

The Gospel Witness

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AND IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.
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Editor: T. T. SHIELDS

Associate Editor: ALEXANDER THOMSON

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

Address Correspondence: THE GOSPEL WITNESS, 130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada.
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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

AN APOSTLE'S BIOGRAPHY

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto.

(Stenographically Reported)

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did."—Acts 26: 9.

"Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts 21: 13.

These two verses sum up the life story of one of the most valiant soldiers of the Cross the world has ever known. In his defence before Festus and Agrippa, the Apostle Paul justifies the course he has pursued as a preacher of the gospel; and he tells his judges that there was a time when he thought he ought to do "many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth". The second verse of the text relates to an interview he had with certain disciples when he was going up to Jerusalem; when a certain prophet from Judæa named Agabus prophesied that the Jews at Jerusalem would bind Paul and deliver him to the Gentiles. They then besought him not to go up to Jerusalem, but his answer to their persuasive speech was this: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." This evening we shall seek an explanation of Paul's great change of attitude toward Christ.

I.

To begin, then, Saul of Tarsus found that THE NATURAL BENT OF HIS MIND WAS CONTRARY TO JESUS OF NAZARETH. His only interest in Him was to oppose all who called upon His name. He thought he "ought" so to do. He is a type and an illustration of every natural man: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

This was Saul's natural attitude, *notwithstanding he was a man of great intellectual capacity*; a man indeed of massive intellect, who to this day stands out in all the world's literature as a master-mind. But notwithstanding his native intellectual strength, he was unable by merely natural powers so to weigh the claims of Jesus

of Nazareth as to reach a right conclusion respecting Him. He had no doubt heard of all the wonders which had characterized the life's ministry of this great Prophet. He was not ignorant of the stories which must have been in circulation—that He had opened the eyes of the blind; that He had made the lame to walk; that He had even raised the dead to life again. Paul knew that He had done these things; he knew that He had gone to the Cross, and that there He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He knew that there was a great company of people who witnessed to the truth of the resurrection, who declared that this Jesus Who had died was alive again, and that they were witnesses of the fact. Saul knew the letter of the gospel before he was converted, and if any natural mind might have been expected rightly to weigh in the balances of a well-informed judgment the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, this man Saul of Tarsus might have been expected to do so.

But notwithstanding his great native mental powers, he was unable to apprehend the truth respecting Jesus Christ; and all his powers of mind were mobilized and concentrated upon the destruction of this new religion. He thought he ought to do everything possible contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus it is still. God does not come into the soul by the gilded door of the intellect. Let us not be at all dismayed because men of great minds think they ought to do things contrary to Christ. That is no new thing. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." And, my friend, you will never find your way to God by the use of your natural powers. I do not suggest for a moment that we must needs stultify ourselves, that we must put aside our reason, that we must

accept that which is contrary to reason in becoming Christians. But I do say that no man will ever reason his way to God. Saul of Tarsus used his reason respecting Christ, and it simply led him to breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. That has always been the effect of unaided human reason—it has always made men bitter enemies of Christ. Do not be disturbed by what you read in the magazines. Do not allow yourselves to be upset because much of that which is called "scholarship" is arrayed against Christ. It has always been so. The natural mind until it is touched of God, in its very warp and woof, in its nature and constitution, is a bundle of "enmity against God". For sin has so laid hold upon man that there is not a power of his mind that is not biased against God, and in the direction of evil.

Here is a man who was an enemy of Christ notwithstanding that *he had enjoyed unusual educational advantages*. To his natural ability had been added an unusual degree of culture. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He had been trained, as he supposed, to think accurately, to reason rightly, to arrive at wise and just conclusions on the basis of evidence submitted. But with all his training he was still an enemy of Christ. You cannot educate people into the kingdom of God. They make a great mistake who put education before evangelism. The Devil has presided at some missionary councils. In China, in India, and elsewhere in the name of the Lord, there are established many educational institutions that are simply places where Satan's seat is—that is all. They are training people to be opponents of the gospel instead of preachers of the gospel. Do not be afraid of your educated infidel. Do not be afraid of the man who boasts of his erudition. Oh, how common it is to hear that nowadays! One is weary of the oft-recurring phrase—"the consensus of scholarship: all the intellectuals believe it." Let them believe it! That proves nothing. An unregenerated mind trained to the highest degree only makes a man the keener in his opposition to Christ.

I would add another word, that Saul of Tarsus was contrary to Christ notwithstanding *he was possessed of a deep religious passion*. He was one of the most religiously disposed men of whom we have any record. He was born religious. He had been trained to be religious from his infancy. He boasted of a long religious tradition: He was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless". And the more religious he was, the bitterer was his opposition to Jesus Christ. Do not be disturbed by the man who is an intellectual, who is an educated man and a very religious man, but who does not believe the Book. It may be there is someone like that here this evening. Untouched by the Spirit of God, religion will not improve the natural man. Indeed, religion is the Devil's chosen sphere of operation. The Devil has always done his deadliest business in the name of religion. It was by one of the twelve Christ was betrayed. The Devil is to-day manufacturing religions, I think, to suit nearly everybody. If you are not satisfied, you must be hard to please; because every possible variety is available. And let me remind you that when at last the Anti-

christ shall come, he will come as a great religious personality. The last great battle will be a religious battle between Christ and Antichrist—and that battle is on to-day. Saul said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

II.

There you have a picture of the natural man. **WHAT CHANGED HIM?** How was his mind changed? First, *there shone upon him a light from heaven*. He said, "I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun." It was a light that was not found upon the natural plane at all: it was something supernatural. A light from heaven illuminated his darkened understanding, and he saw things as he had never seen them before. You cannot read the Bible by this electric light; you cannot read the Bible by sunlight: you must read this Book by a light that is "above the brightness of the sun". No man can ever know God until that Light shines. And this man in another place explained his experience by saying, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

I say to every unconverted man here this evening that if you would know the way to heaven you must learn it by the Light that shines from heaven. And if you would know what you must do to be saved, you must depend upon the illuminating ministry of the life-giving Spirit to make it possible for you to understand the great truths of the gospel. Oh, no, you do not need to go to the professor or the university president. It is quite possible that some poor washerwoman, who can scarcely read her own name would be a better guide for you, so far as human teachers are concerned. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Has that Light from heaven shone into your heart and conscience? Have you got a glimpse of another realm? It may be that the light does not shine with noonday glory as yet. It may be some man here who has long been in his heart an enemy of Jesus Christ begins to feel that he may be mistaken. He has used his reason and it has failed. But from somewhere, somehow,—he does not know how—a light has shone into his heart; and he is beginning to feel uncomfortable; he is beginning to feel that perhaps he has been wrong after all. It is a Light that is "above the brightness of the sun", that is shining from God in order to lead to God.

And then *he heard a Voice speaking*. The word of the Lord came to him; a Voice from heaven—something more than a human voice—saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Men are saved by the word of God. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation". When Jesus Christ stood at the grave of Lazarus, and the stone was removed, He said: "Lazarus, come forth"; and that dead man who had made no response to any other voice instantly responded to the life-call of the Son of God, and came forth. There is in the Bible spirit and life. Our Lord said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." I cannot explain it. I cannot tell you how it was that Christ found access to Saul's heart; I do not know how it was when that Voice penetrated his

understanding he knew that God was speaking to him; but I do know that God speaks through His Word. There is a brother here to-night up yonder in the gallery who was saved by reading a sermon in THE WITNESS. But it was not the sermon that saved him. There was a text of Scripture quoted in the sermon, and when he read that text of Scripture, God set it on fire with the Light that is above the brightness of the sun. Out of that Scripture God spoke as no other voice had ever spoken: he knew that he was discovered of God. I wish I could quote scripture to you to-night for half an hour. Where shall I begin?

Let it be the most familiar text of all: "God so loved the world"—"Please do not quote that; I have heard it so often," you say. But, my friend, if you had really heard it, you would be a Christian. "Oh," you say, "I can repeat it as well as you can." Yes; you know it intellectually; but you have not believed it with your heart. Other people had called Saul by his name; but when Jesus Christ called him by his name, he was made a new man. The good Shepherd "called his own sheep by name."—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

I am not going to argue with you. It is no use arguing with a dead man; it is useless to discuss flowers with a blind man. Only the Voice that wakes the dead can get into a soul that is dead in trespasses and in sins. There were great preachers in those days, but they could not touch Saul of Tarsus. There were great witnesses for Christ, but they had no effect upon him until God took him in hand Himself. And that is how the soul is saved. Whenever a soul is really quickened, it is by God's Word, my friend. He may use a little girl to lead her father to Christ; He may use the wife to lead her husband, or the husband to lead his wife; He may use the preacher or Sunday school teacher; but whatever the instrumentality, when the soul that is dead is made alive again, it is done by the mighty power of God, and nobody else can do it.

What was the truth of the word that burned itself into Saul's soul? *That Jesus Christ was alive.* The saving truth is the truth of the resurrection. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Paul thought He was dead and buried, that He was a false prophet, and an impostor; and that the world was well rid of Him, until he heard a voice from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He had no idea who was speaking until he asked the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" and the Lord answered, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." We have to-day a living Christ to preach. Christ is not dead. You know that is taught in the Scriptures. Ah, yes; but when you realize it, when you actually believe with your

heart that Jesus is not in the grave but in the glory, you will be a Christian. Saul learned that the One Whom he thought was dead was alive again; and when he realized that great truth, it transformed his life. Therefore, if you fight against Christ, you fight against a living Christ—not a dead one. Blessed be God! He can take care of His own truth; He can take care of His own cause.

And I think, associated with that, one of the elements in Saul's conversion was *the testimony of God's people.* "But", you say, "what had that to do with it?" It had a great deal to do with it. Saul of Tarsus thought they were a lot of deluded folks—they were people who did not know very much; and when they stoned Stephen, they laid down their clothes at the feet of the young man whose name was Saul. And this intellectual, this pupil of Gamaliel, stood there, and he saw the first Christian martyr die. He saw the light upon his face like the face of an angel, and he heard him say, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He thought he was a fool dying for his folly. He had met many another. He had cast them into prison; he had laid many stripes upon them; he had persecuted them even unto death; and he thought he "ought" to do it. But in that hour and in that moment when he heard a Voice from heaven, when the answer to the cry of his soul was given, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest", and when he saw that these people whom he had been persecuting to death were the real witnesses of the truth of the resurrection, a flood of light was thrown upon the testimony of every true Christian witness; and every man and woman who had exhibited the Spirit of Christ in the hour of persecution, had his part in Saul's conversion. My Christian friend, go on testifying for Christ. Never mind the sneer in the office and in the shop. "But", you say, "it is not doing any good." Not yet; but "they may by our good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Some day God, by His Spirit, will give a new significance to your testimony; and when the Light that shines from heaven shines upon that darkened soul, and the voice of God speaks, then your testimony will have its place.

III.

Thus the mind of Saul of Tarsus was changed. HOW WAS HE TRANSFORMED INTO A VALIANT APOSTLE? You do not find that Saul faltered; you do not find that he ever limped as Peter did. He pursued a straight course from beginning to end. He was given up to the Lord, and at the end, or nearing the end, he was able to say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Following his conversion what influences made this man what he was? I think *he was rightly instructed in the beginning*, for one thing. When Ananias went to him, the Lord sent him a sound teacher; and He said to him: "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."—As though He had said: "Go and talk to that man, and tell him that it is no easy thing to be a Christian. Tell him that there are rough roads ahead of him; tell him that there are steep hills to climb; tell him there are heavy burdens to bear; tell him there are fierce battles to fight; tell him it will be a hard road all the way through—with much suffering for

My name's sake; tell him I have laid My hand upon him, and that he is a chosen vessel unto me." Some would have said, "Be very careful; do not discourage him in the beginning. Now that he is turning towards Christ, do not be too severe with him. Be very gentle and very careful what you say to him, or else he will turn back again." And that is the weakness of the modern testimony—people are coaxed into the church, persuaded to make a religious profession, and told that it is an easy thing to be a Christian. In some quarters men, and particularly young men, are told that if only one becomes a Christian, all difficulties will be smoothed out; that he will have the easiest time in the world if only he will follow Christ. But that is untrue; it is contrary to Scripture at every point. It is the philosophy of the Devil; it is not the truth of God's Word. It is not an easy thing to be a Christian. It is an easy thing to be a church-member; but to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth is not easy. And so as I preach the gospel to unsaved men, I want to tell you right at the outset that you will have difficulties.

I was preaching in a place the other day, and somebody telephoned me at night after I got home. A lady was on the telephone, and she said: "I wanted to tell you that I persuaded my husband to go to hear you preach to-night. We borrowed a neighbour's car, and we had the use of the car for nothing; but, of course, with the understanding that we would become responsible for any damage. While it was parked outside of the place where you were preaching, somebody stole the back seat out of the car. Then when we got back, after taking some friends home, we found they had stolen the spare tire too; and my husband says he will not go any more." Well, my friend, when you go to church, especially when you come to this church, you had better lock your car; because the Devil will try to do something to prevent your coming back again.

When one makes a profession of religion, the next morning he finds everything goes awry, and then he fears he may have made a mistake. If he had been properly instructed, he would have known that that rather pointed to the probability of his being on the right road. Pharaoh sent his task-masters after the children of Egypt with whips. They cracked the whip, and said, "More work." But as soon as they got out of the country, Pharaoh summoned his army and turned the might of Egypt upon the Hebrews who were going to serve their God. And the moment you set your face toward Christ, and seek to serve Him, you will find that all the dogs of hell will be let loose upon you. I am not speaking now of a merely nominal Christian. "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Talk about an appeal to the heroic? If you want an opportunity to play the man; if you want to be a man from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet, and stand like a man for God, you follow Christ. You will have abundant opportunities. That is what made this man Paul—he was thoroughly instructed from the beginning. When he took upon him the Name of Jesus, he knew that it meant stripes, and imprisonment, and perils among false brethren; he knew all that was involved. I am summoning you who are not Christians this evening to a holy war, not to a life of leisure on beds of ease.

Then, next: *he was baptized*. Read the story. The

New Testament always puts baptism after faith in Christ; and we preach the New Testament here and the Old Testament, too—the whole Bible. If you are going to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, you will have to be baptized: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized." "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." You do not see it that way? No; but you would if the scales were to fall from your eyes. That is why you do not see it. It is in the Book. Do not be angry with me; quarrel with the Book. One brother told me of a talk he had with someone on that subject recently. The other said, "Don't talk to me about that, I have my opinions." But my friend said, "I have no opinions; but I have the Book. There it is in the Book." Paul took the first step, knowing what it would mean—he simply obeyed God; he was baptized. You had better be obedient, too. I have known a great many people who make a profession of religion, who say, "You must not ask me to go too far." They came to this point, they faced this duty, but they turned aside, and thus lost the joy of their salvation. They became "barren and unfruitful" in the Christian life, because they would not follow the Lamb; they would not take God at His word and do as they were told. This mighty apostle obeyed God.

Then, *he got to work at once*. "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." I love to see young converts getting about the Lord's work. When I find people straightway preaching Christ, going here and there telling to all around what a dear Saviour they have found, I know they are on the right track; and I know they are going to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We invite you, therefore, to an active life, to a life of testimony, to a life of witness at all times. It means to obey Him, to be buried with Christ, and raised to walk in newness of life. Preach Christ everywhere! I am looking for the day when every member of this church will be a preacher. We have several hundreds of them already; but I look for the day when they will all be preaching, everywhere, and all the time.

Saul further *enjoyed an experience of divine comradeship*. He found that wherever he went the Lord went with him, and he had such communion and such joy in fellowship with Him, that he was afraid lest he should lose Him. At last he said, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. I will go anywhere with Him. I would rather go into the lions' den, or into the fire with Him, than be separated from Him." But you cannot have those experiences of fellowship with Him while seeking to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. When the Hebrew children emerged from the flames without a smell of fire on them, if you had gone to them and said, "We are very sorry for you. We sympathized with you when you were in the furnace," they would have replied, "Do not waste your sympathy on us. We got nearer to God in that furnace than we ever were anywhere else. There was One like to the Son of God walking with us all the time." Or, if you had said to Daniel, "It was very hard, after your long life, in the evening time, to be thrown to the lions," Daniel would have said, "I thought I had learned somewhat about the

ways of God, for He has helped me these many years; and during my long life I have met many notable personalities; but my richest experience was reserved for my latter days, for I made the acquaintance of a new Angel among the lions whom I could never have known anywhere else, and I would not have missed that fellowship for all the world's honour and preferments. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." When you go into the flames with Him, when you follow Him, you will find you will be driven back upon His word; you will learn how to help yourself from His storehouses. And by and by as you look back upon life, you will conclude that you have made greater speed on the rough road than on the smooth road, that the more the enemy persecuted you, the more you grew up into Christ in all things. The fastest time ever made by an Atlantic liner was made against contrary winds because they were better able to get up steam. Contrary winds are good for us. The true Christian flourishes on difficulties. May He help us every one for His name's sake.

SPECIAL NOTICE

During the past few weeks many of our readers have written requesting, one, two, five, ten, or perhaps, a hundred copies, of Dr. Shields' treatment of the Oxford Group Movement, and have all received the same reply, "We have none"; for our supply has been exhausted for some time. Yesterday we received an order from the Emerald Isle for two thousand copies to be delivered immediately. We are therefore reprinting, and copies will be available by the end of the week at the same rate, namely:

Single copy	5c
25 copies	\$1.00
50 copies	\$2.00
100 copies	\$3.75

(Postpaid)

REJOICE WITH THE UNION

Quite a few enquiries have been received relative to the special missionary offering pledged by the various delegates from the churches in attendance at the Sixth Annual Convention in the Jarvis Street Baptist Church in October. The Union rejoices to state that almost without exception the churches have done what they promised, and in some instances have gone over their objective. More than \$1,900.00 has already been received of the \$2,000.00 pledged. There are still some of our churches, however, which have not taken a special offering for this purpose. It would delight our hearts if they would do so, and send the offering on without delay. If there is any ambiguity in the minds of any, may we help to clear that up by stating that this offering is not only for the purpose of sending our missionaries out to the field, but to bring home those whose furloughs are now due. After three years of hard work, erecting buildings, trekking over the country, teaching school, working on the language, and being doctor, lawyer, and every other conceivable man-of-affairs, these missionaries are in need of rest. Pray that journeying mercies may be given to them, and that they may come on to us in the spirit of grace.

THE EDITOR AT HOME

Dr. Shields, who has been in Texas and Kentucky for the past three weeks, will be home Sunday next, December 3. He will teach his class at 10.00 o'clock, and preach at both services. Dr. Shields will edit THE WITNESS next week, and tell something of his activities in the South.

BOOK REVIEWS

MESSIAH: HIS NATURE AND PERSON, by DAVID L. COOPER, Th.M., Ph.D., published by the Author at 4417 Bernice Street, Los Angeles, California.

This is the second in the Messianic series of books written by Dr. Cooper, the purpose of which is to meet, and if possible, to remove the stumbling-blocks existing in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people and standing in the way of their acceptance of Christ as Messiah.

From the standpoint of the Hebrew text, the main prophetic passages in the Old Testament dealing with the person and nature of the Messiah are examined; Jewish objections are honestly faced, and probable difficulties are most carefully explained. The passages in the Torah which deal with the Messianic ideal lead to the conclusion that the Messiah was to be the seed of the woman, a member of the royal tribe of Judah and a prophet like unto Moses. David, in prophetic vision, saw one of his descendants ruling as King in righteousness for ever. The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and others show that Messiah would be miraculously born of a virgin in Bethlehem, that He would be God in human form, that He would come to earth and associate with men, and that He would conquer the enemies of His people and reign as Priest-King.

Dr. Cooper's book gives evidence of reverent and scholarly research, and the inclusion of the Hebrew text of important passages adds greatly to the value of the discussion. The section dealing with the Virgin Birth of our Lord is one of particular interest.—O. L. C.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL, by LEOLA STROPE, published by JUST A WORD, 1528 West Seventh Street, Wilmington, Delaware, U.S.A.

This booklet deals with the origin, nature and outcome of physical evil, "that kind of evil which manifests itself in the physical universe as suffering, or sorrow, or misfortune, or disaster." Extensive quotations are given from representative writings, stating clearly the four main answers to the problem of evil: the answer of the Stoic Philosophers, the answer of the modern Evolutionists, the answer of the professing Church, and the answer of the Bible. These four views are examined in the light of historical events, and the personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ is shown to be the only effective way of banishing wickedness and of restoring righteousness.

The booklet is a concise discussion of an important theme, and the author, manifestly believing in the integrity and authority of the Bible, has shown skill in depicting the viewpoint of those holding unscriptural views, in order more completely to expose their fallacies. The reference material is also valuable.—O. L. C.

THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY—Published by James Clark and Company, 9 Essex Street, London, W.C.2. Editors: Rev. Professor John R. Mackay, D.D., Edinburgh, and Rev. Professor Donald Maclean, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY is described as "a theological review, international in scope and outlook, in defence of the historic Christian faith." The articles contained in this quarterly, written as they are by outstanding Christian scholars, are always of a fine order; and the issue of October 14th is no exception. Among the timely and instructive discussions may be mentioned two of special merit, namely: "Time Element in the Atonement" by Dr. Kenneth M. Monroe, and "Early Races of Mankind" by Dr. E. Paget Thurstan. Each issue contains a valuable section devoted to Book Reviews, where evangelical literature of all countries is given careful examination.—Miss O. L. Clark, M.A., Ph.D.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 8

No. 4

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 50

December 10th, 1933

FOURTH QUARTER**FIVE MIRACLES**

Lesson Text: II Kings, chapter 4.

Golden Text: "For with God nothing shall be impossible."—Luke 1:37.

Bible School Reading: II Kings 4:1-7; 38-44.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—I Kings 17:8-16.

Tuesday—Prov. 31:10-31.

Wednesday—Ps. 95:1-11.

Thursday—Acts 9:36-43.

Friday—Heb. 13:1-9.

Saturday—Matt. 14:13-21.

**I. MULTIPLYING THE WIDOW'S OIL,
(vs. 1-7).**

In the past, considerable dissension has taken place respecting miracles, and doubt has been cast upon their authenticity; and in these days there are many who decline to believe in them; yet in the light of man's accomplishments in the realm of science, it should not be difficult to accept this scriptural statement regarding that which God can do through his servants. It should be noted that both Old and New Testament miracles were wrought for some useful purpose. They were performed not merely as wonders, though in our Lord's case, they were signs. They all magnify the divine power, and when manifested through ordinary men, they emphasize the privilege and possibilities of faith.

In the multiplying of the widow's oil we have a miracle wrought to relieve the distress of a poor woman, manifesting God's interest in this class. Concerning the action, we note: the cry of the woman, (v. 1), the enquiry of the prophet, (v. 2), his direction, (vs. 3, 4), the miracle, (vs. 5, 6), and its consequence, (v. 7). Observe, respecting the state of the woman that she was a widow in desperate circumstances, at the end of her resources, religious, wise, having faith in God, and evidently highly respected in the community. Concerning the miracle, note its simple nature, its practical purpose, and its spiritual significance. In relation to the latter observe the fact that the miracle was performed in the pouring of the oil; and that the fluid ceased when all the vessels were filled. God manifests His power in giving, and we increase our spiritual possessions in accordance with the same

principle. See the widow's meal (I Kings 17:16), and our Lord's feeding the multitude, (Matt. 14:17-21). The supply of the divine blessing is always abundant, and only restrained by our lack of capacity to contain and use it.

**II. THE PROPHET'S CHAMBER,
(vs. 8-17).**

A very interesting incident is recorded in these verses wherein we are informed of the manner in which the prophet Elisha rewards the Shunammite for his kindness to him. Note, first the hospitality of the woman, (v. 8). The prophet was not without his sincere friends, who desired his company, and sought his comfort. Some, in like manner, have entertained angels unawares, (Gen. 18; Heb. 13:2). Second, observe the provision of the chamber for the man of God, (vs. 9-11). It was a simple provision, arising from a genuine desire to serve, and possibly to benefit in some spiritual way from the presence of the prophet; yet it was highly laudable, thoughtful, and much appreciated. It was a manifestation of respect for one who was the servant of God and brought its own reward, (vs. 12-17). In this there is evident the gratitude of the prophet for services rendered, something which every preacher should bear in mind, but which many seem to forget, also the humility, and disinterestedness of the woman, (vs. 12, 13); and the promise of Elisha, (vs. 14-16), which was fulfilled in due season, (v. 17). In this fulfilment, another miracle is recorded, (v. 14). The birth of a son was not expected in the course of nature. God does not overlook kindnesses shown to His servants, even a cup of cold water receiving its reward, (Matt. 10:42). Note the appreciation and confidence of the prophet; the goodness and carefulness of the woman; and the fact that the child was a son of promise, faith and love.

III. RAISING THE DEAD, (vs. 18-37).

There was undoubtedly great joy in the household when the baby arrived; this was some time later turned to sorrow, when death took him away, and this again into joy at his restoration. The incident is recorded in a simple, touching manner. First, there is the account of the sickness and sudden death of the boy, (vs. 18-20) followed by the journey of the mother to the man of God, to whom she made an appeal in her sorrow, (vs. 21-28), which was answered by the restoration of the boy to life, (vs. 29-37).

Several things are worthy of note in connection with this incident. In relation to the first part, we learn that death visits the young as well as the old. We see also here, and throughout the whole account, the depth of mother love. The child was nursed in life, and after death the mother still believed the prophet could do something. In this we may observe also her wisdom, understanding, faith, and determination. She knew to whom to go for help in her time of need. The man of God was

the only one who could render effective aid at such a critical time, and he could do it, only because he was in touch with his divine Master. May we learn to keep in fellowship with the Lord, so that we shall be helpful to all with whom we come in contact. In the miracle of restoration to life, observe the methods used by Elisha, respecting Gehazi's action, which failed, (vs. 29-31); and his own, which succeeded, (vs. 32-36). The prophet evidently could not delegate the necessary power to another. God would use him in this matter, and no other. He must journey to the place where the body lay, where he went in and shut the door, (v. 33), being thus alone with God, to whom he prayed, (v. 33). All things are possible to those who believe (Mark 9:23); and it may truly be said that few of us understand the power of prayer. God-answered the petition of Elisha, and restored life to the child, (v. 35), bringing great joy to the mother. In restoring spiritually dead persons there must also be prayer, and labour on their behalf. Such work is not easy, and costs something in time, effort and comfort. To be used of God, we must be willing to pay the price, (Matt. 16:24).

IV. THE POT OF DEATH, (vs. 38-41).

In these verses we are given a picture of an ancient theological seminary, with the teacher and students engaged in the classroom, and then partaking of their social repast. This was probably not an uncommon scene, but it is here recorded because of the miracle which took place. In connection with it we may observe the "dearth in the land", permitted as a punishment for sin, the privilege, simplicity and probable poverty of the sons of the prophets, the mistake made by one of them respecting the wild gourds; and the miraculous healing of the food. It would appear as if the sons of the prophets engaged in high thinking and simple living, much as men of a similar class do in these days. There is death in many a theological pot in the present time, and many students are suffering injury thereby. The same may be healed by the application of the meal of true doctrine, only in many cases there is no Elisha to apply the remedy.

**V. FEEDING THE HUNDRED MEN,
(vs. 42-44).**

A gift of food is at all times acceptable, but particularly so in a time of dearth, and Elisha and his company would sincerely appreciate the thoughtfulness of the man who brought the loaves. There were loaves of bread of the first fruits, probably meant as gifts to God, and thereafter to be eaten by his servants, (Lev. 23:15-21). There were twenty of them, possibly sufficient for a like number of men, but in this case one hundred men must be fed. The prophet's servitor therefore expostulated concerning the matter, but he was bidden to serve, and told that the men would eat and leave thereof, which came to pass. Note the probable multiplication of the food, reminding us of our Lord's miracles of a like nature, (Matt. 16:8-11). God is able for all things.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Volume 8

No. 4

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 51

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FOURTH QUARTER

NAAMAN

Lesson Text: II Kings, chapter 5.

Golden Text: "Then he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."—II Kings, 5.

Bible School Reading: II Kings 5:1-19.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Luke 17:11-19.

Tuesday—Ex. 12:1-13.

Wednesday—Is. 53:1-12.

Thursday—Luke 16:13-17.

Friday—Rom. 3:1-18.

Saturday—I Pet. 1:13-21.

I. THE AFFLICTION OF NAAMAN,
(v. 1).

The story of Naaman is somewhat significantly introduced. We are informed first of all of his position and honourable qualifications, then there is added the clause, "but he was a leper". Neither his outstanding position, his upright character, nor his favour with the king, could protect him from the attack of this dread disease. There was, anciently, no cure for it unless by divine aid, and the same is true in the present day respecting certain phases of it, despite the remedies which are being tried. The best that can now be said is that the course of the disease may be stayed in certain cases. It is more prevalent in the east than in the west, due probably to the difference in living conditions, but wherever it is found it produces sadness, and even dismay. It is a fit type of sin, and with this in mind several things may be observed. First, respecting its nature, we note that it is not localized in the body, but affects every part of the same; it is more than a skin disease; it is in the blood. It begins in an insidious manner, making its presence known by a spot, or by a little sore. There is also the danger attached to the hereditary tendency, and to contagion by actual contact. In its effect we may note that it makes the afflicted one unclean, (Lev. 13:8); it hinders usefulness in service; it deprives of joy and real satisfaction in life; it is incurable apart from divine aid; and ensures a sad and certain death. Naaman knew he was a leper, others also became aware of it; the diagnosis probably being given by some person competent to give judgment in the matter, the same being confirmed by the feeling and observation of the afflicted

one, bringing sadness, disappointment, discouragement, and perhaps helplessness into his life. He was a doomed man unless help could reach him.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF THE MAID,
(vs. 2, 3).

When persons are in distress it is the duty of the people of God to help them. The little Israelitish maid was therefore doing her duty. When she gave testimony to the possibility of healing for her master she was also manifesting her interest in him, and her desire for his betterment. In this she was doing good to her enemies, (Matt. 5:44). She was a captive maid, and might have rejoiced in the affliction of the one who possessed her; but she rose above this feeling, and allowed not her circumstances to influence her action in seeking his highest welfare. She knew where healing could be found, and she bore witness to what she knew. Note the nature of scriptural witness-bearing, (Acts 1:8), the importance of the maid's testimony, coming as it did at the right time, although from a weak vessel; and the great consequences ensuing therefrom. It was due to her simple message that her master was healed, and that we have this wondrous message to tell.

III. THE MISSION OF NAAMAN,
(vs. 4-7).

The message of the maid was conveyed to her master, afterwards reaching the ears of the king. Naaman was dispatched with a letter to the ruler of Israel in search of the remedy. Unfortunately there was not a clear understanding concerning the maid's message. She had mentioned the prophet as being the one through whom healing would come, while Naaman was sent to the king. He therefore went to the wrong place and very nearly stirred up trouble between the two countries, instead of securing blessing for himself. Note the miserable condition of the king of Israel, disclosed in his attitude; also the lack of knowledge on the part of the Syrians concerning things of God; and the fact that so many these days go to the wrong place for spiritual healing. One may also notice the helplessness of the world in the face of this emergency, and in the presence of every spiritual need.

IV. THE DIRECTION OF ELISHA,
(vs. 8-12).

It was fortunate for all concerned that there was a man of God in the neighbourhood. There is no telling what might have happened if Elisha had not communicated with the king, and given direction concerning the solution of the difficulty. Men of God have been, and always will be a blessing to the world, although they are not always regarded in this light. They know God and are able to make known His will, and direct in His way. Observe the independence of the servant of God, and the fact that he was not a respecter of persons. He was not influenced by wealth or position. He did not even go out to meet Naaman,

but sent a messenger to convey the direction that the sufferer should wash seven times in the Jordan, in order to be clean. Such direction was clear, easily understood, simple, direct, practical, and divine in its inspiration, yet not at first appreciated by Naaman. In his own mind there was an anticipatory place respecting the manner of his healing, and because this was so different, he "went away in a rage". His pride was hurt and he rebelled at this seeming humiliation. In the spiritual realm there are many who desire to be saved in their own way, and we fear they are carrying out their own plans, meantime despising the divine plan: wash and be clean (Rev. 1:5). The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, (I John 1:9).

V. THE OBEDIENCE OF NAAMAN,
(vs. 13, 14).

Sometimes the servant manifests more wisdom than the master. It was so in this case as is evident from the reasoning employed, and the result accomplished. Naaman acceded to the suggestion offered, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan and came up therefrom healed of his disease. We learn from this the effective nature of the plan. The cure was thorough, complete and instantaneous, and was dependent on the Lord, and not inherent in the water, being based on obedience to the divine command. Dipping in the water was an act of faith. Note the necessity for faith in salvation, (Eph. 2:8).

VI. THE THANKSGIVING OF
NAAMAN, (vs. 15-19).

It is very often the case that for blessing received no thanksgiving is offered. Such an attitude is due either to lack of appreciation or to thoughtlessness. Naaman appreciated what had been done for him and returned to express his thanks. In this he was but doing his duty. The same is enjoined upon all the Lord's people, (I Thess. 5:18). Note Naaman's testimony to God, his offer of a gift to Elisha, the refusal of the prophet to receive it, the request of the Syrian for the earth, his explanation respecting its intended use, and his departure from the presence of Elisha. From henceforth Naaman was a believer in the true God, although the duties of his office would compel him to give acknowledgment to the heathen god. It meant for him either compromise, or trouble, and he accepted the former. Warning is required concerning the fear of man. (Prov. 29:25).

VII. THE SIN OF GEHAZI, (vs. 20-27).

Throughout Scripture we are given warning respecting the sin of covetousness, (Josh. 7:21; Luke 12:15). It is a deadly sin which brings fearful consequences in its train. In Gehazi's case we see it in operation. He thought, evidently, that Elisha was permitting a good opportunity to slip, and sought to make personal gain from the other's loss, but at what a tremendous cost! He desired, deceived, and lied, and became a leper. Sin never pays.

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GOOD NEWS FROM STANLEY AVENUE, HAMILTON

"Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." On Wednesday evening last week at the prayer service the hearts of the people of this church were turned to Him through the message given by Rev. W. E. Atkinson, from the 18th chapter of Matthew, on the law of forgiveness, taking as his text, "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

It was observed that we were like the servant of the Lord who was forgiven the great debt; a debt so great that it could not be paid; a debt that was forgiven when we were utterly bankrupt and had absolutely nothing with which we could redeem ourselves from the condition in which we were found. But through the forgiveness of the Lord, Who forgiveth all our iniquities and putteth our sins behind His back to be remembered no more against us for ever, there was cause for great rejoicing in the grace of our God. And yet, though we had been thus forgiven through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and justified from all things through the righteousness of Him, and made to become as though we had never sinned at all, we went and did much as the servant who had been forgiven all, and took our fellow-man by the throat and said unto him, "Pay that thou owest". In other words, our debt was so great that it could not be paid, but here was one who owed us a small amount which could easily have been met if patience had been exercised. And so we were like that servant inasmuch as the parable has indicated, that we who have been forgiven so much are not willing to forgive a little which has been done against us. The law of forgiveness is a great law. It is based upon the holiness and justice of God. If God for Christ's sake can forgive us all our sins, and can justify us, then we ought to forgive each other as He has forgiven us.

A common expression which is often heard from the lips of Christians is, "I'll forgive, but you know I cannot forget." It is strange how many will pray in our Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us"; or in other words, we say unto the Lord, "Forgive me in just the same way and in the same measure as I forgive others." Now if this be true, then instead of praying for ourselves, we pray against ourselves, and say to the Lord, "Do not put my sins behind Thy back to be remembered against me no more forever because, Lord, I cannot forget. I will forgive, but I cannot forget." Is that the way the Son of God does it? He says, "I will put your sins behind my back to be remembered no more against you forever." He not only forgives, but He delights to forget, and casts our sins into the sea of His forgetfulness. Hallelujah, What a Saviour!

At the close of the message the hearts of His people were bowed down in a spirit of willingness not only to forgive, but with the help of the Lord, to forget the past and to launch out into the work, unto which God had called them.

Pastor Loney was in Orillia conducting special meetings, and upon his return to Hamilton a great gathering greeted him on Sunday morning, when once again the hearts of the people were touched, and many signified their intention of following on to know Him, and to pray for revival in their midst. Great will be our rejoicing through Jesus the Son when all our churches are stirred to reach out after the lost and bring them to Jesus Christ.

Continued Rejoicing

Sunday, November 26th, was another great day at Stanley Avenue. In the morning some twenty-five publicly declared their determination to yield their lives wholly to Christ. In the afternoon at the Mountain Mission three boys were saved. At the evening service a mother and son, and two young women were gloriously saved, and publicly confessed Christ before the church. To God be the glory!

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH, ORILLIA

Perhaps no more significant name could have been given to this place of worship than Bethel, for Bethel means worship, the place where God appears unto His servants, or where the heavens are opened and a ladder of communication is set up between earth and heaven. This has been experienced over and over again in the opening services of this new church built in the town of Orillia. Over one hundred souls have been dealt with in the enquiry room in the last two weeks, and the people have verified the experience suggested by the name of their church as they have seen the souls of men touched by the Spirit of God and regenerated through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The work was begun as a work of faith. Some predicted that it could not succeed because there was not room enough in Orillia for another Baptist church. The folly of such a prediction has been fully revealed in the last few weeks, as the people of God worshipping in the Bethel Baptist Church have seen men and women of mature years walk down the aisles confessing Jesus Christ as Saviour for the first time in their lives.

A Great Meeting

Sunday, November 26th. What a day! What a day! There was a good attendance at the Bible School, followed by a great morning service, and in spite of the change in the weather which affected the attendance, the Spirit of the Lord was

upon His people in prayer. In the evening the Church was filled again, and after a number had confessed Christ in baptism, the message of the evening was delivered. God was there in mighty power, and when the Rev. John Byers gave the invitation, three came for baptism, and a great number responded to the invitation for salvation. A grown-up son was seen to come with a father whose hair was now turning white, to assist in pointing his own parent to the Saviour Who is able to save to the uttermost all who will come unto Him. The service continued on away into the evening, as these beloved ones were instructed in the Word of Life. As soon as the workers were satisfied, each in turn publicly confessed Christ before the congregation, and told of his new-found joy in Him Whom they now trusted. The people of this church are living in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord pervades the whole atmosphere of the place. The people are in a prayerful and expectant attitude, and never before, to the oldest inhabitants, can there be recalled such a moving of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of His people. We offer no apology for recording once again these blessings, but pray and trust that all our churches shall receive a like visitation from the presence of the Lord.

KINMOUNT

"Pastor Boomer was assisted by Pastor Gillion of Bobcaygeon in a week of special meetings, recently held at the Rock School, some five miles from Kinmount, when a time of rich blessing was experienced, and eleven souls came out boldly for Christ. The need of the gospel in Kinmount was laid upon the hearts of these Pastors, and now a special effort is being made here. The Orange Hall was secured for the meetings. No Evangelistic meetings have been conducted in Kinmount for over forty years! This is the second week of the meetings, and already twelve souls have confessed Christ. Last night, Pastor Boomer, with many of the new converts from Norland, and Rock School, joined with us, together with a large number of friends from Bobcaygeon, and with the Hall well-filled, we had a gracious time in the presence of the Lord. There were many convincing testimonies from new converts, and the power of the Lord was in His preached Word. At the close of the service, ten confessed Christ.

There is a real burden on the hearts of some for souls in Kinmount, and a deep conviction of sin is resting upon some unsaved for whom much prayer has gone up. We are praying for, and expecting a great revival in Kinmount. Both the interest and attendance are growing.

We shall greatly appreciate an interest in the prayers of the members of the Union for both the work and the workers."