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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

GOD'S CALL TO A BACKSLIDING CHURCH.

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, February 26th, 1933.

(Stenographically Reported)

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"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.

"Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion."—Jeremiah 3:12-14.

The Prophet Jeremiah was especially called of God to exercise a prophetic ministry. We are told that he was ordained to this high calling before his birth. He came into this world with special natural aptitudes for his task. These were enlarged and sublimed to holy uses by the divine anointing which he received. He prophesied during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and for eleven years of the reign of Zedekiah—even until the disaster which he was sent to foretell, and against which he was commissioned to warn the people, overtook the nation, and they were carried away as captives to Babylon.

It would be difficult to conceive of any man's being called to a less enviable position than that which Jeremiah was required to occupy. He prophesied at a time of great religious declension, when the people, as a nation, had departed from the Lord, and had substituted for the divine ordinances creations of their own imagination. It may be doubted whether any prophet ever lived who was more unpopular than Jeremiah, whose message was less acceptable to the people of his time.

Jeremiah anticipated the difficulty when first he received his commission, for he said to the Lord: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say, not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord

said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

Jeremiah was called to exercise a ministry which was very largely to be destructive. There was much that had to be destroyed in order that the truth might be established.

One cannot read these biographical touches in Jeremiah's prophecy without being moved to sympathy with him in the difficulties he encountered. I think if Jeremiah had been a minister of our day he would not have been invited to deliver addresses at great Conventions. I think, indeed, his Baptist brethren might have been tempted to go to Parliament to obtain authority to exclude him from participation in any of their deliberations, and if possible to silence his testimony. Notwithstanding, because the Lord was with him, he continued to declare the word of the Lord.

Again and again Jeremiah was discouraged because of the rejection of his ministry, because of the steadfast opposition that was offered to his testimony. He resolved at least on one occasion that he would make no further mention of the name of the Lord. In a moment of weakness, he felt that he had been called to do more than his share of protesting, and said: "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Hence,

by the help of God, he again broke silence, and went on in the exercise of his ministry.

I would commend to you a careful study of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. It is a very true representation, in principle, of religious conditions which obtain to-day. You will have no difficulty in discerning a very close analogy between the experience of the Prophet Jeremiah and that of any—and every—faithful preacher of the gospel in our day.

But Jeremiah was not a weeping prophet, as he is sometimes represented to have been. He did exclaim, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." He was deeply moved when he recognized the general departure of the people from God. And yet I do not know where you will find in the entire Bible more tender, more appealing, more pathetic passages, than in Jeremiah's prophecy.

As for example: "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not." And this also: "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

In our text he is commissioned to appeal to God's people to cease from their idolatry, to turn back from the way of apostasy in which so long they have been running, and to return wholeheartedly to the Lord. And in His grace the Lord promised, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

I believe this book may rightly be said to have a special message for this day and generation. Let us look at the text—not wresting it from its context, but viewing it in relation to its historical background, that we may see what teaching it has for us to-day.

I.

The backsliding, the religious declension of Judah, to whom especially Jeremiah was commissioned, was AN INDISPUTABLE MATTER OF FACT. It was abundantly evident that both Judah and Israel were in a backslidden state. It seems to have been common to God's people. While the Bible records spiritual springtime, and draws many a picture of fruitful summer, yet in the history of God's chosen people, autumn and winter followed hard upon the beauty and fruitfulness of summer; and the people who one day were praising the Lord were shortly afterward turning aside to idolatry.

You will recall how bitterly the Israelites mourned because of the bondage of Egypt, and how marvellously and

miraculously God brought them out from the hand of Pharaoh by the might of His own redeeming arm. He made them a free nation by one act of His might; and yet scarcely were they free from the whips of the Egyptian taskmasters when they began lusting after the fleshpots of Egypt, and complaining that they had not been permitted to remain there instead of being brought out to die in the wilderness.

Not long after they left Egypt Moses was summoned into the mount to receive from the hand of God His law, and in that brief absence the people lapsed into idolatry, and under the leadership of Moses' own brother made for themselves a golden calf, and bowed down to it and worshipped. They came to the borders of Canaan, but their unbelief turned them back again into a period of barrenness and wandering in the wilderness. Ultimately they were brought into Palestine, and under the leadership of Joshua there was a somewhat extended period of apparently faithful following of Jehovah. But scarcely had Joshua passed, and the elders who outlived him, together with their influence for good, than the story of the Judges is recorded which is a story of intermittent apostasy.

Talk about the depravity of human nature? Human nature, left to itself, and apart from divine grace, always goes back into the wilderness, always returns to Egypt.

Our text has particular reference to a special period in Israel's history during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. There was a brief revival during Josiah's reign, when the word of the Lord was re-discovered and was read again before the people, and when the people gathered from all over the nation, and the greatest passover that had ever been celebrated was observed. But scarcely had Josiah passed in that fateful battle in the valley of Megiddo than his son Jehoiakim, notorious for having cut the Word of God to pieces with his penknife, led the people back into sin; and the state of God's people during the reigns of Jehoiakim, the brief reign of Jehoiachin, and the eleven years of Zedekiah's regime, was one of steadfast opposition to the word of divine revelation. It was not a popular nor profitable thing to be a prophet during that time. The people refused to hear the word of the Lord: "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

And is not that characteristic of our day? And has it not been now for nearly a quarter of a century? Any man can gain a wide hearing, any man can cheaply earn for himself, with certain classes, a reputation for "scholarship", if only he sets his puny mind to opposing that which God has written. Any man, no matter how clumsy he may be, is hailed as a man of special enlightenment, as a man of unusual erudition, if only he assails the Word of God. I have seen that attitude increase, I have seen the hatred of that which is written becoming more and more intense, with the passing of the years, until in our day a man can scarcely retain his reputation for simple sanity if he declares his belief that God has actually spoken, and that

the Bible is His inspired and infallible word. In this place, however, we take that position; and I boldly say if my voice could reach a million people, and it may at this moment for aught I know, and they were all scholars, and all critics, and were all to say that the Bible is but a book of myths and legends, untrue to science and to history, and to every other department of human investigation and knowledge, it would not disturb my faith. I am not surprised at these things. I know that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned". We need, like Jeremiah, to be willing to be fools for Christ's sake, and to be attentive to the Voice that speaks from heaven.

I am beginning to be hopeful that the present condition of society in Canada and throughout the world will at last startle some of the so-called prophets of the Lord, so that they will reconsider the absurdities they have been proclaiming during the last few years as though they were authoritative truths.

To what have they led us? Where and what is the conventional modern church to-day? Is it not a byword and a hissing to all men who desire a word from Heaven? The leaders of the apostasy in Jeremiah's day were the religious officials. They were the prophets and priests. And I venture to express my own conviction that more than the makers of high tariffs, more than the inventors who have introduced to us a mechanized condition of life, who have procured a machine age, the prophets and the priests of our day, the preachers, if you please, and the university professors and teachers, are responsible for the present state of chaos. The pulpits of this land—and of the world—for quarter of a century have busied themselves, in the majority of instances, fifty-two Sundays in the year, and twice every Sunday, in seeking to destroy men's faith in the word of the living God. It is no wonder there is no confidence left. It is no wonder that truth is fallen in the streets, and men have no faith in anything or anybody. It is no accident that such is the case.

Do not blame the secular universities only. Do not hold our educational systems exclusively responsible. The devil has taken possession of the pulpits and theological seminaries, and enough poison has been disseminated from so-called evangelical pulpits in the last twenty-five years to plunge the whole world into the darkness of paganism. What wonder is it that nobody looks to the church, speaking generally, for leadership in our day? Four or five years ago the occupants of our pulpits were spinning their economic theories, and propounding evolutionary philosophies, telling us how much better we were, and how rapidly we were emerging into a golden age! People are still telling us there can be no more war—when the whole world is like a seething cauldron. They prate about their pacificism, and fail to recognize that war comes from the human heart. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war is your members?" So long as human nature is what it is there is bound to be war. Pacificism, apart from individual regeneration, is philosophically idiotic. Japan is starting a fire in the Orient. Hitler is kindling a bonfire in Europe, and all the world is spending more money for armaments than ever before. And all the time the pacifists, ignoring the hellish potentialities of the human heart, sing their pacific songs, and tell us that all is well.

Upon such a scene as that Jeremiah came, to people thus imbued with false ideas he was commissioned to preach, to men who had substituted their own dreams for divine revelation, men who had set up their own idols in substitution for the worship of Jehovah.

The extraordinary characteristic of the people of Jeremiah's time was that *they would believe anything but the word of God*. It was the most credulous age of history—our own, perhaps, excepted. Anybody could get a hearing who proposed a new religion. Anybody could be popular so long as he was against Jeremiah and Jeremiah's God. That was the passport or acceptance and approval everywhere.

The sin of which they were guilty was represented under the figure of marital infidelity. While they would have nothing to do with their own true Lover, they were always changing lovers: "She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree." Was there ever a day when new cults were so rapidly manufactured, when new religions were so quickly multiplied? Anybody can obtain rank as a prophet so long as he will set up his own imagination, his own dream, in substitution for the word of God, and declare that he represents a "movement" which decries "doctrine"!

Were I free to do so this evening I could name certain anti-Christian cults that have gained wide acceptance in our day, whose fundamental principle is that the Word of God can never be understood except as it is interpreted by somebody else's book, somebody else's key, somebody else's standard. Men of supposed intelligence will accept it. Any kind of movement may gain acceptance. We have had such a "movement" recently—I make no apology for saying it. I cannot understand how any man of spiritual discernment, can be deceived; but we are told that it has the sanction of university circles. Anything has the sanction of university circles if it is opposed to God. You do not require intelligence to pass muster in university circles. The bigger simpleton you are the more apt you are to be given an honorary degree from some university—and if you cannot get one that way, you can buy one. There are many people who have "purchased to themselves good degree" without having first been deacons.

That was the situation in Jeremiah's time, a time when new religions were arising continually, a new prophet with a new dream, bowing down to stocks and stones, to anything anyone named as a god, to anything but to Jehovah Tsidkenu, but to God Who revealed Himself through His prophet. Judah were in a sadly backslidden state when Jeremiah was commissioned to speak to them.

If there is any brother-minister listening to me this evening, if there is any man who has dared from his pulpit to say one word that would tend to lessen, not to say destroy, the faith of men in the Word of God, a fearful responsibility is yours, my brother. I hope you are ashamed of your prophesying. I hope you have sense enough to see how all your philosophies, by the logic of events, have been stamped by an overruling God as philosophies of vain deceit, as sheer folly, leagues removed from truth, and from the facts of the case.

I am not surprised that certain churches should take eagerly to certain movements, for the church that has no word from God, the pulpit without an authoritative message from the Skies, has no ministry in a day like this.

II.

Jeremiah was commanded to APPEAL TO BACKSLIDING ISRAEL TO RETURN: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." Sometimes things have to become worse before they can get better. Sometimes organizations and nations, like individuals, have to come to the end of themselves, like the prodigal in the far country, before they remember the Father's house with all its fullness. Israel had committed two evils: she had forsaken Him Who was the Fountain of living waters, and had hewn out for herself broken cisterns that could hold no water.

Many and varied are the cisterns that Modernism has provided, but all of them are broken cisterns which can hold no water. There is no refreshment for anybody in any kind of philosophy of doubt and unbelief. I would not cross the street to listen to a man tell me what he does not believe. I do not care what he does not believe: I want to know what he believes. Let him proclaim what he believes.

We have fallen low enough to begin to hope for better things. Somewhere I saw at a gas-station an encouraging sign to the effect that even business, when it is on its back, is still looking up. Sometimes one has to look up because there is no where else to look. Surely we have sunk low enough, and it is about time we were looking up: "Return, thou backsliding Israel."

It is possible for churches to return. It is possible for preachers to return to their first love. It is possible for the backslider to come home again.

You who are in this place of worship will listen as I speak to my radio hearers for a few minutes. Among those who hear me to-night there are hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of people who were once active church members, who were Sunday School teachers, who were mission workers, who were personal witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a time when you loved to tell other people what Christ had done for your soul. But you ceased to grow, as we were observing this morning, you ceased to go on with the Lord. There came a period of stagnation in your religious life, and you ceased growing up into Christ in all things. You came under the influence of a minister who did not believe the Bible, and little by little he destroyed your faith. It was convenient for a time because it removed from an irregular life the remonstrances of the authoritative Word of God bidding you to do this or that, and to refrain from other things. You rather welcomed the new teaching as a religious sedative; and you thought your minister was a fine man. You came home Sunday after Sunday felicitating yourself on your own righteousness, on your own excellency of character.

Since that time sorrow has come into your life, business failures have succeeded one another. You are not now as prosperous as once you were. The world does not look as rosy as it once did. Everything has gone awry with you. Now you are wishing for another Voice, you are wishing for Someone to come and point the way back to truth and reality. You would like to get your bearings, and find out where you are. There is sometimes a haunting fear within that you may have made a mistake, that it

was not wise to loose from the old moorings. There is a fear that you may never reach a safe and peaceful haven again. The Bible has no comfort for you. You have turned to it again, but the doubt sown by your minister will not let you believe the Book. Your mind is like a field overgrown with weeds and thistles: no good seed can take root there, no plant of the Lord can grow. Sometimes perhaps there comes the memory of a hymn you used to sing, and you may be attempting to make it your own even as I speak to you to-night:—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?"

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed—
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

It never can. It has never done so yet: it never will. I said you have had sorrow—you have had more than that: you have dug your graves. You have lost the choicest treasures of life. You hold loosely by the world to-day, yet whither you are going you do not know. The man who helped destroy your faith in the Word of God was no friend of yours. I bid you return. I bid you come back to the simplicity of your childlike faith. Come back to the faith of your father and mother. Come back like little children, and if you cannot do more, repeat your childish prayer before you sleep to-night. Bid Him receive you back as a humble penitent into His family.

I am sure that in Toronto there are countless thousands of people, evangelicals, who because of the stultifying influence of a non-biblical ministry, have come to a place where they are blind, and cannot see afar off, and have forgotten that they were purged from their old sin. There are enough people of that sort in the City of Toronto to bring a revival if only they would open their hearts to the incoming of the Spirit of God. If you cannot pray, tell the Lord you cannot pray. If you do not know how to believe, tell Him that. If your mind is full of doubt, tell Him that. If your unbelief is so deeply imbedded that you cannot root it out, tell Him that also, only, "Return, thou backsliding Israel."

Because the Lord says, "I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." There is wrath reserved for all workers of iniquity. That is an unpopular theory, is it? Look abroad on the world to-day. Did you read that story in one of the evening papers yesterday about a Jew's being clubbed to death in Berlin? While the correspondent was buying a paper some men accosted the Jew, beat him about the face, knocked him down, stamped upon him, and left him dying. He lay in the street until at last a negro, because no one else had pity, came and asked for help, saying, "This man will die unless we get him to the hospital." The correspondent helped him, while the policemen stood laughing; and the people gathered about said, "That is what should be done to every Jew in the land." When they reached the hospital the authorities there told them they had brought in a dead man, killed wantonly, for no other reason than that he was one of God's ancient people. It but fulfils the threat Hitler made before he assumed power.

Any man who does not see that the world is full of anger, that wrath is come upon men, is blind. We shall be back where we were in nineteen hundred and fourteen before long, and our apostate preachers will feel the awful wrath of God at last. If there is one place in hell hotter than another, it must be reserved for the man who has paved the way for poor guilty sinners to reject Christ, and has then refused to repent and do the first works. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you."

Historians say that it was the Wesleyan Revival that saved England from the horrors of the French Revolution. As I view the potentialities of the world's condition to-day I can see no hope in statesmanship, in all your economic theories. There is no help in that direction. The only help for this troubled world, if that be possible—and it is possible only by the mercy of our God—is in a great world-sweeping revival, a returning to the Lord, and to the Word of God, and to the word of His grace. Nothing else will help even trade and commerce. Nothing else will restore mutual confidence. The banks are full of money, but they do not know what to do with it. They have plenty of money, but they are afraid to let it out for fear of losing it. They do not trust anybody. There is a universal want of confidence. Men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

But our God is merciful. I beg of you Christians to believe that when you pray for revival you are doing as much for the restoration of prosperity, even to this world, as any statesman in the world. Statesmanship is bankrupt. It is only by God Himself we can be saved from further distresses. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." How ready He is to receive us, and to have mercy upon us!

Alas! Jeremiah was not a successful preacher. He preached with all his might. He prophesied as the Lord commanded. But they mocked him. They sought to destroy him. They persecuted him. They called him names.

Let me read you a verse, you young preachers, for it is a bit of a job you have in this day: "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Were you ever smitten with the tongue? Were you? I have been, many times. Is not that up-to-date?—"Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." I would rather be smitten with a club any day, but that is what is awaiting you as a prophet of the Lord. You must not be disappointed if you have to meet with that.

It is quite old-fashioned, it is out-of-date, but Jeremiah said, "Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me." And he went on with his ministry notwithstanding. The day dawned at last when Nebuchadnezzar came, and Zedekiah was carried away to Babylon, where they gouged out his eyes and bound him with fetters of brass; and the whole nation was led into captivity because they would not hear the voice of the Lord. And we, too, shall have other troubles unless

the nations turn back to God. "Return, thou backsliding Israel."

III.

HOW SHALL WE RETURN? The terms are very simple, and yet they are extremely difficult. They are extremely difficult! Did you ever see a little boy walk out of his father's house in a fit of temper, turning his back upon his father's house, and jumping into all sorts of mischief? When it is nearly bed-time his mother goes up to the room to see that everything is all right against the boy's coming home—but she finds he is there already. How did he come in? Did he come saying, "I have been naughty. I have been disobedient. I am sorry, and I wish you would forgive me; I wish you would give me my supper"? Oh no! He climbed in the window; he had come in when no one was looking. He would not acknowledge his sin.

Oh, the folly of it! How many would come home to-night if it were not necessary to acknowledge their sins! That is a hard thing to do. "I will ask one thing only," said the Lord, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity. Say you have been wrong. Say you have sinned, you prophets; tell the people that you have prophesied lies in the name of the Lord. Tell the people that you have at last come back to the word of the Lord that liveth and abideth for ever, and to the gospel of salvation through the blood of Christ, and that you are sorry you ever went away from it."

That will bring revival in your church. But you cannot have a spiritual revival by joining the Oxford Group, or by sharing your sins with other people. Other people have sins enough of their own. Taste that the Lord is gracious and then share His grace with others! No! No! The need of this hour is general confession on the part of the Christian church, in acknowledgement of its wholesale apostasy from the gospel. There is not a denomination that is immune. There is not a denomination that does not need to do it. Our Baptist churches—I am a Baptist, and I speak for them—need to acknowledge.

What acknowledgement is it? It is easy to confess, to share, your mistakes with other people, for they will share theirs with you and say, "You are not very bad. I am as bad as you are. I will forgive you, and you forgive me; and between ourselves I think we are jolly good fellows." That is not the confession the Bible demands. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord."

The sin of our day, as of all other days, is a sin against High Heaven. It is a sin against the Father, against the Holy Ghost, and against the Son of His love. It is a sin against the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is a sin of the will. That is the acknowledgement that needs to be made on the part of thousands of ministers, and thousands of churches whose representatives hear me to-night.

And you deacons—thank God I have not a deacon in this church to whom it applies—but you deacons who have consented to the propagation of unbelief, who have sat silent in church when your pastor made light of the inspired Book, who have offered no protest and made no remonstrance; you church officers who have partaken of the guilt of the pulpit in disseminating unbelief in every direction—acknowledge your sin. Do it to-night. Do it to your own families.

Let us all acknowledge that we have transgressed against the Lord. Let us come back to Him. There is not one who does not need to get closer to Him, not one who does not need to take that verse in John's epistle and make it his or her own, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I beg you in His name to come back to the Lord. Let us all come. Let us all act as backsliders to-night in the sense that we are coming home, for we could all get a little nearer to the Lord. Do you not think we all need to? Let us have a great turning back to God this evening, in this house and wherever this message has reached. Ere we sleep to-night let us resolve that we shall come into such relationship to God that it will not be our fault if anger from the Lord shall fall.

Let us pray:

O Lord our God, we thank Thee that Thou art ever merciful. We thank Thee that the door of the Father's house is always open, waiting for the prodigal to return. Surely we have proved the emptiness of the cisterns we have tried to make for ourselves. Surely this troubled world has proved that it cannot do without God. Send us a revival. Awaken Thine own people everywhere. Turn the people back by countless thousands, and by millions, to the word of Thy grace, to the gospel of Thy salvation, to the Saviour of men, Who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. We ask it in His name, Amen.

THE GOSPEL IN RUTH.

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday evening, February 23rd, 1933.

*Fourteenth in a Series of Thursday Evening Lectures
on Biblical Theology, which is included in the
Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

(Stenographically Reported)

Our one object this evening, as always, must be to find our way to the Lord Jesus Christ. This whole Bible, we have said again and again, is as the King's palace wherein He is pleased to dwell; but we must come to it, not to see the palace, but to have audience with the King Himself. Many of you will remember the almost extravagantly expressed affection for his friend which Tennyson gives us in his immortal "In Memoriam"; and I should like to borrow two or three of his beautiful stanzas to make application of the principle to which I have just referred:

"A happy lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,
Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

"He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

"So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not."

Thus, in our study of the Bible, it is only as we find our Beloved, as we find Him at home in these pages, we shall learn to delight ourselves always in the law of the Lord. And if it be that we lose Him, as sometimes we

may, we shall do well to emulate the spouse in the inspired Song of Songs. You will remember how she says, "I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." As we come to any particular passage of Scripture it is well for us to pause on the threshold and to assure ourselves that He is the object of our search, and the desire of our hearts. For when we seek Him in the Word of God with our whole hearts, He will be found of us.

The book of Ruth, like every other book of Scripture, is full of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, it was written for the purpose of introducing us to Him. In the seventeenth verse of the last chapter are these words: "And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." And the book closes with a genealogical table, which carries us back to Pharez, the son of Tamar, the son of Judah. The writer to the Hebrews particularly reminds us that it is evident that our Lord came out of Judah, of which Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood. And in that great argument for the superiority of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus, the writer makes a special point of the fact that Jesus did not come of the priestly tribe; but for a knowledge of His direct descent from Judah, through his birth of the family of Pharez, we are indebted to the book of Ruth, the first of Chronicles, and Matthew's Gospel. Now do not pass over these genealogical tables; do not disregard what seem sometimes to be the drier and less interesting portions of Scripture; for if you examine them carefully you will find that hidden away among almost unpronounceable names, which in places crowd each other like mighty trees of a forest, or like great rocks in a weary land,—hidden away among them you will find some precious nuggets of truth, all of them linking us up in some way or another to our Lord Jesus Christ. The book, then, is a link in the record of the lineage of David's greater Son.

This book must have been written at a time when David had already become famous in Israel; for the principal feature of the book is that it is a story of the antecedents of David the son of Jesse. He was already a conspicuous figure in the history of God's people when this book was written; otherwise his genealogy would not have been of any particular interest. It must have been written at a date long after the occurrence of the events recorded in the book. In the last chapter of the book we are reminded of a custom that had formerly obtained: "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel." But the practice had fallen into disuse at the time the story was written, and this explanatory word is inserted in order that readers may understand why Boaz plucked off his shoe. These matters give us some indication of when the book was written; but, while written in David's day, or later, its history, as its opening verse informs us, belongs to the days when the judges ruled. Therefore, you have that problem to solve, as to how the writer obtained his

information of that which happened so long before with such wealth of detail; for certainly it could not have been written by one who was a contemporary of the events recorded. The facts probably were obtained, or knowledge of them, from other documents; but the whole story bears unmistakably the stamp of divine inspiration.

The book of Ruth is really one of the most charming idylls to be found in any literature. If it had been possible to lose this story from the canon of Scripture, and then to have rediscovered it among some old manuscripts, and to have read it asking one's self the question, Where did this come from? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?—if one were to approach it almost without the assumption of its having a divine origin, there is something about the story itself, its inherent beauty, its intrinsic moral and spiritual worth, which differentiates it from all merely human productions. It seems to me it is impossible to read the story of Ruth without feeling it has its legitimate place in the canon of Scripture. It is beyond any question an integral part of the Word of God.

In passing, I want incidentally to ask this question, which applies to other portions of Scripture as well as to the book of Ruth: What is it that distinguishes the inspired Word from all other books, whether it be Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, or any other book—what is it that separates it, and differentiates it from any other kind of literature, which makes one instinctively feel as he read it, This is different from anything to be found in any other book? The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book; but no matter into what language it is translated, it remains the same book of distinction; it stands out a thing apart. It has been translated into languages which have been reduced to writing by the missionaries of the cross. Men have gone into Africa and to other parts of the world among savage tribes, and have spent years picking up words that fell from their lips, gradually reducing the spoken word to a written language, compiling dictionaries, formulating grammars; and then they have translated the Bible into the speech of the people—in many cases the first book of the language to be printed, and when it is thus translated, it has the same charm; the same peculiarity; there is something about it that differentiates it from all other literature.

What is that something in the Word of God which no language can disguise, which no idiom can conceal? You have observed that there are some people who seem to look well no matter how they are dressed. I mean some ladies, of course: you do not pay attention to how men are dressed. But there are some ladies who seem to have an air of distinction about them, no matter how they are dressed; whether they are dressed in the fashion or out of the fashion, it makes no difference. You know what I mean? I cannot explain it, but the plainest frock worn by some women seems to be an adornment. Someone remarks (confidentially, to a friend, of course), "I saw Mrs. So-and-So, or Miss So-and-So, with a new dress to-day. I should like to have one like it." But when they get it and put it on they do not like it at all. They think it is the fault of the dress; they wonder what in the world is the matter; they do not understand it. But the intimate friends of that lady whose dress was so attractive say, "You know she can wear anything." I remember my mother, when mildly protesting against the careless dis-

regard of the proprieties by certain people, saying, "They seem to think that anything becomes them." Of course, she was speaking of manners; and it is not true of manners: some manners are not becoming. But it is true in the matter of dress in respect to some people, that almost anything is becoming. I suppose it is because of some distinction of figure, some grace of carriage, an indefinable something that puts music and poetry into every pose and motion; and so the dress instead of being an adornment, is itself adorned by the person who wears it.

Thus there is something about the Scripture, there is something within it that gives distinction to the language in which its truth is expressed, no matter what that language may be. It is the beautiful soul of the Scripture itself; it is the divinely revealed purpose of redemption running through every book, and that is so different from anything to be found anywhere else, which gives beauty and grace and glory to the language in which that soul is clothed; it is the thought of God in this Book, and even when clothed in defective human speech, the thought of God is always glorious. The unity of the books of Scripture is both good and pleasant, as when brethren dwell together in unity: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." The anointing oil anointed the whole person, until the fragrance of the divine approval was shed forth from the whole man. Thus, there is a savor of Christ about the whole Bible: "Thy name", says the spouse in the Song, "is as ointment poured forth." Aaron's garments were "for glory and for beauty"; and what the garments of Aaron were to the person of the high-priest, the language of Scripture is to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are but garments "for glory and for beauty"; and it is the Person of Jesus concealed and yet revealed in every page and in every verse of Scripture—the incomparable Saviour, "the chiefest among ten thousand", and the "altogether lovely" Son of God—it is Christ in the Bible that makes the Bible different from all other books, and it is His all-pervasive presence in the book of Ruth that gives it its chief charm. Thus we turn to this as we turn to the gospel.

How well this story lays the foundation for a revelation of Him Who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband." What a gloomy story!—famine, poverty, emigration, death, death again, death again: three times the dark angel comes into this home. This is the foundation upon which this marvellous story is based.

She heard "that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread", and she decided to return home again, and

her two daughters-in-law went with her. But on the way she bade them return to their people. Orpah kissed her and returned, but Ruth continued with her. What about Ruth? She was the great-grandmother of David; she was the ancestress of our Lord; her blood was in His veins; behold, she was a woman of Moab, outside the pale of Israel; she was a Moabitess, and the Moabites had given the people of Israel no reason to be kindly disposed toward them: a woman of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and yet she shows a particular quality that is to find its highest exemplification in her glorious Son Who is to come in the dim and distant future. "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods," said Naomi to Ruth, "return thou after thy sister-in-law." And where will you find anywhere outside of the Bible a passage like this? Oh, the music of it! You know they say that if you pick up a shell from the sea-shore and put it to your ear you can hear the sea roaring. They used to tell me that when I was a child. The echo of the music in which it was born is still within. And this is a little bit of heaven let down to earth, and if you put it to your ear you can catch the echo of the song of the redeemed, the mighty holy Hallelujahs of the sky: "Intreat 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." "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." There is a suggestion, a promise and prophesy of One Who shall be still more constant, and Who will never leave nor forsake those whom He loves.

I rejoice to remember that Ruth was a Moabitess; and if you go back over the long line of our Lord's genealogy you will find not only the name of Ruth the Moabitess, but of Rahab the harlot, and Tamar as well: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He was made like unto His brethren; He was one with us; He stooped to the lowest depths; He made Himself of no reputation; He came to give hope to every sinner. Yet, here, by divine grace, you have the very noblest virtue shining out of the character of the Moabitess: touched by Israel's God and by the grace of His Spirit, she had evidently been made other than she was by nature. And the tie which bound her to Naomi was fundamentally a religious tie; for she said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

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

The book of Judges is a book of providence; so is this; and so is every book of the Bible. When Naomi, after her absence of ten years, returned to Beth-lehem, the people gathered about and they said, "Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest." How many people there are who talk like that!—"The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." They would change their name, and yet—

"The threads our hands in blindness spin
No self-determined plan weaves in:
The shuttle of the unseen powers
Works out a pattern not as ours."

"I went out full," she said, "and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." No, she came back again with Ruth, and she was to discover that she had found her fortune after all in the land of Moab. Thus the Lord blesses His people, and brings His purposes of grace to pass.

In the second chapter we observe that Ruth's poverty sends her forth to glean after the reapers. And let me pause here to say that for some reason known only to Himself, God's purposes of grace seem to have run very largely through the lives of poor people. Abraham was not a rich man until God made him so. When Jacob went away from home he had nothing, but when he came back he confessed "with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." When Joseph went away from home he not only had nothing, he was nothing; he was sold for silver; and yet God brought him to the throne. Moses became rich because he was brought up in the house of Pharaoh's daughter; but it was not until he became poor that God could do anything with him; and he is noted in this record as having esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." And so on all the way down through the Book.

When Christ would establish His Church upon earth, He did not do like they do nowadays: if the church of to-day wants to do some great thing, its leaders have a luncheon downtown, and they invite the rich men of the city to come together, and they say complimentary things to each other and talk about the big thing that they are going to "put over." They think that that is doing the Lord's work. That is not how God does His work: it is not how He did it in the beginning; it is not how He does it now: He chose the poorest people. The first great preacher, the Pentecostal preacher, had to say, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." All through the New Testament the principle holds; and through all the history of the Christian Church God has for His own wise reasons taken the "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." And here is a woman who is immortalized by having her name written upon the pages of "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever", who was so poor that she had to go out into the field to glean after the reapers. Therefore, if we are poor to-night we must not be discouraged; for in the spiritual sense it is not until we know that we are poor that we ever become rich; it is not until we become empty that we are really filled. "I went out full," said Naomi, "and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." It is not until we are helpless in ourselves that God is able to bless us.

Ruth went to glean after the reapers, "and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz." Well, what do you mean by "happen"? If you mean chance, then it is not true; if you mean that you did

not know the purpose behind that ordinary occurrence, then your language is permissible. Ruth little knew what was in that apparent happening when she came upon the field of Boaz. Thus, dear friends, God leads His elect to-day. You know the sweet story of how Boaz came into the field and said unto the reapers, "Whose damsel is this?" And they said, "It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." Then Boaz began to take an interest in her, and he said to the reapers; "Do not forbid her; let her follow after you; and do not clean up the fields too closely where she is gleaning; but let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her." And to Ruth he said, "It hath fully been shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband. . . . The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Boaz knew why she had come, that she had come to trust under the shadow of God's wings. By the way, when you read those stories, supposed to be funny stories, about the impossibility of getting along with a mother-in-law, read this inspired story; for there are mothers-in-law and mothers-in-law; and there are daughters-in-law and daughters-in-law; and if a mother-in-law cannot get along with her daughter-in-law, let them both trust under the shadow of God's wings, and they will both be happy there.

How full of human nature this story is, and yet how full, too, of divine inspiration: "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed." And coming home her mother-in-law said unto her, "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" Ruth in sincerity told the story: "I went out to glean and I just happened to get into the field of a man called Boaz." "Boaz?" said Naomi, "why he is one of our next kinsmen." "Yes," Ruth, "and he told me that I was not to go in any other field, but that I was to keep fast by his reapers until the end of barley harvest." "And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field." When Boaz reached her the parched corn she ate and was sufficed. And when our Boaz gives us a dainty bit, as we sit down under His shadow and find His fruit sweet unto our taste, there is a flavour, there is a something about the meal that He provides which cannot be found anywhere else. It is a blessed thing to learn the secret of shutting yourself up to the fields of Boaz, and taking the good sound, sane advice of Naomi, "Let them meet thee not in any other field. Let it be Boaz or nobody."

We are now come to the third chapter, and I confess it is an extraordinary chapter: it tells the story of the courtship of Boaz and Ruth. I suppose some people would regard the story as unique; they would say it is different from all other stories of courtship. It is, of course, an old world story; but the distinguishing characteristic of it, and that which makes it so different from any other story of courtship that ever was known, is that the woman helped a little! You see that, don't you? She did not leave it all to Boaz to do; she did a little herself. Of course, in real life they never do that! They are such elusive creatures! That is one interpretation; but may there not be another? I wonder if it means this: that the Bible is after all the one book in the world that is a

perfect mirror of human nature, and tells the truth about things; and that it is brave enough to tell the truth even about this?

That is the human side of it, but think of the spiritual application. The Lover of our souls will forgive us if we make love to Him; He will forgive us if we seek Him, when we know that He is seeking us; He will forgive us if we make a ready and willing and hearty response to the appeal of His affection: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face: my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." There is a mutuality about the relationship of the soul to Christ after all. O yes, I believe that salvation is of grace, I believe in God's sovereign electing love; but I believe the love of our Boaz is so wonderful that He has a way of wooing us and winning us in spite of ourselves, so that we become His willing slaves:

"For, ah, the Master is so fair,
So sweet His smile on banished men
That they who meet Him unaware
Can never rest on earth again.

"And they who see Him risen, afar,
On God's right hand to welcome them,
Forgetful stand of home and land
Desiring fair Jerusalem."

This story, as far as we have gone to this third chapter, provides a very striking illustration of what constitutes true faith. Faith, after all, is not a product of reason, although it is never unreasonable. Faith is a divine intuition; it is a spiritual instinct; it is something that is born in us by the Spirit of God. Yes, the Lord said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib—speaking of the people in a state of apostasy—but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." But the soul that is really born of the Spirit of God has a kind of extra sense, analogous to the feminine sense in the natural realm. Psychologically, it is a fact that women are different from men. Very few women reason. Now do not be offended by my saying that, It is true. A great many men do not reason either; but very few women reason. They do not count things up like men do; they are a sort of ready reckoner; they get the result by some mysterious means that no one on earth can explain. You ask a woman her reason for doing a certain thing, and she will generally answer, "Because,"—"Because"—with a dash after it, because nobody knows why, and she doesn't either. But in her judgment of many things she is right; she leaps to a conclusion while her slow, plodding husband lumbers along behind her, reasoning his way through. It is instinctive with a child to trust its father or mother. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Spiritual faith, that out-going of the soul which understands God and which lays hold of God, is something that is begotten within us by the Holy Ghost, that is not natural at all. He has put His Spirit in our hearts teaching us to cry, "Abba Father". We call Him Father: we know He is our Father because His Spirit is within us.

Naomi had been away a long time, but when she came back, and when she heard that Boaz had taken knowledge of her daughter-in-law, that he had sent her home laden with barley, and that he had let fall also some handfuls of purpose for her, she said instinctively—if I may paraphrase her saying—"Now give him his full opportunity; do not glean in any other field; depend

absolutely upon him. He is our near kinsman, and I feel that he has a great heart and a purpose of love concerning you." Then in the third chapter when Ruth came home and told her how Boaz had spoken to her, Naomi uttered these wonderful words: "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day. I think I know Boaz, and having begun the thing he will finish it. I believe that he will make it his main business, and that he will do nothing else until he has fulfilled his purpose respecting you. Be content to wait and trust him."

Is not that the attitude of soul that we ought always to assume toward our Beloved? "Sit still, my soul, until thou know how the matter will fall: for your Redeemer will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day." He will save us; He will save us for ever! By a spiritual instinct we know the divine Bridegroom will never be charged with breach of promise. The marriage of the Lamb will certainly come, and at His appointed hour it will be said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

The last chapter is full of interest. Boaz tells Ruth in the third chapter that while he is a near kinsman, he is not the nearest kinsman. He said, "There is another nearer than I, and I shall have to give him his opportunity according to law. I shall have to give him his chance to redeem his inheritance if he wants to. And then if he does not redeem it, I will redeem it. I will stand back, and I will see if there is any other eye to pity, if there is any other arm to save; and if there be not, then mine own eye shall pity, and mine own arm shall bring salvation."

Do you see the analogy? Oh no! The Lord Christ was not our kinsman; He was not our next of kin: He became our Kinsman in order that He might have the right to redeem. He gave the first Adam his full chance, and he failed:

"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."

"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou will redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest, the field of the land of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." Do you see?—he had to take Ruth along—not only the farm but somebody with it: that was quite another story, wasn't it? "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for

myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it." Then follows the passage I quoted: "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsmen said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chillion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses."

So Boaz played the part of the redeemer: he paid the price because there was none other to perform a kinsman's part. Thus are we redeemed by the precious blood of Christ in the presence of witnesses. If I had time to draw the veil and project this passage back to the foundation of things, we should find that long ago the Son of God entered into an engagement,—“the mediator of the new covenant,” “the Lamb slain—as we have seen in other lectures—from the foundation of the world”—the Son of God entered into an engagement to purchase a Bride. Somebody asked me the other day what I thought was the meaning of the parable of the merchant man “who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” Does the merchant represent a soul seeking salvation? I think not. Our glorious Lord Jesus is the merchant man who went seeking goodly pearls, and His heart discerned His Ruth, a pearl of great price—the Church which He would make His bride; and in order that He might have it He sold all that He had and bought it. Jesus invested His all upon Calvary; He purchased His bride with His heart's blood. What Naomi said Boaz would do, our Boaz accomplished. He was never in rest, until He cried, “It is finished.”

And so does our Lord Jesus choose His Bride from among the aliens. Oh, how wonderful that is! “Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife”—a widowed soul, he enriched with all the wealth of his great affection, and of his great estate; the one from whom all hope had departed hoped again. Ruth became the great-grandmother of David, and was given a place in the honoured list of the ancestors of our Lord. O marvel of grace! That He should love one whose affection the world, and the flesh, have engaged.

I have made only the barest suggestions to you to-night; but I wish you would take the book of Ruth and read it over, and over, and over again, until you see the Lord Jesus Christ on every page of it. It will help you to sing still more heartily,

"O I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine:
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

May He help us to love Him more and more for His Name's sake.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 12

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FIRST QUARTER

SAMUEL CALLED OF GOD

Lesson Text: 1 Samuel, chapter 3.

Golden Text: "And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."—1 Samuel 3:10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Exodus 24:1-9.

Tuesday—Genesis 12:1-8.

Wednesday—Isaiah 6:1-13.

Thursday—Matt. 9:1-13.

Friday—Acts 9:1-9.

Saturday—Eph. 1:1-12.

I. THE CALL OF GOD, (vs. 1-10).

From the very earliest period of his life Samuel served the Lord. He was asked of God before his birth, as his name signifies, (1:20), then after being weaned he was returned to the Lord for His service, (1:28). There was no period in his life given over to sin, followed by conversion, as in so many cases of the present-day. His was a life saved as well as a soul, and in the light of such a possibility we should labour to secure the salvation of boys and girls. It is not only possible for God to save such young people, but He can use them in His service. "The child Samuel ministered unto the Lord". And of many another child the same may be said. We know not the exact nature of the duties assigned. Samuel, with the exception of that relating to the opening of the doors of the house of the Lord, (v. 15), but they were undoubtedly such as were suitable to his age and strength. Note ways in which children may serve the Lord these days in the home, in obedience to parents, in school, in attention to lessons, and in both spheres, as well as in play, living a life well pleasing unto the Saviour.

During the time of his boyhood ministry the Lord gave Samuel his first message. The circumstances are interesting to contemplate. God spoke to His young servant during the night. This being the first time he had heard the divine voice he knew it not, and thinking that it was Eli calling him, he entered the chamber of the old man ready to do his bidding, (vs. 4-7). Three times he acted in this manner, (v. 8), and at last perceiving that the child was hearing a voice that was not of earth, Eli advised him to answer, and say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth", (vs. 8, 9), and after this man-

ner, with the omission of the name Lord he responded, (v. 10). Samuel's attitude is worthy of emulation. First, respecting Eli, whom he was so ready to serve. Willingness is characteristic of all good servants, and is highly appreciated by all good persons served. Such willingness also betokens good nature, and sound sense. Second, his attitude respecting the call, wherein he manifests submission to the will of God. Note in this connection the attitude of others when called by God, as Isaiah, (Is. 6:8), and Paul, (Acts 9:6), and the different ways in which the divine calls comes to men. In this case it was by an audible voice. Observe also the significance of the statement that, "the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision", (v. 1), referring to the fact probably that there was no recognized mouthpiece of God. In consideration of this we are impressed with the blessings which we are privileged to enjoy through our possession of the revealed will of God in the Bible. In this Book we have teaching suited to all the needs of men, (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Emphasis should be placed upon the necessity for reading it, and then giving obedience thereto.

II. THE MESSAGE OF GOD, (vs. 11-14)

It is the listening ear which hears the voice of God, and receives His message. Samuel was in an expectant attitude, alert and ready to respond to the divine call. His ear was open toward heaven. It is too often the case that our ears are open to the sounds of earth, while closed to the heavenly voice, and we hear not what God the Lord would say unto us. In teaching, the right attitude might be pointed out; the submissive, expectant, heavenward listening attitude. We shall not always hear that which we expect, or desire, but the message conveyed will be divine truth. Samuel received his message directly from the voice of God. In these days the Lord speaks to us through His revealed word, or on the basis of the same, and never contrary thereto.

The message given to Samuel was of a sad nature, and pertained to Eli and his house. On a previous occasion God had given a message to this servant of His, wherein the information was conveyed to him of the forthcoming judgment on his house, (2:27-36), and here the message is repeated. Samuel is informed that the action of God would create a sensation throughout Israel, (v. 11). When God manifests His omnipotent power, either in mercy or judgment men are compelled to pay heed thereto, and acknowledge its supernatural nature. Note the need for the manifestation of his power in revival, and the certainty of its manifestation later in judgment, with the tremendous sensation caused thereby throughout the universe, (Rev. 6:12-17). Samuel is assured of the certainty of the divine action relating to Eli, (v. 12), the reason for the action is given, (v. 13), and the irrevocable nature of the divine decision is stated, (v. 14). Note God's interest in human affairs, parental responsibility and the impossibility of escaping the consequences of evil deeds.

III. ELI'S ATTITUDE, (vs. 15-18).

The message being of such a sad and dreadful nature, Samuel feared to inform Eli of its content, (v. 15), but on the insistence of the latter he disclosed the same, (vs. 16-18). This must have been a very difficult duty for the lad, but he did not shirk it. The child of God must be faithful at all costs. In the gospel message of these days there is that which relates to sin, its nature, power, and judgment, (John 3:16-18), as well as good news concerning salvation therefrom, (Rom. 1:16), and inasmuch as the message of God is of a personal nature, and displeasing to the natural man with its emphasis on this evil condition, and the need for repentance, it requires holy boldness to deliver the same faithfully, but it must be done. Note this characteristic manifest in Old Testament prophet, (Amos. 7:14-17), and New Testament saint, (Acts 4:31). Eli's attitude on receiving the message was one of submission to the evil of God. "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good", (v. 18). This was likewise Job's attitude, (Job. 1:20), and the same spirit is manifest in our Saviour's experience in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39). The necessity and blessedness of such an attitude may be explained and enjoined, also the wisdom of seeking to know and conform to the will of God.

IV. SAMUEL THE PROPHET, (vs. 19-21).

Eli, due to his neglect of duty lost power with God, and Samuel on account of his faithfulness increased in power and became established in the land as the divinely-chosen prophet. God is never without His faithful servants; even in the sad days of Ahab when the land was overrun with false prophets there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, (1 Kings 19:18), and in the darkest periods of the world's history before and since then, there have always been those who put God first. Several things are stated concerning Samuel. First, he "grew", referring to a perfectly natural process. Second, "the Lord was with him". This was the explanation of his success. Without the Lord he would have been as other men. Note the privilege of thus being associated with God. He possesses each of His own, (1 Cor. 6:19), they are workers together with Him, (1 Cor. 3:9), and when they are obedient unto Him, they receive and are the means of passing on real blessing.

An evidence of the Lord's presence with Samuel is found in the statement that God "let none of his words fall to the ground." Of all the words spoken by men, most of them fall to the ground, due to lack of wisdom and knowledge, for men are but finite and lack understanding of the things of life, and this is particularly evident in the realm of prediction. God sustained Samuel's word and fulfilled the same because it was divine in origin. Note the need for preaching and teaching the Word of God in church and school. Man's word fails but God's word is sure and abideth forever. God vindicates His servants who proclaim His word, and the world takes note of the same as in the case of Samuel.

The Union Baptist Witness

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THE LORD BE PRAISED! BLESSING CONTINUES

It is with hearts filled to overflowing with thankfulness and praise that the news of blessing among the churches of the Union is received. While outward signs are not given at all times and the lack of response to the faithful preaching of the Word cannot be looked upon as the withdrawal of blessing by the Lord, there has always been "seed time and harvest" and after careful sowing, and continuous cultivation many of our churches are gathering in the harvest.

BOBCAYGEON.

It will be remembered that when Pastor M. B. Gillion was a student at the Toronto Baptist Seminary, he was called upon to take the services at the Bobcaygeon Regular Baptist Church for a Sunday. That week-end proved to be one when the elements raged and communication between Toronto and outside points was suspended, nevertheless Mr. Gillion reached Lindsay by train and undaunted, that he might fulfil his engagement, walked to Bobcaygeon, a distance of some twenty miles. At Bobcaygeon only a handful of people gathered; a discouraged people wondering if in the face of opposition it were worth-while carrying on. On that Sunday, however, when they listened to the message delivered by a young man who through storm and tempest had reached his destination late, it is true, but in time to fulfil his engagement, their hearts were touched. "We need a man who will not recognize defeat", said they, and in due time Mr. Gillion was called to be their pastor. There may be some who have not heard of the time of blessing which followed and of how the church membership grew from ten to thirty and then to forty and of how Sunday Schools were started in outlying districts, but it is of further blessing we now want to speak.

A town which becomes in summer a resort for hundreds of tourists presents many difficulties. The gaiety which is everywhere abroad is apt to unsettle the young people; the lack of testimony in other churches draws prejudice to the Baptist Church and there is continual need for much prayer, much teaching and much patience.

Patiently Pastor Gillion has carried on these four years. At times there was much to encourage him, but as often there were trials to be met and problems which would have tried a less indomitable spirit, but now the Lord has sent another time of refreshing.

Knowing the time was ripe for an ingathering, Pastor Gillion appealed to the Secretary-Treasurer of the Union and he sent Pastor James Forrester. For two weeks, Pastor Gillion and Pastor Forrester have been working together preaching the Word and ministering daily from house to house and they have experienced glorious times.

Eight persons have definitely confessed Christ and the believers have been revived. A mother who had been praying for thirty years for her two sons had the joy unspeakable of seeing them surrender to the Lord in the meetings. The testimony of the converts and the return unto the Lord of some who had become cold is beautiful to hear and a praying, witnessing and militant church is expecting showers of blessing during the coming days. The meetings continue. Keep remembering them together with those who minister, Pastor Gillion, Pastor Forrester and Miss Marion Andrew who is assisting with the music.

BRISCOE ST., LONDON.

Rev. R. D. Guthrie will baptize a number of believers shortly. Pray for him as he endeavors to make Christ known to those who have long had dull ears. Pray that the Holy Spirit may work upon men's hearts and in the day which is so far spent bring them to the Lord.

CHATHAM.

Indirectly word has reached us concerning the happy time experienced at Chatham recently. At the close of a service when Rev. E. C. Wood gave the invitation three believers responded, making application for baptism. The meeting was prolonged for it seemed that it was not time to close and Deacon Auvache, a man of long Christian experience, told of what the Lord had done for him. After this testimony, the Pastor felt led to continue his invitation and what was his joy when six persons walked forward, three believers surrendering to the Lord for baptism and three signifying their desire to accept Christ as Saviour.

The radio services which it is Pastor Wood's privilege to conduct are also much blessed. One listener who greatly appreciated a certain message wrote in asking for a copy of the sermon; Pastor Wood was somewhat nonplussed, he did not have the sermon written out; it had not been recorded and so he wrote to the gentleman telling him that he would give the outline at the next broadcast. In a time when so much that is worse than drivel is coming over the air, it is a satisfaction to know that the Lord by means of His faithful servants has a witness that is telling and fruitful.

THE ENGLISH CONGREGATION, ST. PAUL'S, MONTREAL.

The Lord has sent tokens of blessing in connection with the English work as conducted at St. Paul's Church, Montreal, under the leadership of Mr. Brodie Jamieson. Two adults have recently professed conversion and are asking for baptism, while many of the young people in the Bible School have indicated their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

FROM THE PEN OF A LABORER FOR GOD.

OUR FRENCH EVANGELISM.

Rev. Jules Dautheny, Pastor of Beneficent French Baptist Church in Montreal, a missionary to the French Roman Catholics, supported by the Union, writes a report of his work. We give it just as written. When the sacrificing spirit of our missionaries is brought home to the hearts of our people, there will be at least a deeper understanding of the demands of the work in the homeland. Oh, that a greater measure of support might be given.

"Our work here is going on in spite of the economical depression; of course, we feel it worse than a good many other churches in the question of finances. Our people are working men, and no one has worked for many months. All the families in my congregation are on the direct relief, and I have to supply myself all expenses of the church, including rent. But we hope, with the return of spring, that things will change for the better. Nevertheless, the Gospel of the Lord makes headway in the French-Canadian people, and if we had a better place to hold our service, I have no doubt that we bring more people to the knowledge of the Gospel, but we are to content ourselves for the time being, trusting to the good Lord for better times.

"We have a good many sick during the winter and this morning at 3 a.m., one of our deacons, Mr. Wilfrid Thibault, dies at St. Luke's Hospital. A week ago, during the night, the Chaplain of the institution, a Roman Catholic priest, with two other men, try to convert Mr. Thibault to the Catholic faith, but in vain. His wife called on me by phone and I went to the hospital, but the priest had gone. I see the assistant superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Williams, and I have a serious conversation with him concerning the action of that priest. He said to me that he do not know anything about that, but I said to him, that we are under the British rule and not under the law of the old Roman Inquisition; and he promised me, that he will make an enquiry on that case, and forbid the priest to renew his vain efforts. Mr. Thibault died in peace with the name of his Saviour on his lips. He was a good and faithful Christian, he never missed a meeting and was always rejoicing in the salvation of the Lord.

"I have tried to find a bigger hall, but the rent is too dear. As soon as the work will pick up, every one of the congregation will unite and to the utmost to rent a better worship place.

"Hoping that all brethren of the Union shall join us in prayer for the realization of our plan, I remain,

Yours sincerely and faithfully
in Christ,

Signed—JULES DAUTHENY".