

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

REVIVE US AGAIN!

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, April 8th, 1934.

(Stenographically Reported)

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"And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

"And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

"For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

"But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?

"And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?

"Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him."—II. Samuel 19:18-23.

Many of you are familiar, I trust, with the text's historical background. David had for many years reigned over Israel when Absalom lifted up his hand against his father and his king. Absalom was a very attractive man, and multitudes gathered to his standard. David was almost generally forsaken. Even many of his leading men, his trusted counsellors, fell under the influence of the blandishments of Absalom, and, like Ahithophel, whose word had been as the oracle of God, they followed the new leadership, deserting the old. So general was the disaffection that it seemed useless, hopeless, for David to resist it. So he left his city, Jerusalem, and with him a small but faithful band of followers.

As he left, thus rejected of his people, there were many who joined with the enemy. Among them was Shimei the son of Gera. As the king approached Bahurim, Shimei cursed him, threw stones at him and at all his servants, and cast dust, declaring that the Lord was now requiting him for all the evil he had done. Zadok and the Levites who accompanied David carried the ark with them; but when they had crossed the brook Kidron

and David knew it, he said to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." So the ark was returned to Jerusalem.

In due time Absalom's forces were defeated by the armies under Joab's command, the enemy was utterly routed and the rebellion completely quelled. Then the hearts of the people turned once again to their rightful king, and they vied with each other to bring him back again to Jerusalem.

When society is in such a state of flux as that, human nature discloses itself, shows what it really is. We boast sometimes of our civilization, as though the complicated life we have built up about us had really changed the nature of men. As a matter of fact, man, apart from the regenerating grace of God, is still at heart nothing better than a tailored savage. All sorts of evil may still be found in his heart. When external restraints are withdrawn, the true inwardness of his nature manifests itself.

You have but to look at the page of history, no farther back, for example, than to the record of the French Revolution. How freely blood flowed! And what beasts of prey men showed themselves to be! Our generation rather flattered itself that it had outgrown such brutality, that it had become somewhat more refined. Then the Great War broke upon us, and we found that men had as much of the tiger in them as ever. We put that behind us, and the world talked of peace: "Away with armaments. Do not blow people to pieces." But while the nicely dressed, respectable, man of business did not say, "We will not kill them that way: we will just starve them to death," by all sorts of manipulations the same cruelty has been practised. At times, I say, when restraints are withdrawn, men reveal their native savagery.

Among those who went to welcome David on his return was Shimei, the son of Gera. When David came back Shimei addressed him in the words which I have read as a text. Acknowledging his errors, acknowledging that he had sinned, he begged the king's mercy and pardon. Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, a man of blood and iron, like Joab his brother, and who had said when Shimei cursed David, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head", again seeks Shimei's life. David had rebuked him then and said, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" Now Abishai again suggests the day of judgment has come, and that Shimei should be put to death, but David insists that the day of his return in triumph to his capital should not be with him a day of vengeance, but a day of grace. And though Shimei so richly deserved punishment, the king gave him his promise: "Thou shalt not die"—and he swore unto him.

Operating in this history which I have thus briefly sketched were principles which are of the very warp and woof of human life. They are still operative in the lives of men. I think we may find in this history some illustrations of truths to which we ought now to give earnest heed.

### I.

To begin my exposition I remind you of THE VARIED FORTUNES, BUT OF THE ULTIMATE CERTAIN TRIUMPH, OF THE LORD'S ANOINTED. David's entire career was one of variation. Sometimes he was acclaimed as a hero, again hunted as a deer before the hounds; established apparently on the throne of Israel, and then overwhelmed by the rebellion of his own son. And yet at last he came triumphantly again to the throne.

Let me remark, that, like David, our Lord Jesus is often despised and rejected of men. It was so in the days of His flesh. He too wept on the slope of Olivet, like David; and then they brought Him to the cross. It seemed as though that were at least the eclipse of His kingdom; and even the end of the progress of His cause. But after all the three days were but a parenthesis, and on the third day He rose again from the dead; and, having "shown Himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs", He ascended to the Father's right hand. Peter, declaring what had been accomplished, said, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

And in the progress of the kingdom of God there are still fluctuations. There are recurrent periods when spiritual religion seems to be at a discount, and the cause of Christ apparently declines. In pre-Reformation days Evangelical Christianity was almost eclipsed, and it seemed as though darkness had triumphed over the light. Then came the Reformation, and the Jesus of the Bible, the Saviour Whose delight it is to save men by grace and not by works, was again proclaimed among men, and when the tide turned, and revival came, multitudes of people saw clearly once more the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then you will remember to have read how dead the church was in the eighteenth century, how wickedness everywhere abounded, across the sea and on this Continent. But the Wesley revival came, and people turned in countless thousands back again to God. The same was true on this Continent under the influence of Wesley, and of Whitfield, and later of Fynney, Moody, and others; and Evangelical Christianity gained the ascendancy once more. The Word of God became regnant in the lives of vast numbers of people, and Jesus Christ was worshipped as the Son of God.

But we have lived to see days when the religion of Christ has again suffered from the treachery of Absalom. For the last twenty-five years particularly the men who were ordained to preach the Bible have, for the most part, taught men to disbelieve in it. Our theological colleges have produced, not great believers, but semi-infidels. Our pulpits, instead of being used to propagate the faith of Christ, have become platforms from which men have expounded their principles of unbelief, and rejected and discredited the Bible to such an extent that people who to-day dare to declare that the Bible is the word of the living God, that from Genesis to Revelation, it is the divinely inspired, infallible, and supremely authoritative word of God, are esteemed "unlearned and ignorant men". When we speak of Jesus Christ as the Saviour, as having actually died in our room and stead, having been buried as the sinner's Substitute, and raised again in order that He might forgive men their sins—when we speak of salvation through the blood, we are, in the estimation of many, relegated to a past age, and regarded as the propagators of a vulgar religion. Men do not want, we are told, the philosophy of "the slaughter-house". Absalom has again stolen the hearts of the men of Israel, and set the whole kingdom against the Lord's Anointed.

At such times, when the Word of God is discredited, new religions of human invention multiply. Look at your Saturday evening paper if you would see what happens when the Word of God ceases to have its supremely authoritative place in the church which bears the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only yesterday I received a letter in which there was enclosed another letter, telling the story of an announcement in England from a Baptist pulpit of a spiritualistic seance within a Baptist church. Witchery and wizardry takes the place of the infallible Word of God, even among some Baptists. It is very easy to denounce other people, but there are no sinners in the whole earth worse than the people called Baptists. I am a Baptist, and stand for the faith as historically held by Baptists; but with modernistic, evolutionistic, anti-Bible Baptists we in this place have no fellowship at all. This defection from the Word of God, and from the truth of the gospel, has become all but universal, among all denominations, although, blessed be God, there are exceptions. Of course, even in the midst of it there may be

much that is admirable—much sound, ethical, teaching, if you like. But the truth of a supreme, sovereign, Saviour, Who having died for our sins, and risen again, has ascended on high, and Who has released the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, and Who lives to regenerate men and save them by His grace, is almost a forgotten note in many pulpits of the day. But it is not the end. There must always be a reaction from such extremes.

There are people who tell us that we are in the final apostasy. We may be; I do not know. I know that darkness will obtain when Jesus Christ comes again, but I think if a great many people could become a little more expert in their historical study they would not be nearly so oracular in their prophetic pronouncements. Again and again there have been these vicissitudes in the history of the ongoings of God's purposes. Whether this be the last rebellion or not, I am not competent to say. But in some way or another I am sure the King will come to the throne. I pray God He may come in reviving power. I pray that He may, by the grace of His Spirit, lead the people to repentance, even as Shimei was bowed before the king; and that we may see men worshipping the Son of God everywhere once more.

But I think the analogy holds in application to the second, personal, glorious, return of our Lord. If He does not come intermediately through the quickening power of His Spirit, I am sure He will come personally. Some time the white horse and his Rider will come down the skies: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." There can be no reasonable doubt that, as Jesus Christ came the first time in humility, as a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, born as the spotless Lamb of God to bear away the sins of the world, so most assuredly He will come again "the second time without sin unto salvation". We look for that glorious day. So, whichever way He comes, those who are loyal to Jesus Christ are sure to be on the winning side; for He shall reign "till his enemies be made his footstool".

## II.

Glance for a moment at a further consideration. Let us see HOW MEN BEHAVE TOWARD THE LORD'S ANOINTED IN SUCH TIMES OF ADVERSITY AS VISITED THE KINGDOM OF DAVID. How men ran for cover! How they were sifted out! How the true friends of David appeared! And how many there were who were only fair weather friends. As soon as it was said, "Absalom reigneth in Hebron", there were thousands ready to acclaim Absalom king. Many people when next we have an election in this Province will not tell how they vote until after the election. It will make no difference which party is successful, they will be sure to have voted for the winning side. Some people never lose their votes. Nobody knows how they vote. They always profess to have voted on the winning side. So contemptible a thing is human nature! What a bad, treacherous lot we are, always devouring one another! Talk about "the brotherhood of man"! Where indeed is it? I have not seen it.

Shimei was one of the traitors. Shimei had been a very loyal servant of David, but when the throne seemed to be tottering, Shimei prepared to see that his bread was properly buttered. He took the side of Absalom, and threw stones at David.

Have you ever been at a Baptist Convention? I have. I suppose it is the same in any religious convention.

When some great principle was to be determined by vote of the people—I will not say anything about Canada; let me talk about the United States. Oh, I forgot! I am speaking now to the United States! I reach more there by radio perhaps than in Canada. I had better speak about both, and say that human nature is precisely the same under both flags, and that we live in glass houses on both sides of the line and cannot afford to throw stones at each other. I was at a Convention in Washington where, after a full discussion of a certain question, when the Chairman put the question and asked all in favour of the motion before the house to rise, a certain number of people rose. But there were others who had their hands on the seat in front of them, looking around cautiously to see who were standing. When they saw this man and the other man standing, and thought it was safe, they stood up! Some others hastily resumed their seats. I have seen the same thing on this side of the line too. I suppose it is human nature to vote for one's bread and butter.

That is why we have the ballot-box. What is the ballot-box? It is an advertisement of man's treachery and cowardice. If we were real men we should not be afraid to stand on our feet and let all the world know exactly what we believe, and where we stand; and we should freely accord others the same liberty. But most people like to register their opinions in the dark.

It has been popular to discredit the Word of the Lord, and the gospel of His grace for some years. I wonder if I have the ear of some of my brother-ministers who suffer some slight indisposition which prevents their preaching? I am glad of the opportunity of addressing you if that be so. Are there some of you who have been running with the crowd? Many ministers have confessed such weakness. You adopted the new faith, not from any conviction on your part, but because it was popular. The ladies have recently put on new hats. I have said it before, but I think it will bear repeating: the only difference between some preachers in the pulpit and their feminine hearers is that the ladies follow the fashion in what they put on their heads, and the preachers in what they put in their heads.

Medical science, in some respects, is not very much better. There was a time when they took your tonsils out, pulled your teeth, and cut out your appendix, no matter what was wrong. It is a wonder they did not cut your head off. Go to a doctor to-day and, about some things formerly practised he will tell you, "They do not do that now". Thank God they do not! One man did it, and others followed. "All we like sheep have gone astray." Shimei picked up stones and threw at the Lord's anointed, and threw dust in the air, because other people were doing it. That is how people behave in days of spiritual declension.

What a reaction there is upon the social fabric always when the Lord's Anointed is not supreme in the lives of His people! Christian people ought to be the salt of the earth. I like a little salt with my food, but not too much. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" It does not take much salt to preserve a great mass from putrefaction. A Christian man in business, or professional, or political, life ought always to be exercising a certain restraining influence. We have not a regenerated society, nor shall we have this side of the millennium. And you cannot build an ideal society without ideal men and women. You cannot have a truly Christian nation until every man

and woman in that nation has been born again. We shall not see that this side of the millennium. But every Christian man, wherever he is placed, ought to be as salt, preventing the spread of corruption. A Christian man, out-and-out for Christ, true from head to foot, heart, conscience, intellect—everything—surrendered to Christ, ought to be a mighty power for good in legislative halls, and everywhere else. There are employers that would be restrained from doing some things if those who work for them were to say, "Sir, I am a Christian; I will not do what you ask me to do when it is wrong." "Ye are the salt of the earth"; "Ye are the light of the world." We are reflectors of the Light. Only a small light shines in the jewelry store, over the door of the vault; but it is enough to keep the burglars away. "Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men." If Christian men would let their light shine before men in all the relationships of life iniquity would not flourish as it flourishes to-day. A spiritually vital church would have a purifying effect upon society.

If you would account for the lawlessness of our day, you will find the cause of it, very largely, in the religious declension of our time, when authority everywhere is repudiated, and Shimei feels he is at liberty to throw stones and cast dust.

### III.

But they did not throw stones when David again exercised authority. Let us be thankful that **THE TIDE MUST TURN AT LAST AND THE KING COME BACK.**

*How is the restoration of His authority accomplished?* It is said that David "bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man." Let me have the ear of some of my pre-millennarian friends. I am a pre-millennarian, only I do not know as much about the millennium as some of you. But whatever it is, there will be no millennium until Christ comes. If I do not know the whole millennial programme, I think He will forgive me when He comes. Confidentially, I do not think you know it either. I have heard a great many say, "We cannot have the kingdom without the King." We have the King! Jesus Christ is King now, and He is with us all the days. Rejected by some, He is yet "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour". Moreover, the Holy Ghost has as much power as God the Son. If God wills by the power of the Holy Ghost to break men's hearts, and turn men by the million to Himself, He can do it. Some of you predict that after the church is caught away and the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, incomparable wonders of grace will precede and inaugurate the millennium, that the greatest revival of all time will take place without the agency of the church, and after the Holy Spirit's special ministry has ceased. Personally I think that view is absolutely without scriptural warrant. I think the dispensation of grace will end when Jesus Christ comes. But the Holy Spirit can do to-day what David did: he "bowed the heart of the men of Judah"; he melted them down. Those who had been his enemies became his friends, and vied with each other to acclaim him king. Even "Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David."

Why should we not pray that our gracious King would return in revival power, and visit again the vine of His planting? When He does, He will come in grace, as did David on this occasion; and though Shimei had cursed him, he received only blessing at the hands of the king. Abishai proposed to take off his head, but the king said, "This is a day of grace with me: the day of vengeance

has not yet come." To Shimei he said, "Thou shalt not die", and he swore to him.

What a blessing it would be if all who have turned away from the Lord, if the people in this city who have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; who used to attend the old Methodist class-meeting and tell what the Lord had done for their souls; who used to go to prayer-meeting and actually pray for God's blessing; who used to believe the Bible to be the word of God, and read it to their children; who used to go to church expecting to see people saved, and who saw the things they expected to see—if the thousands of professing Christians in this city who really have had an experience of God's grace, but who are backsliders, in heart and intellect, if not in outward conduct, who have turned away from God's Book and God's Son, and have followed Absalom and the crowd, forsaking the Lord's Anointed, I say, if they would but turn back again, if the King would be pleased to bow the hearts of His enemies, what a revival we should have in Toronto!

### IV.

Some day the King will come again. He will come again in person. I pray that before that day shall come, we may all have turned whole-heartedly to Him. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Let us have done with all this modernistic nonsense in the matter of religion. Here is the way of life: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and manifest in these last days for us as a Lamb without blemish and without spot. The religion of the Bible is like the sun, it is from God. It needs no amendment, no alteration, no supplement, no subtraction. Take it as it is. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Receive Him into your heart and life, and crown Him Lord of all. We shall sing that for our closing hymn:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all."

## A DEPOSITORY OF GOSPEL TRUTH

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,  
Thursday Evening, March 29th, 1934.

*Eighteenth 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 9.

What I have to say this evening will be of interest chiefly to the students who are prospective preachers. The rest of you may "listen in". I shall "talk shop" a little with the students this evening. The text for my shop-talk is the ninth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel.

You have probably heard some discussion from time to time, some of it mere pleasantries, and some of it perhaps designedly critical, as to the propriety of preachers preaching old sermons. The Methodist preacher's "sermon barrel", which was supposed to contain sermons enough to last three or four years used to be almost proverbial. The minister, it was assumed, repeated from one hundred to three hundred sermons, according to the length of his stay, and when he moved on to another church, it was said he began at the other end of the barrel and preached the sermons over again.

I do not suppose that was ever true of anyone, I am inclined to think the assumption was devoid of factual foundation.

There are some sermons, however, which never grow old. There are certain truths which will not only bear but require frequent repetition. The teacher in any grade of school, whether in the kindergarten or lecturing to post-graduate students in the university, finds it necessary to repeat his lectures over and over again. There are not a few university lecturers who could deliver their lectures almost as well while they are asleep as while they are awake, because they have repeated them so often. They may differ in verbal form, but their argument is the same. In the course of twenty-five, thirty, or forty years, they have lectured to successive classes on the same subject, and to the extent in which the lectures have dealt with the elemental and invariable principles of the subject, the lectures have of necessity been the same in substance. They have varied, however, in matters in which larger knowledge has shown their earlier postulates to have been erroneous. Such repetition is not only legitimate but inevitable.

There are great masterpieces of literature, such as, for example, the works of Shakespeare and Dickens, and others of like quality, which still live, which are still being published, and are still being read. Some books will bear reading more than once. Some books become like old friends, whom one always gladly welcomes, and with whom one delights to spend an evening recalling and repeating old experiences, which perhaps you have rehearsed to each other again and again at other times; but the mind is quickened, and the spirit refreshed as the old memories are recalled.

The preacher has but one Subject; albeit it is an infinite Subject, and a Subject of infinite variation. There is no end to the word of the Infinite, and there is no possibility of exhausting the wells of gospel truth. And yet there is a sense in which every minister, and every teacher of the Word of God must repeat himself. I recall an introductory word in one of Spurgeon's sermons, to which I may have referred before, but it comes to me at the moment, to this effect: He was dealing with some great subject, let us say, faith. He began by saying something like this—I quote from memory, Once again we shall give our thought to the study of this great subject of faith. I was in the country the other day, and I saw—and heard—a man working in his garden, dibbling beans. He was stooping over and making holes with the little tool he had in his hand. Then he dropped into each hole three beans, and went on and made another hole and dropped in three beans. He was singing to himself as he worked,

"One for the worm, and one for the crow;  
And let us hope the other will grow."

That is what every teacher must do: teach the same subject over and over again; partly for the reason that the first time somebody heard it, he was preoccupied, and the next time perhaps he was half asleep: it should be repeated the third time in the hope that he may be wide awake and able to understand.

You will have to preach on the same subject all your life. Your only subject is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul said when he went to Corinth that he was determined to know nothing among them save that Subject. And that is your business: no matter where you preach, under what circumstances, to what sort of

people you preach, you have only one Subject. But that is an infinitely varied Subject. There are innumerable aspects to the truth. Truth is a diamond of many facets. You may turn it and show it to the sun, and see some new beauty in it as often as you expose it to the light.

You will have to preach upon grace, not once, but all the time. That is fundamental, and it ought to be in every sermon. You will have to preach on faith, not once, but all the time. That ought to be in every sermon. You will have to preach on human depravity, not once, but all the time. That ought to be in every sermon. It ought to be assumed, taken for granted. Implicitly or explicitly, the new birth ought to be in every sermon. The future punishment of the wicked must be set forth constantly. And whether your sermon is distinctively eschatological or not, there should always be that retributive outlook. That will colour all your preaching. And, of course, the various aspects of the Christian hope: the forgiveness of sins, the peace which ensues—and all upon the basis of the atoning sacrifice. All these doctrines of the gospel should be interwoven in every sermon. Sometimes your emphasis will be upon one aspect of truth, and sometimes upon another. There will be no contradiction between your testimony given on various occasions. But even if a particular truth is not explicitly stated, if that be the background of your thinking, and if your approach to these subjects be from that broad standpoint of salvation by grace, through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, any mature Christian of discernment will recognize in the first five minutes of your discourse whether you are an evangelical or not. They will taste it. They will say, "Ah; I have come to the right place now. I know that man's point of view."

Because these things are true there will be some sermons that will never become old; I mean, some of your own sermons. Dr. Joseph Parker was once asked if he ever preached an old sermon. He replied, "No; but I very frequently repeat a new one." All sermons ought to be new. They ought to be fresh. They ought to be vital—not like water that was drawn from the well last week, and has become stale and tepid. The sermon must always be fresh and sparkling, no matter how often you preach it. But there will be some sermons that will always remain with you, undoubtedly some among the sermons you now prepare while students. The text, and the theme of the text, will grow upon you through the years. You will never get away from them, perhaps not even from your original outline. You may vary it in the progress of the years in its elaboration, but it will be the same in argument, and in the substance of the truth it proclaims.

The little boy who laboriously works over his "sums", as he calls them, will do so with due regard to the principles of the multiplication table. If he goes on and specializes in mathematics, and should become an expert in actuarial science, and dazzle you with the facility with which he can look at a row of figures that defies your computation, he will do it all in obedience to the principles he used as a little boy in the kindergarten, although he will have learned other and shorter methods of application.

In the same way, if you know the truth as it is in Christ, the principles of the gospel will be in your preaching now. They are bound to be, because you are

preaching out of the Book, and out of your own experience; and you are bound to give utterance to these truths. You may do it inadequately and lamely, without satisfaction to yourself, and without a great deal of satisfaction to your hearers. You may often feel, "I failed dreadfully to-day, but I know the truth was there. I know it needs to be expounded. I cannot improve on the broad outline of it." But as your mind matures, and your view of life in general is enriched, your sermon on that very text will be so elaborated that it will be different, and yet the same.

Do not be afraid to acknowledge that you occasionally repeat a sermon. I think it was told of George Whitfield that he reckoned he could not preach a sermon well until he had delivered it about forty times. If a sermon is good for one congregation I do not see why it should not be good for another. Of course, you will always bear in mind that your hearers, as a rule no matter how able a pedagogue you may be, no matter how true to the principles of teaching your exposition may be, a large proportion of your congregation will get only a very small percentage of what you give them. You could repeat it over and over without loss to them.

You have perhaps heard the story of the church wardens who waited on the Bishop, asking for the removal of their rector. When the Bishop asked why they were dissatisfied, they said, their minister preached the same sermon many, many times; and that the sermon he preached last Sunday he had preached again and again. The Bishop admitted that was quite serious, and enquired, "Gentlemen; what was the text?" Said the spokesman, "Let me see. I do not recall it for a moment. Mr. So-and-So, what was last Sunday's text?" Mr. So-and-So did not recall either. Not one of the delegation could remember. Then said the Bishop, "I thank you for this call. I will write to your rector, and suggest that he had better keep on preaching that sermon until his wardens are able to remember at least the text."

Of course you will have to decide whether you are in the ministry to entertain people, to minister to itching ears, or to give definite Biblical instruction, and to fasten in the minds of people a great body of truth which will continue to enrich their minds long after you have passed from their view. We are not entertainers: we are teachers, for the office of "pastor" and "teacher" is one, not two. No man can be a real pastor who is not a teacher, the view of some of the Brethren, so-called, to the contrary notwithstanding.

I ventured to expound a certain text, and some of my ardent and extreme friends said, "He is not a teacher." No! This preacher has stood in the same pulpit for twenty-four years, and printed his sermons for half that time—but he is not a teacher! Perhaps not. But he is at least as competent to teach as the peripatetic "Bible teacher" who goes from place to place repeating the same addresses all the time. He, forsooth, is a "teacher"! What nonsense! He is more nearly a ministerial gramophone who has got a certain number of records from a Bible text-book, which comprise his "repertoire". That is a good word, is it not? He begins at "A" and goes through to "Z"—if he has as many addresses as that.

I do not know much, but I have had a little experience; I pass it on to you and to those who read this lecture: I am not ashamed to admit that I have scores

of sermons that I could preach at a moment's notice. Were you to call me in the middle of the night—but no, I should probably still be up, say a little later; three or four o'clock, I could get up and preach on some of these subjects without a moment's preparation. I advise you students not to try that for a while. But when one has twenty-five or thirty years of preaching behind him, he ought to be able to do that.

Furthermore, there will be texts which you have never, as a particular and specific text, expounded, which will come to you and almost in an impromptu fashion, you may preach with great power and blessing to your own soul, and to the souls of others. But when you thus preach, it will be only upon a text, or a principle, with which your soul has communed for years. The address may seem to be impromptu, but, in reality it will be the cream of years of thinking. And if one cannot, after twenty-five years, deliver his soul of an address upon grace, or faith, or salvation through the blood, I fear he has mistaken his calling.

This chapter forms such a text. It caught my attention in my first pastorate. The first sermon I wrote on this chapter is number fifty-nine. In those days my sermons were all numbered—and were for at least twenty-five years. I have nearly two thousand carefully written manuscripts, some of them more carefully written than others. But this was number fifty-nine. I preached it once, and had a good time. Here is the specific text: "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" And although I have preached from that text scores of times, I have never changed my original outline. Let me give it to you: first, *A Sovereign's love expressed*—"Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness?" Secondly, *a wealth of love exhibited*—"Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" Thirdly, *a wondrous love explained*—"That I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake."

Let me boast a little: that is good homiletics, though I say so. One of my young brethren said, "Dr. Shields might be a fairly good preacher if he only knew a little more about homiletics." There was a time when I was rather proud of the ribs of my sermons: now I am more careful of the flesh that is on them. I am all the happier if nobody sees the ribs; for, after all, a sermon that consists of nothing but bones may be good for dogs but not for people! Mr. Spurgeon once said there were some homiletic specialists who reminded him of a man with a great platter and a splendid carving knife; but with nothing to divide. If only the dear brother had something to give to the hungry people who waited upon his ministry, he was specially equipped for the work of division and distribution.

Your task is to feed people. As you grow older, you will probably not be so proud of your homiletical skill, you will conceal the bones of your sermons—but the people will get the great truth you are presenting. The science of homiletics consists in an orderly and understandable presentation of the truth. You must present the truth in such a fashion that ordinary minds will be able to grasp what you say, and remember it.

The great John MacNeill, lately deceased, was a mighty preacher. I have three of his volumes on my shelves—I think all he ever published. There are no firstly, secondly, and thirdly, named in Dr. MacNeill's

preaching. But every sermon has its starting place—and it proceeds straight to the goal. That is homiletics. It is a good thing sometimes to make your sermon like an express train: Have somewhere to get on, and then run into the terminus without any stops. Do as they do in England, the porter calls the train—"London train," and away you fly until you quietly come to a standstill and hear other porters quietly announce, "London. All change". That is the end, the Amen at the end of the sermon.

Without repetition, I am positive I could preach with delight to myself for a whole year, twice a Sunday, and never go outside the ninth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel. It is not a long chapter, only thirteen verses. I have often thought I should like to write a volume or two on this one chapter. I shall not speak to you about types, but try to show you that this historical chapter is crammed full of truth that is illustrative of all the great doctrines of grace.

Last week we saw David fighting—fighting everywhere; subduing his enemies. That is a note we must not forget. I received a letter from a man this afternoon who said, "I heard your sermon Sunday night, and heard what you said about leaving those two poor drunken men in the ditch. Was that a Christian act?" Then he told me about how a drunken man came into a bakeshop where he was working, and how he laboured with him, and how tender he was with him. The poor fellow did not see any difference between a drunken man who wandered into a bakeshop, and a drunken man in charge of a motor-car abroad on a highway at night when the roads were slippery with rain. Be tender with the one, but severe with the other.

This same man said, "I did not like what you said about the Oxford Group." Then he gave me a fearful castigation. You could hear the cat-of-nine-tails whizzing through the air—as he told me that what I need is "absolute love"! Just like his! This brother concludes his letter by telling me that he is praying for me; that I may have more of the love of God, and not be disposed to fault-finding! He was blissfully ignorant of the fact that his letter, from beginning to end, is a tirade.

We must remember that there are many aspects of the gospel, and while we speak of the goodness of God, we must bear in mind there is such a thing as the severity of God: "Our God is a consuming fire". You must make that clear. Last week we saw David executing judgment upon evil-doers, himself an illustration of the One Who will break His enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now from the throne he says—I wish you could get the music of the question. I try to imagine how he looked when he said it, as he recalled the past—"Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Was not that lovely? Was not that godlike? Is that not just what our gracious God is saying all the time?

How would you treat it? I have said it was the expression of a sovereign's love. God expressed His love in the works of His hand. What a field you have there! What a testimony nature gives to the love of our God: "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." In this time of depression when so many people are hungry,

and so many people are ragged, I can almost fancy I can hear God saying, "I did not do it. I gave you plenty. I made the earth to bring forth abundantly. I did not burn the cotton. I did not destroy the wheat. I did not take the bread out of the mouths of hungry children." No, Lord, our rebellion has done it!—"Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." By ten thousand voices thou art saying, "I purpose to be kind." That is the attitude of God. That is the revelation of God in Christ. That is the peculiar, distinctive thing about the gospel: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

There is another text from which I have tried to preach. I heard my father preach from it once, and I never read it but I can hear his voice ringing out that text. I was a little boy, and I do not remember much of what he said; but I can remember the music of that text as it was repeated again and again, like a chime of golden bells: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee"—this clause was his text, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Oh, what a mercy it is that our gracious God is kind! You could preach for ever upon that, the reality of the kindness of God as shown in His works.

My second subdivision was this: that His kindness is shown in His Word. Some people cannot read His kindness in the works of His hands. They do not see it in the flower; they do not hear it in the song of the birds; they do not see it in the lilies. They have never heard a Voice saying, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." They know nothing of that, and God says, "I will speak more plainly." And the Bible, His word, declares the truth of the kindness of God.

I heard a great preacher once say that it had occurred to him that he would read what the Bible had to say about the love of God. He said he read all the way through the Old Testament, but could not find it. I wanted to say to him, "You did not read through my Old Testament." The Old Testament is full of the love of God. The very fact that God speaks at all shows the love of God. The Bible is a bound volume of our Heavenly Father's love-letters.

But best of all, He showed His kindness in our Kinship—for that is what kindness means—in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified Christ, the God Who came in the likeness of man, and Whose glory we beheld. That is the great argument for the kindness of God, that "God so loved the world." How many sermons could you preach on that? It ought to take a month or two to get through the introduction. You could speak of the kindness of God as shown in the works of His hand, in the word of His mouth, and in the Word made flesh, and that might well occupy you for many Sundays.

The kindness of God! You will never outgrow that subject. If you live to be as old as Dr. Haldeman, and preach until you are eighty-eight, you can still preach on the kindness of God. It will be as true then as now.

The next point was, The wealth of love exhibited. If these lay people were not here to-night—I almost wish they were not, we would have a test right now, and see what you could do with that text. It would be a great exercise; we will try it another time when others are not around! You need not answer me, but think it out for yourselves: what would you make of the wealth of love exhibited? Not only love, but a *wealth* of love; not only a wealth of love, but a wealth of love *exhibited*. "That I may show the love of God", said David. "I will not talk about it", he said, "I will exhibit it in a practical way." My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

Where would you begin? Look at the text: "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul?" The house of Saul is to receive King David's abounding grace! Saul! The name of Saul was representative to David of the bitterest hostility, the most murderous hatred of which he had ever had any experience. Again and again Saul had prepared a javelin, and had said, "I will smite David to the wall." But David said, "Find someone related to the house of Saul." Begin, then, with that point: David's invitation was not very broad. It was limited to certain people, not to everybody. Nobody could claim it who was not of the house of Saul. Whoever would not acknowledge that he was of the house of Saul could not claim the king's kindness. Nobody can claim the inheritance without admitting the relationship.

The gospel is for everybody? No, it is not. Go back over your history. There is the story of Saul, a great man, but David's enemy. For whom is the gospel designed? I quote it again: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Mr. Pharisee is not eligible. "I am all right. I do not need blood to wash my sins away." Then you cannot be washed. "I do not need grace." Then I have no gospel for you, Mr. Pharisee; you may go home. All the Bible has to offer of grace is for poor sinners. That does not strain the text. There is your illustration:

Who was Saul? "When he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king." He was a splendid specimen of physical manhood. That takes you back to Genesis where you hear God saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And when God looked upon that first man, He said of His work, "It is very good." It was His best work.

"Is there yet any that is left?" What is left of the house of Saul? That is the point. There was one of Saul's servants whose name was Ziba, and David called him and asked, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may shew"—not "my" kindness, but—"the kindness of God unto him?" This is the Psalmist who said, "My cup runneth over." It is the wealth of the love of God he wants to show. What a truth there is in that! There ought to be enough of the love of God to share with somebody else. We do not need to keep it to ourselves.

What did they answer? "Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet." That was all. There is

no splendid warrior now, but a man lame on his feet. That is an illustration of what sin has done to the world. All that is "left" of that royal house of Adam is a poor lame cripple in Lodebar. This is an illustration of the principle of total depravity, that man cannot hobble his way to heaven.

Where was the lame man? In Lodebar. He was far away from the king—an illustration of the far country. Lodebar! I am not disposed to over-emphasize the significance of these names—do not weaken the authority of your message by being fantastical in your interpretation—still Lodebar means *pastureless*. I have seen some places in our country that might have been called Lodebar. There was no pasture. That is where Mephibosheth was living, and that is where poor sinners live. You could preach a series of sermons on this: "King David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar."

If you want another line of thought, Ziba is the evangelist. Somebody must tell Mephibosheth there is grace with the king. He is in the far country, and David is in Jerusalem. Ziba goes from Jerusalem to Lodebar, and he carries the good news. That is what you young men and women are going to do. You will be Zibas, carrying the good news to China, India, Africa, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Your business will be to find the Mephibosheths, and tell them they are in the wrong country, that they ought to be in Jerusalem.

When you find Mephibosheth and tell him, he will say, "I am a lame man, and I cannot go." There were no motor-cars, no 'buses, no flying-machines; and poor crippled Mephibosheth could not go to the king. Saith one, "That is all right. I wish I knew Christ, but I live in Lodebar. I cannot make the journey from where I am to where your Saviour is. I am a poor sinner. I cannot give up smoking, drinking, and so on. I am so lame that I cannot get to the place where I can be saved." Then is your opportunity to preach the grace of God. Tell poor sinners how David sent and fetched Mephibosheth from Lodebar.

Thus you may preach on the fetching power of the gospel. You may find an illustration of that truth farther back in the Old Testament. There are no stories anywhere like the stories of the Bible. The old man had lost his son. He had gone out of his life, and he never expected to see him again. Find the gospel of the resurrection in Genesis? "I did not know it was in Genesis." Read that story of the man whose home had been darkened. He is going down to the grave sorrowing. The sons have gone from Lodebar to the place where there is plenty of corn. They come back, forgetting their corn, but with this message: "Joseph is yet alive." I cannot read it without thinking of that great word of hope, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Come on, Simon, and tell us the story.

Jacob's sons returned with the gospel of the resurrection. Joseph was not dead, but alive. They told their father "all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them"—but Jacob did not believe a word of it. The gospel always is too good to be easily believed. He "fainted" when they told him, but when they "showed" him the kindness of Joseph in the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, "the spirit of Jacob their father revived". They said, "Come father". He look-



ed, and there were the wagons Joseph had sent to fetch him. Then it was he cried, "It is enough. It is just like him. I knew if it were Joseph he would not mock me by inviting me to go to Egypt. It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

"King David sent, and fetched him." That means that the gospel meets us where we are in Lodebar. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" That is what the angels are for, to go down to Lodebar and bring us up to Jerusalem. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand even thousands of angels." Can you find material for a sermon in that?

When he came, David said, "Mephibosheth." "He answered, Behold thy servant!" Then said David, "Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. I will make you as rich as you would have been if Saul had never sinned." Mephibosheth fell on his face and said, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" That is the publican's prayer in the Old Testament, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." There is a text for you.

"Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house." What does the grace of God do for us? What did Jesus Christ come to earth for? To give us a ticket to heaven? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He came to abolish death. He came to undo everything sin had done, and to make us as well off as though we had never sinned. Righteousness is more than innocence. The grace of God restores to us the years the locust hath eaten. "He restoreth my soul." What is the measure of that restoration? "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The last mark of sin will be blotted out. "Do not be afraid", said David to Mephibosheth, "you shall be as well off as though Saul had not sinned. I will give it all back. Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." He did not live in his own house, as did Absalom. He lived with the king every day.

I preached on that text one day, and at the close of the service a poor lame man hobbled up to speak to me. He was a Christian, and he said, "I enjoyed your sermon very much, but you did not say that when Mephibosheth got to the king's table, nobody knew he was lame." He knew what that meant! He never was so comfortable as when he was sitting down, and nobody could see he was lame. I said to him, "I preach a better gospel than that, for when we sit down at the King's table by and by we shall not have any lame feet to hide. We shall be whole—and holy as He is holy." Holiness means wholeness.

"All that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth." What a blessing it is to know that we have angels for our ministers: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"—"All that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth."

"He did eat continually at the king's table. Thus believers are called to live in the King's presence, and

eat at His table. "He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

The best part of it is the last. I need not keep you long with that, for I could never, never exhaust it: *a wondrous love explained*—"That I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake." That was the wonder of it. When Ziba told Mephibosheth that story, he must have said, "The king does not know me. I never did anything for the king. There is no reason why he should be kind to me." But he was urged to come in any event. When Mephibosheth came into the king's presence he was greeted with this word: "Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake."

(One thing I passed over. Read the story of Mephibosheth, and you will find that in the days following Saul's death, Mephibosheth was a baby and was being carried by a nurse. She let him fall, and that is how he became lame. Talk about the "fall" of man—that is how it happened. Mephibosheth had never been an Asahel who could run like a roe.)

It was for Jonathan's sake. You will have to examine that and see what is the basis of it. The basis was the mutual love of David and Jonathan. Each loved the other as his own soul. What is the basis of salvation? Not that God loves, but that "God is love". The Father and the Son covenanted together for the salvation of men, as David and Jonathan made a covenant. You do not know anything about theology if you do not understand what used to be called, *covenant theology*. There are many preachers who are not theologians, and who do not know the alphabet of theology. Before Mephibosheth was born David and Jonathan came together, and Jonathan said to David, "Thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not; but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth." And David promised. "Will you swear it?" "I will swear to it. I will never be other than kind to anybody related to you, Jonathan."

Mephibosheth did not know it, but he might have come long before if he could have walked. He might have said, "I demand a place in the king's family. I ask for the vacant seat at the king's table. I want to eat of the king's bounty every day." The king might have asked, "What is your name?" "Mephibosheth, a man of shame." Ishbosheth was Saul's son, and Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son. He confessed it with shame. "What is your name?" "Mephibosheth." "Whose blood runs in your veins?" "Saul's." "Saul never did any good to this house. Saul was an enemy of the king." "I know." "You belong to him?" "Yes, his blood is in my veins." "Have you ever earned the king's favour?" "No." "Did you ever fight in the king's armies?" "No, sir; I am lame." "Did you ever carry burdens?" "No, sir; I am lame. I admit that I am a man of shame, but I demand thy bounty." "On what ground?" "Because, while I am related to Saul on one side, I am related to Jonathan too. And I have the covenant promise of the king that he never would turn away anyone related to Jonathan." The king must have answered, "Whoever thus comes in Jonathan's name, I will in no wise cast out."

That is the gospel—that is the whole gospel, "For Jonathan's sake."

### SPURGEON CENTENARY

This year is the centenary of the birth of the greatest preacher who has lived since apostolic days, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. We hope at a not very distant date to publish a special Spurgeon Centenary Number of THE GOSPEL WITNESS. Meanwhile a notice has appeared in several English papers, notably *The Christian Herald*, *Watching and Waiting*, and *The Christian*, sent out by a committee in London. A copy was sent us for publication some weeks ago, but we withheld publication until it had appeared in other papers. We publish the announcement, however, herewith for the information of our British readers.

We were also honoured with an invitation to be the special speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Bible League, which is usually held about June. We have received a letter from the Secretary, Rev. Wright Hay, saying that in view of the arrangement referred to in the announcement below, the Bible League had decided to postpone their Annual Meeting until the Autumn, when we hope to have the pleasure of participating in the League's Spurgeon Centenary also.

The announcement appearing in the English papers to which we have referred is as follows:

#### Spurgeon Centenary

"During the present year the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Charles Haddon Spurgeon is to be celebrated, and none will question that so honoured a life and so fruitful a ministry calls for grateful commemoration. In the judgment of many such a centenary is a fitting occasion to proclaim with renewed earnestness the Gospel that this servant of God so faithfully preached, and to re-affirm the great principles for which he stood. The vital issues which confronted him are facing the Christian Church to-day, and there appears to be an even greater need to 'contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.'

"With this object in view it has been arranged for Dr. T. T. Shields, of Toronto (sometimes called the Spurgeon of Canada), to visit this country in the autumn and conduct a three weeks' 'Spurgeon Centenary Mission' in London, to conclude with a united gathering on October 8th, in the Central Hall, Westminster, at which Dr. Shields and Dr. Dinsdale Young will be the principal speakers.

"Provisional plans have been made for holding the 'Spurgeon Centenary Mission' meetings in Highgate Road Chapel, Lansdowne Hall West Norwood, and Talbot Tabernacle, Bayswater; these Churches being proposed in view of the fact that their three former pastors (James Stephens, W. Fuller Gooch and Frank H. White) were closely associated with Mr. Spurgeon in his defence of evangelical truth. Doubtless many friends will welcome the opportunity of having some share in this commemoration, and any communication relating thereto will be gladly welcomed by the undersigned:—

Charles Fisher (Lansdowne Hall), 17, Chestnut Road, W. Norwood, S.E.27.

W. Percy Hicks (Editor of "The Christian Herald").

Henry Oakley (Trinity Road Baptist Church), 22, Ouseley Road, Balham, S.W.12.

E. J. Poole-Connor (Talbot Tabernacle), 10, South Grove, Highgate, N.6.

John Wilmot (Highgate Road Chapel), Grove End Lodge, Highgate Road, N.W.5.

### A CONFESSION AND A WARNING

A few years ago—when we were just out of our teens—(!) a very clever book agent called upon us, offering for sale a set of books which, from the prospectus, promised to supply us with that of which we felt at that particular time in urgent need. We subscribed for the books in advance of publication. When they were delivered they were rather well bound, and apparently useful to people who bought books for ornament rather than use. Upon a cur-

sory examination we discovered they were of little value beyond the covers.

We wrote the publishers telling them we did not want the books, only to receive in reply a letter saying that as we had subscribed we should be compelled to take them. We consulted a lawyer on the subject, a man who afterwards became an eminent judge. When we had told him our story he said, "You have the books in your possession?" We said, "Yes." Then he said, "Good or bad, you have some property for which you have not paid?" "Yes." "And you do not want them because they were sold to you under false pretences?" To this we agreed. "Very well", he said, "put them in a box, and ship them back to the publishers in plain wrapping. When you have given them time to arrive, send a letter after them telling the publishers you repudiate the transaction on the ground of misrepresentation on the part of their agent—and let them whistle for their money." We followed his advice, and heard no more about it. We paid the lawyer his fee, and felt we got good value for our money.

For many years thereafter we were very careful, but we write this note to acknowledge that not long ago we were caught in a similar trap again—and we write it that we may warn brother-ministers of the trap.

We have the latest edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, but an encyclopaedia or a dictionary falls somewhat behind the progress of modern knowledge even in twenty-four hours. An agent called representing an encyclopaedia that was up-to-the-minute. He had no sample, but only something to show the binding. The volumes were to cost \$59.50, and this gave one the privilege of using a certain research service, which would keep the volumes up-to-date.

When the books were delivered we examined them on several items concerning which we were fully informed; and found them hopelessly out-of-date. Beside that, the print was so small as to make consultation somewhat of a labour. It may be the research service would have some value, but we supposed the encyclopaedia would be abreast of the times in respect to everything, for who could afford time to send a letter to make enquiry, and wait for an answer from the research service unless it were to make an occasional and necessary enquiry upon some unusual subject? We reached the conclusion that the books were useless to us, so we put them in a box and sent them back where they belonged. Notwithstanding, we had made an initial payment pending the arrival of the books.

Some of our readers will say, "Well, we thought better of you than that. We thought you had more sense than to be taken in by a book agent." Frankly, we thought we had ourselves; but this was how we were taken in. The agent showed several letters from men of prominence recommending the books, saying that on matters on which they had consulted them they had found the books all that they were represented to be. We have since ascertained that at least one of these letters and that the one which sold us the books, was never given by the person whose name it bore. In other words, it was a gross misrepresentation. The order was obtained under false pretences.

The name of the encyclopaedia was "The Cambridge Encyclopaedia", published by the Cambridge Society of Montreal; and the name of the agent was B. Martin. If this gentleman calls upon any of our readers offering these books for sale we recommend them to show him the door with little ceremony. We were informed of his having said to one minister that they supplied a certain other minister with a large proportion of his sermonic material; and we have been told that the Editor of this paper is spoken of as one who very frequently consults their research service. We have never consulted them once, and as soon as we discovered the character of their books we shipped them back: we have none of their property, as we could not afford them shelf-room.

If the Cambridge Society and their glib-tongued agent, Mr. Martin, do not like what we have published here, they are welcome to take what steps they please. Meanwhile we warn ministers everywhere to beware of this man and his books.

### THE PROOF-READER'S FAULT

It is unfair to blame others for mistakes one can so easily make himself. We endeavour to exercise great care in the reading of the proof of this paper, but sometimes even a glaring error escapes detection. A few weeks ago we put

a heading on the front page of the paper, "Spurgeon on Dispensationalism". We were more than annoyed when the paper came out to see it reading, "Spurgeon on Dispensation". In the Bible lecture published in the issue of April 5th, on page 8, first column, third paragraph, we quoted the line, "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife". When the paper was off the press and mailed, we found that "madding" was printed "maddening". Wasn't that *maddening*? We learned "Gray's Elegy", very early in life, and we take space to make this correction only because it is an error so frequently made that it might be supposed the makers know no better.

#### ORGAN WANTED

In one of our rural districts the brethren are pushing out into school-houses, and into villages roundabout, carrying the gospel message. It is planned greatly to extend this work during the summer. If any of our readers have an organ they are willing to give away, that can be transported from place to place in a gospel truck, we should be glad to hear from them. Indeed, we think we could probably use several of them. Of course, the small folding organ would be best, but a small organ of any sort could be made to do. Please communicate with THE GOSPEL WITNESS.

### CHURCH NEWS

#### Wheatley—Annual Meeting

At the Annual Meeting of the Wheatley Immanuel Regular Baptist Church, a year of blessing and progress was reported. Though few in number all are willingly doing their best to make the cause prosper in this place. Finances have covered expenses, and at a time like this where but one man had work for so long, we feel that our little group have accomplished much. Through the untiring efforts of our pastor, Rev. W. Lempiere, and some of our men, the cement floor was laid in the basement, and lights put in and curtains hung to separate the classes, and we now have a very desirable Sunday-school room. All this was paid for by donations from friends and offerings by the members. We are glad to say that the spiritual life of the members is bright, and three new members have been added to the church. Pray for the work here that more may see the light, and accept Jesus as their Saviour. During the past five months, a good work has been carried on among the children, who nearly fill the church every Friday evening, to hear and see the pictured story of Scripture characters told by the pastor.

#### East Windsor

The Pastor, Rev. F. S. Kendall, writes, "You will be glad to know that there have been a number of decisions for Christ recently. There are five now asking for baptism. There are three prayer-meetings in addition to the regular one for the Church. They are all praying for decisions for Christ on the part of their friends, as well as for the work of the Union, and we believe that the Lord is answering prayer."

#### Timmins

"At present we are broadcasting morning and evening services," writes the pastor, Rev. H. C. Slade. "The money is sent in for this purpose, so we are pleased to proclaim the message of God in this way as long as He makes it possible. We have reason to believe that our radio audience is large. Just the other day I was informed that the Jewish Rabbi was listening in quite regularly, also many Roman Catholics. Of course, in some cases they are compelled to listen if they wish to have radio at all during the hour we are on, for the station here drowns all others out. Is that what you mean by 'compelling them'?"

#### Willowdale

It was a joy to see nearly one hundred and fifty boys and girls gathered at ten o'clock on a recent Sunday morning to hear the Secretary of the Union give a missionary address. Good times are being experienced under the leadership of Mr. J. F. Dempster. The Bible School has increased, and the attendance at all services is much larger. Of course, the boys and girls of Willowdale are interested in missionary

work. Their former pastor and his wife, Rev. E. and Mrs. Hancox, are working in Liberia under the Union.

At the morning service, Mr. Atkinson spoke from the text, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." This proved a most helpful and inspiring service also, and the people went away with a deeper realization of their responsibility to God and of sending the gospel to those who are less privileged than we are.

#### Dunbar Heights, Vancouver

The pastor, Rev. W. J. Thomson, formerly of Ontario, tells of his work in British Columbia. "Our work here continues in a steady and encouraging way," he writes.

"I have been going from door to door giving the invitation to our services, and speaking the gospel message to those who are willing to listen. I have called at about five hundred homes, and I am continuing this method, as thus only can we get any interest awakened amongst the parents of children, as well as the other homes. Pray for us very specially in this work. We have a good number of fine boys and girls in the school—an average attendance of one hundred and fifteen, with over sixty in the primary. Many of these scholars are devoid of any nominal Christian training, and we desire that their hearts may be reached with the gospel. Our services are very well attended, and our visitation has brought quite a number out; and we are hopeful that faithfulness will prevail over the powers of darkness.

Many of our people in this community are not working, and consequently they are not able to help us financially. The youths here, as well as in other parts of the land are a problem, as the future seems a blank to many of them, and unless the Lord's hand in salvation and guidance be upon them, they are heading for disaster.

It has been the conviction of many of us here that our building is not in the proper location, being about three large blocks from the street car and main thoroughfare, and we are seeking guidance about a new location, so that the future welfare of the work may be looked after in the best interests of the cause. There are several sites (equally good) available at the present time, but if the building trade were to be revived they would soon be out of our reach. How we wish that God would put it into the hearts of some of His people who have money to take the interest of this district and help us practically towards the establishing a New Testament cause.

Vancouver is a city of 'Religious Sprees', and is in a worse plight than any place in Ontario. We have had a remarkably good winter. Every Sunday this year has been dry, very little rain. Violets are through blooming, and wall-flowers are now flaming in the sun. Daffodils are also blooming in the open, and 'only man is vile'. Pray for us here. Love to all the brethren in Ontario, and those interested in our welfare. Yours in Christ, W. J. Thomson."

#### York Road Baptist Church, Guelph

Blessing continues at the York Road Baptist Church, Guelph, under the energetic leadership of the pastor, Rev. H. H. Chipchase. A conference was held on Good Friday at which Rev. Robert Guthrie, of London, was the special speaker. On that occasion three professed conversion. On Easter Sunday, when Mr. Chipchase preached, twelve more professed conversion, among them being two married couples. The Sunday School on that day had an attendance of one hundred and ninety-eight, the largest on record. For four evenings during the following week Rev. James McGinlay, of London, was the preacher, when twenty-five professed conversion, making a total of forty people in six meetings.

Last Sunday the new baptistry, just completed in the new church, was used for the first time, when the church was packed to the doors, and four were baptized. Many more are to follow next Sunday.

THE GOSPEL WITNESS friends who sent contributions to support this daring enterprise in Guelph will rejoice to read of the fruitage of the ministry there. Of course the financial situation in Guelph is still acute. But the heroic pastor who went there without a dollar's guarantee, either from the church or anyone else, is facing the future with cheer and a good courage. THE GOSPEL WITNESS is still ready to receive and forward contributions for the work at York Road, Guelph.

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 9

No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 17 SECOND QUARTER April 29th, 1934

### THE ALTAR SET UP AND WORSHIP ESTABLISHED

Lesson Text: Ezra, chapter 3.

**Golden Text:** "And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.—Ezra 3:11.

Bible School Reading—Ezra 3:1-13.

#### DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Lev. 1:1-9. Tuesday—Lev. 23:33-44. Wednesday—Psalm 136:1-15. Thursday—Is. 12:1-6. Friday—Heb. 1:1-6. Saturday—Acts 2:41-47.

#### I. THE ALTAR AND THE OFFERINGS (vs. 1-6).

On the arrival of the exiles in their own land their first business would be to secure dwelling places for themselves, and make arrangements for their sustenance, after which they would be prepared to proceed to the accomplishment of the purpose of their return. The first thing done respecting this related to the erection of the altar, and the offering of the sacrifices thereon. In this connection note the gathering of the people to Jerusalem, (v. 1), the erection of the altar, (v. 2), the offering of the burnt offerings, (v. 3), and the celebration of the feast of tabernacles, with the offering of the prescribed offerings, (vs. 4-6).

Several things are worthy of consideration respecting this historical record. First, in relation to the physical circumstances of the Israelites. They were dwelling in their own land, they were numerically weak, and they were in the midst of a foreign element alien in sympathy, and later openly antagonistic to them. Of these and other people around them they were afraid, (v. 3). Such fear, though unnecessary on the part of those who were carrying out the purpose of God, can be well understood. Human nature is affected by its surroundings, and in times of danger requires the consciousness of the divine presence to sustain it in perfect peace. We are reminded by Israel's state, of the condition of the Lord's people these days. They are numerically weak, set in the midst of an alien people, (Rom. 8:7), and a crooked generation, (Phil. 2:15), and dwelling with those who know not God, (Eph. 2:12), and who are imbued with the spirit of the great enemy of souls, (Eph. 2:2; I. John 5:19). Yet despite this situation there need be no fear. God's power is sufficient to sustain all who trust in Him, and victory, present and ultimate is theirs.

It is instructive to note in the second place the way in which the people acted under the circumstances. They "gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem", (v. 1). This was wise and necessary, both from the political and religious standpoint. The eyes of aliens were on them, their future national existence was at stake, their testimony to the true God was being observed, therefore, united action was imperative. To appear lacking in union would mean defeat and disaster, for enemies were ready to take advantage of every defect in order to wreck the work which they had come to accomplish. It was true in their case that united, they stood, while divided they were sure to fall.

From the religious standpoint this gathering together of the people was the right and proper thing. Their purpose was the resumption of the public worship of God. This could not be done properly by the efforts of a few individuals. It required the attendance of all, that by their presence, they would bear witness to the importance and solemnity of the occasion, and give proof of their sincerity of purpose. It is too often the case that attendance at public worship is left to the comparatively few devout souls in each community, and the many who care not, and some of these, unfortunately, are church members, are either lolling lazily at home, or engaged in the pursuit of pleasure. God is thus treated in a shabby, ungrateful manner, even by those who profess His name.

It is of significant interest to observe that the gathering together of the Israelites centred in the altar of burnt offering. In all union movements there must be some gathering

point, something that will draw and hold the people together, something agreed upon, and of sufficient importance to arouse and retain the interest of all. The Israelites were not only interested in the erection of the altar, with all that that implied in the way of offerings, but believed such a work was of the utmost importance at that time. They did not wait until the temple was rebuilt in order to offer their sacrifices. The altar came first, the building proceeded afterwards. The spiritual significance is clear. The altar with its offerings reminds us of our Lord Who was once offered to bear our sins, (Heb. 9:28). He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, (Rev. 13:8), dying on behalf of the Church, (Eph. 5:25), of which He is the Head, (Eph. 1:22). He, therefore, is the true gathering point for all saints of God. When we meet, it is unto Him, (Matt. 18:20), when we observe the Supper it is at His table, (I. Cor. 10:21; 11:23-34). He should then be accepted as the preeminent One, (Col. 1:18), supreme in relation to our affections and will. If all God's people would give Him His rightful place, and be done with quarrelling, divisions, and sins in the ranks, they would give a marvellous exhibition of His power in the world, which would bring glory to His name. Note the need for such an attitude, also the fact that the new life of Israel was based on sacrifice, reminding us of the necessity of basing our lives on the atoning work of Christ.

#### II. LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE (vs. 7-13).

Having erected the altar, and instituted the offerings the Israelites proceeded with the building of their house of worship. Their first action in relation thereto was to arrange for the procurement of the necessary building materials, (v. 7). Some time after that the work commenced under the direction of the Levites, (vs. 8, 9), and at the laying of the foundation there was a service of praise to mark the joyous nature of the occasion, although in the midst of the rejoicing there was much weeping on the part of the older people, due to their remembrance of the glory of the former house.

Among other things worthy of attention respecting this building operation, we may note first, the orderly nature of the procedure. It was not a case of each one doing what he pleased, but all were under qualified leadership, and worked as directed, in accordance with his ability. This principle of orderliness is manifest throughout scripture. It is seen in the wilderness life of the Israelites, (Numbers 3), and in their life under the kings, (2 Sam. 5:3). It is seen also in the life of the early church, (Heb. 13:17, 24), and the same is expected to govern the church of the twentieth century. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace", (I. Cor. 14:33). In the Church, Christ is Lord, (Eph. 5:23), the Holy Spirit is Administrator, (John 14:26; Acts 16:6, 7), the pastor, under God, is shepherd and ruler, (I. Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), with the deacons as his assistants (Acts 6:1-6; I. Tim. 3:8-13), and the members working together loyally with him. He must not lord it over God's heritage, (I. Peter 5:3), but his position should be respected, (I. Tim. 5:17-19), as well as that of each leader under him, and all together should be sensitive to the presence and direction of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 13:2).

It should be noted further that the Word of God was accepted as the guide in all these matters, (v. 10). The returned exiles were not setting out on an unmapped course of their own, but were following directions laid down for their guidance. In this they also provide us with an example. We know not how to live, nor how to work to please God, apart from the teaching of scripture, therefore, the same, in a very real manner, should be accepted as our guide. The importance of this requires emphasis in the light of present day scepticism, when so many have discarded the divine instructions, and replace them with human reasonings and guesses.

The third thing worthy of observation is the fact of praise, with the reason for the same. The service of God, while sacred, and solemn, is not dull. There is real joy in the heart of the one who truly serves God. Heaven is a place of joy, (Luke 15:7, 10), our Lord while on earth spoke of His joy, (John 15:11), and the saints are enjoined to rejoice without ceasing, (I. Thess. 5:16). The reason given in the record for praising and giving thanks unto the Lord is "because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel," (v. 11). This was but a statement of truth, for despite chastisement, and even in the same, God had manifested His mercy toward His people. He had preserved them from extinction in the face of their enemies, and had fulfilled His word in their return to their own land. Note His mercy these days, (Heb. 4:16; 2 Peter 3:9).