tell them what a great hero he was, and of all the wonderful things he had done! No; he did not! He did not even tell his father and mother. And I suggest to you young men and women that you endeavour to cultivate the habit of meeting lions every day as a commonplace. Rend them, and throw them aside, and do not bother about it. The greatest battles of life always have been—and always must be—fought in secret. We do well to rend the lions. You do not need to "share" that with anybody else! Some people are always talking about the lions they kill.

I used to know a woman in the church of which I was pastor, who very piously and very weepingly used to appeal to the friends to pray for her that she might be delivered from pride. She feared she might be proud, and she wanted to get herself under her feet! She was always asking people to help her slay the lion. She gave the impression that she was quite a lion-hunter on her own account—but so far as I know, nobody ever found the carcase of one! I do not know what she did, but she did not seem to make any progress in the lion-killing business.

This young man said nothing about it. There ought to be a few secrets between us and the Lord. We ought to have victory over our pride and our selfishness without calling a big meeting to tell everybody about it.

"After a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion." It is a fine thing to have a few places marked out—for yourself; others need not know of them. "That is the place where I had a real battle, and a real victory." We all have our lions to meet. After you have had the victory you may reinforce your courage by viewing again the scene of conflict, as Samson did.

But he found that a swarm of bees had taken possession of the carcase of the lion, and that it was full of honey. You may be sure there is some store laid up for everybody who thus wins a victory before the Lord without saying anything about the lion. "He took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat." He brought a full supply of honey, but do not forget that "he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion". Never mind advertising the slaying of the lion: come with the honey. See that your hands are filled with sweetness. See that you live and walk as men and women who somehow, somewhere, have learned the secret of victory, so "the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet", even as the Scripture says.

"So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments."

This story is rather a mixture. I suppose it is so because your life and mine are mixtures. Samson did some wise things, and he did some very foolish things. This Philistine wife of his was rather an unusual woman—or was she? She was very persistent, but who shall judge whether more so than the women you and I know! The Philistines called for Samson's wife. That is good psychology. If you want to do anything with a man, go and see his wife! That is, some men—and some wives. Now and then, once in a good many years, you will find a man of independence; but they are scarce.

They said to Samson's wife, "Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire." "And Samson's wife wept before him." That is true to life, is it not? This is accurate history. She wept before him, but he refused to tell her. "Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?"—"And she wept before him the seven days." What man could stand that? Think of it! Seven days of weeping! Every morning! All day long! Every night! All the time! There was no ces-

sation of her tears, but she persisted in her demand that he disclose to her his secret. I do not excuse him for telling, but I admit that I have a good deal of sympathy with him; for seven days' continuous weeping was enough to break down almost any man's resolution. At last, when he could withstand her no longer, he told her—and she told the enemy.

When they solved the riddle Samson said, "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." However, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend."

There is much feminine psychology in the story. You must always remember, when endeavouring to understand men and women, that they are two separate creations; they belong to two different orders of life; and they look at things from different points of view. Study the psychology of the chapter, particularly you young men and young women.

Samson returned again to call upon his wife, but her father would not let him see her, so he "caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives." The Philistines argued there was only one man who would do a trick like that. You may earn for yourselves a reputation so that you will be blamed for many things. But Samson deserved this. He did it. And when the Philistines destroyed his wife and her father, Samson "smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter."

III.

Thus he began to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. There is in this chapter something that is strangely reminiscent of Moses. When he began to move for the deliverance of God's people, the first to oppose were the people themselves. They said in effect, "You are only making our burdens harder to bear. Withdraw your hand, and leave us alone." Sometimes things have to be made worse before they can be better. When you try to do a good deed you will find yourself examined of "the good deed done to the impotent man". These men of Judah were afraid. They went up, three thousand of them, to the top of the rock to take Samson. That was a compliment to Samson! It took three thousand of these pigmies to bind him. They went up to bind him because, said they, "He is making trouble. We shall be worse off than we were in the beginning."

If you take the course divinely planned for you, the men of Judah will turn upon you because they do not understand, just as they turned upon Moses, and upon Samson.

"Swear unto me", said Samson, "that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, "No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand—We will just hand you over, a tied-up parcel, to the Philistines." When they had bound him, and brought him up from the rock, "The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new

jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith." That was a strange instrument, but it made little difference what instrument he had. If you are a Samson you may use the jawbone of an ass, but if you are not, do not try it. That is one cause of failure among men. Men who are not Samsons or Davids try to use their weapons. Use your own.

"And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived . . . and he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

IV.

Then he went down to Gaza. That is another chapter in his history, and a very sad chapter. This man was not proof against the wiles of the women of Philistia. It was told the men that Samson had come into the city of Gaza, and they compassed the city about, but he "took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron."

I believe there is an illustration here. After we are really the Lord's, and the Spirit of God dwells within us, no prison doors can shut us in. The Philistines will try it, but we shall be able to lift the doors off their hinges; or, if not, there will be a repetition of Peter's experience when the angel came through the shut doors. The chains fell from off his legs, and the doors opened "of their own accord"; and he came out into liberty again.

Then there is the sad story of Delilah, another woman from among the Philistines. She was besought to get from Samson the secret of his strength. Samson was not called to do a great deal of talking, but certainly he talked too much. He ought to have kept his secret to himself. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant." Three times he put Delilah off with a false statement, but at last he yielded his secret and said that his strength was in his hair.

Note the parallel between this story and that of the woman of Timnath. "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death: that he told her all his heart." The other woman gave him seven days of weeping, but this woman gave him seven days of nagging! "She pressed him daily with her words." She kept it up all the time, like the dropping of water upon a hard stone, until at last, although he could stand much, he could stand it no longer. He told her his secret.

Don't you men be too proud of yourselves. Do not say your wife cannot make you do things like that. She does not let you know that she makes you, but very often—and I think, usually—she has her own way. Most of them do.

Again I say, I cannot commend Samson, but out of sheer desperation he discloses the secret of his strength; he told her it was due to the fact that he was a Nazarite, that a razor had never come upon his head. He was shorn of his hair, and when his wife said as of yore, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson", he said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

How terribly true it is that men may play with evil, and trifle with things that are contrary to the will of God,

and gradually, imperceptibly, be robbed of their strength, until they are as weak as other men! Samson supposed that he was as strong as he had been before, but the Lord had departed from him. And no one is any good to himself, or to his generation, when once the Lord departs from him. That should be our supreme concern, so to walk with Him that we may not be shorn of our strength. Oh, the terrible tale, too horrible to relate; but I suppose you have seen it in real life. The Philistines took Samson, put out his eyes, and bound him with fetters of brass. They put him in the prison-house, and made him to grind the mill.

That is a picture of what happens to the man who gets out of the way of the divine will, who is shorn of his spiritual strength. He becomes the sport of the enemies of the Lord.

V.

Yet how comforting that verse, "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven." God does have mercy upon us all, does He not? There is recovery for His people. Samson did not recover his sight. He bore the marks of his sojourn in Philistia right to the end. But he did recover his strength.

The Philistines held a great feast to rejoice over Samson, saying, "Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us." Do you remember how David lamented over the death of Saul, saying, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." He knew that disaster in Israel would bring rejoicing to the enemies of the Lord. He knew that Saul's unfaithfulness would give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. That is the terribly sad part of it, dear friends, that if you and I should fail, if we were to drag into the mire the Name by which we are called, and if instead of being always triumphant in Jesus Christ, we should lose our spiritual discernment and become bound with the devil's fetters, and instead of serving God, are made to grind at the devil's mill, the ungodly would rejoice over that! How the enemy rejoices when God's people fall! That is a picture of the backslider.

The Philistines made merry over the backslider, Samson. They said, "Call for Samson, that he may make us sport." He was brought in. Oh, if one could but picture that scene, this once invincible champion of Israel now shorn of sight and strength! "He made them sport: and they set him between the pillars"—but listen to this: "Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand"—not one of the mighty men of Israel, but a boy. That is all he needs. He has no strength left, so a lad guided the once mighty man. "Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them"—"Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might;

(Continued on page 12)

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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Lesson 8

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FIRST QUARTER

CHOOSING THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Lesson Text: Ruth, chapters 1 and 2.

Golden Text: "And Ruth said Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God:

"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."—Ruth 1:16-17

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Deut. 15:1-11.

Tuesday—Deut. 15:12-22.

Wednesday—Deut. 24:17-22.

Thursday—Eph. 5:22-33.

Friday—Mark 1:16-22.

Saturday—1 Thess. 1:1-10.

I. RUTH CHOOSING, (1).

The background of the book of Ruth is found in that of Judges. The setting is not pleasant, but the story itself is affecting, beautiful, and significant, furnishing us with information concerning the experience of Ruth the Moabitess, culminating in her marriage with Boaz the Israelite, and her consequent incorporation in the genealogical line of David and the Messiah. The record is of interest, both historically and spiritually. In the former from the general and genealogical aspect, in the latter from the typical spiritual lessons to be derived therefrom. Ruth may be taken as a type of the saint, or the church; and Boaz, of our Lord in His redemptive work. To him Ruth was married after he had redeemed the inheritance of Naomi her mother-in-law, and thus made possible their union. It is of interest to note that the action in these matters came from the side of Boaz, as the initiative in all matters of redemption proceeds from our Lord. It is purely of His grace that we are saved. Note the four chapters of the book as depicting respectively Ruth choosing, serving, waiting, and resting.

In the first chapter, wherein the choice of Ruth is recorded, several things are worthy of note. First, the sojourn of Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons in the land of Moab. The time of this sojourn is stated, with the reason for the same, (v. 1). It occurred in the time of the judges, and on account of famine, which prevailed in the land. On previous occasions the ancestors of these Israelites had left Palestine for the same reason, as Abraham who went down to Egypt, (Gen. 12:10), Isaac, who went into Gerar in Philistia, (Gen. 26:1), and Jacob who sent his sons into Egypt to buy grain, (Gen. 42:1-2). Famine was not, therefore, a new experience for that

land. Note the suffering caused by such an experience, also the spiritual famine caused by lack of the bread of life in this and other lands, which is more fearful, being attended with eternal consequences. The sad experience of this Israelitish family is clearly manifest in the death of the three men, (vs. 3, 5), leaving the three widows to face life alone. Such an outcome was undoubtedly unexpected, but it emphasizes the uncertainty of time, the frailty of human nature, the impossibility of complete unalloyed joy on this earth, and the necessity for thinking of and preparing for the great eternal change.

After the visitation of death in her family Naomi decided to return to her country, "For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread", (v. 6). This was good news to her, and implied the manifestation of the divine favour upon the Lord's own, and all associated with them. Note the acknowledgment of God in this statement, the goodness of God manifest, the spread of the good news, and the power of good news to draw toward itself. Apply those statements to the good news of the gospel. When she set out on her return journey Naomi was accompanied by her daughters-in-law (v. 7), to whom, after they had gone part of the way with her, she gave the advice to return to their homes, and expressed her kindest wishes for their future happiness, (vs. 8, 9). They both declared their intention of returning with her to her people, (v. 10), but she sought to dissuade them from doing this, and succeeded in the case of Orpah, but Ruth clave unto her, (vs. 11-14). By this attitude she gave evidence of her affection for and devotion to her mother-in-law, manifested a beautiful trait of character, and did that which led to her future blessing. Note the providence of God, and the ways in which He works out His plans in the use of natural means, as in the case of Joseph, (Gen. 45:8), Mary, the mother of Jesus, (Luke 2:1), and others.

Failing to be dissuaded from going with her mother-in-law, (v. 15), Ruth definitely and beautifully makes known her decision to proceed with the journey to Bethlehem-Judah, (vs. 16, 17). In her declaration six things are evident. First, the entreaty not to be requested to leave Naomi, then the decision concerning the journey, the lodging place, the people, the Lord, and the end of life. In this there is manifest complete identity with the people of God, final separation from the people of Moab, definite decision for the God of Israel, and determination to bear the full consequences of such a momentous decision. Apply this in the realm of salvation to the one who decides to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and to all who should do so, noting the necessity for decision in that realm, and the consequences involved in the same here, and hereafter. Lessons may be drawn from the momentous decisions of scripture, as that of Abraham, (Gen. 12:4), and Moses, (Ex. 2:11, Heb. 11:25), and the apostles, Matthew, (Matt. 9:9), and Paul, (Acts 26:19).

In contrast with the decision of Ruth there is that of Orpah, who went back unto her people, and unto her gods. She might have gone into better things in

the land of Israel among the Lord's people, but she went back to her old life with its idolatry, and lost the blessing she might have received. Note the many who go back instead of following the Lord, and explain the great loss sustained thereby. Observe the conditions of following Christ. (Matt. 16:24). The arrival of Naomi and Ruth at Bethlehem is recorded with pathos, (vs. 19-22). The whole city was moved, the change in Naomi's appearance was noted, and her sorrowful condition is intimated in her reference to change of name, and declaration concerning the Lord's dealings with her. She went out full and returned empty. She had not profited from her stay in the land of foreign gods, but prosperity came to her after her return to the people of God. Apply this in the spiritual realm.

II. RUTH SERVING (2).

Before describing the action of Ruth in gleaning in the fields, we are informed by the inspired writer of the existence of the near kinsman, Boaz, "a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech", (v. 1). The request of Ruth is then mentioned, together with the assent of Naomi to the same (v. 2), followed by an account of her labour in the field, (v. 3), with its remarkable circumstances, (vs. 4-23). In her action Ruth manifested humility, industry, diligence, faithfulness and willingness to do her share in supporting the home of which she was a member. Apply this to the saint of God in his spiritual home. Note also the providential guidance of God in her going to the field of Boaz. She might have gone to some other field and never have come in contact with this man. But this was in the plan of God, and unknowingly Ruth's footsteps were guided to the right place. Note the necessity for being in touch with God, that in all the affairs of life we may act in accordance with His purpose. Lessons may further be derived from the work of gleaning, permitted by law to the poor and the stranger, (Lev. 19:9, 10). The world is a vast harvest field in the spiritual sense, (John 4:35), and while some are called upon to take a prominent place in the reaping operations, others may glean in the fields and do a very important work in the winning of ones and twos for the Lord. The personal worker is an essential in the work of the Lord, whether in the large evangelistic services, or in the homes and places of business, and each child of God with divine help can do this work, (Mark 1:17).

On entering his field, Boaz became aware of the presence of the strange young woman, and enquiring as to her identity, he was informed of the same, (vs. 4-7), and gave permission for her continuance of work in his field, instructing her to abide fast by his maidens, (vs. 8, 9). During the course of the conversation he intimated that he knew of her devotion to her mother-in-law, (vs. 10-12), after which he gives her further instruction concerning eating and gleaning, and she returns home well supplied with grain from her labours of the day, (vs. 13-23). Note the gracious attitude of Boaz, also his generosity, protection, and condescension, and apply the same to our Lord as the Antitype in His relations with His servants.

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PREPARING PROGRAMS.

Since the note in a recent "Witness" in which it was stated that help would be gladly given in the matter of preparing Missionary Programs, we have had many requests, and the interest with which the announcement was received is very gratifying. Some of the Young People's Societies already have their Missionary Program arranged and we hope to publish one of these suggestions shortly. An invitation is extended to all those who have arranged interesting meetings to tell us of them that others may benefit.

TABERNACLE, KENORA.

The annual business meeting of the Tabernacle Baptist Church, Kenora, Ontario, was held on Wednesday evening, January 18th, and we learn that while the year has been a trying one for the congregation, progress has been made.

The meeting was opened with a prayer service and immediately following the business was attended to. The Pastor, Rev. E. E. Hooper, acted as chairman and the whole session was characterized by a spirit of unity and good-will.

Mr. H. S. Cade, clerk, made a survey of the year and after hearing the Minutes and reports and accepting them, Mr. P. Hudson presented the financial statement. It was a cause of much thanksgiving that despite the trying year, the books of the church closed with practically no deficit. A hearty vote of appreciation expressed the feelings of the church with regard to its officers who had so faithfully served during the year. After the election of officers, the congregation expressed regret that disturbances had hindered the work during the year, and further expressed its determination to, in the future, so order the collective life of the church as to deserve a good report of them that are without, and endeavour to so order their lives as individuals as to "adorn the doctrine of God" in all things.

Arrangements were made for a church rally and congregational supper on Tuesday evening, January 24th.

EAST YORK MISSION.

The prayers of God's people are requested for the work carried on by Pastor Bernard Jeffery in East York. The Lord has given the workers the joy of seeing souls saved and the work is going steadily forward. Recently the mother of nine children confessed Christ as Lord. Pray that the children, some of whom are attending the separate school, may be converted.

The Women's Gospel Meetings are proving of much interest to young Christians and are providing an opportunity for training. Pray for them.

The Mission has a very definite program and objective for this year. It is expected that every department of the work will be added to and that the attendance at all services will be increased. The services are held each Lord's Day at 13 Barker Avenue, Toronto. A Bloor Street car to Glebe Avenue and a walk north to Barker Avenue will bring you to the Mission and visitors are always welcomed.

GOOD TIMES AT COURTLAND.

The Courtland Regular Baptist Church is experiencing the Lord's blessing. The attendance is increasing steadily and there is a deep spirit of interest. Recently the father of four was saved and there is rejoicing. At the recent business meeting, it was noted that despite the depression and the loss of those who were supposed to be the monied-people, the receipts during the year 1932 were about the same as in other years.

An interesting feature of the work is the Thursday evening Bible Lecture for the children. This is conducted by the Pastor, Rev. Leander Roblin, and there is a splendid attendance. It is a real joy to hear the children, some of whom come from homes where the parents are very careless, sing, and see the interest they take in the service.

"The Pastor's ministry is much appreciated," writes a member of the church. "His sermons are truly the utterances of a prophet of God and are given forth in no uncertain way."

The Courtland Church is looking forward to a visit from Rev. H. L. Davey on Tuesday, February 7th.

FACTS ABOUT LIBERIA.

The country known as the Republic of Liberia is situated on the West Coast of Africa.

It has a coast line of about three hundred and fifty miles.

Liberia has few natural harbors and boats anchor at a considerable distance from the shore. Landing is made by small boats and canoes.

Liberia has an area of about 43,000 square miles. It is about the size of Belgium.

Liberia is governed by blacks — Liberian-Americans, descendants of freed slaves.

The natives are not known as Liberians but are known by the name of their tribe.

The Liberians (governing class) live along the coast. The capital of the country is Monrovia. It is estimated that there are some twenty thousand Liberians in the country.

Monrovia is quite a modern city and boasts some imposing buildings.

The native population of the Republic

is to be found inland and although no official census has been taken it is estimated that the various tribes would number a population of between one and a half to two million people.

The climate of Liberia is tropical. The coolest month is August and in that month the day temperature would average 69 degrees Fahrenheit, and the night temperature 65 degrees. February is the hottest month of the year. In that month the temperature often rises to 100 degrees in the shade.

Liberia is the only purely negro government in Africa.

The civilized Liberian speaks English and English is the official language of the country.

The natives are pagans and speak their own dialect.

YORK ROAD MISSION, GUELPH.

A letter from Pastor H. H. Chipchase, dated January 30th, acknowledges receipt of cheque which covered the contributions receive from "Gospel Witness" readers, and he says, "We wish to thank everyone who made the cheque possible. Please extend our sincere thanks. Praise the Lord!!!"

We trust that the cheque sent on is but an earnest of the support which will make Mr. Chipchase's full time ministry at Guelph possible.

From the Pastor's letter, we learn that a business meeting was held on Thursday, January 26th, and at that meeting the Suffolk Street Regular Baptist Church was formally dissolved and immediately afterward the York Road Regular Baptist Gospel Mission was organized. As a Regular Baptist Mission, the work will be carried on until such time as the membership will permit of organization as a Regular Baptist Church.

On Friday evening, February 10th, a baptismal service will be held in the Hespeler Baptist Church and at that time it is expected that fifteen believers will follow their Lord.

Mr. Chipchase is rejoicing in the fact that he is able to give his full time to the work. He writes, "The Lord is certainly blessing our labours. Souls are being saved. Last Wednesday evening after our prayer meeting it was my joy to lead one of the leading young men of my Sunday School Class to the Lord. He is on fire now and after the other young fellows. It is his own wish to follow His Lord through the water of baptism."

"Please don't think that I am taking life easy. I am on the go all the time—and who wouldn't be with over one hundred families to visit as well as the hospital? We had a good day yesterday. All three services were exceedingly well attended."

THE STORY OF SAMSON.

(Continued from page 9)

and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

Thus, at last, by his own death he purged away the stain which his waywardness had brought upon his own name, upon the name of Israel, and upon the name of Israel's God. His final victory was due to his own death. And it is only as we fall into the ground and die that we really become victorious.

I have sketched only a few of the suggestions of this story. A careful study will yield you much more than I have been able to give you.

THE CRITICS CRITICIZED

We are often greatly amused by some of the letters that reach us. There are some things most surely believed among us. We may be wrong, but we believe we are right. Among other things, we believe the Bible to be the only rule of faith and practice, and that all religious questions should be tried by the standards of the Book.

There are some people who do not like controversy, do not believe in it, who yet are themselves constantly starting another controversy. We believe Modernism to be subversive of faith, dishonouring to God, and destructive to the souls of men. Hence we have criticized Modernism. Never have we done so, however, without receiving scores of letters—sometimes hundreds of letters—from people who say they do not believe in controversy; to whom we are inclined to reply, "If you do not, leave us alone. We do not want to have a controversy with you." They deny our right to have any controversy with anybody else, and then proceed to deliver themselves of a tirade against "controversies"!

And now it is the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group are guided by four principles: absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love—that is to say, providing you accept all they teach you, and offer no objection. But while hosts of people have come to the office since last Thursday to obtain copies of the Oxford Group lecture, others who do not believe in controversy, and who abhor criticism,

send us pages of bitter invectives because we have dared to dissent from positions taken by the Oxford Group.

How really funny the whole performance is! If it be wrong for us to criticize the Oxford Group, it is equally out of place for the critics to criticize us.

Up to this hour we have seen no fruit from the Oxford Group that would convince us it is of God. We have seen many things connected with it which seem to us to indicate that it is not of God. We have done our utmost to warn people against other errors, and we shall do what we can do to put people on their guard against the insidious teachings of this Groupism.

THE OXFORD GROUP MOVEMENT LECTURE

Already there has been a great demand for copies of the Editor's lecture on the Oxford Group Movement. The surplus of last week's issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS is now almost entirely exhausted, and the booklets are selling rapidly. We ask the cooperation of all our friends in spreading the message contained in this lecture as widely as possible. Particulars as to price will be found in the advertisement at the foot of this page.

THE EDITOR IN CHICAGO

The Editor of THE GOSPEL WITNESS will give the evening address, Tuesday, February 7th, at Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, in connection with the twenty-seventh Founder's Week Conference. The address will probably appear in these pages later.

THE WORK IN GUELPH.

We call attention to an item in the Union Baptist Witness from Guelph.

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions received from various places in response to this appeal. We shall be glad to receive other contributions. We need, indeed, about sixty dollars a month. Send either to THE GOSPEL WITNESS office, 130 Gerrard Street East, or to Rev. W. E. Atkinson, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Canada.

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