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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

HORSES AND CHARIOTS OF FIRE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, October 22nd, 1933.

(Stenographically reported)

Broadcast over CFRB, 690 k.c., as is every Sunday evening service of Jarvis Street Church, from 7 to 9 o'clock,
Eastern Standard Time.

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."—III Kings 6:15-17.

Prayer by Rev. W. S. Whitcombe

Thou art very great, O Lord; Thou art crowned with honour and majesty. We cannot fathom the depth of Thy love, nor rise to the height of Thy majesty; but we come to Thee knowing that Thou art, and that Thou art the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Thee. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Thy ways higher than our ways, and Thy thoughts than our thoughts.

We know that Thou doest all things well; and we trust therefore that Thou wilt order all the circumstances and events of our lives in accordance with Thy plans, for Thy glory and for our good. We rejoice that Thou art not far from any one of us, for in Thee we live, and move, and have our being. We bless Thee that God in the person of His Son hath all His mightiest works outdone. We rejoice in Jesus Christ to-night, for we know His grace, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

We praise Thee for the death of Christ, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin. We praise Thee for the sanctifying presence and power of Thy Holy Spirit. We rejoice in the hope that is set before us. Because Thou hast blessed us in past days, because our cup has run over, we believe that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Because Thou hast been our help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings we rejoice. Thou alone knowest how many, how manifold, are the needs of this congregation, and of the larger invisible radio host who join with us in worship. Yet all our needs are met—yea, more than met in Thy boundless grace. Enable us to believe that Thou dost order every step of our way, make us to know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to Thy purpose.

Comfort those who sorrow, bind up the broken-hearted, strengthen those who are weak. Be merciful, we beseech Thee, to those who are called upon to suffer. May every trial of life be as an angel of God, ministering to us the riches of Thy grace, according to Thy loving kindness, and the multitude of Thy tender mercies.

Let Thy word find entrance to our hearts to-night, that we may rejoice in the freedom of the sons of God. Make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to hear the voice of the Son of man and live. Save souls, we pray Thee; and unto Thy name we shall give all the praise and glory through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Long ago a very wise man observed: "This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, wisdom is better than strength: Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard."

The text I have announced to you this evening is taken from a story which strikingly illustrates the principle of the wise man's observation. The king of Syria warred against Israel, but after a while he discovered that no matter how wisely he laid his plans, no matter how perfect his strategy, by some means or another his quarry invariably scented his approach, and escaped out of his hand again and again. At

length it became so evident that the king of Israel was advised in advance of his strategy, that the king of Syria began to suspect that he was the victim of treachery. He called his officers about him and enquired, "Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?" To which one of his officers replied, "None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

Thus the king of Syria was told that the spiritual forces of a nation are really mightier than all her weapons of war. Notwithstanding, the poor man's wisdom is often despised; and in this case, when the king of Syria learned that it was by the advice of Elisha the prophet the king of Israel had delivered himself out of Syria's trap repeatedly, he went with his army in pursuit of Elisha, and, finding him in Dothan, encompassed the city roundabout with his horses and chariots of war. When the servant of Elisha rose early in the morning, and looked out upon the country surrounding, he found that he was in the midst of a besieged city, that the whole force of Syria's army had been assembled against his master, and there seemed to be no avenue of escape.

Then it was that the servant exclaimed, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" To which Elisha answered, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

This evening I shall try to expound to you the principle that wisdom is more precious than rubies, and that whoever has become wise unto salvation, and has learned that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding, whose feet have been set in the way of righteousness, will invariably be brought into a city like that of Elisha. We shall examine the text in order that we may be enabled, by divine grace, to interpret some of the experiences of life, to understand some of the hard things that come our way. We shall think for a little while of the perplexities of the faithful, of the advantages of the just, and of that spiritual illumination which is indispensable to true peace in the soul.

I.

HOW MANY ARE THE PERPLEXITIES OF THE FAITHFUL! Here is a man of God who takes a certain course under divine direction, and because of it he is pursued by the forces of evil, and finds himself at last shut up in Dothan. That is literal history, but because it is literal history it is also a parable of life. The elements of life, while they may vary in form, are ever the same in nature; and whoever takes the path of righteousness will find that it will not be lighted and paved and policed to the end of the way. He will often find himself in what appears to be a *cul-de-sac*, shut up in a city from which he finds it impossible, by the exercise of any human power, to extricate himself.

I desire to help you to a clear understanding of a certain principle which is fundamental, and which inheres in the truth which this text so graphically sets forth. That principle is this, that whoever applies himself unto righteousness, and seeks to bring his life

into conformity to the will of God, will invariably find himself opposed by all that belongs to the carnal mind which "is enmity against God"; and as surely as he seeks to make application of principles of righteousness to daily life and conduct, just so surely will he find that the ramifications of that principle of enmity that is opposed to the law of God will be opposed to him; and that this vile world is not a friend to grace to help us on to God.

In the modern view, that abnormality, that strange irregularity, that moral eccentricity, which the Bible calls sin, that alien thing which operates in every life, and which every thoughtful man must observe, not only in the lives of others, but particularly in his own—I say, that thing which the Bible calls sin, in the popular view has lost much of its offensiveness. It is now regarded as something that is characteristic of a stage in human development, and that by and by we shall leave it behind us. In the thought of many it has ceased to be something that is at variance with the moral order, and that is opposed to the will of God. The fact is, sin is not a stage in some divinely ordered metamorphosis, it is not a shell, a cocoon, which the human chrysalis is to slough off in the course of a natural emergence into a higher life. I affirm it is not true that men are naturally ascending. On the contrary, they are naturally descending in the scale, our evolutionary friends to the contrary notwithstanding.

Frequently do I allude to that strange delusion which has so fastened itself upon the public mind that it is almost impossible to find a bit of literature anywhere that is not coloured by it. It is responsible in no small measure for the present-day condition of things. But the fact is, sin is an alien, a foreigner; it does not belong to us; it is at war with the constitution of things. It is directly opposed to God, and His laws. As soon as a man is led to see that, and is led to a true repentance, which means a change of mind toward that foreign element in human life, instead of loving it, or even tolerating it, seeing it at last in its true character, he abhors it, and shares the divine point of view: hence it becomes to him the "abominable thing" which God hates; and by divine grace he is enabled to turn his back upon it, and to seek to conform his life to principles of righteousness revealed in the Word of God. As soon as he does that, he finds himself pursued by all the hounds of hell; and in every direction discovers that he is at war with things as they are. He finds himself at last—again and again indeed—shut up in some city of Dothan, besieged by enemies. If he has no vision of reinforcements for his beleaguered city than can come through natural channels, there is nothing for him to do but to cry out in anguish and alarm, as did the servant of Elisha, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

And now let us observe the working of that principle in two or three obvious directions.

Look, for example, at the man who seeks deliverance from the lusts of the flesh, who sets himself to bring the mind of the flesh, with all its covetings and worldly desires, and its not only earthly, but earthy, ambitions, into subjection and subordination to the higher law of the spirit. When he endeavours to "put off the old man" with his deeds, and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true

holiness", he finds it at once true that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other". Faithfully to pursue a course of righteousness leads the man into ever fiercer conflict.

One might cite many examples, but consider the man who is an alcoholic, the unfortunate man who has developed within him, or who perhaps has inherited in part, tendencies toward alcoholism, which become at last as a fire burning within him. He has to fight against that. Then, objectively, externally to himself, there are always found multiplied temptations in the form of opportunities to indulge the appetite which he has encouraged. That is true of all fleshly indulgences, of everything that is contrary to the law of God. Whenever the sin within a man seeks opportunity for expression, he will never want for outward opportunity for its indulgence. And when he seeks to deliver himself from it, he discovers that he is doing battle against an army, not against one. He finds that all sins are related, and that when he seeks the subjugation of one, they join together as an army; and he is shut up at last, as a captive in a city, unable to deliver his soul.

It is true in other directions. I may cite another example. I knew a man intimately who was a man of business, the president of a number of industrial concerns, but I speak of his relation to one particularly. That concern manufactured things which no private individual could use: his only customers were municipalities. He had to deal with public corporations. I need not tell you what he manufactured, but the product of that concern was of no use to individuals: it was of use only to a city, town, or village. He told me that his product had been examined by experts, and that his company had taken prizes at many exhibitions. When one of his agents approached some municipality, with a view to selling one of the articles his company produced, invariably an expert was appointed to test it, to see whether it was up to standard.

He said they had never had an expert reject their product; they always approved, and recommended the purchase of the article. Then came the day when they had to sell it, and somebody was appointed by that municipality to do the business. My friend said, "I am ashamed to say it, but I found it impossible to sell anything to any corporation unless I was willing to pay the agent a bribe for buying the article. I did not care for the money, I was willing to reduce the price, but such was the practice that unless we were willing to warm the hands of public servants we could sell nothing. We have thousands of dollars' worth of stock in our warehouses, but as a Christian man I will not resort to bribery. I will not do it, if I have to shut up my business." He tried again and again, and found it the same everywhere. At last he led that corporation to make an assignment, and they went out of business. He found himself in Dothan as a business man, surrounded by armies; and it was impossible for him to extricate himself from the situation.

I doubt not I speak to many this evening who have endeavoured to do that which is right in the sight of God, who have tried to make application of the principles of the religion of Christ to every-day life. They have tried to pursue a straight course, but in their pursuit of it have found it has led them into Dothan again and again.

The man says, "I do not know what to do, sir. I find it hard to be a Christian in business, to be honest and straightforward." I hope the case I have stated was an extreme one, but it is not a story from a book: it is a story from real life, that of a man of whose integrity there could be no question.

The principle applies in many directions. It is nonsense to say that it is easy to do right. Whether you work in the office, in the shop, in the school, in political life—every man finds it an exceedingly difficult thing to make application of Christian principles to every-day life. I have a good deal of sympathy with men in high places, who, in their public utterances before they have been entrusted with an important office, have made certain pledges to the people, who later have failed to implement their promises. They made them in good faith, they intended when they made them to fulfil them as soon as they found themselves in positions of authority. But when at last they arrived at the position, they found they were surrounded by so many that it became a practical impossibility to carry out the programme which they had projected. They found themselves in Dothan, just as did Elisha and his servant.

That is my first simple word, that whoever would be faithful to the highest principles in life, whoever would receive Christ, first as Saviour for the forgiveness of sin, to receive from Him the priceless gift of life eternal, and who would thereafter seek to put into practice the principles of His religion, finds himself often perplexed. You witnessed the ordinance of baptism this evening. I have known many who, in the exercise of their religious convictions, have found themselves in Dothan. I do not think anybody cares whether you are baptized or not, if that is all there is in your religion. You may be immersed—and immersed a hundred times—nobody will object to that. But if your baptism means what the Scripture teaches, if it means the putting of the cross and the grave of Christ between you and the old life, if it means that you are really buried with Christ, and that you rise to walk in newness of life, and if indeed, finding yourself on resurrection ground, you not only call Jesus, Lord, but endeavour to do the things that He says, if thereafter you live a life of separation, shut up to the service of God to be a witness to the power of His grace, not only on Sunday, but seven days of the week, not only in church but in all the relationships of life—if you do that, you will find yourself driven into Dothan again and again.

In our day a man who endeavours to practise his religion seven days a week is supposed to be almost mentally unbalanced. You can scarcely retain your reputation for common sanity, and be an out-and-out Christian everywhere. They say, "What has happened the man? He must be queer. He is a fanatic. He is a religious person." Every Christian ought to be always on duty, like Elisha, speaking the word and doing the will of God; but if you do, you will get to Dothan.

II.

That is a gloomy view of things, is it not? But there is a brighter side; therefore a word about THE ADVANTAGES OF THE JUST. Elisha said, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The young man did not see it at the moment. But the Bible is full of that truth, that goodness is invulnerable and invincible; that in the end of the day righteousness must

triumph. Light must have ascendancy and ultimate dominion over darkness.

That is true of our endeavour to live according to the will of God, that they which be with us are far more than such as are against us. Let me once again remark that sin is not an element in any sort of evolutionary process. Sin, in its very nature, is revolutionary. It is contrary to the moral order of things. It is an offence against God. The American Revolution resulted in the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States, and the establishment of one of the greatest and most influential nations of the earth. But the revolution involved in the operation of that power which the Bible calls sin cannot possibly have such an issue. The constitution of the universe is against it. God is against it. He has laid aside neither His sceptre nor His sword. There is no possibility of any man, or any company of men, ultimately triumphing over the principles of righteousness. Whoever takes the side of evil, however numerically superior the forces may, at the moment, seem to be, takes the losing side. Righteousness must triumph at last, in the end of the day, because "they that be with us are more than they that be with them".

I said that the constitution of things is against sin. I wonder will you follow me a moment in this simple and yet perhaps not perfectly obvious argument. The man who takes the side of righteousness immediately invokes the help of all the forces of nature. Look at your own body, for instance. You know very well that sin, if persisted in, enslaves the whole man. You have heard of men drinking themselves to death. I suppose that is terribly possible. It is possible for a man to go to such lengths in the indulgence of the body, in various ways, that at length he will destroy himself.

But have you not wondered that some men are not more quickly destroyed? Have you not observed some man running in the course of evil, and marvelled that he lived so long? He may have violated I know not how many laws of nature in the pursuit of pleasure, perhaps he has given himself inordinately to business, trampling the laws of nature under feet—and still the brittle thread of life holds on and does not snap. When the man is taken ill, the doctor says he has a marvellous constitution, that he has marvellous recuperative powers. The truth is that God has so constituted us that the moment a man repents and turns from his sin, everything there is in him begins to fight on the side of righteousness, and the recuperative powers of nature begin to assert themselves. The man has an appetite for drink, and indulges it until he has what is called alcohol tissue, and the system demands liquor. He says, "I will not touch it again, if I die in the attempt." Little by little he discovers that that tissue becomes normal, and assists him in the very battle in which he is engaged. The constitution of things is on the side of God, and not on the side of sinful men. We have but to turn to Him in true repentance, changing our mind, being brought by divine grace into harmony with the nature of things, and we shall find all the resources of Deity, in all realms, are at the command of faith, to reinforce us in our struggle against evil.

You say, "How does that apply to the man down in the counting-house?" Take a very simple illustration, and I think recent events in the business world have

tended to establish the truth of what I am about to say. Here is a principle known to every child in the kindergarten, that two and two make four. They do not make three or five: they make four. That law cannot be ignored in the bank or in business. Try it, and you will find the truth of that which was sung to you to-night. Men have put twenty thousand dollars into a business, and upon that foundation they have tried to build a several hundred thousand dollar structure. That was all right in sunny days, but when the storm broke the assets of the business were discovered, and the twenty thousand dollar foundation would not carry the superstructure of several hundred thousand dollars—and down it came, and the man was bankrupt.

Another man said, "I will be honest and straightforward if I never get rich," and he observed that law which is as inexorable as the law that two and two make four. He said, "I will give sixteen ounces to the pound, a hundred cents to the dollar, value for value received, in goods or in labour. I will deal honestly with my fellows." He did not get very rich, but when the storm came it beat upon his house, and it stood because it was founded on a rock of reality. You cannot divorce morality from the material affairs of life, from business or any other line of human endeavour, without at last paying the penalty.

On the other hand, as we adhere to principles of righteousness—in a little business, or a big business soundly based—we shall be able to say to all our opponents, "Aha, you have found out at last that they who were with us were more than they which were with you. Ye can do nothing against the truth, in any realm, but always we must be for the truth." And if we are for the truth, the truth will be for us. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

III.

THERE IS AN ILLUMINATION OF THE SOUL WHICH IS INDISPENSABLE TO PEACE. The young man got up early in the morning, and looked out upon the plains immediately surrounding and the mountains in the distance. He saw nothing in the mountains, but he saw much in the plains. The horses and chariots of Syria were round about the city. That is all he saw. He said, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" He needed no special revelation to see the horses and chariots. It was apparent to everybody that Elisha and his servant were in a trap, shut up by the powers of the king of Syria.

There are many people like this young man. The world is full of them just now. They are fond of telling us it is "an awful day". You will meet them to-morrow—men with their eyes downcast, and their spirits keeping company with their boots. "How are you to-day?" They can only answer, "Alas! Alas! how shall we do!"

I suppose the young man is to be commended for getting up early in the morning. There is no light upon life's duties like the light of the morning. But I warn you, if you get up early in the morning to look for trouble you will be sure to find it before the rest of the household get down to breakfast. Many people get out on the wrong side of the bed, and they greet us in the early morning with, "Alas! Alas!" You need not come to me with that kind of tale. I can say that myself. I know the difficulties of life are very real. Only the foolish optimist will deny it.

I crossed the sea some years ago with a man who was one of the diamond kings of South Africa, a multi-millionaire; we sat at the same table. I have heard many definitions of an optimist and a pessimist; but this was his: "An optimist is a man who does not care what happens as long as it does not happen to him; and a pessimist is a man who has lived too long with an optimist." I thought it was rather good.

This man certainly was no optimist: "Alas, my master; how shall we do?" But there are some good things to be said for him. *He was wise in saying what he had to say to his master.* He did not run through the streets of Dothan crying out his alarm, but he sought audience with his master, and poured out his complaints before him. He told him of all the difficulties he had visualized, of all the enemies of which he was afraid: he contented himself with talking to his master.

I recommend that course to you. You women will have difficulties in the home, but spare your husband. You husbands will have difficulties down in the office; do not come home and retail all your troubles, as though your wife has none. She has had the children all day—and now she has you into the bargain, and that is more trouble. It is a good thing to go to the Master when the king of Syria and his army threaten us. Talk to Him and to nobody else.

I have heard of a man who, when the ship was passing through a storm at sea, went around among the passengers and produced something like a panic. There are always some people on shipboard who are crossing the troubled sea for the first time. When I was returning from England a few weeks ago there were two women among the passengers, who evidently had never crossed before. The sea was not rough, but the ship rolled a little! These two ladies were discussing the outlook, and one said consolingly that she had read that drowning was a quick death, and that she understood it was not particularly unpleasant. Turn an alarmist loose among people of that sort and you can soon have a panic on your hands. The man of whom I speak was somewhat like that. He went to the captain and said, "Captain, do you think we shall survive?" "Oh," said the captain, "I think we may if I can get everybody to do his duty." "Duty? Is there anything I can do, sir?" "Yes, come with me out on deck. See that rope? Hold it until I come back and release you from duty."

The man held the rope for hours, as though the safety of the ship depended upon it. When the storm was over the captain returned and said, "I think you may safely let go now." The man walked proudly along the deck as though he was a hero, and was greatly chagrined that the people did not recognize him as such. He thought they should have passed a resolution of appreciation and thanks, but nobody paid any attention to him. Finally he went to the captain and asked him about it. "It is strange," said he, "that a man should serve as I did, and nobody should even say, 'Thank you'." Said the captain, "Did you suppose you were doing anything? I gave you that rope to hold to keep you out of mischief."

There are many people who need a rope to hold in business to-day. All they can do is to say, "Alas! How shall we do?" Do not say it in the office to-morrow. Do not carry gloom to your fellow-workers to-morrow. There is enough of it without your complainings. Go to your Master, and He will help you.

"Fear not," said Elisha, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The young man could not see it. Then the prophet prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The young man looked—but now he did not see the Syrians at all: he saw only that the mountains surrounding were full of horses and chariots of fire.

That is all we need, as Christians, to have our eyes opened to the resources of Deity, for God is on the side of every man who trusts Him. Angels are sent forth "to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"; "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." He is the Helper of every man who will trust Him; He is our Rock and our Refuge; they shall never be ashamed who wait for Him.

That is my simple message to you this evening. The Lord has not forgotten us in this troubled world. Religious assemblies are framing resolutions about war! I wonder what they hope to accomplish? What are you going to do with Germany? Hitler talks too much to be very dangerous. He is like a barking dog—barking, barking, barking all the time. As long as he continues to bark the world will know where he is and what to do with him. I frankly think there is a great deal of needless alarm. We know his disposition, and the world surely will be on guard against him. If a number of men openly declared they were going to arm themselves and shoot up the town, I think the Toronto police would soon become active. I do not suppose they would all go to bed and allow the bandits to arm. Nor do I think Britain and France and other nations that paid so great a price for liberty are going to stand idly by and let the mad man of Europe do much damage.

Our God lives, and though clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. Find your rest and your refuge in a God who is above all nations; and when you see the Syrian king with all his army, remember that there are horsemen and chariots of fire, that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." Nothing shall harm us if we be followers of that which is good.

Are any of you without the pale? Are you without this divine protection? I have travelled in wartime, and have been thankful for the British flag and what it means—as I always am, indeed. But there is something that means more than that. To be a Christian, to be a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, and to know that all Heaven's resources are enlisted for my salvation, for time and for eternity, is to have peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Let us pray:

O Lord, open our eyes that we may see. Save us from dishonouring Thee by perpetually groaning. Help us to hear Thee calling down the skies, "Be of good cheer." We thank Thee for this great truth, that Thou dost never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in Thee. Bless our meditation to all within these walls, and to all who have heard by radio; and help us to lean hard upon God, that we may never be ashamed. For Thy name's sake, Amen.

MORE ABOUT DAVID AND GOLIATH

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, October 19th, 1933.

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

(Stenographically reported)

Lesson Text: I Samuel, chapter 17.

We shall turn again this evening to the seventeenth chapter of the first book of Samuel, and shall begin with the thirty-eighth verse.

It is quite possible to read such histories as we have before us this evening and see in the record nothing but a mere chronicle. The historical portions of Scripture are not only historically accurate as to the facts they record, but they also enunciate a philosophy of history. The histories are written to show, not only that certain things have come to pass, but why they have come to pass. They lead us back to fundamental principles, principles which are always found operative in human life.

I begin this evening by calling your attention to what I shall call *The Unexpected Ways of God*. God is continually surprising His people. He works in unusual ways. He does for His people exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think, according to His power that worketh in them.

There is a reason for our being surprised with the ways of God. The fact is, sin has inverted the laws of order. The enemies of the gospel spoke more accurately than they knew, when they said of the apostles, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." A certain quaint old Methodist preacher of bygone days was a true exegete, after all, when, preaching from that text, he announced that he had three observations to make. The first was that the world is upsidedown; the second, that it needs turning right-sideup; and the third, "We are the chaps to do it." It is true that the world is upsidedown; it has become eccentric, out of centre, out of harmony with the will of God, and therefore out of agreement with the ways of God.

It is more than a figure of speech which is employed by the Lord when in Isaiah He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The natural man sees things negatively. I suppose you have looked under the black covering of the photographer when he is focusing his camera? At first you find it difficult to identify the objects on the glass because they are upside down. The negative shows everything the opposite of the facts: white is black, and black is white, and it is necessary to make a print from the negative to reverse things.

When the Psalmist said in his haste, "All men are liars", he uttered a great truth; for we are all of us liars in our natural state in this respect that we see things in reverse. We see things upsidedown, we see the opposite of what is the truth. That is why the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God". That is why we can know nothing of the spiritual realm until we have been born again, and brought into

right relationship to God. Then it becomes possible for us to see the kingdom of God. If that fundamental truth were always kept in mind it would save us from a great deal of mental confusion, and help us to be calm and undisturbed when Goliath talks about what he is going to do. That is our subject for to-night. Poor Goliath! He thought he knew a great deal.

Israel is in need of deliverance, and God brings deliverance from an unexpected quarter. A great army is out there set in battle array, and a mighty man of war champions the Philistine hosts, and issues a challenge that Israel should send a man to fight with him. Using ordinary common sense, where will a man be found to accept the giant's challenge? In the opposing army, of course; from among the soldiers; from among those who are trained to fight. In other words, we shall get help from the experts. That, apparently, is what President Roosevelt thinks. He has surrounded himself with what they call the "Brain Trust", a company of professors. If you want to learn how not to do most things, go and ask the professors about it. That, of course, does not apply to the Faculty of Toronto Baptist Seminary: they are quite exceptional!

It would be natural for Israel to expect to find help from those who were accustomed to war; from the military schools, from those who were familiar with the king's armoury. No one in his senses would ever think of looking to a sheepfold to find someone who would meet the giant of Gath. But that is what God did. And that is the way He almost always does. He surprises us by finding His instruments in unexpected places.

The person He selected provided just as great a surprise, for it was not a man of long experience, not a man, I fancy of unusual physical stature. I think the record indicates that David was rather undersized than oversized. He was not a big man to look at. When Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse's sons, He looked at Eliab, and the Lord said, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." - The Lord chose someone not quite so imposing to look at as Eliab, a youth "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance".

Perhaps when David sat down to his harp and soothed the spirit of Saul with his playing, the people spoke of his "delicate" hands. Perhaps they were like a lady's; they were so finely formed. David was an artist, and music flowed from the ends of his fingers. You could not expect him to fight! Be careful of men of that type. I never was afraid of the blustering bully. He is a good fighter when there is a fence between him and all harm! But these quiet, refined, gentlemanly fellows—you had better be careful with them.

David was not a soldier, he was the only one of Jesse's sons who had not joined the army. What a mistake! All the rest of them were in uniform, but the one who could really fight had no uniform at all. You young men will observe that principle in operation a great many times. You will find many men who are not preachers who can preach better than those who are. Do not get the clerical habit, and plume yourselves, boasting that you are ministers—"clergymen" perhaps. You may be, and yet not be able to preach.

God selected one who used surprising weapons. Saul said, "If you must go, we will get you ready." And you

know the story of how he took David to the armoury and put him in armour. It was not Saul's personal armour necessarily; all the armour was his, for he was the king. David did not object to the armour, but it was a new experience to him. He got it on, then took the big sword out of its scabbard and said, "I wonder if I can use it?" Throwing it all aside the youth said to Saul, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him." In effect he said, "I am not at home with your weapons: I shall have to use my own."

You young ministers will find many people in life who will want to dress you up in Saul's armour. I have been offered many coats of mail myself. If you can find a man somewhere who is frightened out of his wits by the very voice of the giant, you will generally find that he will become most eloquent in telling you how to fight. He cannot do it himself, but he will tell you how to do it. You will get much advice from brother-ministers. They will tell you how to carry on the work of your church. I have had it all my life—and I have discovered that men who have done nothing themselves are usually expert in advising others. Be careful of such counsellors.

Men will tell you that the proper way to fight a giant is to put on a coat of mail: that there is no use trying any other way. The best way of preaching may not yet have been discovered. The world has had great preachers, but there is no reason why some of you could not be greater than any preacher that ever lived. I do not know that there is much promise of that, but who knows? Neither did David look as though he were a match for a giant. But you must not allow yourselves to be shut up to conventional ways of doing things. You may improve upon the finest church organization that ever was effected—only do not let anybody make you wear Saul's clothes, if you can fight more effectively with sling and stone. But we must guard against misunderstanding here. While God thus surprises us, *He always uses thoroughly prepared instruments for His work.* God never uses the wrong tool. It may not be the tool that men would select, but it is His instrument, and He has a reason for using it.

Many, reading this story, are disposed to emphasize the supernatural element in it—and I shall not underestimate that. But remember, God never puts a premium upon ignorance or incompetency. I remember hearing a story of a man's addressing some ministers on one occasion, and he said, "Never mind grammar. Do not waste your time on such subjects: the Holy Ghost will teach you grammar." A wise man sitting on the platform said, "No; He will not. You must learn that yourself." And so you must.

It was no accident that David slew Goliath. Do not think of David as a man who had not been to school, who had not been trained for his task. He had been in the best of all schools, and under the direct tutelage of God Himself. There was, in this great victory, a human element as well as a divine element. I know we should like to shut our books and cease to exert ourselves, and drift along carelessly and indolently, doing nothing—and then suddenly burst upon the world as a great hero in some department of life, a deliverer of the people. But such a wonder the world will never witness. Moody, Spurgeon, Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, and others, did arise in the Lord's work to the surprise

of multitudes. But an examination of their records will disclose the fact that God had had them in training for a long, long time.

We observed that principle last week: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." There was an accumulation of faith, and the gradual strengthening of David's moral character, as well as of his religious faith. But was that all? No; not by any means. Do you suppose David learned to use that sling and stone easily? Did you ever try to use one? Did you ever try to hit anything with a gun—or with what is in the gun? Most of us could succeed better with the gun than with what is in it! I have tried a few times. The thing went off—and I did too. It looks so easy when one sees a trained marksman level his gun—and down comes the object. "I can do that." Try it! Just try it! He did it easily. I know; but ask him how long he was in training before he was able to do it.

Unless I am greatly mistaken it requires much more skill to bring things down with a sling and stone than with a gun. Did you ever see it done? That piece of leather and two thongs, with a stone in it. The man swings it around his head, and lets the stone go. Were you to try it, the stone you thought would go east is likely to go west! David had had long practice in the use of sling and stone; and in that particular matter he was a master.

Read about the Benjamites, the ambidextrous men who could use both the right hand and the left, and could "sling stones at an hair's breadth, and not miss". They had a true eye, and after long practice they became expert marksmen. That is how David learned to kill the giant. The wilderness was a good place to practise.

How are you going to do anything, young men? "Anybody can read." Can he? Have you heard some ministers read the Word of God? I am ashamed of the public reading of many ministers. Some of them are fond of commenting upon every verse. Even in the reading of the lesson, they cannot let God speak once. Train yourselves to read the Word of God without comment; so that God may speak through you. You will not do it well at once; it will take practice, as everything else takes practice.

If you are going to be useful ministers of the Cross you will have to bring every power you possess under tribute to that great calling, and only by the strictest discipline and long continued practice will become expert in anything. Anybody can use his hands when he preaches. Can he? I heard Dr. Haldeman preach once, only once. He was a little man, trim in appearance. He stepped briskly from his seat to a certain place, crossed his hands, and began—and poured out the message for about ten minutes like a Niagara without a gesture, without a movement of any kind. Then he stepped quickly forward and leaned on his desk. Presently he wanted to describe something that was going down to the bottomless pit. He used one or two words—I do not remember what they were—leaned over his desk, as if he were leaning over a precipice, and with a simple gesture consigned something to the nether regions, and his congregation sat spellbound as, in fancy, they heard something roll down into the utter blackness and bottomlessness of the pit, as though expecting to

hear the echo of its fall. His gesture was a sermon in itself.

Nothing can be done well without practice. David had used his sling and stone to some purpose, and he was perfectly at home with it. He knew what he could do.

I know a man who was one of the strongest and most symmetrically developed ministers of my acquaintance. He has certain limitations, as we all have. The difference between that brother and some other people is that he knows what his limitations are; he knows the sphere within which he is at home and a master, and you cannot tempt him beyond it. You cannot make him try to fight in Saul's armour. He has not proved it, and therefore confines himself to the use of implements with which he is familiar, to the kind of service for which he is especially fitted. If you have a voice to sing, train it; make the most of it. Do not be ashamed to use it. But if you have not a voice, do not try to sing. You see what I mean? Be yourself. Attempt the thing for which you are fitted by nature, by practice, and by grace.

And now another matter. I consulted one or two commentaries to see what they had to say about the four stones that David did not use—and, as usual, they said nothing. Even Matthew Henry had not a word. David "chose him five smooth stones out of the brook". Why? Was he not trusting God to deliver him? And if so, why not use Saul's armour? Because David had learned that the Spirit of God puts no premium, as I have said, upon incompetency. I think David reasoned, "For me to try to fight with weapons to which I am not accustomed would be to tempt God. I have no right to ask Him to help me to fight after that fashion; but if I take my own weapon, my sling, which is the only thing I know how to use, and the Lord knows it is the only thing I know how to use—if I use that to the utmost of my ability, I can depend upon God to help me and supplement my efforts."

That applies to preaching. If you ask God to help you to preach, He will do it. But if you have been too lazy, or too preoccupied with secondary matters to prepare yourself for the great hour when you must stand up to represent Christ, you will have no right to ask God to bless you. In such case you would need to ask God to forgive you. The same is true of you who are Sunday School teachers. If you have made no effort to prepare yourselves for the particular task which is yours, you have no right to expect God to work a miracle in order to neutralize either your indolence or your preoccupation—or anything else which may have kept you from preparing for your duty. God—I had almost said—is economical in respect to miracles. He works miracles when necessary. If we could learn that lesson how speedily it would put an end to this orgy of sentimentality and emotionalism shown in the so-called divine healing and other sign-mongering campaigns. Whoever undertakes anything "in the name of the Lord of hosts" should remember his doing so makes him a representative of Jehovah, and as such he should exert himself to represent Him as worthily as possible.

That is why you students are in the Seminary. We all know that whatever learning we have, whatever natural ability may be ours, or how thoroughly it may be developed, even if one could be trained so that by natural standards he would be superior to any man

living—even then, he could do nothing without the help of God. But, on the other hand, if it is possible for one thus to get ready for the great hour, and he neglects to do so, it is useless to ask God to help him overcome his consequent unpreparedness.

Why, then, the extra four stones? It was not unbelief that led David to take five stones instead of one. He knew that ordinarily he could sling a stone to a hair's breadth and not miss. He knew that if God put strength into his arm, one stone would be sufficient to slay the giant.

Did any of you ever play cricket? Did you ever see an expert bowler, a man of whom the other side has been in terror? They watch his first over, and the umpire says, "Wide." What? "Wide"! The next ball may be a little nearer, but before the "over" is finished the umpire cries, "Wide" again. The other bowler bowls from the other end, and then there is a whispered conversation as they cross the field, but when the bowling is again from this end another man takes the crack bowler's place. Why? The great bowler is "off the wicket". Why? Nobody knows. He does not know, but he is off the wicket that day. They will run no risk with him, and an inferior bowler, who is on the wicket, is much safer.

The best man in the world may be sometimes "off the wicket", in respect to human skill. You will be off the wicket a good many times when you preach. You will bowl "wide". You will say, "I do not know why. The ball was all right: I had a great time in my study getting ready. I could scarcely wait for the hour of service. But when I tried to deliver that sermon I felt helpless. I had the worst time of my life." I am talking out of school. I am talking "shop", but I speak to preachers. You will be tempted to say, "I will not bowl again." Yes; you will. You will be "on the wicket" to-morrow.

David was going out to the greatest fight of his life. Take one stone, David. "No, I will not be presumptuous; I will take five. If I cannot do it with five, I cannot do it at all. I may miss the first time." David recognized that while God was helping him, divine help would not necessarily make him infallible. Will you try to remember that? I hear someone say, "I have prayed about this." That is well, but it does not necessarily imply that you have the last word of divine wisdom on any subject because you have prayed about it. There are some people who come along with their one stone, saying in effect, "Everybody get out of the way. Mr. Giant, stand still while I knock you down. I have only one stone, but I have prayed about it, and I am your conqueror." But the giant will not stand still!

Let me explain the four stones. I knew a man who was a very simple preacher—he was so profound that he was simple. He brought water always from a deep well, but he had a way of putting it in a little cup so that a child could drink it. It was always cool and sparkling. He was not like another preacher I know whose wife, when he had delivered himself of one of his vacuous orations, and the people rubbed their eyes, not knowing what he had been talking about, remarked to a friend, "Of course, the difficulty in this church is that my husband preaches over the heads of the people." She was probably right, for inflated balloons have a way of going over people's heads, and over the tree-tops, too.

But the preacher of whom I speak was a great scholar. His sermons were always the distilled essence of the subject they discussed. He ministered to a people who were like a Scotsman who once described the kind of milk he liked on his porridge. "He said, "I am very easily pleased; I like it off the top"! These people were well trained, and they liked it "off the top". And that is what they got, for their pastor never said all that could be said on any subject: he always had four smooth stones in his scrip, and woe betide the Giant Number Two who showed his head. And one day Giant Number Two did challenge him.

In the membership of the church was a gentleman who was manager of a bank, and he knew much more about banking than about theology; but, like many others, he thought he knew more about theology. After his pastor preached one morning he came up and said, "Pastor, it is not often I disagree with you, but I disagree with you this morning." "That may be possible, but we shall not quarrel over that." "Certainly not", said the man, who was one of the deacons. "What did you not approve of?" "You made a certain statement with which I do not agree." "That", said the pastor, "opens up a very large subject. When we both have time, at a mutually convenient place and hour, we could talk this over more fully perhaps?"

The time and place were appointed, and the deacon went to the pastor's study. He stated his case (I heard the story from the man himself), and the pastor began to ask the deacon questions, and to tell him a great many things he had not known before. Telling the story afterward he said, "I came out from that gracious man of God like a whipped dog—and he had not said one unkind word. But he had succeeded in showing me that I had presumed to speak upon a subject of which I was profoundly ignorant. I never challenged my pastor after that." He was afraid of those four stones!

It is the reserve of knowledge that gives authority to what we say. If you are going to speak twenty minutes, fit yourselves to speak a hundred minutes. I do not suggest you always use five stones, but have them ready. It is the surplus that gives power. Do you say, "That is not faith"? Yes it is. God can use one stone, but He may require me to use the five before I succeed. David's faith was in God, hence he went against the giant. He had no faith in himself, hence he took five stones instead of one. We must prepare ourselves to fight as though everything depended upon ourselves, and then trust God absolutely as though everything depended upon Him.

Look at those two principals of the conflict. "And the Philistine drew near." He always draws near. Evil is always aggressive, always on the march. It was the cardinal principle of German military tactics that they must never allow the enemy to fight them on their own territory: they must advance and fight on enemy territory. That is why they invaded Belgium.

When the Philistine advanced, "David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine". We can learn something from athletes. Go back to my cricket illustration. See that man on the field? He bursts into a run, and with the momentum thus obtained he bowls the ball. He puts the weight of his whole body behind the muscle of his arm, and throws his whole self into the game. What saith the Scripture? "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Take the offensive against the enemy.

Then as to our inward attitude. "Abhor that which is evil." Take up a positive attitude toward it. "Cleave to that which is good." Take up a positive attitude toward that. The neutral is always a dangerous man. To assume a neutral attitude toward evil of any form is to court disaster. Because evil is aggressive we must be aggressive also. When the giant comes to meet us, we must run to meet the giant. We are only men. We all have the failings of men. Human nature is human nature. Sometimes we think we have many things under our feet, but they bob up again. Of course, we have no pride! We are not self-seeking! We do not care what anybody thinks of us! We have become independent of human opinion. We are entirely shut up to God, and care nothing for what anybody says! Whoever so imagines will some day have a rude awakening.

In my first pastorate I had the smallest church in town, a little bit of a church; and when I met Mr. Minister going to his big church I felt pretty small. Pretty small! "And when the Philistine looked a bout, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance." He was such a boy!

But you will find that attitude outside toward the church. You will meet clever young men who will laugh at the Bible. "You are going to be a preacher? Well! Well! "He disdained him." The world, the flesh, and the devil, always take up that attitude toward the church, toward the weapons of our warfare which are not carnal, and toward the ministers of the gospel of Christ. You must never expect compliments from Goliath.

Do not argue. Listen to this young lad: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Be sure of your ground, and in the name of the Lord go on with your task. Let the world laugh at you if it will. They laughed at Christ, let them laugh at you. He laughs best who laughs last. Goliath's laughing soon ended.

Why did David hit him in the head? Goliath had on an armour of brass, a helmet of brass, and a man bare a shield in front of him—and it was about the only place he could hit him. David must have been a good marksman. He struck him with a stone in the forehead, so that one stone was quite enough; and the old record says, "David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David." The one thing that others regarded as indispensable to victory was the one thing he had not.

Then you remember he used Saul's sword to cut the giant's head off. Anything will do to cut a dead man's head off! But I leave the suggestiveness of that act to your own sanctified imaginations.

As soon as the giant was killed the Philistines ran. Evil is not brave, even though championed by a giant. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The Philistines ran. Then, you will have plenty of help when you begin to succeed. Nothing succeeds like success. The men of Israel chased the Philistines. After you have knocked the giant down, you may be sure you will have a good congregation. They will all help you chase the Philistines—when the Philistines are running away. It is easy to be popular under such circumstances.

Years ago I went to a certain town to hold evangelistic meetings, and the minister met me at the station and asked me to be his guest. He told me the leading man in his church had always entertained the visiting ministers, but that he was awkward just then, and was opposing everything. He opposed holding the mission, he then tried to have the services held in the basement of the church, and had refused to entertain the visiting minister in his home. The pastor assured me that he was not opposed to me personally, but was doing everything possible to block the pastor. "So", he said, "I want you to come and stay with me." I gladly accepted his invitation.

We began the meetings on a Monday night, and by Friday night the people could not get in the building. By Sunday night the aisles and every available inch was packed with people. (It was not a big church, and it does not take a very big stone to make a ripple in a little pond.) But the whole town was stirred, with people coming from all the other churches. At the close of the Sunday evening service—the giant of unpopularity, of indifference, having been made to lick the dust, the unknown preacher was now, locally, a bit of a celebrity—Deacon Awkwardly Impossible came up with his wife and met me at the front of the church. "We have had a wonderful day", the husband said, "and a wonderful week." Then the wife spoke: "My husband will go over to the parsonage and get your bag, for we should be delighted to entertain you for the remainder of your stay." You see they were now ready to help chase the Philistines.

You will always find that. I do not know that it is particularly germane to the subject—I had never thought of the significance of it before—but when that woman said that, I said, "I believe the Book, and try to follow it as closely as I can, and there is a verse that reads like this: 'In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.' Go not from house to house. You will excuse me, I am sure: I am going to stay at the parsonage."

Notwithstanding, it is great fun chasing the Philistines. We will come back to this chapter again next Thursday evening, that we may learn therefrom the greatest lesson of all.

RELIGIOUS SPREES

(Reprinted for the second time from "The Gospel Witness" of June 26th, 1930, in response to many requests)

We have heard of men who make their wives a meagre "allowance" for the upkeep of the home and the provisions of the family table, and who then periodically go off with their friends and lavishly entertain themselves and others with highly-flavoured, strongly-spiced, dinners, served with intoxicating or semi-intoxicating stimulants. But when their physical systems have become surfeited with such unhealthy diet, and their gluttony and drunkenness have produced the inevitable reaction in the impairment of health and the reduction of energy, they return to their homes and their faithful wives, that they may, by the wholesome food they supply and by plain home-cooking, nurse them back to their normal health again.

This has its parallel in religious life. Marriage is a divine institution, and was instituted for the propagation of the race; and the family was established for the nur-

ture, rearing, and training of children. Similarly, the local church was instituted for the propagation of the gospel, for the propagation of a spiritual race, for the rearing of families composed of persons who have been born again, and for their nurture and training in the things of God.

But there are some professing Christians, like some women, who do not want to keep house; they refuse the responsibilities involved in house-keeping. They prefer to go about from one "tabernacle" restaurant to another, and leave the cooking and dishwashing, and all the responsibilities connected with the getting of meals, to others.

And there are religious restaurants which cater to religious irresponsibility. They have no membership, they have no spiritual family, they produce no children. They provide a highly-seasoned religious menu, accompanied by all sorts of religious jazz. They hang their menu cards out in front. They advertise their successive cooks as "the most wonderful (what would empty heads do without that word, "wonderful"?), the "greatest", the "most dynamic" (whatever that is); the "most scientific", etc., etc. Everything is in the superlative degree. These religious restaurants have the "most" salt, the "most" sugar, the "most" pepper (sometimes abbreviated to "pep") the "most" mustard, the "most" sauce, the "most" noise, the "most" excitement—and, incidentally, the "most" collections of any institution on earth.

The theatre and the circus can scarcely compete with their sensations. If they haven't the biggest elephant, they have the greatest "orator"; if they haven't the cutest monkey, they have "the most scholarly anti-monkey, anti-evolution "scientist"; if they haven't the "most" thrilling parachutist, they have the most daring elocutionary aviator who never takes the air without breaking all previous oratorical altitude records; if they cannot announce the visit of some renowned explorer, they exploit "missions" in the interests of a "Cook's Tour" to Europe. The operations of these religious restaurateurs are more than "child's" play, for they range from the Baltic to the Pacific. Their hearts are alternately moved for the heathen of California and Toronto, and then for the benighted of Europe, and then once more for Toronto. They have a multiplication table all their own. Their one hundred equal three or four hundred, and their five hundred are never less than a thousand. Their "tabernacle" dimensions vary from "Cosmopolitan" to "Metropolitan", and even to the local limitations of a little village like Toronto, and all within the space of about twenty-four months. The lumber of which some tabernacles are built must have been very green to shrink so much—and so quickly.

The fellowships of these religious exploiters vary as often as their enterprises fail: through many "alliances", "world-wide", European, and local, they run from the extreme of *defending* the veiled anti-supernaturalism of "Peter the Fisherman", to the ultra-emotionalism of Pentecostalism.

Some people estimate a restaurant by the number and colour of the bottles of condiments on the tables. And there are religious people who try to live on stimulants. They want the church to be like the midway, with merry-go-round, and everything that is spiritually abnormal. They would rather pay their money for a shot at a religious rifle-range, in an attempt to exhibit their religious marksmanship, than actually to wrestle with

principalities and powers for the subjugation of evil in their lives. They would rather pay to see some self-advertising religious giant (being in reality a dwarf on concealed stilts) than patiently cultivate their own souls so as to be "rooted and built up in Christ".

To this spiritually morbid taste for the unusual, abnormal, spectacular, sensational, these "tabernacle" purveyors of religious stimulants especially cater.

If the "tabernacle" type of religion made its appeal only to the religious toppers, to those whose religious experience consists of a succession of sprees, it would not be so serious. But the small boy is invariably more interested in the circus when it comes to town than in his school-books. So, too, religious infants, babes in Christ, whom the Scripture describes as "carnal", that is, those in whom the old nature is as yet more prominent than the new, are ever attracted by the spectacular and extraordinary. The passion for "signs" is ever an evidence of spiritual immaturity. Hence the advertised promise of "tongues" and healings, and extravagant—and untrue—professions of perfection, constitute a real menace to the life of young Christians.

The religious circus penchant is utterly demoralizing to normal church home life. It is as when the children come home from the circus and set up a miniature circus in their father's backyard. The growing plants are trampled down, the furniture is taken from the house and either scratched or broken; and unless parental authority intervenes, the usually well-ordered home is soon reduced to the vulgarity of a circus ring. Thus "tabernacle" habitues are doubtful assets to any church. People, especially young Christians, return from these "tabernacle" sprees with utterly abnormal, and, hence, unscriptural views of the proper function of the church, and of normal Christian growth and development. They have developed "itching ears", and nothing but religious jazz will please them.

"What!" says one, "itching ears developed in orthodox tabernacles?" Yes, most decidedly, if by "orthodox" you mean the opposite of Modernistic anti-supernaturalism—namely, ultra supernaturalism. "The magicians did so with their enchantments." The devil is both Modernist and Fundamentalist by turn. He will play any role to defeat the purpose of grace in the believer's life. Thus the "tabernacle" pabulum indisposes its guests for constant and patient soul-culture by steady study of God's Word; it indisposes people for the mastery of difficult lessons, and especially for the hard, regular, faithful, work of daily witnessing for Christ. The "tabernacle" habitues are served, at least occasionally, with a diet of semi-profanity and gross vulgarity; and are encouraged in the development of an ultra-pious, ultra-spiritual, ultra-unctuous, superiority complex that approximates the ludicrous figure of a circus clown. Under such quackery a novice becomes an expert of great authority over night.

This writer humbly confesses his innumerable shortcomings; he recognizes and acknowledges that his ministry falls immeasurably short even of his own ideals, to say nothing of the exalted standards of God's Word, which like the lofty peak of a great mountain, seem to grow higher and higher, and more and more challenging, the nearer they are approached. For that reason he is grateful to many truly humble and spiritual friends who pray constantly that he may know more of divine power in his life and ministry. But while we

would do justly, love mercy, and *walk humbly before God*, we regard with a holy contempt the insufferable insolence engendered by these "tabernacle" hypodermic inoculations which leads some nondescript novice to write us extended epistles on how to substitute enervating stimulants for wholesome food, and render oneself as useless as he has ever proved to be. We never read beyond the first page of such epistles.

But to continue our argument; it has been proved again and again that neither the body nor the soul can be built up on stimulants. It has also been demonstrated that neither physically nor spiritually can life be proportionally developed, or enriched, or made useful, without regular exercise and constant industry—in a word, without work.

The "tabernacle" type of religious activity provides a grandstand seat for the accommodation of those who would witness a religious performance, but the spectators have no opportunity to participate in the performance except when the collection is taken. The "tabernacle" type we have described is a parasite. It preys upon other religious bodies. It is particularly injurious to small churches, which, if they would do their work must for a while at least be content with small things. The "tabernacle" spirit holds small things in contempt: better a big shell than a smaller structure of solid and enduring construction. Hence, small churches patiently do their work in school and church, and bring young people to Christ, and the "tabernacle" calls them with its promise of big things.

But at the end of a circus day even children grow tired and want to go home. Thus, too, God's true children, who by reason of their spiritual birth, "desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby", sooner or later weary of the religious merry-go-round, and go home to their church family. That is well. And then it is the church's task to nurse them back to normal spiritual health.

The chief virtue of a circus is that it stays but a short time in one place. It is "cosmopolitan", and a major portion of its staff spend their time in putting up tents and taking them down again. No community could endure a circus long, hence it must keep on moving. So also of the theatre. Even the most popular plays wear out, and the players must move on to find other people to pay to fill the seats.

So the chief virtue of these "tabernacle" movements is that they are short-lived. They wear out and move on. They usually make a spectacular beginning, because their authors have, by experience, become experts at beginnings, because they have spent their lives beginning things. But the inoculations lose their effect, and the patients refuse to respond. Hence, they become as "cosmopolitan" as a circus. Then with a pious profession of having prayed much, and being "wonderfully" "led", they move on and make another beginning.

"Then had the churches rest—and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." We had better abide by the Lord's programme which is to edify and multiply the churches. The family must be the social unit of the state if the state is to prosper. And the church as a spiritual family, the church founded and fostered by New Testament principles, is the social unit of the kingdom of God through which God will be pleased to propagate a spiritual race, "a holy nation," until, at His coming, that kingdom shall be manifested in glory.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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Lesson 46

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FOURTH QUARTER**IN GOD'S TENDER CARE**

Lesson Text: I Kings, chapter 19.

Golden Text: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."—Isaiah 41:10.

Bible School Reading—I Kings 19:1-21.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Job 4:12-21.

Tuesday—Ps. 111:1-10.

Wednesday—Jonah 4:1-11.

Thursday—Phil. 1:19-30.

Friday—Heb. 1:6-14.

Saturday—John 16:25-33.

I. UNDER THE JUNIPER TREE, (vs. 1-8).

The scene depicted in this part of the chapter is in contrast with that described in the previous lesson. There, the prophet was bravely facing the foe, here he is in flight; there he was in triumph, here he is in despair. It might be difficult to explain such a quick transition did we not understand something of human nature. Of course, Elijah's life was threatened, and it may possibly have been the part of wisdom to flee, but this does not account fully for his low spirits. A servant of God might be persecuted without becoming discouraged, as Daniel in the lion's den (Dan. 6:17), and Paul and Silas in prison, (Acts 16:23). The explanation would seem to be in the reaction from previous efforts. Every experience takes its toll of nervous energy, and Elijah had been severely tested in this respect on Mount Carmel, even though he had gained a great victory. It would be well for us to guard carefully against reactions from all unusual experiences, for it is then that so often foolish deeds are done, and unwise words are spoken, and Satan gains the advantage, (2 Cor. 2:11).

Several things are stated respecting Elijah's experience. First, we are informed of Ahab's action in making known to Jezebel, his queen, the particulars concerning the Mount Carmel transaction, with the resultant message of the latter to the prophet, (vs. 1, 2). In this, the character of Jezebel is manifest. She was opposed to the action there taken, because she was in hearty sympathy with idolatry. Ahab was not a good man, but he certainly was not improved by his

association with this wicked woman. He ought never to have married her, (16:31), and care should be exercised by all young people in choosing a partner for life, that such an one conforms to the scriptural standard, (I. Cor. 7:39).

The flight of the prophet is then described. Upon the receipt of Jezebel's message he arose, and went for his life to Beer-sheba, where he left his servant, (v. 3), afterwards journeying alone for another day into the wilderness where he "sat down under a juniper; and he requested for himself that he might die", (v. 4). He was plainly discouraged; due, evidently, to what he believed to be lack of success in his mission. His triumph at Mount Carmel had been great, his expectations as to its results had been high, but these had failed of fulfilment, and brought home to him in his overwrought condition the realization of his own powerlessness. He was no better than his fathers. Things were not quite as bad as he thought they were, and this he was speedily to learn by divine interposition. Note the temptation to discouragement among the Lord's servants, and the dangers inherent in estimating the success of spiritual work by a survey of outward signs only. God alone knows the worth of any work, and we must be willing to labour faithfully where He places us, leaving all results to Him.

Observe the wisdom of Elijah in making known his discouragement only to God. He was away from the haunts of men and could freely express himself to One Who understood him. Human beings are so apt to misunderstand us that, in general, the less we say to them expressive of our inner thoughts, the better. Note further, the beneficial effects of periodic withdrawals from the sphere of human activity, when we may get alone with God, unburden our hearts to Him, and receive His counsel, (Mark 6:31). Such withdrawals need not be into desert regions, but may take place in the privacy of our own homes. It is of interest to note that Elijah's prayer was not answered. He prayed to die, but God had something else for him to do, before removing him from this scene. It is a good thing some of our prayers remain unanswered, for they are at times somewhat foolish. The will of God should govern us in our prayers, as in our actions, (James 4:15). The care of the Lord is manifest respecting His servant, in that He permitted him to have a good sleep, and provided for his nourishment, (vs. 5-7), afterwards giving him directions concerning his future duties. It is remarkable, the benefit which may be derived from a good sleep when one's nervous system has been overwrought. The Lord knew the medicine necessary for His servant.

II. THE STILL SMALL VOICE, (vs. 9-21).

After receiving divine aid Elijah journeyed "unto Horeb, the mount of God", where he had a remarkable experience in the Lord's presence. First, he lodged in a cave, where he heard the divine question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and gave an answer expressive of the

condition of the people, and their attitude toward him, (vs. 9, 10). He is commanded to stand upon the mount before the Lord, when God gave a remarkable demonstration of His power, in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but spoke to His servant in a "still small voice", (vs. 11, 12). Again, the question is asked relative to his presence in that place, followed by the same answer, (vs. 13, 14). Direction is then given the prophet concerning the anointing of three persons who would deal with the idol worshippers, though not all in the same way, and the information is given that Elijah is not the only one who had remained true to Jehovah: there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, (vs. 15-18). The casting of the mantle upon Elisha, denoting his call to the prophetic office is the last recorded event of the chapter.

Several things are worthy of note concerning this experience. First, in relation to the Lord's question, (v. 9), we observed that it was reasonable, pertinent, kindly, and clear, and gave Elijah an opportunity to explain his position. In his explanation he makes reference to his faithfulness to God, to Israel's disobedience to the Lord, to his belief that he was the only faithful one left, and to the fact that his enemies were seeking his life, (vs. 9, 10). It is well when we can give a reason for our presence in any place. Sometimes we allow ourselves to drift, and were we asked the question recorded in this lesson we would not know what to answer. Emphasis requires to be placed upon the necessity for the God-directed left, (Acts 16:6, 7). Note may be made of the experience of Elijah with the presence of God manifest in the elements (vs. 11, 12). The great fires of nature were roused, but it was in the still small voice that the prophet heard the message of the Lord. This is generally the case with the servants of God; the great things of life are impressive, and significant, but the divine voice conveys its message usually in the quietness of one's own life. The listening ear is therefore essential, and also the quiet period.

The message of God gave commandment, and also corrected a wrong impression of Elijah's; he was not the only one remaining true: there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God knows His own (2. Tim. 2:19), and is acquainted with their residence. He has His faithful unknown saints, even in the darkest days, and we need never despair on account of the paucity of numbers, for there are generally more than we are aware of who are standing true to God. It would be better, however, if such persons would make their presence felt a little more forcibly. The circumstances connected with Elisha's call are of interest, noting the symbolical action respecting the mantle, the time and place of the call, while Elisha was engaged in his ordinary pursuits, and the obedience of the latter.