

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
AND IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.
\$2.00 Per Year, Postpaid, to any address. 5c. Per Single Copy.

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

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Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada.

Vol. 12, No. 11

TORONTO, JULY 27, 1933

Whole Number 584

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

ABRAHAM'S FAITH

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto

(Stenographically Reported)

"Abraham believed God." Romans 4:3.

Our text brings before us a character to whom history ascribes a most unusual distinction. It is, I think, evident from the record that Abraham was a man of great natural qualities; he was a man of great personal force; a commanding personality, who would be sure to be influential in any sphere in which he chose to move. He was a man of initiative—a pioneer, a pathfinder; a man who did not hesitate to adventure great enterprises; a man, indeed, of outstanding natural ability. Wherever he went he was accorded a position of prominence, as a prince among men; he was a man of great patience, of perseverance, and of a benevolent spirit.

And yet, it is not for these things he was distinguished. His outstanding characteristic was this: that he believed God. It is that fact which gave to Abraham an abiding place in history. He is the supreme example to all believers; he believed God. Volumes are wrapped up in that simple statement. He was enabled to go to the very Centre and Source of things and find rest for his soul, in the only place where rest is permanently obtainable: he believed God.

If I were able this morning to say nothing else, but so to emphasize the text as to impress it upon your mind, and send its message ringing through your hearts through all the week, it would be worth our while to spend a little time just listening to the text itself. "What saith the scripture?"—the inspired record of God's unfolding of his purposes? "What saith the scripture" of the man whom God chose to be the builder of a nation, to whom he should commit the divine oracles? Just this: "Abraham believed God." And that, my dear friends, is still the distinctive feature of the children of God. Faith is the grace which differentiates the Christian from all others. He has found his way to the Spring; he has discovered the path to the Throne. To him it has been given to appreciate that which is abiding; and he has staked his interests for time and for

eternity upon the word of "God who cannot lie." "We brethren," said the Apostle, "as Isaac was, are the children of promise." "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

I.

I want, therefore, this morning to subject this statement to a little examination, that we may discover WHAT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH REALLY WERE. In what sense did Abraham believe God as his contemporaries did not? What was the inherent quality of Abraham's faith, which made him different from all others, and which put upon him this signal honour of making him the father of the faithful?

In the first place, Abraham's faith was a *faith which was not discouraged by human impotence*. Such a man as Abraham must have had an introspective habit of mind. He was not the sort of man who would blindly walk in any way. He must have turned his thought often upon himself. I do not think that it was left to the great men of our day to begin to ask questions. Abraham must have learned how to enquire about things; and when the great promise was received from the Lord, which predicted the coming into his life of a blessing which was humanly impossible, Abraham must instantly have turned his thought upon himself, and must have begun to enquire how these things could be. But no sooner had he done so than his mind was instantly directed back toward God. Abraham would have said, "I have here no ground for confidence: no human resource; no promise whatever of blessing within the realm of my own power." But instantly his heart went back to God, and "Abraham believed God"; and he said, "If God says so, the thing shall be."

And that is the first step in the direction of true faith. Whatever be the content of the promise; whatever the great desideratum upon which our hearts are set; what-

ever the character of our spiritual expectation, we have not learned the alphabet of true faith until we have learned to turn our thought entirely away from ourselves to God. It is God who is to be believed. In spite of our poverty; in spite of our weakness; in spite of the moral and spiritual impotence of these natures of ours, we are to believe God, simply because "He is God, and beside Him there is none else."

Then further, Abraham's faith found no *circumstantial encouragement*. There was nothing in his surroundings to confirm his faith. There was no probability of the promise being fulfilled, circumstantially. His faith lifted him out of, and beyond, his circumstances into another realm. He lived up there with God. Down here there is no single circumstance to lend probability to the realization of desire; the thing is utterly beyond all possibility of fulfilment. We need to learn that lesson. Our faith needs frequently to be tried; for very often in that which we are pleased to call faith, there is a large element of circumstantial trust. It is easy to pray for rain on a cloudy day; it is easy to believe the Lord will provide when already we hear the sound of the reapers, and we know the crops are good; it is easy to believe that somebody will be converted when we hear the news that already the man has begun to pray. When there are certain circumstantial encouragements, some of us say, "Ah! I have great faith." But it is not faith at all. Faith that is faith indeed, is independent of circumstances, absolutely. Faith that is faith indeed, relies upon God, and upon God alone. Such was the faith of Abraham: he believed God.

Another thing to be said about Abraham's faith is that it found no *inspiration in precedent*. There was nothing in Abraham's own experience to justify his expectation. Nor was there anything in the whole field of observation; nor was there anything in the records of history. God, if you please, proposed to do a "new thing"—something that had never been done "under the sun." And yet, although there never had been such a blessing, "Abraham believed God." He anticipated the word of prophecy: "Behold, I will do a new thing."

Why should not God do new things? Perhaps there is a man or woman here this morning who finds himself, or herself, in a unique situation, utterly peculiar. You have conferred with all your friends; but you say, "I cannot find anybody who has been exactly where I am." It would be surprising if you could not find some precedent in Scripture. But even if you cannot, my point this morning is, that we are to look to God as the Author of things; as the great Originator; as the One who can do what nobody else can do, and what nobody else ever has done; as the One who can do, if He will, what even He Himself has never done before. "Abraham believed God." But what precedents *we* have; what inspiration ought *we* to find for faith! It seems to me it would be scarcely possible for us to find ourselves in an absolutely new situation. Read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where the roll is called of the outstanding believers of antiquity. Consider the variety of their experience; and I think most of us will find there some food for faith. But I remind you that even if you cannot; or if your mind be so clouded that you cannot understand and interpret your own circumstances; when you cannot see for all the fogs and mists of earth, still dare to believe God, whether there be any precedent or not; for God can come into your life and do the thing that never was done before—if so

be, you have a promise from Him that thus it shall be.

Then, I would remind you further that Abraham believed in the possibility of a blessing coming to him, which was *contrary to the course of nature*. If the men of science of that day—such as they were—had been consulted, I feel sure they would have called Abraham a fool for his pains. They would have said, "Abraham, we are here to tell you that such a thing never was done in the history of the world. And furthermore, we, who have read the laws of God in the works of God; who have the wisdom to discern in what direction God works, and His methods of accomplishing His purposes—we affirm, not only that the thing has not been, but that it cannot be; that all nature is against you, that the laws of nature are fixed and inexorable, and that it is useless to pray against them." Abraham would have said, "I know all that; I have taken account of all these impossibilities on the natural plane, but my faith does not rest there; I believe in the supernatural; I believe in a God who is above nature. I believe God, and if God says it shall be, He is the source of all law—'In Him we live, and move, and have our being,'—and if He so orders, then the laws of nature must be suspended; but God will have His way."

And, there is no true faith that does not believe in the supernatural. The conception of the universe as a great machine in which God has imprisoned Himself; whose laws inexorably operate in such a way that God Himself cannot suspend them—that is not the Biblical conception, that conception of God is not found in Divine revelation. It is a man's dream of God; but it is not God's revelation of Himself. We are to *believe* God.

What then was Abraham's faith? *It was simply based on a divine revelation*. Abraham would never have imagined such a thing for himself; would never for a moment have dreamed of the possibility of his having a son—but "he believed God," because God had said it. And his faith was simply the result of a spiritual illumination, enabling him to apprehend that God really is, and what He is. And while Abraham would give all glory to God for the world about him, and the stars above him; yet, to him, God was a transcendent personality Who was something more than all His works, and Who was sovereign over all the works of His hands—so that if God promised, it must be so.

God give us then the faith of Abraham—no one else can! "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Canst thou by the exercise of thine own reason and imagination sketch a picture of God? He infinitely transcends our human understanding; and only when in the greatness of His grace, He condescends to unfold His purposes to His children, can we see Him, and believe Him, and trust in Him.

II.

I now desire to point out SOME DIRECTIONS IN WHICH A SIMILAR FAITH MAY BE EXERCISED IN THIS PRESENT DAY. The faith of Abraham is the faith we all need. We need above all things to be taught to believe God.

I venture to say that *the Christian revelation, the Scripture itself, requires just such faith as this*, in order to its true understanding. I shall not quarrel with the man who depends upon his scholarship for the understanding of this Book. I am not at all surprised that he should discover in it difficulties that not only challenge his reason, but which so transcend his reason that he is

bound to reject it; not that it is against reason, but because it is above reason. This Bible is a supernatural Book from beginning to end; and no man can believe the Scripture unless he has, elementarily, at least, the very faith of Abraham.

I remember that in a certain discussion we had in a great meeting not very many years ago about this Book, some man arose and said in effect: "Do those who profess to believe in the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, really consider the difficulties involved? How is the Infinite Spirit really to speak to men?" And he thought he had propounded a great question. There came to my mind instantly a scripture, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?" As though God should say, "Can I make a man to speak, and yet be unable to speak Myself? Can I make a man to write, and yet be unable to write Myself? Can I make a man who is able to communicate his thought to another mind, and be unable Myself to communicate My thought to the creatures I have made?" If God be but a law, as say the wise, if He is but an impersonal force, then there is great difficulty; but if we believe God, there is no difficulty in believing that He has written a letter to His children, is there? The difficulty would be to believe that He would not do it. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

And this Book in the very first verse challenges us to believe. If you can believe the first verse of the Bible, you can believe every word in it to the last word in Revelation. Listen! "In the beginning." Who was there? Who knows anything about "the beginning"? "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." The first verse of Genesis implicitly claims divine inspiration for itself, by whatever hand it was written; for only God could speak of "the beginning." Yield yourselves to the challenge of that first verse and like Abraham say, "Amen,—God has spoken; I believe God!" If you believe that, you will have no difficulty with the rest. I do not mean at once; but in the process of the discipline of life, and by the teaching of the Spirit of God, you will come to understand. You will have no difficulty, for instance, with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, if you believe God. There is nothing more difficult there than that which was involved in Abraham's faith. The fact is, the difficulty that is inseparable from the supernatural character of the Scripture, and the supernatural character of the birth of Christ—the supernatural character of His birth and mission—that difficulty always stands in the way of human reason, and we can never surmount it until we believe God—but when we believe God, it is gone.

Very well then, is there an unconverted man here this morning? Can I find a bankrupt soul here this morning? Can I find a man whose past is but a desolate wilderness? Can I find a man this morning who has no power of will; no strength of purpose; no hope of ever recovering himself from the ashes of the past in which sin has destroyed and buried all his holiest expectations? Is there a man here who says, "It is no use, sir; I have been to church, I used to go to church regularly, but because I found no help in the church I abandoned it." We are glad to have people coming here who have not been to church for years. It is not unusual now for us to have people in the congregation who say they have not been in any church for years. Possibly there are some here this morning. You have turned your back upon the church, and say

you have found no help in organized Christianity at all; and you are disposed to raise all kinds of objections. I want to tell you, my dear friends, that your hope is in God. Can you believe God? Can you believe God as revealed in Jesus Christ? "Let not your heart be troubled," said Jesus, "ye believe in God"—in some vague infinite Spirit yonder—"ye believe in God, believe also in me. Let the faith which you have reposed in a God who is sovereign in distant realms, infinitely remote from human experience; which you have reposed in an infinite Omnipotence somewhere—let that faith now be transferred to Me. Ye believe in God, believe also in me, for I am God, manifest in the flesh."

If that be so, let us go back to the first verse of the Book again: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Are you any more hopeless than that, my brother? Is life any blacker, more destitute than that? "without form, and void,"—no plan or purpose; simply a human wreck—that is all that is left. Very well, then, believe God! For "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He can make you over again; He can give you a new heart; He can enfranchise your will; and clarify your judgment; and purify your conscience; and cleanse your memory; and make you a new man in Himself—if you believe God. That is what it is to be saved—just to believe that Jesus died to pay our debt; and that by the power of His own grace, He can effect a complete transformation of our lives, at last "presenting us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

Let me now say this further word to you who are believers: *We should exercise this faith of Abraham in behalf of others*, because that is what Abraham did. He believed that contrary to the course of nature; in defiance of circumstances; in spite of the unprecedented character of the promise, Abraham believed that God would put in his home a son; that He would create a new personality; that out of death, life should come. The challenge—I do not like that word, let me say the call of the word of God to all believers is to give God His proper place, and believe that He can bless the church with spiritual children; that He can bring His sons from far to sit down at "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

I know how indifferent people are to religious appeals. I am quite aware that we are living in a day when men seem to be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." I do not ignore the fact that the Word of God is held by many in contempt. I am prepared to acknowledge that there are multitudes of the Lord's children who are at their wit's end to know what to do; and that the history of this Old Testament is being repeated when you say that the people of God have fallen upon evil times; for when political foes were multiplied; and the prestige of the kingdom was diminishing, and things were growing from bad to worse—what did God's people do? They did everything but the right thing—they went down to Egypt for help; they sought by organized political methods to postpone the inevitable disaster due to their unbelief. And yet there was but one way out of their difficulties, and that was to turn their hearts back to God; to believe God.

And I confess that in our day, I despair of making things better by the laying out of tennis courts, and the introduction of all sorts of allurements into the church. I

have no expectation that men will be saved by the pulpit's accommodating itself—if I may say it without offence—to the carnal standards of the unbelieving in the pew; by seeking to please and to persuade; I have no hope whatever that by that means souls are going to be saved. For when a soul is saved, there is a new creation; when a soul is really converted, God touches that soul with His own almighty finger, and breathes into that soul "the breath of life"—and there is no substitute for that.

"And, behold, there were very many in the open valley," said Ezekiel when he went into the valley of dry bones—"and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?" That is the supreme question. Can a soul dead in trespasses and sins be made to live? We must answer, "No," unless we believe God. But if we believe God, then we may believe that the worst sinners in Toronto may become the best of saints; that the most indifferent people may become the most zealous for the Lord.

Our only hope is in God; and therefore, let us honour Him with our faith, and patiently wait for our Isaacs. Abraham had to wait a long time. Very likely every day Abraham spread the promise of the Lord before Him, saying to Him, "I am waiting; I am waiting; I am still waiting for the fulfilment of the promise." And at last God answered him, and the child of promise was born. I quote it again, "We then, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." We are here because God promised we should be here; and others will be here because God has promised. That is why we are meeting Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday—and I trust every day bowing our knees before God, saying to the Lord God Almighty, "Do as thou hast said."

I shall carry it just this one step further, and I have done. *Our outlook should be wider than our own church, and our own family, and our own city, and our own country.*

I shall never forget—I may perhaps have told you before, but if I have, I repeat it—I shall never forget some years ago driving through the country with the late Dr. John G. Paton. We were alone together talking about the things of God; and as we passed a certain house I pointed to it, and told him of a young lady who had been recently converted in that home, and baptized; although her father was a professed infidel. She had had no help at home, but she had been really converted. I told Dr. Paton about it in a few words. He turned to me full of interest. And he said, "She really believed on the Lord Jesus, did she?" I said, "Yes." "She was really converted, was she?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Praise God"—and, literally tears of joy rolled down his cheeks. He did not know her, and never expected to see her; but like his Master, he had a heart big enough to love all the fallen sons of men, and shared the gladness of the angels over a sinner repenting.

So ought our thought and interest to extend to China, where our Brother Barham has been, and where many whom we love have gone; to India, where we have members of this church labouring for the Lord; to South America; to Africa; and Europe; to the Islands of the sea; and to all parts of our own country. Can we not vicariously exercise the faith of Abraham? Can we not believingly pray for a world-wide revival?

Indeed, looking upon this old and war-scourged, sin-cursed earth of ours, is there any hope for it? Yes; I believe there is in "that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." But may there not be some great spiritual visitation before then? May we not see religious revivals here, there, yonder, even to the uttermost parts of the earth? Can you believe in a religious revival in the heart of Europe, for instance; in Russia; in rationalistic Germany? Can we believe? Is there any chance of it? Absolutely none; unless we believe God. God can bring it about—nothing is impossible to Him.

Therefore, I call you in the name of the Lord, as you pray, thanking God for the resurrection of which we ourselves have been the subjects, for the new creation which we ourselves have experienced; and looking out upon our own families, and upon our own neighbours and friends—our fellow-citizens in this country, and then even to the uttermost parts of the earth—let us pray with a new faith such as Abraham had!

What was Abraham's faith? "In thee"—and as yet he had no son—"shall all nations of the earth be blessed." And faith of the quality of Abraham's will pray and believe for the blessing of God to come upon all nations. How sad to hear men talk of God as though He were no more than man. What was Abraham's conception of God? He thought of God as one who could and would bless all nations of the earth; Who was over all, blessed forever! And oh the wonder of it, that the blessing should come upon the whole world through him, through his seed—a lonely man, without a son! And God said, "Abraham, I will make you a channel of blessing to all nations of the earth." And Abraham believed God! And was it not in that day that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day—He saw it and was glad? Somehow or another, he saw the coming One, and he knew that after the flesh, He was to be of his blood, and that through Him all nations, and kindreds, and tongues should be blessed.

Is such a faith worth having? In a day of such universal unrest, political, and industrial, and religious, unrest; when not only individuals, but governments, and nations, and leagues of nations, are at their wit's end to know what to do; when men's hearts are failing them for fear, and in looking after those things which are coming upon the earth; in the midst of it all we do well to believe God. His promise is of the Morning, of the rising of the Sun, of the coming of the King, of the triumph of Righteousness, of a nightless, shadowless, painless, deathless, tearless city at last. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Let us believe God!

LAST SUNDAY IN JARVIS STREET

As most of our readers know, Dr. Shields left last week for an absence of some weeks in England. Rev. W. Gordon Brown, Professor of New Testament at Toronto Baptist Seminary, preached morning and evening, and again in the open air at nine o'clock, at all of which services there were splendid congregations. The messages were strong, and were ably delivered. Several responded to the invitation at both services, and at the evening service two young men were baptized, who had cycled more than a hundred and twenty-five miles to obey the Lord in this ordinance. Both men have been Christians for some time, and it is expected they will enter Toronto Baptist Seminary this fall.—V. S.

SEMINARY STATEMENTS AND STORIES

W. GORDON BROWN

SEMINARY COMPARISONS

Last school year Toronto Baptist Seminary registered some fifty-five students. Our immediate constituency, of course, is the Union of Regular Baptist Churches. In proportion to its seventy recognized churches our School is large indeed. As seminaries go we are far from small. Knox College, Toronto, graduated four in Theology a year ago, and this last term it was three or four that received theological diplomas from McMaster University. Toronto Baptist Seminary graduated ten, and three others postponed graduation to obtain a better diploma next year. Still we are far from satisfied. "The field is the world", "God so loved the world", "Go ye into all the world". Oh for a world vision!

OUR SPECIALTY

Almost all business houses are telling us of their specialties: "We specialize in this, that, or the other thing." Toronto Baptist Seminary specializes in at least three things.

We specialize in the Bible. Strange as it may seem, some theological schools do not demand that their students read it. Of course, ours must read it, read it through, read it often. They must find its outline, and the general structure of each of its books. They must study parts of Scripture intensively. The teaching of the various books of the Bible, and of the Word of God as a whole, they must grasp as a system of doctrine. In the history of its influence down through the centuries they trace "one increasing purpose". Hebrew and Greek are keys put into the hands of students that they may unlock hidden treasures in the Book.

We specialize also in English. We desire that our men should not only have a message to preach, but should know how to express it. They must mean what they say, and say what they mean.

A certain distinguished professor said last winter that the distinctive quality of the ancient Greeks was an instinct to keep close to the immediate fact, "the things before one's feet". The Greeks, he said, drew beauty from fact. To be sure, there is nothing so beautiful as the Gospel. Alas that it is so often awkwardly presented! It is our hope that the men who come to us may acquire some grace of speech as well as of heart, for the preaching of the beauty of holiness.

We specialize in Christian work. Lectures by the President, Dr. Shields, and others, are devoted to the methods by which souls may be won to Christ, and churches of the New Testament order established. Our men and women learn to do by doing. Each student has, throughout the school year, some definite piece of Christian work for which he is responsible, and in which he may serve the Lord; and, at the same time, acquire useful experience.

We appeal for support. We ask for bequests, large and small. We seek also occasional and regular contributions. Our needs are great, but our opportunity is greater. Will you help us?

For the convenience of those who would remember us in their wills, and in order that we may not be confused with any other institution, we give below a form of bequest: "I give, devise, and bequeath, the sum of _____ to Toronto Baptist Seminary, Toronto, Canada."

SUMMER WORK

Our Colporteurs

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days"—Ecclesiastes 11:1.

So our two colporteurs, Messrs. A. Dallimore and W. Hall, believe. They are going from house to house over the twenty-eight towns and villages on Montreal Island. At each home they leave a tract, and, where possible, engage the people in religious conversation. Most of the French are Romanists, and sometimes their tracts are torn up and thrown back at them in disgust. On other occasions these people, like the absent-minded waiter, exchange cold shoulder for hot tongue! How great is the need for the gospel may be gathered from the following account of a Corpus Christi parade: "It is held yearly, and literally means the Feast of the Body of Christ, and consists of carrying the exposed

wafer, made into 'the body of God', through the streets in great pomp. It is estimated that over five hundred thousand were in the parades in Montreal. One is held from every four or five churches. The choir boys are dressed in various red and gold robes, and walk along the street with their hands in the attitude of prayer. The bishop, either walking under a little golden-coloured canopy, or borne in a chair on the shoulders of four men, carries the wafer in a golden carrier. As it passes, every one kneels, some putting their faces to the ground. Mr. St. James says that, if anyone standing there does not kneel, he will be dragged down to his knees by the others."

Rome and the Police

The latest reports have it that "a week ago Sunday evening we received more opposition from the priest at our open-air meeting. The chief priest of the district drove up in a car while" Mr. Rattel, a converted Franciscan monk, "was speaking, telling how and why he left the Roman Catholic Church, . . . and listened for a few moments. Shortly after a policeman came, and announced that we must move, which we refused to do. He departed, and in five minutes returned with the district chief and four other officers. This time the meeting ceased, even though by-standers requested that we be allowed to continue. They told us that we could not hold any more meetings unless we had a license, and, of course, we, being ignorant of the fact, obeyed, but we went to the chief of police the next day to get permission to hold open-air meetings, and we found out from him that they had no authority to stop us, but now we have the right to hold our meetings without further interference. The people here are hungry for the true Word of God. The last Sunday we had an open-air meeting we had a crowd around us of at least five or six hundred, eagerly drinking in the Word."

Pavilion, N.Y.

Mr. Adam Galt, a graduate of this year, together with his wife who also spent a year with us, has settled at Pavilion, N.Y. "The church is in the Genesee Association and has seventy-six members on the roll. The people are rallying around, and seem to be anxious for the salvation of souls. As far as I know the church has always stood for the Faith. There are Modernists in the Association, however. One good feature is the fact that we are not in debt, yet we have no money in the treasury, so we have an even start! The population of the place is about five hundred. It is located twelve miles south of Batavia."

Cannington, Ont.

During the past week the Seminary Four have worked with Pastor R. E. J. Brackstone in Cannington. The special preacher was Rev. W. J. H. Brown, well-known for long years of gospel ministry and for weekly messages on the air. The ground had been well prepared. Pastor Brackstone writes: "The believers have been edified, the unsaved have been made miserable, the _____ minister has been aroused, and the town has been awakened". The special preacher himself says: "I esteem it a real privilege to assist Pastor Brackstone of Cannington in special meetings last week. While graduating this year from the Seminary, Mr. Brackstone has been pastor of this church (together with the Sunderland Church) for two years. During this time splendid work has been done. He began with a congregation of fifteen, to-day he preaches regularly to an average congregation of sixty-five, and the church is united and happy under the able leadership of its pastor. As I witnessed this young man in action as a pastor and the work that is being done by the Seminary Quartette, again and again I said, God bless Toronto Baptist Seminary in its ministry."

(Signed) W. J. H. BROWN.

Timmins

Student D. MacGregor writes: "The work in Timmins is being maintained. Indeed there has been a slight increase these last Sundays, but it is hard, discouraging work. We are now holding open-air meetings every week in South Porcupine and are hoping this way to reach the people. Much visitation is also being done."

NEWS, VIEWS AND CUES

W. G. B.

ASSOCIATIONS

We are known by the company we keep. The Scotch proverb has it that if the black bird flies with the crows it is likely to be shot. We were again impressed with the truth of these morals when we last Sunday questioned two young men as to why they cycled and trucked some one hundred and fifty miles from their own village, with its Baptist Church, to be baptized here in Jarvis Street. Said they: "The church in _____ is associated with the McMaster group—and we are not Modernists. The minister is not a Modernist, but he is with those who are."

There are ever some who are tired of the battle, and anxious to make peace at any price. As a tonic for tired warriors we suggest a re-reading of the *Ichabod* number of THE GOSPEL WITNESS (one hundred and seventy-six pages; price 20c).

SLAVERY

A century ago,—to be exact it was August 7th, 1833,—the Bill for the Total Abolition of Colonial Slavery passed the House of Parliament in England, and on August 20th, the House of Lords. Thereby 700,000 slaves were set free in the British Dominions. Yet slavery exists to-day. A few years ago it was found in a more or less disguised form in Liberia. The slave population of Arabia is estimated at nearly a million. Some great chiefs in Abyssinia are said to have fifteen thousand. Indeed, the commission reporting to the League of Nations shocked the careless world by the ascertained fact that slavery is enforced in nineteen political areas. The horrors of this statement it is hard for complacent minds to imagine.

But no, "slavery" is not limited to backward lands, it is everywhere. The Lord Jesus answers our modern claim to freedom as He did that of the ancient Jews: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin" (John 8:34). The sinner is a slave. But freedom is in Christ: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (v. 36). Yet fully to enjoy "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Galatians 5:1), His disciples must continue in His Word; only then will they "know the truth" in its liberating power (John 8:31f.). Paradox as it is, Christian liberty consists in being what Paul loved to call himself, a "slave of Jesus Christ".

JEWS OPPOSING AND OPPOSED

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."—Romans 10:1.

So prayed Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, but a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Nineteen hundred years ago that prayer was offered, but still it is unanswered.

"The Jews are the most modern of the modern", writes Dr. O. Von Harling, for forty years a European missionary to the Jews, in *The International Review of Missions* (July, 1933), "but one thing remains unaltered in the Jew: his opposition to the Gospel." The forms of disbelief may vary but the resistance remains. Small wonder is it when we recall what persecutions "Christian" countries have perpetrated on the Hebrew people. "Anti-Semitism . . . to-day . . . has formed an alliance with national consciousness" in Germany, and "there is every prospect that anti-Semitism in this form will spread into all the countries where the Jewish questions exists." Let us rejoice, however, "that to-day there exists a large number of Hebrew Christians, much larger than is generally supposed." It may seem strange to some, but "the history of missions shows that the majority of Jews have been won through the witness of believing Christians in the congregation, rather than through the preaching of missionaries."

HOMES OF SIN

Ghandi has spoken on occasions of India's temples as "homes of sin". They are; there "the fiends of darkness seem to sit in sullen repose", as Henry Martyn said of India.

But, O Christian worker, while you pity and pray for the heathen there, remember that many of our "Christian" temples are homes of unbelief.

WITHOUT CREED

This unbelief often glories in what it calls broad-mindedness and refuses to raise any barrier of creed. An example may be found in the new Y.M.C.A. recently erected and endowed just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Its lecture room and swimming pool are well equipped, and its carillon tower and frescoes beautiful indeed. This is called a "Christian Association", and yet, we read, its programme is to be without distinction of creed and devoid of proselytizing! A Jew, a Mohammedan or a Christian must be equally at home. Does this mean that Christianity does not matter? Is there some other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved than that of Christ? Will Mohammed do? The prime purpose of a "Y" should be that set forth by the originator of the movement, "to lead young men to faith in God through Jesus Christ".

CALEB AGAIN

The veteran Dr. O. W. VanOsdel "was taken ill early in January and was kept in bed by the doctor for ten weeks, and following this period was another like period of getting strength renewed and generally righted up for business." And yet he reports in the July issue of *The Baptist Temple News*, "We are now in the field again and hope to stay". The old saying had it, "Youth for zeal and age for wisdom", but Dr. VanOsdel combines both. May our Caleb yet possess much more land.

JARVIS ST. PULPIT CONFIRMED

Like many of our modern products for household use, Dr. Shields' sermons have numerous advantages. They are always food for thought, and comfort for the soul. Many preachers find inspiration for the pulpit in them—some go as far as to preach them. Last Saturday *The Toronto Globe* used a sermon from the Jarvis Street pulpit in reviewing a new book on, *Jesus Christ—Nineteen Centuries After*. The reviewer said that the book confirmed the sermon, which he quoted as follows:

"On a recent Sunday evening some of us listened over the air to a searching sermon that spoke of 'enemies of Christ', and others who do not hold His divinity, as being unable to leave Him alone. They talk about Him—they criticize Him—they even admire Him as a great Man; but one thing they never do, and that is,—ignore Him".

AUTHORITY

The Christ of the Bible: "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and upon the earth" (Matthew 28:18).

The Evangelical Preacher: "The winds of disquietude are laid to rest in the caverns of divine faithfulness" (C. H. Spurgeon).

The Modernist Professor: "That which I absolutely repudiate is authority" (Dr. L. Auguste Sabatier, "Religions of Authority and Religions of the Spirit", p. 283).

The Modern Novelist: "Mankind, frail parasite of doubt, seeks ever for a sign, conceives no certainty but the enormous certitude of uncertainty" (A. S. Hutchinson, "If Winter Comes", p. 108).

It was in the offices of a Roman Catholic priest. In his long black robes he sat on the far side of a plain table, the representative of an apostasy centuries old, of a system to which many are turning in this modern age, of the Pope of Rome. Of course, we have all been impressed by the way in which, when many Protestant churches are almost empty, large Catholic ones are filled and re-filled on Sunday morn-

ings. It may be true that in South America or Spain, Rome is losing her hold, but in this country imposing edifices, monster parades, and a feeling that one must say nothing against the Papacy, are evidences of increasing power. We have all wondered why. I have, so I asked the priest. The answer was in one word, "Authority". Said he in effect: "Let a man go to a Protestant church and say to them, 'What is the truth on such and such a matter?' The answer is, 'We think so and so.' 'Can you guarantee it?' 'No, but this is our opinion.' Let a man go to a Roman priest and ask the same question, and the answer is, 'Here is the truth on that point.' 'Can you guarantee it?' 'Absolutely.'" That, he claimed, was the secret of their power. In part at least we are sure that he was right.

No, we do not acknowledge the authority of Rome, for we do not believe that final authority rests in an organized church. Even Roman Catholics must appeal to the Bible in their attempts to prove the infallibility of Peter's barque. Logically, then, a man must be a Protestant before he is a Catholic!

That is to say, in the famous words of the seventeenth-century English divine Chillingworth, "The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." Would to God that this were true of all who claim the name Protestant. Too many have ceased to protest, or rather they are now protesting against this fundamental principle of Protestantism, the authority of the Bible.

Authority? Frank Modernists say there is none. Of course, we do not believe what we believe on the authority of "a divine Church" like Rome, but Dr. H. E. Fosdick says that we should not do so on the authority of "a divine Book or a divine Man" (*Christianity and Progress*, p. 157). The "divine Book" is the Bible, and the "divine Man" is Jesus Christ, and yet God's written and God's incarnate Word are not sufficient for our faith! Some Modernists bewail man's demand for a final voice. A professor in Union Theological Seminary, New York, once said, "It will never be quite possible to deliver men from the craving after some authority in religion" (Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross, *The God We Trust*, p. 156). Such a cry for a voice from Heaven is natural, we think, to the human heart, but the Modernists tell us it is the relic of a by-gone age. "Recognition of an absolute authority belongs to the feudal age with its caste system" (R. Hoashi, of Japan, in the *Chicago Divinity Student*, February 15, 1932, p. 3). Intellectual Greeks of old turned, unsatisfied, from one system of philosophy to another, and the jangling reasonings of men led them to long for a voice from Heaven. The voice has spoken, but our modern pagans would make us deaf to its words and turn us back into the old abyss of skepticism.

Of course, not all Modernists are so frank as Sabatier when he said, "That which I absolutely repudiate is authority" (as above); some say authority is in reason, the old rationalism! Others say it is in experience, that man's authority is a matter for the individual. But individual authority is no authority! Away with "modern sentimentalism, which sometimes regards God as One with whom we can go linking arm in arm along the highways of the universe".

Ultimately, to whatever authority we may bow, it will be one of two kinds, either from Heaven or from men, (Mark 11:27-33). The authority of man matters little in our relations with Heaven. It is the voice of God we must hear. That voice,—to Him be the praise!—speaks in the Book which is the Word of God. The Bible reveals the will of God for man. It is God's record concerning His Son. It centres about the Christ Who has all authority (Matthew 28:18). If we would do anything, in Napoleon's expressive phrase, to "close up the chasm of anarchy", we must bow in full and glad submission to the Christ of the Bible and the Bible of the Christ. For the man who knows that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, this is possible, indeed, the only thing to do. As a Unitarian put it: "The Modernists . . . have brought Jesus down to the human plane, thereby destroying His supernatural authority and sanction" (*The Christian Register*, September 19, 1929). But Christ cannot be brought down, He is at the right hand of the Majesty on High. All things are to be judged "according to Christ; because in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of all rule and authority" (Colossians 2:8-10).

WE HAVE ALL THEY HAVE

The optimists hope that two hundred million people will visit the World's Fair at Chicago to review a century of progress. "Progress on Parade", the fair has been called. Our age is complimenting itself on its tremendous advances over the generation that preceded it. And the Modernists or religious liberals, as they are inaccurately called, are telling us that religion, too, must advance. The faith of our fathers will not do for their modern children. The religion of the Bible must be displaced by some new light, some fresh revelation,—at least so they say.

It was a favourite saying of Professor H. S. Curr that Evangelical Christians, in the faith of the Bible, have all that the religious liberals profess to hold. We were impressed with this again when, in a popular story book, the hero sought some new light, some fresh revelation, and found it in the first epistle of John: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (4:16). The new revelation was the "old commandment" of which the Apostle spoke so long ago.

But what discoveries in religion has Modernism made? What can it teach us? Is it that there was progress in creation? But that is written large over the first page of the Bible. Is it that Jesus Christ was truly Man? The Roman Church would put Him so far away that an intercessor is needed between Him and us. But, as has well been said, the cure for Mariolatry is an emphasis upon the humanity of Christ. But did we need Modernism to teach us that ours was the *Man* Christ Jesus? That doctrine was plain in the Gospels from the beginning. Is it the social gospel which the Modernist would teach us? But the Gospel—and the Law before it—were social. Witness the second table of the Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Is it an ethical religion which they would propound? The Gospel of grace was always ethical.

Where are these great moral ideals which are supposed to be discovered since the canon of Scripture was closed and guarded? We cannot find them. The ethics of religion, latently or patently, are found on the pages of Holy Writ. But perhaps it is that our religion should be progressive? No! we must not be of those "progressives" who would "advance and not abide in the teaching of Christ" (II John 9 revised text), for they "have not God". And yet "in the doctrine of Christ" infinite progress may be made. Spurgeon once said: "The idea of a progressive gospel seems to have a fascination for many. To us that notion is a sort of cross-breed between nonsense and blasphemy." Some men mistake motion for progress, but a merry-go-round is no substitute for a railroad.

We have not been able to discover what it is which, in a constructive way, Liberalism can offer. We have all they have, and furthermore, we have those foundations on which the results of Christianity they would laud have been, and must ever be, based—authority, supernaturalism, the Deity of Christ, the atonement, the second coming. Our faith is not stagnant, but it is "static" in the original sense of that Greek term, "causing to stand". "Having done all, stand."

WHY, McMASTER, WHY?

Frankly, we should like a plain answer to the following questions of fact:

1. Why were so few (three or four) graduated in Theology this year?
2. Why is there a striking cleavage in the student body of this "Christian" school, between Arts men and Theologues?
3. Why have "family prayers", a former custom after supper in the University dining-room, been dropped?
4. Why do McMaster professors hold dances for their students in their homes?
5. Why are the words "McMaster" and "Baptist" omitted from advertisements in the Hamilton papers of the Sunday Chapel services?
6. Why, then, do advocates of this Baptist University go to Associations, etc., to urge Baptists to send their children to a Baptist school?
7. Having departed from the faith, is the University also departing from the practice?

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 8

No. 3

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 33

August 13th, 1933

THIRD QUARTER**ABSALOM'S FLIGHT AND RETURN**

Lesson Text: II Samuel, chapters 13 and 14.

Golden Text: "And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me."
—II Samuel 14:32.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Genesis 3:13.
Tuesday—Numbers 35:9-28.
Wednesday—Hosea 14:1-9.
Thursday—Luke 15:1-10.
Friday—Luke 15:11-32.
Saturday—Luke 18:1-8.

I. ABSALOM'S FLIGHT (chapter 13).

The sins of the fathers manifest themselves in the children. Many a father has discovered this to his sorrow, and David must also have had a realization of the operation of this principle. He had sinned grievously in the case of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and Amnon was but following his footsteps when he sinned against his sister. Absalom also, in the murder of Amnon was treading in his father's footsteps, for Uriah the wronged husband suffered death at the command of the king. The responsibility of parents, both fathers and mothers, toward children is very great, in the life-blood they give to their offspring, and in the example shown before them.

The record of this chapter does not make pleasant reading, but like that of our former lesson, it was written for our instruction. In it there is brought before us the inevitable course of sin: he looked, he coveted, he took, he hid. There is set forth Absalom's discovery of the evil deed, the anger of the king, the murder of Amnon at Absalom's feast, and the flight of the latter to the king of Geshur. The whole is a domestic scene, with a palace background, wherein some of the evils of polygamy are evident, with lack of true godliness.

Several things are worthy of note respecting this incident. First, the evil effects of an irregular affection. It may be that at first the love of Amnon for

Tamar was just what that word implies, but it is evident that evil ruled in his later conduct, and throughout the incident it seems clear that Amnon had no expectancy of securing Tamar for his wife. Amnon's sin affected others, as sin always does: Absalom was led to commit murder; the king, as the head of the household, was responsible for the existence of all; the members of the court, and in a measure the whole nation due to the prominence of the persons involved; and above and in all, the Lord God Almighty, for while wrong was committed against individual, domestic, and national life, sin was committed against God. The serious nature of the sin therefore should be understood, from the standpoint of its nature, as well as from that of its consequences.

Further note may be made of the torture of evil passions, their lack of consideration for and cruelty toward others, the danger of encouraging them, by thought or otherwise, their blinding effect to all consequences, their paralyzing effect on all good desire, and the necessity for suppressing them. It needs to be emphasized that no real satisfaction ever comes by way of sin. Some pleasures of a fleeting nature may be derived therefrom, but the fruit of sin is not long in manifesting itself, and dissatisfaction takes the place of the passing pleasure. Observe also the action of Absalom in taking the law into his own hands in the slaying of his brother. He was the natural protector of his sister according to the custom of eastern polygamous households, and we can well understand his anger, while not condoning his offence. In acting as he did, while he manifested his righteous indignation, he also flouted the law of God and man, and made the matter worse for all concerned. God's way is the best in all the affairs of life, and should ever be followed.

II. THE RETURN OF ABSALOM (chapter 14).

Historically and spiritually, the record of this chapter is of considerable interest. As in former lessons, we look upon David as being typical of our Lord; while Absalom, naturally and spiritually, is the erring sinner. In this light we note first that Absalom was estranged from, and in self-banishment from the father's presence, due to his sin. The consciousness of his sin is manifest in his flight to Geshur. By his sin he had brought himself under the penalty of the law, and for fear of the same he fled the country. Observe the condition of the sinner in God's sight (Romans 3:10-18); the reason for that condition (Romans 3:23);

and the penalty resting upon sin (John 3:36). It may be said truly that sinful men—and by such a term is meant the whole human family—are in a state of estrangement and self-banishment from God, owing to their sins against Him. Like the prodigal, they are in the far country (Luke 15:13), and not until through Christ they return to God the Father can they claim a change of attitude, state, and place. Before this occurs there must be the consciousness of sin brought to pass by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), leading to a sense of need (Acts 2:37), and true repentance for sin (Acts 2:38), and faith in Christ as Saviour (Acts 16:31).

Observe in the second place the affection of David for his erring son: "His soul longed to go forth" unto him. But the sin of the son hindered such a manifestation. He would willingly have taken him in his arms, but sin had separated them; and not until some penalty had been exacted for the sin, in the exclusion of Absalom from the king's presence for some years, with its accompanying consequences of lack of fellowship with the father and mother, did full reconciliation take place. The antitype of this is not hard to find in God's love for the sinner (John 3:16). The latter, though estranged by sin, an alien in mind to divine things, was and is loved by the Lord (Rom. 5:8). Note the wonder of this, also the desire on the part of God to welcome every sinner into His presence; the impossibility of an unrepentant sinner ever having fellowship with Him, the great work of our Lord in dealing with the sin question (Rom. 3:24), and the way now open for the sinner to return (Heb. 10:19, 20).

The return of Absalom was due in the first place to the affection and desire of David (v. 1), as in salvation the initiative is with God (Eph. 1:4). Salvation is due wholly to His grace (Eph. 2:8), and is dependent upon Him. The return was due in the second place to the intercession of friends on his behalf. Joab knew the heart of his ruler, and planned to lead him to issue the command for the return (vs. 1-3). In this plan there is revealed the sincerity, earnestness, daring, love and ingenuity of Joab. In the spiritual realm it is the will of God that His people should intercede for the unsaved, and seek by every means in their power to bring them to Him. Joab is typical too of our great Intercessor. Joab's plan was successful; the intercession had its desired effect, and the command was given to bring the young man home. And the great "I will" of Christ is always effective with the Father.