

The Gospel Witness

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

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.
Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada.

Vol. 12, No. 40

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 15, 1934

Whole Number 613

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

HOW CHRIST CHOOSES HIS BRIDE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, February 11th, 1934.
(Stenographically Reported)

Broadcast over CFRB, 690 k.c., as is every Sunday evening service of Jarvis Street Church, from 7 to 8.30 o'clock, Eastern Standard Time.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

"Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."—II. Thess. 2:13, 14.

The long story of human sin and suffering and sorrow is the result of the belief of a lie. In the beginning the tempter succeeded in misrepresenting God—and man believed the misrepresentation. His belief of that which was not true has issued in an abiding misunderstanding of God. The tempter persuaded man that God designed to withhold from him all that was pleasant and desirable in life. Man believed that misrepresentation; and the lie has persisted from then until now. Hence it is a commonly accepted principle that the life of happiness, the life that is fullest of good things, is a life remote from the word and will of God; that a Christian life must necessarily be devoid of all that is pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise. Thus the devil slandered God, and belief of the slander brought death into the world and all our woe.

The purpose of divine revelation, from Genesis to Revelation, is to correct that slander; and to show men that God is exactly the opposite of all that Satan has represented Him to be, and of all that our sinful imaginations have conceived Him to be. Hence figures are multiplied both in the Old and New Testaments, with a view to illustrating and making clear to us who and what God really is.

The truth of His divine Fatherhood is set forth in the Old Testament. That is not distinctively a New Testament doctrine: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Indeed, there is no conception of God in the New Testament that is not foreshadowed in the Old. It is amplified, brought to completion, however, in the New. Thus our Lord Jesus takes

all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament and fulfils them in Himself, showing us what is meant by the divine Fatherhood, what sort of Father God is, by illustrating in Himself His divine Sonship: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

But God represents Himself both in the Old Testament and in the New, in a still more tender relationship than that of father: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." But what manner of bridegroom He proposed to be we could not learn apart from Him Who called Himself the Bridegroom. That beautiful figure which abounds in the Old Testament stands out in bold relief in the New. The great chapter which I read to you of the divine Bridegroom, the prediction of His coming, and of His glory, finds its fulfilment in the work and ministry of our Lord. The religion of Christ is a religion of love, of the truest kind of love—not of mere sentimentality, but of a love that is love indeed. Jesus Christ is the Lover of our souls. And what more interesting story is there in life than that of the mutual attraction even of two human hearts, and of their ultimate union with each other?

I propose to try to show you this evening how our glorious Bridegroom makes choice of His bride.

I.

First of all, HE CHOOSES HIS OWN BRIDE: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." The doctrine of divine sovereignty is set forth on every page of

holy Scripture. There are princes of royal courts in this earth who have not the right of choice. The bride is either chosen for the prince, or he is restricted in his choice to very narrow limits. Not so with this prince Whom I preach to you this evening. He will suffer no one to restrict the outgoings of His affection. He is absolutely sovereign, sovereign *de facto* as well as sovereign *de jure*: He actually exercises His sovereign power.

I remark that *that right which He claims for Himself ought freely to be accorded Him*. It is perhaps illustrative of the perversity of human nature that men so readily deny, even to God Himself, that independence which they so jealously claim for themselves. Claiming for themselves the right of choice in every department of life, they would deny to God the same right which they themselves demand. But this Saviour Whom I preach is determined to make His own choice, and if indeed we are saved, we are saved, not because we have chosen Him, but because He has chosen us. Whatever may be true of the human relationship, I am positive that in this divine relationship of which marriage is the type, not the anti-type, the Bridegroom takes the initiative. The choice is with Him, and with Him alone. He makes choice of those who shall be saved.

I venture the assertion that there can be no true foundation for saving faith until that great fundamental principle is recognized, that salvation always begins with God. It is from Him. He is the Alpha and Omega of it. He chooses such as shall be saved. Do you believe that?

I remember my good friend, the late Dr. John McNeill, who was once Pastor of Cooke's Presbyterian Church in this city, saying something to this effect: I love that doctrine of divine choice, the doctrine of election, of the sovereign grace of God, for then I know that somebody will come. That is true. This bridegroom chooses His own bride, as He has a right to. Why not? You had better let other bridegrooms choose their brides too. Keep your hands off. Mind your own business. If you have ever meddled with an affair of that sort, I expect your hands have been rather severely burned. If you have ever been unwise enough to try it, you have probably discovered that there is at least one department in life in which the right of self-determination is already so firmly established that it makes no difference what the League of Nations has to say about it. I think the most that can ever reasonably be hoped for at any kind of wedding is that two people shall be satisfied—and if two are satisfied, that ought to be enough. Our Lord will make His choice, for He is determined that He will find one satisfactory to Himself.

How fortunate that He makes His own choice! Who could choose for Him? A very wise observer of ancient time said: "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." No one can account for the outgoings of human affection. It is one of the truly great problems of life. I am called upon not infrequently to celebrate the marriage ceremony, and I am often glad I have nothing to do but officiate. I am very glad the participants do not expect any word of approval from me. Do not be afraid to come: I promise to express no opinion. It is none of my business. But very, very often I am at an utter loss to understand it.

But still more difficult would it be to understand the strange course which the love of God may take, and upon what strange objects His affections may be set. At all events, this Prince will allow no one to interfere with Him: He will choose His own bride.

It is extremely unfortunate when the parents of either party to a marriage contract are dissatisfied. It is always to me a happy augury when the parents on both sides are pleased. Of course, I do not recommend young people always to wait until parents are pleased—for then, in some cases, there would be no marriage at all. But other things being equal, it is most gratifying when all concerned find delight in the mutual choice of the bridegroom and the bride.

My text says that *the Father's choice is one with the Son's* in this respect: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit." Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—all the resources of Deity, are engaged in the salvation of the soul. When at last this Bridegroom brings His bride into the Father's presence, to present her, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing", without fault before the throne of God, it will be a source of satisfaction to the bride to know that all heaven will be waiting to welcome the redeemed soul, that everybody in heaven will be satisfied with the marriage. I shall speak to you, if the Lord wills, in a week or so of the marriage of the Lamb, and try to tell you what a happy day, what a blissful occasion, that will be. But I anticipate that stage by going thus far this evening to say that, not only will the Father and the Spirit be satisfied with the Son, but that all the angels in glory will accord the Son His sovereign right with gladness, and will heartily approve His choice. They will share His unspeakable joy when He brings His bride into the Father's presence.

Those of us who are Christians may have to endure criticism enough here, but when we get home to glory we shall have done with all that; everybody will be satisfied when we arrive in that city of which you were singing a few moments ago, the city "four-square".

Then this Prince *claims the right to marry beneath Him*. That is not allowed to many princes. They are shut up, in their choice, to someone of royal blood. But this Prince insists that He will set His love wherever He wants to, that there shall be no restriction whatever, and that if He chooses to select one of humble station, then He will exercise His sovereign right in so doing.

What would happen if it were reported that some royal prince had come to this city seeking a bride? That he was determined to find her not among the high, but among the lowly, not among the rich, but among the poor; and that he would not allow humble birth to stand in the way of the realization of his own love's dream? Would not that be an interesting tale? How many hearts would begin to flutter in Toronto if that were true! What dreams some people would dream if that were published!

I publish much bigger news than that over the radio to-night, for just such a Prince has come to Toronto, and He is seeking a bride. He will not find her among the high and exalted: He will look for His bride among those of lowly origin, and among those who can bring Him no dowry whatever. That is a great gospel.

But I go farther than that, and say that *this Prince claims the right—and not only claims it, but exercises it—to set His heart's affection upon someone who is morally unworthy of Him*. Here there are no analogies, at

this point we are without precedent. We have heard stories of love leaping over all barriers of rank, defying all considerations of poverty; of love's waiving the verdict of the eyes and discerning some hidden grace of character that nobody else can see. We have read stories of human love that defy analysis and explanation. But I do not think any of us could justly rejoice in the prospect of a union between one of sound moral character, and one whose character was faulty. That would transcend all limits of reason and of sound judgment. There must be sound character, however humble either may be, or there can be no satisfaction between the two.

That is true. But again our Prince is called, "Wonderful". He defies all the conventions of life, and actually sets His heart upon one who belongs to the criminal class, upon someone who is under the condemnation of His Father's law. Even prison walls are not allowed to stand in the way of His affection, but He allows His heart's love to go out after those who are under the curse, and who are, in themselves, utterly unfit to be His companions.

You ask, "How can that be justified?" Moral opposites cannot happily be joined. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed. One cannot marry light to darkness, or good to evil, with any prospect of peace. A union of moral incompatibilities argues anything but good for the future. How, then, can the sinner hope for happiness with the Saviour?

I point out to you how this representation of God must, of necessity, *enlarge the hope of every one of us*. Who would ever dream of union with the Holy One? What sinner, indeed, would of himself ever desire it? Who would want to be married to Incarnate Goodness, to be joined in an indissoluble union with Him Who is essentially—not outwardly only—but in the very essence of His nature, holy as God is holy? We should never have dreamed of it, and indeed I think we should never desire it. But the truth that the Holy One makes choice of sinners opens the gates of heaven to all of us. This is the gospel—deep as the lowest depths of the horrible pit, wide as the poles of human experience, long as the uttermost reaches of the far country, high—high as the heavens? No, as high as the throne and Person of the Lord Himself; "Whereunto he called you by our gospel with the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The text says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit."

I recall a little episode when I was a lad, in my late teens I suppose it was. I do not remember the occasion of it, but I remember a playful remark which I heard from my mother. She had noted some peculiarity in me—I do not remember what it was: there are so many—but she said to me, "If ever you are to be happily married, you will have to have a wife made for you." I am sure she was right; but a kind Providence anticipated that necessity, and arranged it admirably. No: I do not plead guilty to being any more peculiar than you, only my peculiarities are mine as yours are yours. But it is a great mercy to mankind that the Lord has made so many different sorts of women, different in every respect but this, that they are all infinitely patient with difficult husbands.

The Prince of Whom I speak must have a wife made for Him. Hence, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Setting His love upon one who is

beneath Him, and unworthy of Him, such an one is brought from beneath and lifted up into the same rank of royalty which He Himself enjoys. Such an one is born again. You have only to think for a minute to see the absolute necessity for any sinner, if he would live with God, to be born again.

Many people have come to me with their marital difficulties, sometimes a husband, and sometimes a wife, saying, "What shall I do? We cannot go on living this cat-and-dog existence." And I have always but one answer to make: "I cannot see any hope for you short of divine intervention. You will have to be made over again. If you get new natures, and are changed by the mighty power of God, it may be possible for you to live together."

And if that is necessary as between men and women: how much more emphatically true it is—and must be—in respect to our relationship to God! It is absurd to think of anyone in his or her natural state dwelling happily with the Prince of glory. Thus "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit". What a gospel that is, that the poorest, the humblest, the most unworthy, man or woman in this city, or within reach of this radio message this evening—and indeed could my voice reach to the millions of India, and China, and South Africa, and South America, and touch the men and women in the very lowest stratum of human life, I would still declare that the lowliest, the most unworthy, the poorest, of the sons of earth may dare to dream of union with the Prince of glory; because He sovereignly chooses His bride from just such.

II.

And He will have His way, as I shall try to show you next Sunday night. He will win for Himself those upon whom His heart is set: chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

"Belief of the truth." That is how he chooses us: He shows us the truth. He unveils the ugliness of sin. I said to you the other day that our Lord Jesus has a rival—and He has. There is always someone bidding for your heart and hand, and would claim you for his own. I read a story years ago of a man of large wealth and position in life who had an only daughter upon whom all his heart's affections were centred. He had no son, and she was his heir.

There came into the family a man of fine appearance, of engaging manners, a very attractive personality. He laid siege to this young woman's heart, and won her. The father was greatly concerned. He first of all had his suspicions of the unworthiness of this man, suspicions which were soon confirmed by positive knowledge. He learned that he was not what he professed to be; but how to convince his daughter of that fact was the problem. He was too wise to oppose her without stating his reasons. Therefore he quietly went to work until he ascertained certain facts in the case, and one evening, calling his daughter by name, he said, "I have to go down into the centre of the city to-night; will you come with me?" "Certainly, father, if you want me."

They drove down to a certain place—it was before the days of motor-cars—and at a certain point they got out of the carriage and told the coachman to wait for their return. They went down into the dark alleys of the city, where this cultured young lady had never been before. She saw sights, and heard sounds, to which she was an entire stranger. As her discomfort increased she clutched

her father's arm and clung the more tenaciously to him. They walked along together until presently they came to a place where there was a blaze of light streaming out into the street. It was a bar-room, and the smell of liquor smote their nostrils even before they got to the door. They heard sounds of drunken men and women inside, and the daughter said, "Oh, father, take me out of this; I do not want to be here." "But I want you to go with me all the way," he said.

To her utter amazement he led her right up to the door of the bar-room, pushed it open, and took her into the midst of the drunken crowd. And there, behind the bar, with his sleeves rolled up above his elbows, in a white apron, dealing out damnation at five cents a glass, stood the man, the fine gentleman to whom she had given her heart! She swooned, fell into her father's arms, and he carried her out and managed to get her back to the carriage. When she had regained her composure the father said, "What now, daughter?" She replied, "Thank you, father; I will never see him again."

That is a picture of this evil world with all its allurements, wooing us toward the path that leads to destruction. And the tragedy is, the hearts of men believe that in that direction lie peace, and plenty, and abiding satisfaction. And it is the function, I repeat, of divine revelation to strip the mask from the ugly face of the pretender, and to show men that to give their hearts to this world means to marry the miseries of the pit, for this life, and for the life that is to come.

At the same time, it is the function of this Book, and the special ministry of the Spirit of truth, to show who Jesus Christ is, to identify Him as the King of kings, and Lord of lords, as the Prince of glory, in order that our hearts may be weaned away from the one, and given wholly to the Other: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Do you believe, dear friends, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Do you believe that He is the Creator of all things, that "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made"? Do you believe that God has made Him the Heir of all things, and that He has in His hands such gifts as men, in the greatest flights of imagination, have never dreamed of? Do you believe that He offers to save you now, and to save you for ever?

I said a moment ago that He sets His love upon those who are under the law. Nor could He ever have won them to Himself had He not paid the awful price, the penalty our sins had incurred, and made it possible to throw open the prison doors, and to marry us, if I may so say, even as captives, that He might bring us to glory, "whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". I offer you a position of affluence, of honour, of renown, of everlasting glory. I am authorized to invite you to share the throne with Him Whose throne is established in the heavens, and Whose kingdom ruleth over all.

"Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing thy great Redeemer's praise;
He justly claims a song from me;
His loving-kindness, O how free!

"He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!

"Though numerous hosts of mighty foes,
Though earth and hell my way oppose,
He safely leads my soul along;
His loving-kindness, O how strong!

"Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day,
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving-kindness in the skies."

That is the gospel. May the Lord help us to receive it for His name's sake. Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee for Thy interposition in human affairs. We thank Thee that Thou hast caused the light to shine from heaven, that Thou hast given us Thy Holy Book, and sent Thy Holy Spirit to correct the devil's slander, and to make it possible for us to know the truth, and, knowing it, to be made free. Thou Lover of our souls, come to us this evening. Help us to yield heart and intellect, will and affection, all there is of us, to Thee, that we may receive Thee for what Thou really art, the King of glory, the Saviour of all who believe. For Thy name's sake we ask it, Amen.

DAVID'S ROUGH ROAD TO THE THRONE

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, February 8th, 1934.

*Twelfth in the 1933-34 Series of Thursday Evening
Lectures on Biblical Theology, which is included in
the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson Text: II Samuel, Chapter Two.

Our lesson this evening is in the Second of Samuel, the second chapter, beginning with the eighth verse. Before giving thought to the chapter especially before us, I would direct the students' attention particularly to a very profitable line of study. There are introduced to us in this chapter a number of new characters. I know of few things more interesting than biographical study. It is well to familiarize ourselves with the life-stories of men who have brought things to pass in the various departments of life. I do not mean, for the moment, life-stories found in the Bible alone; but the lives of great men generally. Men who have been great servants of their day and generation are worth studying in an endeavour to discover the secret of their greatness.

The Bible abounds in biographical passages. Some of them are little more than allusions to certain characters, but if you gather together these incidental allusions to certain persons, you will often discover an outline at least of their life-story. There are the great and more conspicuous characters of course, such as we have been studying of recent months: Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David. But there are other great characters—or characters that would be great if they were not dwarfed by contrast with these mountain-peaks. As you approach the Rockies, in the distance, you will discern the peaks of the great mountains, but before you reach them you will come to what are called the foothills. There are many foothills in these Biblical Himalayan ranges. There are the high peaks such as we have named, but there are others whose characters will repay diligent study.

We shall not have time to examine them particularly this evening, but I name a number of them. Abner, the son of Ner, who was captain of Saul's host, and who made himself strong for the house of Saul, was really a great man; and when he was treacherously slain by

Joab, David said, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" Notwithstanding his early opposition to David, Abner was a really great man.

Then it is worth while studying the characters of the three nephews of David. One of them, Asahel, reaches the end of the journey in the chapter before us, but the other two, Joab and Abishai, remain; and we shall have occasion to deal with them in subsequent studies, but each of these three men seems to have been a man of real distinction. Not all their qualities were admirable, but they were influential leaders of men. They were all the sons of David's sister Zeruah. Nothing is said of their father; but the mention of his sepulchre in II. Samuel 2:32, suggests his probable early death. It may have been also that Zeruah was the stronger member of the partnership, and possibly her name persists because of that. At all events, these two characters which will appear in subsequent chapters, Joab and Abishai, are worth study.

I.

Our lesson begins with the story of Abner, who was captain of Saul's host. Last week I called your attention to the loyalty of the men of Jabesh-gilead, who showed kindness to the house of Saul by taking the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan and giving them decent burial. You recall how David warmed up to the men of Jabesh-gilead because of their constancy, because of their loyalty to his predecessor—and he was not mistaken. They became as loyal to him as they had been to the one who had gone before him.

Abner was the captain of Saul's host, and, as such, was intensely loyal to his master. He was true and faithful to him, notwithstanding Saul's obvious faults. Sir John A. Macdonald, who was one of the fathers of Confederation, and perhaps the leading spirit in effecting the federation of the various provinces, once said to a company of men something to this effect, that he did not place a high value upon the friendship of men who were his friends only when he did right, and was successful. He said he wanted friends who would stand by him when he made mistakes, and when he failed.

The successful man will never want for friends, or at least for followers who call themselves friends. I have often referred, without shame, to "Amos and Andy", because there is so much human nature in their comedy. To-night, when there seemed a prospect that Amos might come into the possession of a little money because the children of Sarah and Elijah Jones are being sought, the Kingfish and Andy decided they ought to get a little closer together—and a little closer to Amos. They planned several social affairs, so that Amos would understand they were his true friends. When Amos came into the garage office he was almost overwhelmed by their expressions of friendship and offers of assistance. But after Amos had gone out, another idea occurred to the Kingfish: that perhaps the children of Amos' parents were being sought for some other purpose than to give them money—and he and Andy decided to postpone their social activities until they found out what Amos was wanted for.

How true to life that is! When things go well with you, people will keep step with you, but if the tide turns, there will be a different story to tell. There are not many Abners.

David was never bitter toward Abner though he was

the captain of Saul's armies. David was a man of keen discernment, and he never blamed Abner for his constancy, for his loyalty to his master. Abner was slow to change alliances. While others deserted Saul, Abner remained true to him.

In every reform or revolutionary movement, whether in society or in a church, whenever there is a severance of associations and a new movement is begun under a new leader, there will be found certain types of people who will flock to the new movement always, just as the "mixed multitude" accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt. It is never difficult to begin a thing. One can always get a following for a beginning. But the majority of the people who are so ready to begin with you, will be just as ready to begin with somebody else, and you may find yourself without a following to-morrow. There are types of people who never seem to have anything at stake, who will drift from one allegiance to another at the slightest provocation, or with no provocation at all. Little dependence can be placed upon such in any association of life.

But Abner was of the sort that is not easily separated from an old allegiance. He must be overwhelmingly convinced of the unworthiness of the old and of the superior worthiness of the new before he will change camps.

Ishbosheth was the son of Saul. Perhaps the only thing there was about Ishbosheth to distinguish him was that he was his father's son. It is a good thing, of course, to have a great father; but if that be the only thing of worth about him it will not carry a man very far. Ishbosheth does not appear to have been a man of any great ability, but because he was a king's son, at Saul's death, Abner, the captain of Saul's host, "brought him over to Mahanaim; and made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years."

Observe *Ishbosheth was not heard of until he was forty years old*. There is a world of teaching in that. If a man has not made some impression on his day and generation by the time he is forty years old, it is useless to expect he will ever do so. If he has become something by the time he is forty, he may develop strength and become stronger, and perhaps maintain an influential position; but men do not display qualities of greatness when they have passed forty if they have shown nothing of it before. Ishbosheth was never heard of until Saul died, and Abner put him on the throne—and he was there two years.

There are many Ishbosheths in life, men who are looking for some Abner to put them forward. Travelling on the train some years ago I fell in with a certain man whom I had known years before, who was under the delusion that somehow or another, in his case, the world had failed to recognize a very great man. He could not quite understand how or why he had remained unrecognized. I think he lived in the constant expectation that the discovery would sometime suddenly be made. But nobody had recognized that greatness was in their midst when he was about. He was a minister. He came over to where I was sitting in the car, and asked me if I did not think that even in the ministry men who occupied prominent positions obtained their positions through the influence of someone else, or, as he put it, "Do you not think pull puts

men into positions?" I told him I thought it possible men might sometimes be thus introduced to certain positions.

I have in my mind now a certain case where a professor went to a large church and would not leave until he had a promise from the officials of that church that they would call a certain man. They "called" him, and the man accepted the "call" and settled in the church. After a few months the newspapers reported that he had suffered an attack of nervous prostration. The church had paid him a considerable honorarium, and sent him away for a rest. When I read it I said to myself, I was sure somebody would have nervous prostration—but I was not sure whether it would be the minister or the church! Ishbosheth was forty years old when he began 'to reign over Israel, and he *reigned two years!*"

When the minister to whom I have referred asked that question, I said, "It may be possible that men are placed in positions in all walks of life by somebody else's influence—but that will not keep them there." If men have not the qualities in them to keep them in such a position, they will not stay. Abner took hold of Ishbosheth, made him king, and propped him up for two years. We have known many ministerial Ishbosheths who can endure or be endured for only a short two years.

Young men, do not depend upon human help. Depend upon God. More doors open to a *push* than to a *pull*. I have known many men who have waited for doors to open with a pull. Get behind the door, and push. Do not depend upon Abner to make you a king. He did it in this case, but even Abner could not keep Ishbosheth on the throne.

II.

"And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months." During that time he found opposition from both Abner and Ishbosheth. It is the old, old story that we meet all the time. You cannot make progress in anything in life without encountering opposition. There is a proverb to the effect that the course of true love never runs smooth. The course of nothing runs smooth in this life, so far as I have observed. David was anointed; he was born to be a king; in that direction lay the plan and purpose of God—but he had to contend for every inch of ground he won.

Abner's splendid qualities blinded him to the truth in respect to the merits of Saul and David. His excessive loyalty to Saul made it difficult for him to recognize that his proper place was with David. He recognized it at last—but too late. You must expect to have difficulties. How often the name of this church has appeared in the papers, and how often our name and honour have been dragged in the mire, because, they said, there is some opposition! Of course there is opposition. There always will be.

When I had been Pastor of this church two or three years, twenty years ago or so—certainly it was before the war—*The Toronto Saturday Night* published an article on the "principal" churches of Toronto. There were four churches named. This was one. The churches and their pastors were described. The pastors were all great men—even I, according to that paper! They did not know anything about me, but I suppose it was thought good policy so to describe

Jarvis Street Church. And I distinctly recall laying that article down with a feeling of disgust, saying, The Lord help us when the churches of Jesus Christ can be thus spoken of. One minister was remarkable for the salary he received. Another minister's duties were "chiefly of a social character"; his wife was one of the social leaders of Toronto, and even the minister himself was often called upon to appear at social functions. His splendid qualities, as exhibited in a drawing-room, were all described. Surely that sort of thing is only playing at church. The minister who is about the Lord's business will have to travel a rough road.

David surely had had his full share already, and he might have assumed now that Saul was gone, and he was recognized as king, and the crown had been put upon his brow, opposition would cease. But scarcely was he proclaimed king in Hebron when Ishbosheth, a mere nobody, was set upon the throne to reign over all the tribes of Israel with the single exception of the tribe of Judah. Therefore David had to fight on.

So must you. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Do not pity yourself because of that, for it is a law of life. There is no man in business who succeeds without effort. The man who labours strenuously for a few years can soon lose everything he has won if he slacks down a bit. You not only have to keep on, but you must keep on keeping on. You must never cease from your efforts—if I may so say—to co-operate with the will and purpose of God. We are to "work out (our) own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in (us) both to will and to do of his good pleasure". If we are to be anything, or to do anything, in the world, we shall have to "live strenuously", to use, I believe, Theodore Roosevelt's fine phrase, to the end of the chapter.

III.

Abner and Joab were the opposing commanders: Joab was captain of David's host; and Abner captain of the men who followed the son of Saul. In those days it was possible for the enemy to come within speaking distance of each other. Joab and Abner discussed their differences between them. Twelve men from each side went out, and they met and slew each other, and the field was called Helkath-hazzurim. That is a nice name, is it not? It was the field of strong men, but what did they accomplish? There are many controversies of this sort that are utterly useless, striving about nothing. Ishbosheth is not worth fighting for; but he will fight, David's men must oppose his pretensions. These twenty-four men were equally matched, and when they had slain each other, neither side was any better off. But it issued in a very sore battle, and the men of Israel were smitten before the servants of David.

IV.

Now we come to the story of these three men, and particularly of the one who, with this chapter, disappears from history, save as his death became a cause of antagonism between Joab and Abner on a later occasion, and was, indirectly, the cause of Abner's death.

Asahel, one of the three, "was as light of foot as a wild roe". Asahel presents an illustration of how a

man possessed of one quality to a superlative degree, may so misuse that one quality that, instead of its leading him to distinction, it leads him to destruction. If you have a good voice, do not be too proud of it. If you can speak well, be careful not to talk too much. If you have some ability in debate, do not cultivate a spirit of contentiousness. Otherwise, your very ability may destroy you.

I have observed not a few people whose one special quality, possessed to a superlative degree, because it was misdirected, became the occasion, not of any great achievement, but of the very opposite.

"Asahel pursued after Abner", and he trusted to his fleetness of foot. I wonder if any of you students have the gift of fluency? Are you able to speak, and to speak easily? Do you ever have to wait for a word? If you are naturally a fluent speaker, I congratulate you; but I caution you to be careful to use that Asahel-like quality wisely.

I knew a man years ago who was a man of splendid qualities, and a man who has been most useful; but who, had he given attention to the correction of one defect, might have been still more useful. He was brought up in associations where it was common to hear the English language terribly mutilated every day. After I had come to know him, I said to him one day, "So-and-So, if you would give yourself to the study of the English language, and learn to speak accurately, I believe you would have a great future." Some years later someone said to me, referring to this man, "I am told that So-and-So would sometimes be rather tame if it were not for his vocabulary." It was a mutual friend who passed that criticism. I said, "His vocabulary? You surprise me. I did not know he had an extensive vocabulary". He replied, "I do not mean that he always selects the correct word; what I mean is, that he never lacks for a word of some sort." I answered, "You do not mean his vocabulary; you mean his fluency. You mean he can always talk."

I said to my friend one day later, "So-and-So, do you know what would be the greatest blessing that could by any means come to you?" "No. What?" "If some day when standing before a large audience, every word were to pass from your mind, and you were unable to utter a single word, and were compelled to sit down in utter confusion, that would be the greatest blessing that could come to you." "Why?" he said. "Because," I answered, "if thus you were to 'break down', as it is said, you would be more careful in your preparation; but as it is your fluency is a snare to you."

You see what I mean? That any particular faculty, which, properly exercised, is a very important element in a man's usefulness, if it is not properly directed and controlled, may mean his destruction. For example, here is a student whose head is like a piece of oak, hard and thick. It is very difficult to get anything into it. It is like driving a nail into a piece of oak. It is difficult to make it penetrate the hard surface, and after it is introduced one must hammer away to get it in. But when once it is in, then what? Try to get it out! I have known men whose mental faculties were not of the highest order. They were not particularly keen intellectually. They had difficulty with almost every subject to which their mind was directed, whether mathematics, languages, history, or what-not. Nothing came easily to them. But the man had a will,

and he said, "It is hard, but I will do it." He kept working away; falling, but picking himself up and going at it again. People thought he would never amount to anything, but when he got to the end of his course he had first in many subjects—not because he was keen, but because he was industrious, because he was determined to win, and he would not let anything stand in his way.

I have known other men with Asahel's ability, men who could outrun everybody. Such a man says, "I do not need to work." He presumes on his ability, he becomes downright lazy. Are any of you students disposed to be lazy? Every one of you! There is no exception. We are all disposed to be lazy. But the man who finds difficulty makes that very fact a stepping-stone to success. Determined to overcome it, he goes on and succeeds. The other man, because he finds, particularly in some subjects for which he has a natural aptitude, science, languages, or some other subject he has not to labour to master it, says, "I take to that like a duck to water." But presuming upon his superior capacity, he failed. Thus men often fail in the direction of their natural aptitudes because they presume upon it and do nothing.

"Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe." He did not wait for anybody else. He went after Abner. Abner was a man of honour. Abner would have answered the description so often used in the British Army: he was "an officer and a gentleman". He never soiled his hands by any dishonourable conduct. He would not take advantage of a foe. He turned to Asahel and said, "Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. Do not depend upon your fleetness of foot." But Asahel would not listen. "Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? . . . Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place."

There are some men who are such fools one does not need to be clever to beat them. Abner did not need to turn around to kill Asahel. He destroyed himself by the misuse of his superb gift. The finest athlete in David's army, he threw his life away. Let us be careful how we use any gift which God has given us lest, in the use of it, we effect our own injury.

V.

"And it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still. Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner"—but it was no use; they could not overtake him.

You have later an account of a conference between Abner and Joab, when Abner said, "Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren." Joab blew a trumpet, and an armistice was arranged; the people returned each to his own place, and the war ceased, temporarily at least, between Abner and Joab, and the armies which respectively followed them.

There are some quarrels that may thus be composed by conference. In the British Parliament there are two Houses, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The House of Lords is comprised of legislators who are there by virtue of their birth, or by virtue of their ele-

vation to the peerage. It is analogous to the Senate in the Canadian Parliament. Periodically we hear discussions about the abolition of both Houses, the House of Lords in England and the Senate in Canada. I do not know whether I have told you the story before, but if I have it will bear repetition.

There was a time in the days of John Bright when there was one of these occasional discussions about the usefulness of the House of Lords, and certain people, as usual, were proposing its abolition. Mr. John Bright, a Quaker, was a Commoner, notwithstanding he did not favour the abolition of the House of Lords. It is not now polite to pour your tea into the saucer to drink it, but originally saucers were provided for that very purpose. There was a time when people poured their tea into the saucer, and it was so, according to my story, in the days of John Bright—not so very long ago. Not in my time, but not so very long ago. The House of Commons usually opens about three o'clock in the afternoon, I believe. One afternoon Mr. Bright, on his way to the House of Commons, stopped to have tea, with others, at the home of some noble lady. As he stood in her drawing-room holding his cup of tea, his hostess said to him, "Mr. Bright"—remember the usefulness or otherwise of the House of Lords was just then a matter of public discussion—his hostess said, "Mr. Bright, what useful purpose does the House of Lords serve?" As he poured the steaming tea into his saucer, and held the saucer in one hand, and his cup in the other, he touched the saucer with his cup and said, "Your ladyship, this is the House of Lords where things are given opportunity to cool off."

Some of you remember our Convention days when we had long sessions from ten o'clock in the morning until two or three o'clock the next morning, with a continuous debate through the whole period, while people stood in the aisles too interested to feel sleepy even when the midnight hour came. You know how easy it proved to inflame a company of people. The people in Paris need our prayers just now. And they need a saucer into which to pour their tea. That is a tinder-box, and the history of France, and particularly of Paris, must provoke anxiety in the minds of the thoughtful.

We have seen how a great company of people can be stampeded into wrong action. When everybody has cooled off, they may see the folly of it. Hence the advantage of another chamber in which matters may be redebated in cooler blood, and viewed perspective. That is the one and only advantage I see in the League of Nations. If international issues can be referred to some independent and impartial body where they may be coolly debated, when a few hours or weeks have passed, perhaps things may appear in a different light.

There are some matters of dispute, as in this case between Abner and Joab and their respective armies, which can and ought to be settled by negotiation; and without war. Where there is a real issue, however, where there is a principle at stake, it is another matter. In this case there was nothing—I ought to apologize for I perhaps, was about to say something which would be almost a pun—the only issue in this case was Ishbosheth, and he was no issue at all. He was not worth fighting about. Many of the controversies in churches, and between nations, are like that: They are about some Ishbosheth that might better be treated like Jonah, and thrown overboard. If Abner and Joab would only stop fighting long enough to talk the matter over, they would blow the trumpet, and the followers of each would go home.

Let not that deceive us, however, and lead us into a false security, and persuade us that all matters of dispute can thus be settled. I cannot help wondering what *The Toronto Star* thinks it is accomplishing just now in publishing its war pictures. I do not know of anybody in the world who does not regard war with horror. I do not know of anybody, anywhere, who wants war. Everybody knows how terrible it is. I have myself seen some of the horrors depicted in those pictures. But no pictures however gruesomely accurate can adequately represent the horrors of war. Is it to be assumed, however, that there is no possibility of issues arising between nations which involves principles of righteousness, where surrender would be treason of the highest degree? I think with the war pictures, there ought to be printed pictures of our policemen with their revolvers. Why should our policemen, in this peaceful city of Toronto, carry revolvers? They do not need them to protect themselves against me, nor against you. We are not going to hurt them. But everybody knows that even in a settled community like this there may be lawless elements which will yield only to force.

Until the Lord Himself shall come, and at and by His coming, destroy the lawless one who is the source of all lawlessness in the world, which lawlessness will yield to nothing but force, we shall always need force. Notwithstanding, whenever real issues arise between individuals, or between groups, or communities, or nations, the parties concerned will do well to take time, like Joab and Abner, to talk matters over in an endeavour to compose their differences. Were they so to do in many cases they would blow the trumpet, and go home. Now and again some real issue will arise that will have to be fought out for the reason that the lawless one has not yet been put in chains. Until he is, he will always have abroad someone who will need handcuffing among individuals and nations. But in all matters of dispute, large or small, an appeal to force should be the last resort.

I believe these Old Testament stories may yield very much useful instruction in regard to international relations. Indeed if, instead of preparing to be preachers, you students were preparing for the practice of law, or to enter the service of the state, to become legislators or governors, I would still say to you that, for your guidance, for the principles which endure, and which can most safely direct us in respect to our relations to each other as individuals, or as nation to nation, there is no book in the world that will so wisely and so accurately direct you as this holy Book, which is the word of truth, and the word of wisdom too.

WHOLE BIBLE COURSE LESSON LEAF

(Continued from page 11)

III. AMON THE SON OF MANASSEH (vs. 19-26).

Amon succeeded his father on the throne when he was twenty-two years of age. He was old enough to understand the significance of the change in his father, yet instead of following the good in his parent "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord", (v. 20). He "humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more" (2 Chron. 33:23). He was a disobedient son, and a wicked ruler, serving idols and forsaking the Lord, (vs. 21, 22). He had been brought up in idolatry. In his formative years he had imbibed such teaching, and had been impressed with his surroundings, and later in life such an influence bore fruitage. We are impressed thereby with the importance of the proper training of the young. This cannot begin too early in life, and if of the right kind, it will bear fruit in years thereafter, (Prov. 22:6). Parental responsibility is great; both in life and act the highest type of example should be set.

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS, MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

(The following is reprinted from *Watching and Waiting*, London, Eng., of February, 1934. It is often claimed by present-day dispensationalists of the Scofield school that C. H. Spurgeon taught the same things. We are confident that Spurgeon would have regarded some of the teachings of that school as grave errors. The pre-tribulation rapture, whether secret or open, and the whole conception of the postponement theory find no place in the teaching of Spurgeon.—Ed. G. W.)

Sword and Trowel, March, 1867.

The following reprint had no signature, and so presumably, it was C. H. Spurgeon's own, as editor. It demonstrates that the right reception of sound doctrine will in itself combat the notion that saints under the old covenant are excluded from the Church. Dispensational truth cannot deny doctrinal facts.

Since C. H. Spurgeon's days, the error herein refuted has, alas! become more generally accepted among professing Christians.

We trust that the reappearance of these wise words may prove helpful to many. Should further help be desired, we commend *The Old Testament Saints not Excluded from the Church in Glory*, B. W. Newton, 1/- of our publishers.

The article, slightly curtailed for space, but otherwise unaltered, was entitled:

"There be Some that Trouble You."

The early history of the Christian Church bears a remarkable witness to the profound reverence with which Gentile believers honoured the names of the venerable fathers of the Jewish people. These grafts from an alien stock into the true vine felt peculiarly sensitive on the question of pedigree. The argument so plentifully employed by the Apostle Paul to prove that in Christ Jesus there is no difference, sufficed not to disabuse their minds of inferiority. Just as we can now suppose that generations must elapse before the negro, not only liberated, but enfranchised, will cease to feel that his sable skin betrays a debased ancestry; so then, there was a sense of shame when reflecting on themselves, and a sense of envy when regarding their Jewish brethren, which prompted the converts of the Gospel—whether Greeks or barbarians—to seek out and establish some points of alliance with the blessed patriarchs and prophets of the Israelitish faith. Their very credulity is instructive. You might easily persuade them to submit in ripe years to the ordinance of circumcision; they would willingly observe any fasts or feasts, undertake long and tedious journeys to Jerusalem, or conform to any Judaical usages, lured by the tempting bait of association with the favoured race "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

The epistle to the Galatians was written with an express purpose to check the Judaizing tendencies of those churches. In prosecuting this object, the apostle used extraordinary severity while denouncing the false teachers. But his tender sympathy towards the weak consciences of disciples is no less conspicuous. He gives and repeats assurance after assurance that their apprehensions of disability were groundless. They possessed an indefeasible title to all patrimonial and federal blessings. This was sealed by the spirit of God, and would rather be compromised than confirmed by any carnal acts.

"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The Error Stated.

An error of an opposite kind has attained some notoriety in our day. The Gentile element is predominant almost to exclusiveness in the Christian Church. Occupying a place of privilege which our forefathers knew not, there have arisen among us certain brethren who stealthily at first, and afterwards more boldly, have disparaged the Jewish patriarchs, and vaunted for themselves a superior claim to the love of God, and a higher place in the destinies of heaven than they deem it possible for the saints of the pre-Christian era to inherit. Profane rivalry! not more pretentious than unwarranted; not more audacious than unscriptural. Does the

*Other headlines are ours.

proposition admit of debate, or is it necessary to do more than refer every enquirer to the plain, unequivocal testimony of the New Testament? So we thought at first, as our spiritual instincts revolted at the heresy. In obedience to the divine counsel—"foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife"—we would have contented ourselves with warning the flock we delight to feed. For divers reasons, the obligation of another article is forced upon us. We give place to no one in the intense sympathy we feel that the honest scruples of every soul that conscientiously seeks the light of truth. If he be a penitent who has stumbled on the very threshold of revelation, or if he be a believer who has fallen into the hands of unsafe guides, and become embarrassed in the effort to find his way into the deeper mysteries of its inner courts, we would offer our prayer to God for the Spirit of wisdom, that shall enable us to direct him aright.

Difference of Dispensation.

From the tenor of the correspondence we have received, we infer that there are not a few such sincere believers in Christ, who have had their minds unhinged by the various tracts and publications which have been, for the most part, anonymously put into circulation. Their question is, "In view of the various dispensations under which it is has pleased God to gather an elect and faithful people out of the world, has it not been reserved to the Christian dispensation to furnish the privileged company, which, in their unity, is called "the Church," "the bride of Jesus," "the Lamb's wife?" We have already refuted this notion. Still, it appears that stumbling blocks have been laid in the path of those who diligently search the Scriptures, which, by the grace of God, we will endeavour to remove.

And, first of all, do not, we beseech you, be cajoled by any appeal to "God's dispensational arrangements," knowing that, however various they may have been, His covenant has endured the same through them all. It is a mere truism that Abel was not circumcised, that Noah did not observe the Passover, and Abraham was not baptized.

Only One Covenant of Grace.

Difference of dispensation does not involve a difference of Covenant; and it is according to the Covenant of Grace that all spiritual blessings are bestowed. So far as dispensations reach they indicate degrees of knowledge, degrees of privilege, and variety in the ordinances of worship. The unity of the faith is not affected by these, as we are taught in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The faithful of every age concur in looking for one city, and that city is identically the same with the New Jerusalem described in the Apocalypse as "a bride adorned for her husband."

Surely, beloved brethren, you ought not to stumble at the anachronism of comprising Abraham, David and others, in the fellowship of the Church! If you can understand how we, who live under the present economy and, unlike those Jews, have never been circumcised, are nevertheless accounted the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and not in the flesh, you can have very little difficulty in perceiving that those Old Testament saints, who were participators in the faith of Christ's death and resurrection, were verily baptized into Him according to the Spirit. Neither time nor circumstance founded the faith of Abraham. He rejoiced to see Messiah's day; and he saw it and was glad. He believed in God who "Calleth those things that be not as though they were." It were well for us to walk in the footsteps of the same faith.

The Church on Earth is Not Perfect.

It was doubtless with an advance of knowledge, privilege and worship, beyond measure bright, that the Christian dispensation, like the kingdom of heaven upon earth, was ushered in. We may regard it as inaugurated by the personal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, attested by His Resurrection, and unfolded by the Spirit of God. But who among us will venture to think that this economy, under which we are called, in contrast with the economies that preceded it is perfect? Perfect in what? Are we perfect in knowledge? We know in part, we prophesy in part; when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Are we perfect in privilege? Alas! The great majority of believers walk in bondage, failing to enjoy a clear assurance of their pardon, a thorough immunity from

the fear of death, or a joyful anticipation of the glory that is yet to be revealed.

Would you dream that we are perfect in organization? In how few instances are all the component offices of fellowship filled by men who are moved and actuated by the Holy Spirit? Is there in any one of the Churches, that claim allegiance to the commandment of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, such a complete presence of true believers, and such a complete exclusion of all unholy persons, as to warrant our supposing that that particular church represents the bride of Christ? Was it anticipated in the parables of "the kingdom of heaven," that there ever would be?

Where is the Church on Earth?

Let the Plymouth Brethren define "the Church" from which, by injunction or consent of their leaders, Abraham, Moses, David, and others, "as individual servants," are to be kept aloof. Their "plain papers" will tell us, "it is the actual living unity with Christ, and with each other of those who, since Christ's Resurrection, are formed into this unity by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven." Turn aside now and see this great sight. Where is it to be beheld? In the Ecumenical Church of Rome! In the Episcopal Church of England by law established! In the sections of Presbyterianism! Among the Methodist Societies! Among the Congregationalists! Or is it, after all, among the Plymouth Brethren themselves, whose diversities and disunion are so notorious? We venture to suggest that the Church, which is the bride, has not her counterpart on this earth. While Christ, Who is our life, is absent, the life of the saints is hidden—hid with Christ in God. The New Jerusalem is out of sight. The Epiphany of the Church is a feast yet to be celebrated. That fair damsel has not yet (in the language of courtly fashion) come out. She has not been introduced. Her appearance will be the signal for nuptial festivities. Not all who claim to be Church members on earth, because they live under this dispensation, will be acknowledged in the day of the Lord. Nor will the accident or circumstance of having lived before this dispensation, preclude the recognition of any saints in living unity with Christ at His appearing.

The Church in "Romans" and "Galatians."

We extract the following note from the January number of *Things New and Old*, the editor of whom is a gentleman to be easily recognized by his initials, as well as his name:—

"M.G.—Your kind communication did not reach us in time for our December issue. The difficulty of your friend arises, very much, we should say, from not seeing that the Church, as such, is not before the apostle's mind in Galatians or Romans. He is speaking of believers, and the ground on which they are individually justified before God. They are justified by faith, as Abraham was, and, hence, are morally the children of Abraham. And, further, though Abraham did not and could not belong to a body which had no existence, save in the purpose of God, until the Head ascended into the heavens, still, most assuredly, Abraham and all the Old Testament Saints will share in the heavenly glory. Very many, we doubt not, are perplexed as to this point, because they make it a question of comparing individuals one with another. If it be a question of personal worthiness, holiness or devotedness, Abraham might stand above the most holy and devoted among us. But it is not so at all, but simply a question of God's dispensational arrangements; and if any be disposed to find fault with these, we are not disposed to argue with them. Some nowadays, have a way of turning the subject into ridicule, which savours far more of wit than of spirituality or acquaintance with the Word of God. But we trust that we shall never surrender the truth of God, in order to escape the shafts of human ridicule."

Here is the very gist of the matter. But as for the remark that the Apostle Paul was handling "simply a question of God's dispensational arrangements" this view is so contrary to that which he has himself put forth in his "Notes on Genesis," that we need only refer our readers to his own Commentary on the 16th and 22nd chapters of Genesis, for a candid admission that Paul's allegory drawn from the history of Hagar and Sarah referred to the Covenants, and not the dispensations. We may, however, still be

allowed to express our profound astonishment at the declaration that the Church is not before the Apostle's mind in either the epistle to the Galatians or that to the Romans. If

"Jerusalem which is above which is Free,"

does not mean "the Church," what does it mean? We are aware that some annotators have interpreted it of the Church militant, and others of the Church triumphant. The news has yet to reach us that "individuals justified before God" were alluded to in this maternity. Supposing that "the Church" is not the mother of us all, the inference stands transparently forth, "Abraham is the father of the faithful, but each justified man is his own mother," *q.e. ducens ad absurdum*.

Let this suffice. We have no intention to open the pages of this magazine to vain jangling. An earnest study of those Scriptures which disclose

"The Everlasting Covenant"

as it was gradually but distinctly revealed, will do more than any arguments of ours to dissipate the mist of those strange doctrines we have referred to. That Covenant was declared to Noah; it was still further opened to Abraham and Isaac, it was confirmed to David; Isaiah rejoiced in its sure mercies; Jeremiah was privileged to relate many of its special provisions; and Paul avers in his epistle to the Hebrews that this is the Covenant under the provisions of which the precious blood of Christ was shed; it is the blood of the new Covenant. The priesthood of Christ is declared to be after the order of Melchisedec; it was, therefore, revealed in the days of Abraham. The word of the oath by which he was consecrated is communicated to us in the 110th Psalm, and so it was well known to David. In like manner, the gift of the Holy Spirit, though not bestowed till after the ascension of Christ, was explained by the Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, to be a fulfilment of prophesy that was spoken before the Incarnation. The dispensational succession of events does not affect the Covenant. If it did, then Abraham could have no more interest in the Jewish than in the Christian economy, Canaan not having come into possession of his posterity till centuries after the patriarch's sojourn on earth had terminated.

Interest in Christ's Death.

Had none of those believers any interest in the death of Christ, they must have died in their sins; but if they were interested in His death, why not in all the blessings that ensued? Is it pretended that though their welfare was deeply involved in the fact that "Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only," they are wittingly excluded from participating in the immediate consequence—"that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad?" According to the terms of the everlasting Covenant, and not according to the law, nor yet according to the tenor of any transient dispensations, the Old Testament saints were justified and accepted of God.

The testimony to the bride is not peculiar to the New Testament. Her praise and her destiny were sung by those who went before. And it does appear to us that the whole discussion that has been raised should excite a sigh deep and solemn in our breasts. Where has humility fled? Has it ceased to be a cardinal virtue among the followers of the Lamb?

Are we one with the Patriarchs?

When our readers lay down this magazine, let them take up the Gospel of Matthew and read at the eighth chapter, verse 11: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark the words "kingdom of heaven," so often used by Christ to signify the Gospel dispensation. The next words make this construction more obvious: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Let us implore you to invert the question you have propounded to us. Those blessed patriarchs are undoubtedly heirs of the promises. Christ has acknowledged them. You need not ask whether they shall sit down with you, but your enquiry may well be whether you shall sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 9

No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 9 SECOND QUARTER March 4th, 1934

SATAN GETS HIS MAN IN POWER

Lesson Text: II Kings, chapter 21.

Golden Text: "And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever.

"Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them."—II Kings 21:7, 8.

Bible School Reading: II Kings 21:1-18.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Psalm 86:1-10. Tuesday—Dan. 9:1-9. Wednesday—Numbers 14:15-21. Thursday—Matt. 3:1-12. Friday—Acts 2:29-40. Saturday—Acts 17:22-31.

I. MANASSEH'S APOSTASY, (vs. 1-9).

One would expect an evil father to be followed by an evil son, but for a good father to have such a successor is not so easy of explanation. Hezekiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Manasseh did that which was evil, (v. 2). This difference in attitude may have been due to one or more reasons. Manasseh was quite young when he ascended the throne, (v. 1), his father was dead, he would be surrounded by older men, not all of them possibly consecrated to the service of God, and he would be invested with great power. Under such circumstances, with inexperience of the world's ways, surrounded by flatterers, in the possession of absolute power, and with parental guidance lacking at such an age, it is not difficult to understand the downward course of the king. Nothing but the grace of God could keep one right in such a position, and this evidently Manasseh failed to depend on. There may also have been some defect in his training, which would lay him open to the subtle temptations of his office: but apart from this there was enough predisposition in his own heart to explain his actions, for the human tendency is ever away from God. Note the conscious and unconscious influence of our associates upon us, the necessity for daily preparation of spirit before encountering such influence, and the need for the proper instruction of children respecting their duty to God and man. In business there are many temptations for employer and employee, and the grace of God is essential in order to withstand these, (2 Cor. 12:9).

No man reaches the bottom of the hill in one jump. The downward course is always gradual, but once entered upon it is difficult to stop until the end of the descent is reached. It is altogether likely that Manasseh's apostasy proceeded in this manner, but in its fully developed form it was a complete forsaking of the worship of God. He followed the abominations of the heathen, (v. 2), he reared up the high places, worshipped the host of heaven, (vs. 3-5), made his son pass through the fire, consulted with familiar spirits, and set a graven image of the grove in the house of the Lord, (vs. 6-9.) Such conduct was foolish, wicked, and fatal to the peace both of individual and nation. It included the forsaking of God, the desecration of His house, the worship of Baal, and of the host of heaven, and consultation with evil spirits. Manasseh evidently went the whole length of idolatry, and led his people into more evil than the nations which had inhabited the land before them, (v. 9). When one turns his back on God there is no estimating how far he may go in his rebellion. He has cut loose from guidance and restraint, and acts in accordance with his desires. Note the warning herein for backsliders, and for all who are out of touch with God. The heart in a wrong relationship with

God is never at rest, and is ever seeking something that will satisfy. Note the many who are following false teaching these days, their pitiful condition, and the blessedness of trust in, and service of God.

II. THE LORD'S MESSAGE, (vs. 10-18).

It was not to be expected that Manasseh would be permitted to continue on his wicked way indefinitely without divine interposition. God is merciful, and it is because He is such that He intervenes in the lives of men. The worst thing that can happen to a person is to be left alone in sin, as in the case of Ephraim, (Hos. 4:17). The Lord took note of the conduct of the king, and promised judgment in consequence thereof. The judgment would be most severe in accordance with the heinousness of the offence, (vs. 10-16), but it would be just. The word of God was fulfilled, first in the coming of the Assyrian captains, and the carrying of the king as a captive to Babylon, (2 Chron. 33:11), then in the captivity of the whole people, (25:21).

Several things are worthy of consideration respecting the action of God, and its consequences. First, the fact that God's word was fulfilled. Men are apt to grow indifferent toward the divine predictions when they are not immediately put into execution, but let no one imagine that seeming delay in this respect means non-fulfilment, or forgetfulness on God's part. He remains faithful to His word, and time with Him is not to be counted. In not a single instance has His Word failed. See fulfilled prophecy respecting Israel, Gentile nations, and our Lord.

In the second place, note the effect on Manasseh of the divine judgment. "And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers", (2 Chron. 33:12). Affliction was beneficial to this king as it has been to many others. It is at such a time that man realizes his helplessness, comes to the end of himself, and becomes aware of his need. While his money lasted the prodigal thought not of returning to his father's house, but when this had gone, and his companions had forsaken him, he came to himself, and decided to return to the parental roof, (Luke 15:17, 18). It is a sorry commentary on human nature that God is compelled to permit men to reach the end of their resources before they will turn to Him. When everything is going well, men are inclined to be self-sufficient, and when the wicked prosper they are heedless of the divine requirements. Affliction in both cases is merciful. Jonah sought the Lord from the fish's belly, (Jonah 2:1), and Manasseh humbled himself in captivity. Note the necessity for humility in approaching God, and the wisdom of manifesting this without the aid of affliction.

We observe in the third place that Manasseh prayed unto the Lord, (2 Chron. 33:13). This was the outcome of the spirit of humility, and the manifest repentance which it exhibited. The king was sorry for his sins, and determined to be done with them, and petitioned God in conformity with this. We are not informed of the exact nature of his prayer, but probably there would be in it confession of sin, request for pardon, and supplication in behalf of his country, with the expressed desire for return thereto. The prayer was heard, the Lord was intreated of him, he was returned to his own country, and "Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God", (v. 13). The merciful character of God is manifest in this gracious response. Manasseh had sinned grievously against Him, yet on repentance he was forgiven, and restored to his former position. Note the possibility of forgiveness for the greatest sinner, and the necessity for repentance, prior thereto, (Acts 2:37, 38).

Real repentance makes itself manifest in the life. If no change is observed in the daily actions, it may be taken for granted that the repentance was not real. The genuine article shows itself not only in sorrow but in righteous deeds. In Manasseh's case he took away the strange gods, and restored the worship of Jehovah, commanding his people to serve Him, (2 Chron. 33:15-16). In order to receive God's blessing there must be a putting away of sin, as in the case of Achan, (Josh. 7:25), the prophets of Baal, (I Kings 18:40), and the New Testament saints, (Col. 3:8), then a restoring of the true worship of God. Christianity is not something merely to be believed: it is a life to be lived. Much harm is done to the cause of Christ when this is not realized and acted upon.

(Continued on page 8)

The Union Baptist Witness

Is the Official Publication of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec. Send all communications to the Office Secretary, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, Canada.

PASTORS' AND PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE

The regular bi-monthly meeting of the Pastors' and People's Conference of Western Ontario was held at Chatham on Wednesday, January 31st. The afternoon meeting, under the leadership of Rev. E. C. Wood, was addressed by Rev. Walter Lempriere, who spoke on Romans 8:32, reminding us of the wonderful grace of God shown by the gift of His Son for our salvation.

After supper, the evening service, presided over by Rev. C. E. Scott, was addressed by Rev. James McGinlay, President of the Union. His message was based on Deuteronomy 8:2: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no." Mr. McGinlay in his presentation of the message of God's Word, again showed the qualities of mind and heart which have endeared him to God's people. The teaching concerning God's constant loving care brought comfort and cheer to all. As we were reminded of the speaker's recent illness and of the way in which he has been given back to us in answer to prayer, his presence constituted an encouragement to our faith.

SPECIAL MEETINGS

MEDINA—SIX NATIONS' RESERVE

Prayers are asked by the Pastor for a series of meetings to be conducted by Rev. Arthur Lee. The Lord graciously blessed the ministry of our brother upon a former occasion, and the people are again anticipating a time of rich blessing. The Pastor, Rev. Melchie Henry, would be glad of the prayerful co-operation of the Union's constituency.

STANLEY AVENUE, HAMILTON

Some years ago the Stanley Avenue Church experienced a time of revival under the ministry of Dr. Conant. The saints were built up and edified, through his teaching ministry, and not a few were awakened to their need of salvation. Dr. Conant has had a wide and fruitful ministry everywhere he has gone. The people are not entertained, but are brought to realize by convincing argument based upon the Holy Scriptures, and backed home by the Spirit of God, that they are facing eternal realities, and are in need of the Saviour he represents.

During a visit to Toronto Dr. Conant spoke at a certain chapel service on the text, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." Among many things he said, "They grow from within; they produce their kind, and they are alive by the life from within." That message created no small stir as he emphasized, "how they grow". Professors and students were heard discussing it for days after. It was a hard blow to religious education. The new birth is not new to those who have been born again, but it is new and very troublesome to those who have never experienced His regenerating power. Like Nicodemus, men still say, "How can a man be born when he is old?" The new birth is as old as the gospel of God's grace, and it is just as new as every new-born babe in Christ. Dr. Conant preaches it in all its fulness, and the prayers of God's people are earnestly requested that under his leadership a mighty spiritual awakening may take place in the city of Hamilton.

ST. CATHARINES

Sunday, January 21st, marked the banner day for the new Bethel Regular Baptist Church. Rev. E. E. Hooper is pastor of this new and thriving work. The largest morning service gathered since meetings were started, and in the evening the small building was taxed to its utmost capacity. After an inspiring sermon by the pastor, the invitation was given and one responded. Already there is a need for a larger building. The people are coming and are also beginning to realize the need of an evangelical testimony in the northern section of the city. Will you not join with the friends in

St. Catharines that the Lord will meet their need in all things that a glorious work for the Lord may be established there? They have begun without the assurance of any outside financial aid, believing that God Who commanded them to "preach the gospel to all people" will take care of every need.

IMMANUEL, HAMILTON

Rev. Alex. Thomson, B.D., pastor of the Mount Pleasant Road Baptist Church, Toronto, spoke to appreciative audiences on the occasion of the 37th Anniversary of this church.

In the morning the special speaker gave a strong message on the "Passover", and in the evening addressed a large gathering on the subject, "Christ Weeping over Jerusalem".

At the Bible School several boys and girls responded to the invitation and publicly declared their desire to follow the Lord.

Monday evening also proved to be a night of exceptional interest. The Stanley Avenue orchestra furnished special music, and Mrs. Hess delighted the audience with her rendering of "On the Jericho Road".

Rev. C. J. Loney and Rev. E. E. Hooper led in prayer, and the scripture lesson was read by Rev. W. E. Atkinson. The special speaker was Rev. James McGinlay, President of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec. He brought a searching expository message from the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy bearing upon the sufferings and afflictions of the Lord's people, not only in Biblical times but also in our own day and generation. The services were in charge of Rev. H. S. Bennett, and after one of the best Anniversary celebrations in the history of the church, when many former members and friends were present, this service was brought to a close by the singing of the hymn, "When peace like a river attendeth my way," followed by the benediction.

HILLSBURG

The Pastor reports good times among the people at Hillsburg. Last Sunday morning two adults definitely accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour. Hillsburg is working with the Alton Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Raymond LeDrew, a graduate of the Toronto Baptist Seminary. They are planning a couple of weeks of preaching services in an endeavour to reach the unsaved of the district. Anyone who has been saved rejoices wherever any are being convicted by the Spirit of God and brought into fellowship with Him. The Union rejoices in the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the brethren at Hillsburg.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

SUNDAY, MARCH FOURTH

Has been chosen as

Special Field Day

for

Home Missions

A glorious work is being done by the Home Mission Pastors of the Union. New opportunities are opening for establishing preaching stations, and funds are urgently needed to wage an aggressive warfare.

PLAN — PREPARE — PRAY

and

GIVE ON MARCH 4th, 1934

Envelopes will be supplied, and all our people, boys, girls, men and women, in Bible Schools and Churches of the Union are earnestly requested to make this a great day in the History of Baptist Home Missions for the Union.