

The Gospel Witness

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"GREAT FAITH"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto.

(Stenographically Reported)

"When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

"And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."—Luke 7: 9, 10.

The uniqueness of Jesus expressed itself in an unusual ministry. One of the characteristics of that ministry was its sweet naturalness. Our Lord Jesus, if I may say so, made the supernatural natural. He withdrew the veil; and led us to the Source of all law, and of all power. What violence men have done to Christ's revelation of God! They have sought to confine Him within grim walls of ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism, fencing Him about with forms and ceremonies; and setting priestly officers to guard the gates that lead to His presence. And yet our Lord Jesus came to teach us the approachableness of God; to make it clear to us that the door is open into His presence; and that whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

It is said very simply of Him, that He "went about doing good". How often He bowed His ear, and listened to the plaintive tale of neighbours, as they came asking help for their friends; of relatives who came seeking help or healing for those who were dear to them! Nothing could be simpler than the gospel narrative, that "God was in Christ"; and that even the little children could come and touch Him. "And he took them up in His arms and blessed them." And He is the same Jesus still—just as approachable to-day as He was then; and we may come to Him as they did, who lived in the days of His flesh, and receive grace at His hand.

Sometimes we miss the teaching of Scripture, by imagining that its most precious truths lie far beneath the surface, and are to be obtained only by much digging. If we could come to these simple narratives like little children, and read them as a child would, and accept their teaching as a child would accept it, believing it

means exactly what it says, what blessing we should all find!

This is the story of a man who exercised what our Lord Himself called "great faith". Would you not like to know that Jesus Christ had said that of you? No higher compliment could be paid to anyone than for the Lord Himself to say, "He is a man of great faith; he trusts Me absolutely, with a faith that I am compelled to recognize and to honour."

I.

What were THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS "GREAT FAITH"? It is the story of a man, whose servant was sick—a servant who was very dear unto him. Some servants are not very dear to their master; some employers have but little interest in the physical, or spiritual well-being of those who work for them; they look upon them as part of a machine which exists to turn out profit for its owner. But this man had a servant, "who was dear unto him"; and in his need he sent to Jesus.

I want you to look in the simplest way possible at this story. I have heard a man preach before now, when I have wondered by what subtle art he managed to discover certain things in a text; and I have been compelled to admit that I should never have imagined that the idea he seemed to find there had any relation to the text, or the text to that idea. I believe the most useful kind of preaching is that which makes even the children say, "That is all there; that is perfectly clear; it is there in the narrative, why could not I see it? I will look

and see if I cannot find some things like that myself." And that is what I should like to do this morning—just to say the simplest word; to expound this old and familiar story in the simplest fashion; so that it may drive us all to God's book for the nourishment of our own faith.

What, then, was the origin of this "great faith"? Manifestly, *it grew out of what the centurion had heard of Jesus*. He would never have trusted Him, as he did, if he had not been informed of Who, and What Jesus was. We must give careful attention to what is said about Jesus. We must never forget that it is exceedingly important that we should have correct views of Him. We can none of us afford to wait upon a ministry that minimizes the Lord Jesus. You can forgive much in any preacher, if only he magnifies Christ; for that is what you and I need. We need a great Saviour; because we are great sinners; and we shall be enabled to believe for a great salvation in One Whom we clearly apprehend to be the Son of God. Does it matter what men say about our Lord? Does it make any difference to their hearers' faith when men spend their time discussing the limitations of Jesus? Frankly, if a man says that Jesus was anything less than God, I would not go to hear him the second time. I cannot afford to. I need a mighty faith; and I can never have a mighty faith in any but a mighty Saviour. And the man who takes the crown from His brow, and the sceptre from His hand, is doing me the greatest injury in the world. I cannot afford to be with him, or to listen to him at all—I do not care who he is.

This man had been in the company of someone who magnified Jesus, like the little maid in the household of Naaman. She did not know very much; but she whispered her secret to her mistress. She said, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." What else she knew of him, I do not know; but that he had power to heal the leper she was certain; and she told what she knew.

Thus faith begins; and in the same way it is developed. Faith flourishes when it sees Jesus; it is nourished by a fuller knowledge of Jesus. And we ought to endeavour to nourish our faith, to feed our faith with a more perfect knowledge of the greatness of Christ. Is it languishing this morning? Are you troubled with doubts? How are you going to get rid of them? Just in this way—resolve: "I will learn something more about Jesus; I will study His character; I will put Him to the test in my daily life. And as He proves Himself true, my faith will become stronger and stronger by experience of His faithfulness."

That is what had happened in the case of this centurion. He had heard something about Jesus; and then I fancy he heard something more,—and then something more,—and something more,—and we should make it the ambition of our lives to know Jesus Christ better. It is worth while devoting the rest of our lives just to learn more about Him; for the more intimately we know Him, the easier we shall find it to trust in Him.

I would remind you also of the privilege of nourishing each other's faith. Have you had sickness in your home? I suppose you have. If it was a serious illness, you consulted doctor after doctor. Your neighbours and friends came to sympathize with you; and then it seemed that everybody with whom you had any acquaintance at all had been visited by this same ailment. Have you

ever discovered that? If you were a preacher, and were unfortunate enough to have a cold sometimes, and to cough in public, you would discover at the close of the service, that there were at least one hundred people who knew how to cure that cough. We are all alike in this. We say, "I can tell you how to get rid of that." And as soon as the character of the illness is noised abroad, friend after friend comes in to ask you to send for Dr. so-and-so. Why? "Because I knew somebody who was afflicted just as you are; and they called him in, and they got help." And sometimes one is embarrassed by suggestions. Do you not think that almost certainly happened in this case, when this centurion's servant was sick? I feel sure somebody came in, and said, "Now look here, if you could only get Jesus of Nazareth, He could help you." "How do you know?" "Well I can tell you of case after case just like your servant, whom He has healed. I know He can do it—I have seen Him." And the centurion's faith was nourished by the experience of some who had received grace at the hands of Jesus.

Why do you suppose the Lord comes into your life, and answers your prayer in a very little matter—so small that you would hesitate to let anybody know you ever prayed about it? Do you pray about the little things of life? and do you get help in the little things of life? And then you are ashamed to tell anybody that the Lord Jesus has helped you just there! And yet our lives are made up of little things. There are only a few important events in life after all. Character is formed by the experience of everyday life, by the way we meet the little emergencies that arise day by day. And it is just there God wants to develop our faith, until we shall become men and women of great faith; learning to trust Him in the little things; and then sharing our experience with others in order that they may trust Him too.

And that ministry, whoever exercised it, which consisted in magnifying the Lord Jesus before this centurion, made him *not only a man of faith, but a man of prayer*. Knowing Jesus to be the great Healer He was, he sent for Him. Mark my words! *The ministry that magnifies Jesus will drive people to their knees*; and the ministry that magnifies men will empty the prayer-meeting, and silence the voice of prayer.

For why should we pray if we are sufficient of ourselves? But if we can do nothing, and He can do all things, then it will be our joy to lie at His feet, and earnestly to entreat His mercy. And if you would teach other people how to pray, magnify the Lord Jesus in your testimony. Be witnesses to the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever you go. Let it be known that He is helping you every day; and others will seek the help which you have obtained.

Another characteristic of this great faith, was that it made him very *humble*. Great believers are always humble men. There never can be a great faith, I have said, where there is not a clear apprehension of the greatness of Jesus. And just as we see Him in His glory, we shall be correspondingly humble. This man had such a view of Jesus, such a conception of His worthiness, that he felt he was not worthy to go and see Him. He therefore found somebody else, whom he conceived to be worthier than himself, to pray in his behalf. So great was Jesus in his view, that he felt he was not worthy that Jesus should enter under his roof. Those who prayed for him said, "That he was

worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." But the man himself had forgotten all about the synagogue; or at least it never occurred to him to plead that as a reason why Jesus Christ should help him. He was humbled in the conscious presence of God.

Thus my dear friends, the more clearly we apprehend the true character of our Lord Jesus, the deeper will be our wonder that He should ever take knowledge of us. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" That was the cry of one who had seen the greatness of God revealed in the works of His hands. But when we behold God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, we shall be still more humbled; and our faith will rest wholly in the grace of Him Whom we believe.

II.

In the second place, still very simply, I want to try to show you that TRUE FAITH CONCEIVES JESUS TO BE INDEPENDENT OF TIME AND SPACE; and to be sovereign of all instrumentalities. One wonders how this man had learned so perfectly the character and the power of Jesus. He clearly apprehended that the power of the Lord Jesus was commensurate with His will. "If only He wills to bless me," he seemed to have reasoned, "He can do the thing that I ask of Him." Hence he sent messengers to Jesus, and Jesus came in response to his call; and he heard that He was coming. But even then he did not advance to meet Him; but he sent friends to give Him this message: "Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." And he added, if I may paraphrase his saying, "I have learned something from my own position. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. I know that behind my word there is an authority that must be obeyed; but the authority residing in Thy word is infinitely greater; and if only Thou wilt speak the word, even disease and death must instantly obey; for I have seen Thee, Thou great Prophet, to be sovereign of all the powers of earth, and of the universe. Speak the word only—that is what I want—I ask for nothing else."

And it was when Jesus heard that, He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. He knows Who I am. He knows that One approaches his door, Who said, 'Let there be light, and there was light'; Who spake, and it was done, and commanded, and it stood fast forevermore." He asked no instrumentalities; he did not request that Christ should use means at all. He believed Him to be a physician Who could prescribe, and send the remedy by wireless. He had only to speak the word, and it would be done.

What then was the faith of this man? *He believed that Omnipotence dwelt in the word of Jesus.* Do you? Have we the faith which this centurion had? Do we believe, for instance, that in the promise of the gospel there is the creative power of God? Do we believe that the gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto

salvation to everyone that believeth"? Do you believe it, as you testify to the grace of God, for that is preaching the gospel? Do you believe it, when the Pastor preaches, or when somebody else preaches; do you believe that there resides in this word the power that spake the worlds from naught? Do you believe that there is wrapped up in the word of the promise of the gospel, the very power which spake, when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"? Do you believe that in the gospel God is speaking again with the purpose of remaking man? If we thus believe, we may have exactly the same results as this centurion had.

It may be there is someone here this morning who has long been praying for an unsaved relative, perhaps across the seas; perhaps in some distant part of this country; or of the United States; or somewhere else. Now how are you praying—Lord, save so-and-so some time, somehow? Then do you begin to imagine the various instrumentalities which God will probably use? Can we not rise to the sublime height to which this man attained, while there in his Capernaum home? One day in his home, he sent—yonder to Jesus—this message, this prayer, "Lord if Thou wilt speak the word there, my servant will be healed here. Speak the word—the word—the word! Nothing more is necessary."

Will you ask Him to do that this morning? Will you pray: "O God, speak the word to some backslider, and he will return to his first love. Speak the word to some man who is estranged from some other man, with whom he ought to be on terms of Christian fellowship—speak the word, and his heart will be broken, and they will come together. Speak the word, Lord, and the thing Thy word commands must come to pass.

Why can we not thus trust the Lord Jesus to do what He waits to do for us? "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"—not among the scribes; nor among the Pharisees; nor among the doctors of the law; nor among any of those who had heaped upon the word of God such an accumulation of tradition that they could not get through it to the truth of God. But He found this great faith in an unexpected Gentile quarter.

And so it happens still, that the learned professor; or the minister in the pulpit; or many professed followers of Christ—who ought to be men of faith—seem to have outgrown that; and God finds outside of this trained religious circle some simple man who was not taught from his infancy; some simple man into whose heart God's Spirit has shone, until he saw God in the face of Jesus Christ; and trusted Him absolutely! And through Him God does His work!

Shall we not learn the lesson of this old story this morning, and take God at His word?

"If our faith were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine,
In the presence of the Lord."

Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith." And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick." Omnipotence—let me put it in another word—the grace of God, *instantly responds to the faith that recognizes God as God.* The moment our faith gives God His proper place in our lives, that moment God begins to work as God; doing the work of God; saving the souls of men; and glorifying Himself. Let us believe that for to-day!

THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM

By Rev. A. C. Whitcombe

"And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"—II Samuel 23:14-15.

Somewhere in this province, it matters not where to the reader, there is a brisk little valley stream that winds its way along the foot of a steep wooded hill, throws itself in a white spray over a twenty-five foot cliff into a black, rainbow-arched, eddy-filled pool, and then glides away into the woods. There are many streams larger, stronger, and more beautiful, no doubt, but to one who saw it for the first time in his boyhood days just after coming from the West, it is the ideal to which all streams should attain. The sight of it amply repays a day's journey past many other streams, and to lie on its banks, or fish under the falls, or wander about the hills that hem it in, is a pleasure worth waiting a whole year to enjoy.

We all have some spot that is dear to us, some landmark that stirs our memory and imagination, usually connected with our early and carefree years. Such a spot was the "well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate" to David. The land was full of wells, deeper, colder, fuller than David's well. But he had not played beside them when a lad; he had not watered his flock and quenched his thirst at the end of a long tedious day at their edge; their troughs and curbing stirred his memory not at all, and the groups gathered about their mouths meant little or nothing to him. Bethlehem's well had refreshed him day after day; its people were his people; every stone held a memory of home and kin. A drink of its water would bring back his early years and refresh his weary soul. It would help him to forget that Saul hunted him; that his band of men were hard to handle, that his prospects were anything but bright.

David had what has been described as a "chequered career". At this time he was on a black square. We are all subject to such moves, some more than others, to be sure, but none of us enjoy the carefree joy of youth forever. It is a great thing to have a well of Bethlehem to draw from for refreshment at such times even if it is a precarious and costly business to reach it. One ought to be truly thankful for such places and experiences in the past. What is true in the secular and material realm is equally true in the religious life. It is altogether likely that to his companion at the well mouth David had remarked on the refreshing quality of the water, but more often he had drunk it and watered his sheep without thought or comment. It was not until he found himself an exiled leader of a band of malcontents, separated from home by a fierce foe, that he saw the true value of that water, once so easily reached and so often used. Many an one, fallen into "an hold", has been refreshed by the memory of something learned in a godly home, or from a faithful Bible School teacher, or preacher. Such things coming as they do to us, as a part of our ordinary routine, become in later years the well from which we get a soul-refreshing drink. We ought, therefore, not only to be sincerely thankful for such influences, but in our turn do everything possible to fill the impressionable years of the generation following with such reservoirs.

It is an old and true saying that, "We never miss the water till the well runs dry." But David's well did not run dry. Had that been the case he might have steeled himself to do without. It still flowed clear, cold, and refreshing; others enjoyed its water, he himself was almost within sight of it, but circumstances kept him away. That which had been his privilege so often as to make it seem no privilege suddenly became greatly desirable when he was held from it. The prodigal son thought home was a very tame place: the far country was much better, so he took all that he had and made his way to those green fields. When his money was gone and he found himself feeding swine, he saw that the grass was not so green as it had appeared to be from the hill near his father's house. He found that the far country had no bread to match the taste of the bread on his father's table, and no water to match the water of that old well beside the gate. He never would have found it out at home. Medical men say that no man has perfect eyesight. But many of the defects to which the human sight is heir may be

corrected by glasses properly fitted by an expert. Circumstances, sometimes, make good spectacles through which to see the true value of things we once thought common.

Many a saint, who took casually enough the privileges and blessings of a good church-home and its fellowship, has suddenly been shut out from it all through sickness, or the changing circumstances of life. Then they have longed for that which was at one time so common as not to be counted among their blessings. They would, now, if they could be, always present at the prayer meeting; they would always be in their place on Sunday, both at the Bible school and the church service. Now they pray continually for an opportunity to meet with God's people as earnestly as David longed for water from Bethlehem's well. They promise God solemnly that if He will heal them, or change their circumstances so that they can get out to worship Him where His people gather, they will value the unspeakable privilege and never hold it so lightly as to grumble at either the length or the frequency of the services.

Many a soul nourished under the influence of a godly home, brought up on the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, has found that circumstances make good spectacles through which to see the true value of things. Such an one did not stumble on the truth at home where such things irked him, but in the far country where they could not be had. Many such souls brought to themselves by memories of what they once had and the knowledge that such blessing now enjoyed by others might be once more their own, have risen, repented and returned. Now arrayed in the best robe, with a ring on their hand, and shoes on their feet, they continue to eat and drink and be merry in their Father's house, and they go at every opportunity to get a draught from the well "which is by the gate".

ENGLISH MODERNISM

The Apostacy of English Non-Conformity, E. J. Poole-Connor, April, 1933, 76 pp., published by Thynne and Co., Ltd., London.

The Evangelical author of this enlightening little book seeks to dissipate ignorance (p. 8) of the apostacy of Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists in England. He does it, and that by quoting statements of the unbelief of their representative leaders (we wish such writers would always give book and page references, as, alas, they too seldom do), and pointing out, though in moderate tones, how far into the "far country" of skepticism their intellectual prodigality has led them. The Congregationalists have held "that Christian doctrine is variable" (p. 17), and some of them have come to think that perhaps "the Christian religion itself may be only a transitory episode in the spiritual pilgrimage of Mankind" (quoted on p. 19). The great Spurgeon's protest in the Down-Grade Controversy (from 1887 on) "did little more than to show the strength of the current he opposed" (p. 33). Dr. T. R. Glover, perhaps the most noted leader of the English Baptists, who propose to celebrate the centenary of his birth, says he "preferred the homage and tattle of admirers to the challenge of independent minds" (quoted on p. 29)! The *Commentary* of Dr. A. S. Peake (Methodist), in its bold championship of the Higher Criticism, "helped to save us from the fundamental controversy", according to his obituary notice (p. 35); and through him and others like him, "the change from the older view of the Bible . . . took place almost without more than a few ripples on the surface of Church life" (quoted on p. 58). In any denomination there, Dr. Glover says that "to-day, if you want a real old obscurantist (by this nasty epithet he means Evangelical—Ed.) college, you have to found a new one" (p. 64). Thank God, then, that that is exactly what we have done in Toronto Baptist Seminary!

We do not, however, believe with Mr. Poole-Connor, that Scripture would lead us to "compromise" on "modes of baptism" (p. 71); but certainly all Evangelicals should fellowship in their common faith and together uphold the honour of our Lord. For a true believer to read this book is to be inspired, in sheer desperation, to do something to defend and proclaim the infallibility of Christ and the truth of the Bible.—W. G. B.

ARE YOU THERE?

In England the usual greeting on taking up the telephone is the question, "Are you there?" It may sound a little strange to those who are used to the "Hello" used on this side of the water, but one must admit that there is more meaning attached to the English phrase. It would be the height of folly, for instance, to go on talking for two hours over an expensive long-distance connection, without first of all ascertaining whether or not there were someone at the other end of the line.

That, however, is precisely what the Jarvis Street pulpit does for two hours every Sunday in the year over a radio "hook-up" that costs thousands of dollars. Since it has been my privilege to speak into the microphone at Jarvis Street I have often longed for the privilege of asking the question, "Are you there?" But inasmuch as that is not possible, or at least, as it is not possible for the speaker to receive an answer to that question, I have tried to do the next best thing by reconstructing my unseen audience from the letters, phone calls, and casual, indirect reports that come in during the week following the broadcast.

Here, then, is a picture of a small part—just a pew or so—of the extra-mural "congregation" of Jarvis Street, as I have been able to reconstruct it in my mind's eye. Here is a pew in London, Ontario, where sits a lady who has been an active Christian for forty years and yet, as she writes, "struggling deep in my heart with just such doubts as you mentioned . . . Had you called out my name when you began to preach, no more definite message could possibly have been prepared for me . . . How sorely I needed the consolation your message brought me." Another pew stretches across the whole length of the city of Toronto. On the east side of the pew a young man who has just got out of the hospital after an illness of some months listens to every word of the sermon. About the middle of the same pew there sits a mother in Israel, whom the war bereft of her two sons, and who has since suffered a stroke that has almost deprived her of the power of speech. She utters many times the one word that her tongue is able to frame easily, "Beautiful, beautiful". At the west end of the Toronto pew there is a semi-invalid, a visitor in the city, who, casually turning the knob of the radio, hears the Jarvis Street service, is blessed, and phones in to ask for a printed copy of the sermon. Just outside the city, in a farmhouse, there is a young man listening who is unable to leave the farm because of his employer's absence. "Glorious!" he said to us the next week. Farther away from Toronto another group of two families join in our service, and on the following Thursday drive forty-five miles to hear the Bible Lecture. "People drive fifty miles to see a hockey match, why shouldn't we do it to hear the gospel?" they said. About the same distance from the preacher, but in a different direction, there sits a partially-deaf member of our "congregation uncongregated". The loudspeaker is turned on full blast, and his ear is bent down toward it. In this way he is enabled to hear perfectly a sermon preached fifty miles away, while at his own church he can get only scraps of the service.

Other members of our "congregation" are on holidays and stay on holidays while the church comes to them. A medical man in a northern Muskoka summer resort enjoys the service, while in another part of the same country a group of people, some of them unsaved, gather in the summer cottage of a member of Jarvis Street to hear the gospel. Strangest of all, perhaps, a carload of people returning from a holiday in the north country tune into Jarvis Street, and for forty miles down a crowded highway listen to a sermon on Total Depravity. Evidently the driver kept that important doctrine in mind, for his passengers arrived safely in Toronto! There is still another group of people whom we hope may be included in the picture, but who are too distant from us for letters to have arrived yet: our missionaries in Liberia have recently bought a radio, and we are hoping to receive word from them any time that they have joined with the home folk in their Sunday evening service. Already they have been able to get "Amos 'n Andy"; traders on the coast report that Toronto has been heard there; so we may yet have a Jarvis Street pew in Africa.

And so we might go on describing our radio audience—who shall say how many there are? For every one that we

know of there are hundreds, and perhaps thousands that listen, are blessed, and go about their daily work without the preacher ever having the slightest knowledge of where his words have fallen, or what fruit they have brought forth.

Long before the days of radio Longfellow expressed the same idea very beautifully:

"I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

"I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?"

"Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend."

A beautiful thought indeed! And when the arrow is the arrow of conviction, and the song that of Moses and the Lamb, we have the assurance that after many days we shall find them again. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it".—W. S. Whitcombe.

THREE HUNGRY, HEALTHY CHILDREN ASK FOR MORE

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

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

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THE SEMINARY CORNER

THOROUGHLY FURNISHED

A few months ago I had occasion to visit a physician, and among other things we talked about the ministry and its difficulties. In his emphatic and vigorous manner, my medical friend said, "It is the toughest racket there is to-day." While I should not venture to use the word "racket" to describe the gospel ministry, there can be no question as to the appropriateness of the word "tough"; it is equally certain that it requires "tough" men to carry on the gospel ministry, and I use the word "tough" in its proper meaning of "possessing great endurance".

Toughness in the human spirit—"the ability to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"—comes partly from the mental and moral make-up, and partly from the discipline to which body and mind have been subjected. In all walks of life, increasingly great importance is being attached to this matter of training, and in no other calling is there greater need for this than in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the church was still in its infancy, the Apostle Paul insisted on the necessity of the man of God being "thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Of course, training will not take the place of a divine call or the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of a man: the most exacting course of treatment would never impart temper to a piece of wood. But, being given the divine preparation, the necessity for a thorough training is by no means removed. The service of God in the world to-day calls as never before for the best men with the best training possible.

Toronto Baptist Seminary came into existence seven years ago to train young men and women who believe the Bible for an effective ministry at home and abroad. In spite of many prophecies to the contrary, success has crowned our efforts, and there are now Seminary graduates in every quarter of the globe preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. The prospects for a good enrollment next term are unusually promising; and we have many friends, far and near, who have taken this work to their hearts. It would be of interest to such friends, as well as to prospective students, to be given a bird's eye view of the Seminary courses and their relations one to the other. The prospectus, which is sent free on request, furnishes a detailed description of the courses, but for those who have not had the opportunity of studying that interesting treatise, perhaps the following sketch will give some idea of how we go about our work in the classrooms.

Having received our students with a firm belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and praying that the power of the Holy Spirit may characterize their ministry during their stay with us and afterwards, our first, last, and only task, is to teach them the word of God and how to preach it effectively. Each course is made subsidiary to this great central purpose, though various courses seek to arrive at the goal by different routes. All our work might be roughly classified under three general headings, and, to follow Kipling's little rhyme about those

" strong serving men,
Who taught me all I knew"

their names are "What", "Why", and "How".

First of all then, come those courses that set out to answer the question, "What saith the Scripture?" It has been well said that most of our difficulties in connection with the Bible come from reading books about it, rather than reading the Word itself. These courses have this in common: they require a careful study of the text of the Bible, whether it be in English, Hebrew or Greek, intensive or extensive. In Bible Introduction, which is taught in all the years, every student is required to read the whole Bible and to master the contents of each book. The classes in Biblical Exegesis seek to "expose" the Scriptures, as the negro preacher said, by a minute study of representative portions of the Old and New Testaments. This microscopic method is continued in the advanced classes in Greek and Hebrew on the basis of the original text, so that together with the admirable discip-

line that the language study gives him, the student also has the thrill that comes from getting the exact shade of meaning of a word or phrase just as it came from the hand of Isaiah or Paul. The Life of Christ class, as its name implies, makes a special study of the story of the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is given in the four Gospels.

A belief in the inspiration of Scripture carries with it the idea of a oneness of purpose and teaching throughout the various books. That is to say, the Bible is not merely a collection of books, but is, as the very word implies, "The Book", presenting from first to last, "One Lord, One Faith". It is from this point of view that we approach the Bible in the Systematic Theology classes, seeking to grasp that unity of view that binds together the various parts of revelation, and to teach what the Bible reveals concerning God, Sin, Redemption, and all that these vast themes involve.

In these days, as never before, perhaps, we must be ready to give a "reason of the hope that is in us". Like the farmer who studies the habits of the weeds and parasites that trouble his fields and flocks in order that he may learn how to wage war upon them, the Christian teacher must know not only what he does believe, but what he does not believe. Thus we have courses which answer the question, "Why is Christianity True?" The work in Bible Introduction includes a study of the objections raised by the "Higher Critics", and shows that the Bible's account of itself as the unveiling of the mind and will of God is much more credible than the evolutionary theory of its growth from the "religious consciousness" of the human mind. Christian Evidences answers the arguments of the rationalists and agnostics, while Modernism and Modern Cults unveils the sophistries of the counterfeit Christianity of present day sects, as the study of Non-Christian Religions does for those of ancient times.

That most fascinating and important subject known as Church History may be thought of in several ways: as a missionary study continuing the Book of Acts, or as a course in Systematic Theology dramatized in two thousand years of history. But in whatever way one thinks of it, this subject is invaluable for the balance and perspective that it gives to one's outlook on the world to-day.

If the subjects already dealt with answer the "What" and the "Why" of the preacher's message, the rest answer the "How" of it. We are indeed fortunate in the classes in Homiletics in having a professor who teaches not only by precept, but by example, for the occupant of this chair is the pastor of Jarvis Street Church. Under his able guidance the prospective preachers study the works of the great preachers whose sermons have commanded large audiences and whose ministries have been blessed to the salvation of many. The study of English is also given a prominent place on the curriculum with a view to enabling the students to use their mother tongue as an instrument of clear thought and precise expression. Problems of church management and pastoral duties are discussed in the Pastoral Theology class. Last year work in French was added to prepare men and women for service among our fellow-citizens in French Roman Catholic Quebec. Christian Psychology, Latin and Missions, are invaluable both from the practical and cultural points of view.

In addition to these academic exercises each student is expected to have some regular Christian work in which he or she is engaged. These activities include visitation work in hospitals and from door-to-door, distribution of tracts, teaching of classes, and preaching in the open air, in missions, churches, factories, and jails.

Enough has already been said of our work to convince the reader that we have no place for sluggards in the Toronto Baptist Seminary. We would candidly advise any who are looking for an easy time to avoid the Seminary, but to those who have learned that we enter into the best things of life only through "much tribulation" we believe that the thoroughness of the training which we offer will make a strong appeal.—W. S. Whitcombe.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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No. 3

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 37

September 10th, 1933

THIRD QUARTER**NUMBERING THE PEOPLE**Lesson Text: II Samuel, chapter 24;
I Chron., chapter 21.

Golden Text: "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly". II Samuel 24:10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—II Chron. 32:24-33.

Tuesday—Prov. 18:1-12.

Wednesday—Eccles. 11:1-10.

Thursday—Psalm 57:1-11.

Friday—II Cor. 4:1-10.

Saturday—Col. 3:1-11.

**I. THE NUMBERING OF ISRAEL
(vs. 1-9).**

The Bible flatters no man, but tells the truth about all. It seeks not to hide, or gloss over, men's sins, but is fearless in their exposure. Such an attitude is adopted, not with the purpose of satisfying curiosity, or blackening the character of the guilty, but in order that the truth might be known, God's grace magnified in the forgiveness of the sin, and warning given to all. David occupied the highest position in the land, and he had been greatly favoured of God, yet his mistakes and sins are recorded. This is an evidence of the impartiality of Scripture. God is not a respecter of persons, (Acts 10:34), and the Book of which He is the Author, of necessity manifests the same characteristic. Sin is sin wherever committed, and the greater the personage the greater the responsibility for the same.

The sin recorded in this lesson was connected with the numbering of Israel. At first sight its nature seems somewhat hard to understand, as on former occasions such numbering had taken place, (Num. 1:2; 26:2). It would seem from this that the taking of a census was not in itself wrong; but when other factors entered in, it was accounted sinful. These factors are not explained in this case, but it would seem as if the action taken was either a deliberate transgression of a command of God, or the engaging in an unnecessary activity reflecting on the leadership, protection, and wisdom of God. In both cases the

act would be wrong. Possibly, however, the sin was deeper than the outward act, and lay in the motive governing the same. We are told that Satan moved David to "number Israel and Judah", (v. 1), and doubtless he did this through an appeal to the pride and ambition of the king. The Lord had prospered him, and added to his dominions, and he may have desired to know the number of his men for some selfish purpose ministering to his pride of possession. The Lord was his Protector, therefore a large army was unnecessary to guard him against his enemies. His territory was large enough, therefore he need not plan any scheme of aggrandisement. He had no reason for being other than content and trustful, yet he listened to the Evil One and sinned against God.

David's action must have been clearly contrary to the will of God, as Joab, the warrior, who was not what one might call a deeply religious man, sought to dissuade the king from carrying it out, (v. 3), but failing in this he, and the captains of the host performed the duty assigned them, (vs. 4-9). Note the nature of the work assigned the leaders, the manner of its accomplishment, the determination of David respecting it, his foolishness in not listening to reason, the fact that Satan uses even the Lord's people in the carrying out of his purposes, (Matt. 16:23).

**II. THE REPENTANCE OF THE KING
(vs. 10-14).**

After the numbering of the people, which was accomplished in nine months and twenty days, (v. 8), David's heart smote him, and he confessed his sin unto God, and desired Him to take away his iniquity, (v. 10). It is a pity he did not give proper consideration to his plan before he embarked upon it. He then would have been saved a great deal of misery, and thousands of his people would have been spared their lives. All meditated actions should be considered from the Lord's standpoint and proceeded with only if approved of by Him. If, however, sin has been committed, there should be repentance for the same, (Acts 2:38), which implies real sorrow for, and cessation of, the sin; meaning that the individual exercised thereby is sorry enough for the sin to stop it. Note the fact that underlying repentance there is the consciousness of sin against God, a sense of guilt, without excuse.

The reality of David's repentance did not mean the avoidance of the penalty for the sin. The prophet Gad was instructed to place before the king three things in the way of penalty, one of which he was bidden to choose. In this we see judgment mixed with mercy. This divine attitude is also manifest in relation to Adam, (Gen. 3:22-24), to the antediluvian world, (Gen. 6:7, 8), the cities of the Plain, (Gen. 19:15), and other occasions of a similar nature. In his choice, David was invited to state whether he would prefer seven years of famine, three months of fleeing before his enemies, or three days pestilence (vs. 12, 13). Very wisely, he placed himself in the hands of the Lord, and signified his willingness to accept what he would give him, rather than trust

himself in the hands of men, (v. 14). It should be observed that sin always brings a penalty. God told Adam that disobedience to His command would mean death, (Gen. 2:17), and the whole human race has suffered as a consequence. In the matter of salvation our Lord has borne the penalty for sin, (I Pet. 2:24), and now through acceptance of Him as Saviour we are forgiven and justified from all things, (I John 1:9; Rom. 5:1), and life takes the place of death, (Eph. 1:1).

**III. THE PENALTY FOR SIN
(vs. 15-28).**

David fell into the hands of the Lord in the matter of judgment, and as a result a pestilence came upon Israel "from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men", (v. 15). This was a great calamity and affected the nation physically, spiritually, and numerically. In respect to all, but particularly the last, the pride and ambition of the king would be deeply touched, as it meant the reduction of the citizenship by a considerable number. However, David was by this time in a humble, submissive mood, and would not feel this aspect of the matter in the same manner, or to the same degree, as he would have done before his repentance. His feeling after his change of heart was that of genuine sorrow for the suffering of his people. He admitted his own sin in the taking of the census, declared their innocence in the matter, and prayed that God's hand would be against him, and not against them, (v. 17). Note the circumstances of David's prayer, (vs. 16, 17); its direct, supplicating nature, its efficacy, and the evident sincerity and earnestness of the king.

In answer to David's prayer, Gad was sent with instructions to him relative to that which God desired him to do for the removal of the judgment. Israel had been visited from Dan to Beersheba, but the progress of the destroying angel had been stayed at Jerusalem, and David is directed to rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, (v. 18), situated near Jerusalem, at the place where the angel was stayed. David obeyed the command, offered burnt offerings unto the Lord, and the plague was stayed from Israel, (vs. 19-25). Note the significance of judgment being stayed by sacrifice, the prominence of the altar in Scripture, and the application of this to our Lord's sacrifice on Calvary. There is no judgment to those who trust in the finished work of the cross, (Rom. 8:1). The principle enunciated by David respecting offerings is also worthy of consideration, (v. 24). He would not offer unto the Lord that which cost him nothing. His religion was not of the cheap variety. A great many people are seeking to go to heaven by the cheapest route. They do not hesitate to spend on themselves, but they are loath to give generously to the service of God. Love delights to give of its best, and if we love God it will surely be manifest in all that we give Him. The generosity of Araunah is worthy of emulation, (v. 22).

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HUNGER TIME

Liberian letters tell us about the serious "Hunger Time" which has come upon the people. It is a time of suffering greater in severity than has been experienced in any year since the establishment of the Regular Baptist Mission in that needy land.

In the homeland also "Hunger Time" has been upon the people and the pinch of poverty and the sorrows of idleness have been felt throughout the length and breadth of the country. There is a famine in our land as surely as there is in the faraway Mission fields, a famine far reaching in its extent and yet there has been little turning to the Lord and little intercession that His wrath may be turned away. Men have been in the furnace of affliction but have not turned from their wickedness and besought the Lord, for there is a famine in the Land for the message of the Book of Books. The prophets have been slow of speech and few are aware of the peril in which they stand.

"Hunger Time" is upon the agencies endeavouring to spread the Gospel message. During the summer months there is a greater dearth than ever in the land and less flows into the waiting reservoirs from whence the thirst of the waiting ones for the "Water of Life" must be quenched. The storehouses from which the bread is dispensed are also empty because those who have much have forgotten how hard the pangs of hunger are to bear. They seldom remember that in the day when they called upon One for the Water which satisfieth, the cup was lifted to their parched lips and they lived anew; they are unmindful of the "pit from whence they were taken" and the woes of those days of separation from fellowship and of the vows that have often been upon their lips concerning the winning of souls and the publishing of the Good Tidings.

The Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec is the reservoir sustaining the work the Lord has entrusted to it in Liberia, West Africa. It is the storehouse which helps to support the Home missionaries; missionaries among the French Roman Catholic people; the trail rangers of the Western provinces; the circuit rider and a ministry to those who were the aborigines of this land.

"Hunger Time" retards progress. Let us see to it that this is not true of our work.

A BABY'S TEARS

In the Holy record we read of one who had compassion upon a little child for "Behold, the babe wept" and now we read in very modern times of other hearts being touched because of tears upon the face of a little one and the child's great need. We tell the story as gleaned from letters written by Mrs. Hancox and Miss Lane.

While Miss Lane was about her duties one morning she was surprised to see a very tiny little girl, the picture of distress and misery, near the house and found that she had come to beg a tin that she might cook some wild potato leaves. She appeared to be about six years old but was so thin and short of breath and her small baby face bore the marks of tears that it was hardly credible that she should be alone. Her story pieced out later was a sad one. Her mother had died and she had been brought from the interior as a pledge for a debt and all that that involved can only be imagined, but here she was at the Mission Station, a little one in desperate need. The tin was supplied to her and she went away followed by Miss Lane's thought. Later she came back and as Miss Lane's house was full and she could not bear to turn her out for the night, she sent her with a note to Mrs. Hancox and she was taken in to sleep in the girls' house. "Of course, we took her in", writes Mrs. Hancox, "I gave her a warm bath, cut her medicine from her neck, dressed her and put a string of beads around her neck. Poor wee thing, she is so frightened that they will come and get her."

REJOICING TOGETHER

Just last week, we published a note telling of how the Lord was blessing the testimony of the Willowdale Baptist Church and adding unto its numbers.

This week, we make reference to it again because, in the meantime, we have received word from Rev. and Mrs. Hancox who formerly laboured at Willowdale and are still members of that Church. Mr. and Mrs. Hancox are rejoicing in the blessing that has been experienced under Pastor Dempster's ministry. They write—"Some mail came from home this week to cheer our hearts. Willowdale has been having a soul refreshing time. One boy wrote us the finest letter telling of his baptism and his desire to work for the Master. While we were at Willowdale this boy was quite indifferent and now he is out and out for the Lord. We rejoice indeed. He tells us that it is hard at High School just to witness, but we hear that he has produced his Bible many times in school and has proved many an argument."

Mr. and Mrs. Hancox speak of others in their letter to whom salvation has come and express their thankfulness to God that he has brought this blessed experience into lives coveted for Him. They say, "May the Lord continue to pour His grace upon you all. We pray constantly that such blessing shall visit all our churches."

AN IMPORTANT EVENT

Not so very long ago, it was our pleasure to report the recognition of the Briscoe Street Regular Baptist Church

of London, Ontario, and review the accomplishments of that people and now the Pastor of Briscoe St. Church has supplied us with a splendid report of the Recognition and ordination services held in connection with the Trinity Baptist Church of Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Had we but room for the whole report, it would be read with interest, but our news always over-runs our space and so it must be condensed considerably and possibly await fuller mention in the Annual Report of the Executive Board. We now report on part of the service and next week will speak of the Ordination.

Niagara Falls

On June 22nd, there gathered in the Trinity Church, Niagara Falls, a company of people, representative of several churches in the fellowship of the Union. The occasion was to form a council to consider the recognition of the Church as a Regular Baptist Church and accept its request to fellowship with the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec.

Rev. Clifford J. Loney of Stanley Avenue Baptist Church, Hamilton, was chosen Moderator and Rev. R. D. Guthrie of Briscoe St., London, as Clerk. At the call of the Moderator, Mr. J. S. Bennett, a member of the Church, read from the Minutes, the resolution of the church calling a council for the consideration of recognition.

The history of Trinity Church was reviewed and it was noted that in March, 1932, the work then known as Beulah Mission, sought a closer adherence to New Testament principles and counselled with Rev. Clifford J. Loney of Hamilton, who was then President of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches, regarding fellowship. After outlining their work and their position, Pastor Loney agreed that a supply would be sent them for one month and in April, 1932, the Mission was organized as a Regular Baptist Mission with a membership of seventeen. The meetings were then held in the I.O.O.F. Hall on Main Street and a call was extended to Mr. James Fraser of Hamilton to become Pastor. Mr. Fraser began his ministry on May 1st, 1932, and since that date much blessing has attended the preaching of the Word. From June until October, meetings were held in a tent at the corner of Lundy's Lane and Main Street and souls were saved, and the Mission strengthened through this means of ministering. At the close of the summer, the Mission moved back into the Hall and carried on its services until November 7th when the membership organized as a Regular Baptist Church. On December 10th, 1932, the building which the church at present occupies was secured and the average attendance increased to sixty in the morning and one hundred and twenty-five at the evening service. During the year twenty-six believers were baptized.