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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

WOULD THE OXFORD GROUPS HOLD A HOUSE PARTY AT THE INN AT BETHLEHEM?

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, March 25th, 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.

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—Acts 4:11, 12.

Long ago the patriarch Jacob described his son Reuben as being "unstable as water", and predicted, therefore, that he should not excel. A later authority declared that "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways". But there are degrees of instability: some are more unstable than others. But human nature generally, of itself, lacks constancy. We are all more changeable in certain directions than we ought to be. The Athenians who spent their time in nothing else than either to tell or hear some "new thing", by no means monopolized that human tendency. We all like to see and to hear new things. There are many new things which it is quite legitimate we should see and desire. Many ladies will discard their present headgear some time between now and next Sunday. "Spring is coming"? We hope so! But it will make no difference, hot or cold, the Easter bonnets will be out for an airing. I do not object to it: I rather like to see people with new hats; it is a change. I sometimes wish some wider privileges were permitted the male side of the house—because we are so much more in need of adornment. I have sometimes almost envied the men who wore red coats, and all the finery that went with them; for a very ordinary man could be dressed up to look quite important in those days. But now we must go on with our drab colours, while the ladies monopolize the—what is the hackneyed newspaper word?—the "colourful" elements in life.

That tendency shows itself in every avenue of life. There are fashions in medicine. Sometimes a doctor will tell you, "That is not considered the best practice today." There are fashions too in education, as in dress.

And there are fashions in religion. Men are continually seeking new forms of expression. Some of these forms may be but a variation of that which is, in itself, essentially good. I see no reason why one should dress

the truth always in the most unattractive garb. The devil never told but one lie and that was in Eden. All lies were germinally wrapped up in that original lie—and he has busied himself ever since making new clothes for that old and effective lie. I see no wrong in our making new clothes for the truth, providing it is always the truth which we present. It is well to present it as attractively as we possibly can, and in harmony with the nature of things, even when we depend, as we must, upon the mighty power of the Spirit of God. But even so, it is folly needlessly to antagonize anyone. It is well that we should learn how to approach people, and to present the gospel as wisely as it is possible for us to do.

There have been changes in organizations, and in movements. I remember in my ministerial youth the Christian Endeavour and Young People's Society had a great vogue. It was freely said that the church had neglected its young people for a long time, and that this was going to bring in a better condition of things. It was all good so far as it went, and I have no doubt much good was accomplished. Then came a time, about twenty-five years ago, when the Laymen's Missionary Movement was begun. I could call the roll of prominent business men in Toronto—some have gone to their rest; others still abide—whom I heard say at that time that they had already managed to make for themselves a competence, and that from then forward they were going to give themselves exclusively to the work of the Lord. I heard one layman say that the commander-in-chief of the Lord's armies was about to put the shock-troops into the battle! And he meant it. Like a good many others, he carried on for a while; but in due time the Laymen's Movement went the way of all flesh. It gradually diminished in magnitude and intensity until by and by it passed-out of existence altogether.

Later there was the "Men and Religion Forward" Movement. I have a row of volumes on my shelves in the study now, containing the reports of speeches made at their conventions. Some there were who seemed to believe that nothing had been done since the great commission was given until the Men and Religion Movement was born, but that now the millennium would come immediately. But the millennium has not come—and the Men and Religion Movement is gone. It did not live long; it died in its youth, almost at birth.

Now we have another movement. If it be a movement which proclaims the truth, if it be a new way of preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God, then, as they say down South, I am "for it". So long as men proclaim the gospel of salvation, and men are really saved, we may withhold all criticism. But, personally, I want no substitute for the gospel of grace. I am rather suspicious of any religious movement which claims to have discovered something that has not been known before. But when this new movement calls itself a "first century fellowship", we are entitled to go back to the first century and to the original sources of information and authority, to discover whether this new movement is in accord with the teaching of Scripture.

I spoke on, "The Oxford Group Movement Analyzed", more than a year ago. The address was published in a booklet of about forty pages, and spread over the world. We have had requests for it from nearly every mission station in India, China, Burma, Ceylon, South America, and I know not where else. Recently a book store in Belfast, Ireland, sent for two thousand copies. It indicates that the Oxford Group Movement, whatever it is, is widespread, and that many desire to bring it to the touchstone of the Word of God, to ascertain whether it is scripturally true.

In nothing are people so readily deceived, I think, as in the matter of religion. I suppose it is partly because that is the devil's chosen sphere, and that the most dangerous devil of all is a religious devil. He did his deadliest work through one of the twelve, and it was the religious world that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought to be very careful, however, in presenting opposition to any sort of movement which seems to be doing good. We should ascertain the facts of the case, and be sure of our ground, lest by any chance we should be found to be fighting against God.

Let us look at some of the implications of this Movement in the light of this text. I say this for it, that if and when it really brings people to God, if it magnifies the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, if it honours the Bible as the inspired and infallible word of God, if the lives of men are really changed from within by the mighty power of God, through its instrumentality, we should be thankful for it. I suggest that, if the Oxford Group is really an effective instrument for righteousness, it should give a very earnest invitation to all the members of the Ontario Legislature to attend one of their "house parties". I think they are in particular need at this time of some uplifting influence.

I.

But let us come to the text. It asserts that SALVATION IS IN ONE WHO WAS "SET AT NOUGHT" BY THE RELIGIOUS EXPERTS OF HIS DAY: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders." I would remind you that Peter was addressing himself to Annas, and Caiaphas, and all the kindred of the high priest—the very men who had sat in judgment upon Jesus Christ, and who had condemned Him to death. They were the men

to whom Peter addressed himself particularly on this occasion as the builders who had set at nought this chosen and divinely appointed Stone.

It has ever been so that man-made religions have set Jesus Christ at nought, discounted Him in some measure, and at some points. They did it of ancient time: they do it to-day. There are many forms of religion that are called Christian that have in them no Christ; that is, not the Christ of the Bible. We have been asked to dispense with the Christ of the Bible on the authority of scholarship, to deny the Virgin Birth on the ground of its unscientific and therefore impossible character. We have been asked to discard the Bible on similar grounds. We have been asked sometimes, "Who are you that you should set your opinion against Annas and Caiaphas, against the high priests of the higher criticism? against the principal leaders of modern religious thought?" They tell us if we are to have Christ at all, we must modify our views of Him, we must change our attitude toward Him. But the Christ of the Bible, of the Old and New Testaments, many of these experts refuse to accredit. We must have some other kind of Christ.

What I want to know of any movement is, Does it set Christ aside? Does it set this Stone at nought? If it does not set Him aside, does it magnify Him? Does it make Him central to its teaching? If it does not offer a substitute for Christ, does it offer a supplement, something to be added? Or, on the other hand, does it ask us to accept a diminished Christ, a Christ Who does not fill out the picture of the Christ of the Old and New Testaments?

You must not be over-much perturbed because certain religious leaders of standing, of reputation, and perhaps of unblemished life, discount Evangelical Christianity. That is not new. They have always done it from the beginning. They discounted Jesus Christ Himself, and nailed Him to a tree. Peter's charge against these priests of religion was that they had endeavoured to eliminate Christ: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you". That is the trouble to-day. I boldly affirm that any man who will accept the full-sized portrait of Jesus Christ presented in the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, will, by that very fact, settle for himself, in principle, all critical problems: the question of Christ's virgin birth, His miraculous power, His atoning sacrifice, His literal resurrection from the dead, His ascension to the right hand of God, and His personal return. If, without deleting anything from the Book, you accept that portrait and say, "That is my Christ. At His feet I bow. Before Him I worship. I take the great saying from the lips of Thomas and say of Him—and to Him—My Lord and my God"—when you can say that, you are saying exactly what Peter implied, Salvation is to be found in the stone that was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. He Who was despised and rejected of man is honoured and exalted of God.

Does the Oxford Group Movement do that respecting Jesus Christ? That is the question. Ask that question for yourselves, and form your own judgment. What I desire to do this evening is to hand a scripture rule to you and say, "There it is. Take the rule and measure it. If it is full measure, adopt it; if it is not full measure, beware of it." That is the principle.

The religion of the chief priests and Pharisees had no atoning blood in it, no cross in the Christian sense. They had crucified Christ. Theirs was a religion from which the offence of the Cross was eliminated so far as they

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were concerned. Peter said, "You set Him at nought? You will not have the Christ Whom God has sent? Notwithstanding He is the head of the corner."

That is the positive side of it, but the Bible has a way of stating things negatively as well as positively.

II.

The following verse teaches us THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF THE SALVATION THAT IS IN CHRIST. "This is the stone." "Quite so," says one, "but I have another view of things. I am depending for my salvation upon something else."

But how many hold some other view of salvation than the way prescribed by God Himself. They are like Naaman, who said: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." He wanted some other way than God's way.

Here is the Word of inspiration. I would hang it as a bell in your conscience, if you are not a Christian, that it might keep ringing for ever until you know you are saved. Hear it: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ only, without subtraction, without addition, Jesus Christ Himself the Saviour,—"Neither is there salvation in any other."

We have in this new Movement some strange things. The "group" principle is significant. Sixty of them have come from England. There is a psychology in it, the psychology of the good advertiser who tells you the same thing, without comment, a thousand times over until by and by your reason is almost set aside, and the thing that is told you a thousand times you at last persuade yourself is true. Our Lord sent the disciples out two by two. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow." But the "group" is another matter.

And so is the "house party". I wonder if I am speaking to some of my Ottawa friends this evening, or to some friends in Montreal, who have written me letters, telling me that I must, before forming a judgment of this matter, attend a "house party"; and that it is quite impossible to understand what the Oxford Group Movement is apart from a "house party". If you want to propagate Oxford Groupism, do not say that again; for a more comprehensive condemnation of it could not possibly be spoken than that.

A mother tells her little boy that she is going to have company, and adds, "Now, Johnny, you must behave yourself while company is here." Or Mary goes away for a visit. She is going to stay a week or ten days. Before she goes, all her tendencies to mischief are listed, and she is told what she must and must not do: "Be on your best behaviour while you are in company."

Most of us are. We do not make a special parade of our weaknesses in the homes of others. A company of agreeable people—I mean, people who are occasionally agreeable (we are all agreeable sometimes) should be at their best at a house party. Surely the man who is as cross as the proverbial bear can smile occasionally. There are people who reserve their smiles for some other "house party" than their own. Levi had a house party in his own house. He called all his friends together, and I suppose his wife was there, and his children if he had any. That is the right place to begin. That is the

proper kind of house party. But surely a company of people, wearing their best clothes, freed for a little while from business irritation—and domestic irritations too if there are any—who get away for a week or ten days, and smile at each other, can have a good time. You have in that the psychology of the group again.

I have no objection to evening clothes. I see no harm in making the best of ourselves. I am no extremist on that matter. But here is a religious group that will go to this city and the other city, in order to gather together a house party,—and I have been told somewhat authoritatively that I do not know anything about it unless I have been at a house party.

My Lord came to no house party when He came from heaven. He came to a humble sort of inn at Bethany on the outskirts of Jerusalem, but so many people were there before Him there was no room for Joseph and Mary; and the infant Child was born in the stable. And from then until now the Prince of glory has condescended to poor people. The Christ of the Bible is too often crowded out into the stable. When John sent to Him, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another", He spoke of the "changes" that were being wrought: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up"—that is a "changed" life, is it not? But listen: "And the poor have the gospel preached to them." That was Christ's credential.

The poor only? No. We preach the gospel to the poor and the rich. If there are any rich people who hear me to-night, we invite you to Jarvis Street Church. But when you come within these doors, no matter how much money you have, to us here there is only one thing that can make one man differ from another, and that is the grace of God. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." I am positive there is no warrant whatever in the New Testament for differentiating between classes so far as the church is concerned. Whether you are rich or poor: as we see it, you are either saved or unsaved. If you are poor, and you are unsaved, there is a Saviour for you. If you are rich as Cræsus, but unsaved, you need exactly the same Saviour as the poorest man in Toronto,—and you must receive Him on exactly the same terms. Nobody is rich before the Lord of glory. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

I am suspicious of a movement that confines its activities to a particular class, and shuts itself up to a "house party" in the Chateau Frontenac. I have been there. I do not object to a good hotel. But if this group religion can be understood properly only by spending some time in evening clothes at the Chateau Frontenac, I am sure it is not the religion of the Bible.

"Neither is there salvation in any other." There is no salvation apart from Him, the risen Saviour Who "died for our sins according to the scriptures". I believe in a "changed" life, but so far as I have been able to analyze it, the Oxford Group religion is a substitution of psychology for the power of the Spirit of God. It is psychological rather than pneumatological. It is of the mind rather than of the Spirit which comes down from heaven. It is easy to move people—for a little while—by something of that sort. What disappointments we have had in this church in people who ran well for a while, but were soon hindered. What about a group that comes and stays a few days, and is gone? How can you measure a work done for eternity by such standards? There is no salvation in any other than Jesus Christ.

Take that text and apply its principles. It will save you from every kind of heresy that is abroad to-day. Hold you fast to the simple Word: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

III.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF JESUS OF NAZARETH? He is the divinely anointed One. Here we enjoy the convenience of electric light, but it is no substitute for the sun. What a nasty night last night was! Those of us who were out just crawled along over the ice. When I came down to School this morning I said, "I wonder if it will be as icy as it was last night?" But the sun—God's sun—for just a little while had looked upon it all—and the roads were safe. The ice was gone. There is no substitute for what God has ordained. The name of Jesus Christ, and all that He represents, is older than the sun. From before the foundation of the world our gracious God determined the way of salvation, that it should be through Christ. He has never had to change it. It is late in the day to change it at Oxford, or to give us a minimized Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

It matters not what other name. That sweeps everybody out, and leaves Jesus Christ in splendid and glorious isolation. His is the Name. His is the name of prophetic significance. It is all in the Book. I am sorry for you if you do not know the Old Testament. It is a wonderful book. If ever you hear a preacher—if he has all the degrees that all the universities of the world can give him—discount the Old Testament, go to him and say, "Mr. Preacher, you will have to go back to school before you can preach to me again. You talked a lot of nonsense to-day." The Old Testament is the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. Every word of it is God-breathed and is true.

The Old Testament is packed full of Jesus Christ, as much as the New. I have said it again and again, but I say it once more. Someone says, "I want the Christ of the New Testament." I do not, divorced from the Old. The Christ of the New Testament is no Saviour at all if the Old Testament be not true. Mr. Whitcombe read to you this evening how Peter carried his hearers back, and told them that "all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken", had spoken of Him—all the prophets. The whole world waited for His coming. He is like the sun, adequate to the purpose to which He was divinely ordained. "Neither is there salvation in any other."

"There is none other name." This is *the only name of covenant value*. The God "that cannot lie" is in covenant with Jesus Christ. He has sworn by Himself.

Presently we shall come to the Lord's Table, a great company of us, and we shall take the wine, and shall hear Him say, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." The covenant is ratified, sealed, forever established in the blood that flowed from the heart of Incarnate Deity. To Him every promise that God has given, is made: "Neither is there salvation in any other." Somebody gives you a cheque and you take it to the bank. Perhaps the bank knows you, so there is no difficulty about identification. The teller looks at the cheque, and says, "What is the name?" "So-and-So." "Oh yes; I see. But that man has no account here." "But it is drawn on this

bank." "I cannot help it; we do not know him." "But he gave me the cheque, and I have endorsed and presented it in good faith." "I cannot help that. We do not know him, and we cannot honour the cheque. His name has no value here."

Take the name of the greatest and best of earth to Heaven's bank, and on the ground of that name, ask for salvation. The divine Banker will say, "I do not know anything about it. There is only one Person Who has any account in this bank. There is only one Name that heaven will honour." You must have the name of Jesus. You must pray in His name. You must show that you are identified with Him. Apart from that, there is no salvation for you. "But I was baptized as a child." That makes no difference. "But the man who baptized me said, 'Seeing this child is now regenerate.'" I cannot help it; the Bible says nothing of the sort. "But I joined the church, and became an office-bearer. You do not mean to tell me that I am not saved?" I do not, but my text says there is "none other name".

Here is a man who is a minister, a Doctor of Laws, a Doctor of Divinity, a Doctor of Philosophy, and I know not what else. He is a good man, and teaches much that is true. One says, "There is Dr. So-and-So, surely he will get to heaven?" I do not know. If he does, it will not be because of his degrees, not because of his own righteousness: the only thing I know is that no man can pass into the presence of God in peace unless his trust is wholly, exclusively, in Jesus Christ.

Is that plain? Can I make it plain to you to-night that no ordinance, no church membership, no wealth, no works of righteousness that you can do—nothing is of any avail apart from Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other." "But I am the captain of my own soul." That being so, you will lead your ship on the rocks, if you have no better captain. "But a man must work out his own destiny." I tell you there is no salvation in any other than in the person of Christ. If you are in Him, you are saved; if you are not in Him, you are not saved—even though you have been to a thousand house parties. "There is none other name." "But I—I—I do so-and-so." Never mind your "I". I do not know who you are, minister, deacon, bishop, archbishop, it matters not: salvation is in Christ, and in no other name.

That means you dare not go to God in any other name, or He will not have respect to your prayer. But when one shall go with nothing in his hand, no name of his own to plead, no righteousness of his own to offer, nothing but moral and spiritual bankruptcy, and will say, "O Lord, save this poor sinner for Jesus Christ's sake", God will hear you for He always hears Him, and the angels will rejoice the moment you put your trust in Jesus.

You say, "That is a very ordinary sermon." I intended it to be so. "That is very simple." I intended it to be so. "That is very narrow." I intended it to be so. "That is very uncharitable toward many, many religions." I intended to anathematize all religions that presume to teach that salvation can be had in any other way but in the one and only crucified Christ. Have I made it clear that, for time and eternity, there is no hope but in Christ Jesus? That is simple, is it not? "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." That promise is signed, sealed, stamped with blood, bound with the oath of the eternal God. You can go out of here to-night saying, "I am rich with an eternal salvation, a salvation that cannot perish, to my credit."

THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Sunday Morning, February 11th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

"For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

"So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us."

"Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and of such as lay in wait by the way.

"And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days."—Ezra 8:21-23; 31, 32. -

Prayer by Rev. W. Gordon Brown

Our Heavenly Father, we come to Thee this morning with no animal sacrifice to offer, building fires upon no altars, claiming the ministry of no earthly priest: but we come by that one perfect Sacrifice, by that Altar in which we, as believers in Thy Son, have a right to participate. We bring Thee His blood for our cleansing, and His offering of Himself without spot to God for our sanctification and our consecration to this Thy service. We bless Thee because of our High Priest, Who offers a perfect sacrifice, whose ministry is still continued, Who pleads the merits of His blood for us.

We come in our need, O Lord, the youngest of us, and the oldest of us, all of us sorely need Thee, need Thee more, perhaps, than we realize. Grant to those who are young in years that protection of Thy divine care which will guard them from the ways of the world that would keep them from Thee.

Give to those who have life's burdens to bear, strength to bear them, and the renewing of Thy Spirit, that they may faithfully discharge those duties which Thou hast laid upon them. Help us all to work as beneath the great Taskmaster's eye, to work for His approval, to work for His "well done", and His reward.

Some Thou hast chosen in the furnace of affliction, to make them ministers of suffering by Thy peculiar providence. Help them, O Lord, to see that Thou hast chosen them, and in the hours of trial to believe that God is, and that He is faithful to those who trust in Him, that every cloud, no matter how dark, has a silver lining.

Bless, we beseech Thee the ministry of Thy Word, O Thou sovereign Christ, calling men to Thyself. May this be the birthday of souls. Grant that in this house of Thine it may again be true that this one and that one was born again. So do Thou quicken Thy messenger that in the message which Thou dost give us through Him this may be accomplished by Thy grace. And wherever Christ is named, His cross, His glory upheld, and the hope of glory set forth, whether in this or lands beyond the sea, make us all Thy children, one in Christ Jesus, looking for that day when Thy kingdom shall be established, and Thy purpose accomplished; and these petitions we present in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

This text is part of the record which reports the return of the captives of Judah from Babylon to Jerusalem. After seventy years of exile the Lord has smiled upon them, and He has moved the heart of a heathen king to be favourable toward them, he has commanded his servants to facilitate the passage of this great company of people from Babylon to Jerusalem. Their

leader is not a great warrior, but only a scribe; he is not trained in the use of arms, nor in the leadership of armies. But at last a great company of people is assembled. They are to be repatriated, returned to their own much-loved land. There are men in large numbers, and women and children, and much substance. They have found favour with the king and have been provided with much treasure, for he has commanded his servants to supply Ezra with everything necessary to the re-furnishing of the house of God in Jerusalem. And when this great company are duly organized, the men and the women and children, and their vast substance, Ezra takes thought for their safety. There is not one of them who carries arms. It is a great company of unarmed men and women, having with them a lot of helpless people, the women and the children; and in addition to that large quantities of gold, and of silver and other substance of great value. They have to make their journey from Babylon to Jerusalem over a country where they know they will be beset by enemies, and where robbers lie in wait at almost every turn of the road. Ezra stops to enquire of himself, How shall I ensure the safety of this great company of people whom I am commissioned to lead? He recollects that he had boldly avowed his faith to the king, that he had told him that the hand of God was available to all those who sought His help, that the God of heaven was their Helper. Now he says, "I am ashamed to ask the king for soldiers to protect us. What does my profession of faith amount to if now I must ask the king for protection in the journey?"

A tremendous risk is involved, from the natural point of view. He takes a great responsibility who would expose this great company of women and children to the merciless attacks of the marauders from whom, naturally, it would be folly to expect to escape. Ezra said, "I shall have to have protection from somewhere", so he proclaimed a fast and he said to the people, "Let us commit our way unto the Lord; let us ask Him to look after us, and to give us journeying mercies to carry us safely through to Jerusalem." They prayed, and the Lord was entreated; and without the loss of a child, without the loss of any of their treasures, he records: "we came to Jerusalem".

Surely that affords a fine example to all believers in our day!

I.

First of all, then, let us examine very briefly EZRA'S DECLARATION OF FAITH, AND SOME OF ITS IMPLICATIONS. The substance of it was this, that the hand of the Creator of all things, whose power was unlimited in heaven and on earth, was outstretched for the salvation and preservation of all those who would really seek Him.

That is the substance of evangelical faith still. That is what it means to believe God—not merely to have our sins washed away: it does mean that; not merely to be made children of God: it does mean that. It means that we are held securely in the hand of God.

Two or three weeks ago I spoke to you one Sunday evening on that text in the tenth chapter of John: "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand". I tried to explain to you the eternal security of the believer. Thursday a friend came in who had been travelling, and he said he had not received a GOSPEL WITNESS since December. I asked for copies, but I found that that sermon was exhausted; there was

not a copy left. We have frequently had the same experience, that no matter how many copies we print of a message on the eternal security of the believer, they are always sold out immediately.

We need to be assured of the fact, my dear friends, that trusting God means that the hand of our God is upon us, that we are held securely in His hand, and that He guarantees our safety for time and for eternity. That I can only mention and pass on.

That was the substance of Ezra's faith. And *this faith he had openly declared in the presence of a heathen king.* He had told Artaxerxes that he had a God Who was always near to His people, Whose ear was always open to their cry, Who could always be depended upon to deliver them in times of trouble. That was his declaration of faith. Let me read it to you: "We had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him".

The obligation rests upon us to declare our faith, not only in the presence of believers, but boldly to commit ourselves to a life of trust in the presence of those who know nothing of the grace of God. It is your business, as Christians, to avow your faith in the office, in the shop, on the street; everywhere to let everyone know that our salvation is not a salvation that merely ensures our entrance into heaven by and by, but that it is a salvation that is good for seven days in the week, and that we are even now in our place of occupation, or recreation, wherever it may be, that we are even now in the enjoyment of such divine protection as guarantees that the hand of God shall be upon you for good.

It is a bold declaration to make, but Ezra made it, and he made that declaration *in circumstances which seemed to belie the truth of it*, for even when he made it he was one of the captives in Babylon, far away from home.

I dare say you have sometimes felt the same difficulty. You have thought that when you have overcome certain matters, and were riding triumphantly on your high places, you would confess your faith. You have said, "I am out of work just now; I am having a hard time, and I had better keep quiet. What will people around me think? They will say, 'A fine religion you have!'" But this man declared his faith in the most difficult situation imaginable, when he and all his people were far from home as exiles. And yet he says: "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him."

Open it was to Artaxerxes to say. "And is this present situation in which you find yourself, a good thing? Is it good for you to be found in Babylon instead of Jerusalem?" Is it good for you to be out of work instead of rejoicing in plenty? Is it a good thing for you to have all the tides against you instead of having everything for you? Can you say in such circumstances, in the presence of believers, "I will trust God. I know that His hand is upon me."

Thus did Ezra declare his faith. And *such a declaration of faith is going to put you in rather a critical position by and by*; for be assured of this, that the time will come when you will have to give proof of the reality of your faith. God will see to it that by the ordering of circumstances you will be brought to a place where your faith will cease to be a matter of theory, and will have to become a practical rule of life. God will providentially see to that. That is where he brought Ezra and all the people. And here he is. The

tide has turned for them, and they had prospered even in the land of captivity, and their very prosperity now constitutes their greatest danger, for the Lord has blessed them with vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and with vast treasure, not for themselves, but for the house of their God in Jerusalem. He has given them favour in the sight of the king, and the king has issued a letter commanding all his servants to give Ezra whatever he wants. There is to be no reserve at all, anything he needs that is necessary to the execution of the divine will in the life of this company of people is to be his out of the king's treasury. The gold and the silver are provided him, and he is now ready to start back to Jerusalem. And he says, "Now what shall I do? At present I am under the protection of Artaxerxes whose favour God has been pleased to give me. But as soon as I leave Babylon and take the high road to Jerusalem, taking this great company of people through the desert, what will become of the women and children? What will become of all this treasure?"

II.

HE IS ASHAMED TO ASK HELP OF ANY ONE BUT GOD. Now mark you: *he could have asked of the king soldiers to help them.* It is recorded in the seventh chapter that he was given a blanket promise by Artaxerxes guaranteeing everything he needed. And if he had asked for soldiers to help him, and to protect him Artaxerxes would instantly have granted his request. But he said, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers. I have told him that I trusted God; I have told him that the hand of God is upon us; I have told him that we are held in the hollow of His hand. Now if I ask for soldiers he will say, 'Well, Ezra, what has become of your faith? You told me a little while ago that your God always helped you, and now you want me to help you, do you? You cannot trust these women and children to God after all? Your faith is only a matter of theory. You are a scribe, you know, and you like to write things in a book; you like to talk about these things. But you have not any real faith after all!'"

Ezra saw what would be the mental reaction of Artaxerxes to any such request, and he said, "I will not do it; I am ashamed to do it."

Oh, that Christian people in our day could see clearly the implications of their profession! One of our brethren showed me a letter. He had seen an advertisement, and just to see what was in it he had answered it, and the reply was to this effect: A certain company had undertaken to conduct campaigns in churches to gather old gold and silver—I do not know whether old boots were included or not! But they would undertake to conduct a campaign, and they did actually raise as much as two hundred dollars in one church! A certain percentage went to the church, a certain portion went to the man who brought this company into the church; and so the company evidently assumed that there were some people in churches who were there just to get out of it what they could. So they were going to engage this company to go to the church and conduct a campaign, and they were to get their rake off.

Do you suppose that a company like that was organized and that they paid their advertisement for nothing? It was only symptomatic of the deplorable condition obtaining to-day,—the people of God on their knees before the world, the flesh, and the devil, saying, "Please help us a little bit."

In my first pastorate I told my people that I was no priest or pope, but that I was at least the master of my own course, and I said, "I vowed a vow to the Lord that I never would be pastor of a church for twenty-four hours that depended upon anyone outside the church for its support. You will have no bazaars, and no concerts, and you will have no means of that sort exercised for the raising of money while I am Pastor. Of course, you can have them all if you want them, but you cannot have them and me. The moment these things begin that moment I cease to be your Pastor. I should be ashamed, that is all." A year or so after that when I was Pastor of a small village church a woman came to me and said, "I have no money, and I cannot give any, but I can cook and bake, and if you would have a tea meeting we could make some money." "Well," I said, "we will have a tea meeting." She said, "You will?" "Yes." Her name was Mrs. Ferguson—she has since gone home to glory so I may name her. I said "I will write out the advertisement at once and put it in the paper, and say that Mr. So-and-So, naming her husband, has a wife whom he greatly loves, but that, unfortunately, he is very poor, and quite incapable of providing her with support; that he is very hard up, and she needs some money, and I will appeal to them to bake some pies and all the rest of it, and we will have a big tea meeting, and the proceeds shall go to Mrs. Ferguson, and that will help to keep your house." Her eyes flashed, and she said, "Don't you dare. You will hear from my husband. We have not much, but we never had to do anything like that." "No", I said, "but you would drag the honour of the Prince of glory in the mire by advertising to the world, the flesh, and the devil, that He cannot look after his own bride. I am ashamed."

The churches of God ought to be ashamed to put themselves under obligation at any times to anyone who does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not ask Artaxerxes for anything. The God of heaven will help us. His hand is upon us.

Ezra said, "I proclaimed a fast, and we prayed, and I got all the people to pray." Oh, I wish I had time to read the story. I shall just read a verse or two. Listen to this: "Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered"—they had asked for nothing, but all these things had been given them—"I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents; also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord. So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God."

"Now" said Ezra, "there they are. Ask God to take care of them. Ask of Him a right way for ourselves, and our little ones, and our substance." And so they

prayed by the river of Ahava; and on the twelfth day of the month they departed to go to Jerusalem.

III.

What did Ezra say? He said: "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him". And he said, "I told Artaxerxes it would be; we prayed, and it was exactly as God had said. The hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way, and we came to Jerusalem—we arrived, without any loss at all, and without any soldiers to help us! We put our faith to the test, and God fulfilled to His servants the word upon which He caused us to hope."

My dear friends, in these critical days in our lives, we all have our difficulties, and we have actually said that we believed God. Do we? Do we believe God? Is our faith only a theory, or have we learned to roll all our burdens upon Him, and leave them there, and actually put Him to the test?

The same question arises in respect to our church life. We have many interests here, the Seminary, THE GOSPEL WITNESS, our Radio fund, and all the rest of it, our church, our missionary interests, all these things to maintain at a time when some churches are closed, and others are finding it extremely difficult to continue. What shall we do? Let us be ashamed to profess one thing and practice another. Let us reduce our faith to practice, and if need be, proclaim a fast. And let us pray that the Lord will verify His promise in our own experiences. And I have not the shadow of a doubt when the record is completed we shall be able to write just as Ezra did that the hand of God was upon us: we committed ourselves to Him, and the hand of our God was upon us, and we came to Jerusalem.

May the Lord bless us every one. Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, for Thine abounding grace.

"Here we raise our Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help we've come,
And we hope by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home."

We thank Thee for all that Thou has shown us of Thy gracious power, and for all that is yet to come. Help us that we may be true believers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE WEEK-END IN JARVIS STREET

Sunday morning there was a fine School, and 85% of the School attendance remained to morning service. About twenty-five responded to the invitation to confess Christ. A great congregation attended in the evening; five were baptized, and the evening service was followed by the Communion as is usual the last Sunday of the church year.

THE SECOND SERMON THIS WEEK

Owing to the press of work incident to the closing of the church fiscal year, the transcription of last week's lecture was delayed, and a morning sermon of some weeks ago takes its place. The lecture will be published next week.

"THE OXFORD GROUP MOVEMENT ANALYZED"

The first sermon this week discusses briefly one aspect of this Movement. The whole subject was rather comprehensively treated in an address by the Editor under the above title over a year ago, which was published in a forty-page booklet. A first edition of 10,000 was soon exhausted, and a second edition of 7,000 was printed, some of which are still on hand, and can be obtained of: THE GOSPEL WITNESS, 130 Gerrard St. East, Toronto, Canada, at the following rates: Single copy, 5c; 25 to 50 copies, 4c each; 100 copies, \$3.75.

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ON THE VERGE OF GREATER THINGS

The word which came to David of old was that when he heard "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees", he might expect things to come to pass. Anyone who has ever had any experience with a mulberry tree knows that when the berries are ripe there is always a commotion in the tops of the trees. Birds are very fond of them, and nearly every species is to be found feasting upon the ripened fruit. Birds are looked upon in Scripture as evil emissaries. They catch away the seed when it is sown; they fly over head and rob the sacrificial altars, and it is man's duty to protect the fruit of his labor. He plants the trees, mulberry trees; he sows the seed, and by faith waits for the harvest time.

Nothing would bother a mulberry tree, nor any other kind of tree for that matter, were it not for the expectations of the luscious fruits; and thus it appears also in the Kingdom of God. Satan knows where there is something at stake. He hinders the work. He would drive out the ones who have through much toil and perseverance sown the seed and planted trees, ere they reach the harvest time. Learn the lesson of such a great parable, and remember as Regular Baptists we shall reap in due season if we faint not. Satan is busy, but let every one who nameth the name of Christ outwit and outguess him by watching unto prayer, and defeating his purposes by such diligent endeavours as will guard the precious harvest of the true labourers.

As we journey from Church to Church, and Mission to Mission, it is inspiring to note the progress, and to witness the gathering in of many to the Kingdom of God.

Kinmount

The weather was against us. All the elements seemed to be let loose to keep the people away from service. It rained Saturday night, and turning much colder by Sunday morning, the streets were a glare of shining, slippery ice. The people had to come almost literally on their hands and knees.

Rev. M. B. Gillion had the joy of leading around twenty happy believers some time ago to the foot of the Cross, and now desires a permanent work of grace established there. A hall has been secured, and each Lord's Day evening the gospel of God's grace is being proclaimed. The bigotry of some is being manifested in wondering why it is necessary to start other services in the village. Precious souls are perishing, and this is evidenced by the fact that around twenty have already surrendered to His claims.

This new cause will be carried on in connection with the Bobcaygeon church. Funds are urgently needed for this extra field, and the prayers of God's children are requested for this new venture of faith. Five miles away a Bible School is being held in the Rock School House each Lord's Day afternoon. The teacher has recently been saved, and is desirous of following the Lord in baptism.

Bobcaygeon

While Mr. Gillion has been giving some attention to other fields, he has had the happy privilege of having Mr. J. J. Burton, a deacon of the Jarvis Street Baptist Church, with him, who is conducting a series of special meetings in the Bobcaygeon Church. They have had the joy of leading at least one into the Kingdom of God. A middle-aged man who throughout his lifetime steadfastly refused to own the claims of the gospel was graciously saved. An aged father who still survives, had prayed for many years for his son, who ere he died testified that Jesus Christ had won, and gladly, though in much pain, went to meet the Saviour whom he so recently received. Others are interested and there is every prospect of many others yielding themselves before the meetings are concluded. A baptismal service will be held in Bobcaygeon on Good Friday.

There may be other churches who will desire the services of such a man of God as Brother Burton. With his long ex-

perience and mature Christian life, he proves a blessing and a benediction wherever he goes. Should there be any, please communicate with the Union Office.

Long Branch

For some time the pastor, Rev. A. Penman, has felt discouraged because there were no visible results from his ministry, and only last week laid the whole matter very definitely before the Lord in prayer. Sunday morning came and the outlook was doubtful, but when the invitation was given two responded. This was indeed encouraging, and his hopes were redoubled. In the evening the people came to the service in a spirit of expectancy, and they were not disappointed. The Secretary of the Union, Rev. W. E. Atkinson, had been invited to preach, and after a most interesting discourse from the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, four persons responded to the invitation. Rev. A. Penman and his people are most happy over the results of last Lord's Day, and rejoice in the way the Lord has been pleased to manifest His presence amongst them. Added to this all six have signified their desire to follow the Lord in baptism. Rejoice evermore!

THE ARRIVAL OF THE DAVEYS

In a letter from Mr. Percy E. Clubine, dated February 9th, he tells of the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Davey and their family in Africa. "Imagine our surprise," he writes, "when at five o'clock at night, the Paterson, Zochonis, runner appeared with a note saying that the boat would be in Bassa the next morning with the Daveys on board. Things were all excitement at the station that night, and in the morning at six ten, Mr. Hancox and I with a long string of noisy boys set out on the long trek to the beach. News had been sent to the neighbouring towns concerning the arrival of the Daveys, and in leaving we met a swarm of men coming to the station with a view to getting loads to carry from the beach. We made excellent time in the cool morning, and in two hours we had reached Harlandville, a distance of about nine miles. Here Paterson, Zochonis & Co. have a trading post, and we were in time to get a ride on their truck the rest of the way, arriving at Grand Bassa about nine o'clock. As soon as we could have a sponge bath and slip into some dry clothes, we were out on the sand to see if there were any signs of our friends.

Welcomed by Missionaries and Black Folks

"We were sorry that we were unable to go out to the boat to greet them, but no sooner did we arrive on the beach than we saw the boats returning from the ship with the missionaries and all their cases. Soon they were landed, and were almost 'swamped' with the black people who swarmed around them. Most of them had followed us down or had heard the news around Bassa. In an hour the boxes were all at Paterson's, and we were seated in their house investigating the mail that the ship had brought.

Danny Finds His Own People Strange

"Mrs. Davey had decided to proceed to the mission at once in order to get settled with the children as soon as possible, so soon after lunch we got into the truck, and our boys climbed in at the back and we were off. That is to say, I returned with her, but Mr. Hancox and Mr. Davey remained to settle the customs and get the boxes on the way. We arrived in Harlandville at twenty minutes to three, and after taking a good drink from our water bottles, we proceeded. The baby was carried in the hammock alone, since Mrs. Davey chose to walk for a time. Danny was hoisted upon the back of Morris, one of our yard boys, and not without some boisterous objections. He was rather afraid of black people at first, but it did no good, for Morris was elected to carry him. At six o'clock we arrived at the mission, just as dusk was falling."