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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"WHAT SHALL I DO THEN WITH JESUS WHICH IS CALLED CHRIST?"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, April 29th, 1934.

(Stenographically Reported)

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"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"
—Matt. 27:22.

Prayer by Rev. W. Gordon Brown

O merciful Saviour Who died for us, Who gave Thy life's blood that our souls might be cleansed of sin, Who rose from the dead that as Thou hast lived we, too, might live, we rejoice that we have been buried with Christ; that our sins have been left in His grave; that we have risen with Him, for He has given us His life; and that, by the power of the Spirit of God we are seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Help us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, and thus been admitted to such a standing, more fully to enter into the experience of it, and the power of it, and the blessedness of it. With such blessings hast Thou blessed us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, therefore, do we ask that Thou wouldest forgive us for so poorly attaining thereto. Grant that our state may advance toward our standing; that we may grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Infinite God, Thou art the God of each individual soul; therefore do we bring ourselves before Thee, and ask for the blessing that each of us needs. With some it is a desire for Thy balm to heal the wounds of the spirit; the need of others is the Bread of Life, for they are hungry; and of others still, the wine of Thy joy to cheer them. O Saviour, Thou art the Lord of Thy church as Thou art the Saviour of the individual soul. Thou art the Head, O Christ, over all things to the church, which is Thy body, the fulness of Him Who filleth all in all. Grant that the members of Thy body may faithfully witness in this world of sin. Unite us to this great task, and strengthen us therefor. Turn back the hearts of those who love Thee in a fresh way to Thy word. Drive from our midst the unfaithful shepherds. Help Thine own to distinguish between the sheep and the wolves in sheep's clothing. Raise up among us continually such pastors of the flock as shall be approved by the chief Shepherd Himself when He shall appear. So let Thy work prosper, establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.

Mercifully deal, O Lord God, with the nations of this world. In what confusion are they, in what distress! And yet we believe, according to Thy revelation, that Thou hast not left the world, but that Thou dost rule. O that Thou wouldest send forth Thy light and Thy truth, and let them lead men

to Thy holy hill! Send out Thy judgment and Thy righteousness, that justice may be established in the land, and the fear of God be known. So do Thou bring the truth of Thy grace to the souls that sit in darkness, to the nations that know not Jesus Christ. Dawn upon them in that bright shining which is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in Whose name we ask these and all other mercies. Amen.

There are certain texts of scripture which, like the clock that strikes the hours, have been heard so often that we have ceased to regard them. When such a text is read it must be announced with some unusual emphasis in order to command attention. But there are certain special circumstances which remind us of the solemn passing of the hours. When the physician tells us that the fever will reach its crisis at a particular hour; or when the year is dying, or, perhaps, when marriage bells are chiming, people give attention to the striking of the hour. So a particular passage of the word of God may acquire a new significance, when special circumstances set its principles in bold relief.

In all history Pontius Pilate stands out as the supreme champion of the principle of neutrality. He was determined, when an important issue was submitted to him for decision, to avoid the responsibility which the making of that decision involved. He endeavoured, therefore, to transfer the responsibility for it to somebody else. The world is full of Pilates still, who are unwilling to commit themselves to a definite course, who are constantly endeavouring to find some middle way by which they can at once avoid the consequences of doing right, and the penalty of doing wrong. Pilate submitted the question, which properly belonged to himself, to the people: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

Neutrals need often to be pitied where they must not be despised. Neutrality instead of minimising often

multiplies troubles. The neutral in any controversy must often pocket his pride and submit to many indignities. Some men are born belligerent; some men achieve belligerency; and some have belligerency thrust upon them. But whatever the *casus belli*, we must all find in the end, that neutrality in respect to questions of right and wrong is madness. Whether we will or no, we must take sides at last.

The text will throw some light upon the folly of attempting to assume and maintain an indefinite attitude toward moral questions, while the peculiar conditions of the day will lend new pertinency to this age-long question.

I.

The text ENUNCIATES THE PROBLEM OF A MAN WHO, UNWITTINGLY, AND AGAINST HIS OWN DESIRE, FINDS THAT HE HAS JESUS CHRIST UPON HIS HANDS. Pilate was not at all interested in the respective merits of the doctrines of Pharisaism, and the principles of the philosophy of this great Galilean Prophet. He had no desire whatever to become involved in their discussion. He was not concerned with the personal animosities which manifested themselves in the conspiracy which resulted in bringing Jesus of Nazareth to his bar. He would fain have washed his hands of the whole matter, and, in a figure, he did so, declaring he was innocent of the blood of this just Person. He tried to persuade himself it was none of his business. By his standards considerations of vastly greater practical moment to himself engrossed his attention. But in the regular round of official duty he found himself with the principles and Person of Jesus Christ on his hands.

That is true of every man, irrespective of his position in life. There is no man here, there is no one who hears this message by radio this evening who can wholly, and always, escape the responsibility of making a definite decision in respect to his attitude toward Jesus Christ. There is no possibility of our avoiding ultimately meeting with Him. *He will meet us in the principles which He incarnates.* He may meet us sometimes anonymously; He may cross our pathway when we do not recognize Him. But the principles which have their source, which find their rise and inspiration in Him Who is incarnate God, have their ramifications all through the warp and woof of human experience; and it is an utter impossibility, by any artifice which man can devise, for any one of us to escape, at last, sometime, somewhere, saying "yes" or "no" in respect to the claims of Jesus Christ. A man may refuse to go to church, he may refuse to read the Bible, refuse to hear any sort of religious message, or even to read a religious book; and permit no one to approach him to address him personally on the question of religion. He may endeavour to shut the very name and all thought of Christ out of his mind. But in spite of all his efforts, sooner or later he will find himself, in the ordinary affairs of life, face to face with Pilate's problem: he will have Jesus Christ on his hands, for the reason that there are certain principles which emanate from Him, and to which no man can do violence without at last touching Christ Himself.

I know how many people there are who labour to be neutral in respect to matters of great importance.

There is one outstanding, historic, example. At the outbreak of the Great War the late President Woodrow Wilson of the United States not only declared the neutrality of the nation, but he called upon all newspapers,

all public men of every rank to be neutral in speech, and to be neutral in thought. He would have no entangling alliances; he would live entirely apart from this great world conflict. That was happening in Europe, and he and his nation were living in another hemisphere, and, therefore, it was no concern of theirs! But when he had told, or advised, his people to be neutral, they forthwith discussed the war. And as for the President himself, from that day until they found themselves precipitated into the conflict, he was kept busy writing notes about a matter with which he had determined he would have nothing to do. Why? Because the principles involved did not belong to Europe only. They were principles of universal significance and application; and though he would have kept his ships at home, and withheld the nation from participation in that conflict, he found that in spite of all his efforts the warring principles crossed the sea; they entered into the very texture of the life of the nation, and became a menace to the nation in every department of life. At last he was forced, as thoughtful men must have known from the beginning he would be—he was forced to participate in the war with which he had first of all resolved he would have nothing to do.

No man can be neutral in respect to moral principles: he must be for them or against them, and the circumstances of life will at last force him to a position in which he will be compelled to declare himself.

I speak to people this evening who have just turned the dial of their radios apparently by accident. Some of you listen by radio who never go to a place of worship. I doubt not that I have the ear at this moment of thousands of people who have not crossed the threshold of a place of worship in many a day. You are not interested in what you call the niceties of the theology. You are not concerned with biblical matters, and you have—well, little interest in discussions about the Person of Jesus Christ. That is something apart from you; you are entirely detached from it. No you are not. If you will not go to church the Lord can address you somewhere else than in a pew; and the principles which have their origin in Him, and which are part of the moral constitution of things, will find you in your business, in your home, in your pleasures, in every expression of life, and you will be forced, for yourself, to do something in respect to these principles which are identified with Him, Who was their supreme manifestation.

I will go further and say that *these principles of truth and righteousness not only emanate from Christ, but they are inseparable from His Person.* You cannot take sides for or against certain principles without allying yourselves with, or taking up an attitude against the incarnation of those principles. In the case of war, a nation may declare its neutrality, but when its own rights are infringed, it stands upon its neutral rights. A little while ago England tried to be neutral, and so placed an embargo upon all arms sent to the Orient, with a view to withholding her support from Japan, with whose policy she had no sympathy. But immediately China said, "That cuts both ways. You cannot do that to Japan without doing it to us. They have arms, and we have not". So, in her effort to take a perfectly neutral position, she found herself, in spite of herself, and really in opposition to her own desires, allied with the wrong side.

A man says, "I have nothing to do with Christ". But

you are bound to have something to do with Him. You cannot escape the question of right or wrong, can you? Whether you stand on the inside of the counter or on the outside, there is a question of righteousness involved in the business transaction contemplated. The man on the inside of the counter may, or may not, be truthful in his representation of his wares. And you on the outside, perhaps, may try to take advantage of the man who has something to sell. You think the contemplated action has no relation to religion at all, and certainly no relation to the Person of Christ. You say, "I care nothing for religious theories: all I care about is conduct, and character; what a man really is, and what he does, is what weighs with me". But what a man is, and what he does, inevitably relates him to Christ, because it is impossible that we should do wrong without offending Him; or do right without allying ourselves in some measure with Him. I remind you that the Lord Jesus is something more than a subject of discussion for preachers, a subject which may engage the thought of church-going people: Jesus Christ is God, whether you believe it or not; and He is the supreme manifestation of the law of God, or, let me say, the morality of God, the principles which make up the character of God. And you cannot violate one of these principles without dealing with Him. Every transgression of the principles of righteousness must at last lead to the place called Calvary; and it will lead you inevitably, as it led Pilate, to have to do with the Person of Jesus Christ.

There are those who try to shelve the question as to Who Christ is, and whence He came. "That does not matter", they say. Well, that was the question that was before Pilate. That was the question, about which there were differences of opinion, that had been argued before the high priest, and which was argued again before Pilate. "Who art thou? . . . What sayest thou of thyself?" Pilate said: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ, I do not know whether He is Christ or not. I do not know whether He is the Messiah or not. I am not interested for myself. But what shall I do with Him?"

Full often men are ready to engage in academic discussion of principles in the abstract, with an air and spirit of complete detachment from the principle discussed. But when a man, perhaps from the set purpose of keeping himself from loss, gives first consideration to his own desires, his own pleasures, his own carnal and temporal interests, by so doing inevitably, although it may be ignorantly, he allies himself with every Barabbas on earth,—and you will find him sympathetic with every predatory, robber-principle, and corporation, or organization or movement in the world.

On the other hand such an attitude puts him in practical opposition to everything essentially Christian, and most of all, to Christ Himself. The smallest transactions in which principles of right and wrong, good and evil, are concerned indicates the soul's real attitude toward the Person of Christ.

There are those who object to belief in Christ being made a term of salvation. Men whose thinking in my judgment is not profound but superficial in the extreme, affect to disparage doctrine, and say that after all it does not make any difference what you believe. "I am not interested in the doctrines of the gospel", says such an one. That is one of the plausibilities that carries the teaching of the Oxford Group: it does not make any difference what you believe. You may believe Jesus is a

Man only, or you may believe He is God; you may believe anything you like. You may differ in a thousand particulars, but let us all come together and do right! Well, the thing is a philosophical absurdity. "Oxford", indeed! "Oxford!" It has no flavour of "Oxford" about it. If you will only think a little further you will realize that creed and character are inseparable, as are also creed and conduct. It is forever true that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he". What you think about Jesus Christ, what you believe about Him, will inevitably determine your attitude toward Him. If Pilate had really believed that Jesus was not only "called Christ", but that He *was* Christ—if Pilate had really believed that Jesus of Nazareth was God manifest in the flesh, if Pilate had, in his deepest soul been convinced that this Man Who stood before him was the incarnation of Deity, and that there resided within Him the very power which spake the worlds from nought, he would never have delivered Him up to death. It was because he did not believe that Pilate assumed the attitude he did. And so I say it is of vital moment to us that we should know Who Christ is, and what He is, for that will determine our attitude toward Him: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

The fact is a man's creed is his character, and his character is his creed. Belief in Christ means more than an intellectual subscription to a verbal statement of abstract truth: it means rather the surrender of the whole life to the Person of Christ,—to the truth as He reveals it, as He practiced it, as He empowers men to live it. Whatever creed a man may profess, his real creed, that which he really believes is that which is embodied and exemplified in his character.

Hence, when the Person of Christ is on your hands, what you believe with respect to Him will determine your attitude toward Him, and the life He represents; and your attitude toward Him is an infallible index of what you really are.

That evermore confronts us all. What shall be our attitude toward Him Who claims to be the Son of God? What you believe about Jesus Christ, what you believe of Him, what you believe Him to be, will determine your conduct, your character, and your destiny, for the simple reason that the principles of the gospel which find their sum and centre in the Person of Him of Whom the gospel speaks, constitute the moral constitution of the universe. You cannot avoid it. You are bound to come into harmony with it and yield heart and intellect to it, or else stand in opposition to it. And if you stand in opposition to it you pit yourselves against all the power of God Himself.

II.

Pilate ENDEAVOURED TO TRANSFER TO OTHER PEOPLE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A DECISION WHICH ONLY HE COULD MAKE. I think there is nothing more difficult than to get people to recognize their individual responsibility to God, or, if you like, to right and truth.

I wonder if you have ever paused to consider the real significance of the doctrines of collectivism which are in our day everywhere being preached? The various forms, aspects, and degrees of Socialism, find perhaps their extreme manifestation in Russia, with other expressions of the principles of collectivism in Italy and in Germany. In all these cases the individual is merged in the mass, and responsibility is spread over a multitude instead of being placed upon each indi-

vidual. The Christian religion is essentially an individualistic religion; and the principles of collectivism are diametrically opposed at every point to the Christian religion. In the beginning God made man in His own image and likeness. God deals always with individuals, and with nations as collections of individuals: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God": you shall answer for yourself, I shall answer for myself. But the tendency of human nature always is to transfer the responsibility for making any decision in respect to vital matters to somebody else. That is why it is that so often a man who has long been under military discipline, who has been accustomed to receive his orders from a superior, who has been trained to allow somebody else to think for him, and plan for him, and act for him, when he gets out of the army and ceases to be only an element in a great machine, but becomes again an individual that must think for himself, and act for himself, and work for himself, very often is useless. We say of certain men, "Oh, they are just soldiering;" which does not mean that they are heroic, but that they avoid responsibility, and drift along.

My dear friends, the principle underlying this is a principle that operates in your life and mine. How ready we all are to say: "Well,—oh yes, I will tell you what to do. Go and see Mr. Smith about that." And Mr. Smith makes a notation upon the communication you took to him, and he sends you to someone else. It is Dickens' "Circumlocution office", you know: round—and round—and round. There is a colloquialism, the origin of which I do not know, but which some may understand better than a more polite phrase. You have heard of people's "passing the buck", whatever that means: "It was not my fault: it was someone else's." The children do that from the beginning. Something is heard to fall with a smash in the next room. Mother runs in to find a valuable piece of crockery on the floor in fragments. She says to the little boy: "Did you do that?" "No mama, it broke!" He did not do it; "it broke"! Have you considered that every one of us, naturally, is an evolutionist? "It is not my fault. I am a victim of circumstances. I am only in the process of evolution. I have no responsibility. It is somebody else's responsibility. I am what I am because my father and mother were what they were, and because circumstances have shaped me." That is sheer nonsense, my dear friend. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

That is a question that ought never to have been asked. Pilate had no right to ask other people to settle his problems. And you have no right to ask other people to settle yours. I have had many ministers come to me to ask me to help them through their difficulties, and I have learned through a somewhat painful experience that in the majority of cases if they cannot settle their own problems, no one else can settle them. I have had many husbands come to me to ask me to intervene to effect reconciliation with their wives, or wives with their husbands. I have learned to say, "No, thank you! If you cannot compose your differences, and settle your own problems, do not ask me to do it." But that is what we all want to do—transfer responsibility to someone else.

In respect to this matter of your personal relationship

to God, you cannot transfer the responsibility for that relationship to your circumstances, to your hereditary tendencies, to ordinances—you must bear it yourself. Your naked soul must some day stand in the presence of a Personal God, and give account for the deeds done in the body. How long so ever delayed that time of judgment may be, it must come inevitably, and we must all receive or reject the salvation that God has wrought for us.

I speak to some this evening who say, perhaps, "I would receive Christ, I would become a Christian if it were not for the tendencies of my own nature, for the evil habits which have gripped me and enslaved me, if it were not for the chain of circumstances which have brought me into my present and so difficult position. But I am really not responsible for what I am, or where I am. If only, by some miracle, my situation could be changed, then I would listen to your gospel." You are all wrong, my friend. There is no situation in life, I do not care how complicated, in which a man can justly, before God, escape the responsibility for his own acts. You are where you are, you are what you are morally by your own decision. You cannot transfer it to anyone else. The decision to do right must always rest with you. You may be circumstantially irresponsible, but you cannot be so morally. Nobody else can share either the responsibility or the privilege of making your choice between good and evil, light and darkness, Christ and Barabbas. Remember that principle in business to-morrow. Wherever you go, do not stop to ask, What shall I do? The moment you ask that question you take the first step on the wrong road. In such matters you must ask nobody what you shall do but God. You shall give account of yourself to Him. What shall you do with Christ? Talk to Him about it. Do not ask me, do not ask anyone else. Dare you say, "what then shall I do with Thee, Lord Jesus?" You dare not ask that question of Him. I challenge you. You cannot bow in the divine presence and ask God what you shall do with God. There is only one thing for any man to do, and that is to bow in His presence and acknowledge Him as God, and do as He commands.

Whenever you ask a question of this character in respect to right conduct *you are reasonably sure to receive the wrong answer.* "What shall I do with Jesus?" The evidence has been submitted, with no proof of wrong-doing. Pilate, himself, said, "I find in him no fault at all." "He knew that for envy they had delivered him". He knew that the prosecution had absolutely no case, and there was only one right thing to do with Jesus, and that was to declare that He was what He had claimed to be—and set Him free. Why did he ask that question? Because he did not want to accept the responsibility, or to run the risk of offending either party to the controversy. Then he washed his hands at last, and said, "It was not my fault; someone else made the decision for me." No one can ever make such a decision for anyone. Pilate made the decision in the moment he asked the question, as you must do also. They said, "Let him be crucified!" You say, "Shall we always have that answer?" Always! Barabbas is always more popular than Christ. "But Barabbas was a robber!" Well, the most popular men in the world are robbers, not only in the United States, but everywhere. Is that true? I used to wonder at many things in the Bible that were paradoxical. I cannot understand them now, but I know

they are true. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." If you have plenty of money you may buy coal by the carload, and get it at half price. If you have very little, you must buy it by the hundredweight, and pay four or five times the price: "whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." "Men will praise thee; when thou doest well to thyself." If a man in business tramples all competitors under foot, and achieves the pinnacle of success; becomes a rich man; lives in a great house, people forthwith forget all about his dishonest methods of acquiring wealth, and because he has done well for himself will praise him. But the man who will sacrifice, who will give—give—give—give—give all the time, they crucify. The world has always done that. If you ever ask other people to help you to form a decision in respect to Christ they will always tell you to choose Barabbas before Christ; to set the robber free and to crucify incarnate Goodness. I tell you Satan is the god of this world, and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one". The majority are against you. You say, "That surely cannot be! Do you believe in majority rule?" The majority are often wrong: "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." No man will ever be strong until he is willing to take his stand with the minority and against the majority. Pilate wanted to be on the side of the majority; and at last he "gave sentence that it should be as they required", he yielded himself to the inspiration of the prince of this world, and gave consent to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. You will never be a Christian—I say it advisedly—you cannot be a true follower of Jesus Christ unless you are willing to be in the minority, unless you are willing to take a stand, and a course of which the majority will not approve. And let me tell you this: a great many benefactors of the race in all departments of life have, until the fruit of their influence has been seen, been in the minority. I do not mean to say that if you are one of those peculiar people, who are out of step with everyone, you are necessarily right. I do not mean that: I mean on these great principles which have to do with the fundamental, elementary things of life, you cannot take sides with Jesus Christ without having the world, the flesh, and the devil against you. The majority went away from the place called Calvary thinking they had done a good day's work when they had approved of the crucifixion of the Son of God.

My question to you, my friends who are here, and who hear by radio, is this: What will you do with Jesus Who is called Christ? Not what shall I do; that is my responsibility. What will *you* do? Will you recognize Him as God? Will *you* recognize Him as your Sovereign Lord and Creator? Will *you* look to Him as your Saviour? Will *you* acknowledge Him as your Master and Lord? Will *you* dare to take sides with Jesus Christ against the world? Never was there a day when it was more necessary that those who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ should be willing to go all the way with Him, and to accept all the implications of the faith they profess, to go even "without the camp, bearing his reproach". Something you must do! What shall it be? What will you do with Jesus Who is called Christ?

JOAB AND THE WOMAN OF TEKOA

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
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(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson Text: II. Samuel, chapters 13 and 14.

The thirteenth chapter records a very sordid story, with certain principles with which we may perhaps profitably deal. The man Amnon, who is the villain of the tale, had a friend who was a very subtle man. Beware of your friendships. This man, by his evil counsel, augmented the evil of Amnon's own heart.

There are people whose presence and companionship are a rebuke to evil tendencies. I remember reading a story of a certain man whom I had met, but whom I did not know intimately, of whom it was said during the South African War that his presence in any company made profanity or vulgarity impossible. But this man, Jonadab, was a man who assisted others in doing evil. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."

Another lesson may be learned from David's laxity in dealing with the evil here recorded. David could be very severe sometimes, but in this instance he was utterly lax. Instead of bringing the wrong-doer to judgment he passed the matter over lightly, and by so doing, laid the foundation for much trouble for himself in later years.

Many churches have sought to avoid trouble and disruption by permitting certain people to go on in their evil ways. The situation, however, as a result, frequently grows worse instead of better. There is a place for discipline and order in any community that recognizes God.

One cannot but feel some sympathy for Absalom in the circumstances, but Absalom's fault was that he did right in a wrong way. There is never any justification for duplicity, for going around a difficulty in order to avoid what would be involved in straightforward dealing. I recall an instance in which I was asked to serve, with others, on a council in the case of a church dispute. There was a man in the case who was obviously a disturber of the church's peace, and always a cause of trouble. Scarcely was one difficulty settled when another appeared. The Pastor was tried to the breaking point by this man's intrigues. But he sought to fight fire with fire, and thought to be very diplomatic and tactful, with the result that he found himself led into the doing of many questionable things. When the whole matter came to the surface, it transpired that the Pastor, good man as he was, actuated no doubt by pure motives, had acted so unwisely, so irregularly, so unlawfully, that it was impossible to approve of his course, even though one had sympathy with him, and felt the greatest indignation against the church's chronic trouble-maker.

When you have difficulty in your church life, you will seldom overcome it by a circuitous route. It will pay to deal frankly with a matter, to face the facts as they are, and then you will have nothing afterward to clear up because of an unwise course even although taken from a worthy motive.

Absalom finds himself at last an exile from his father's kingdom, a voluntary exile albeit; but he has taken himself away in anticipation of the king's wrath; and in the fourteenth chapter we see David mourning the absence of his son.

I propose to show you how this story may be turned to illustrative account. It is not a type, understand, but a useful illustration. In the exercise of your ministry you will find that that is half the battle: discovering how you may present old truth in a new and attractive way, because you will have to preach the same doctrines over and over again. You will have really to expound the same principles, but you must learn to dress them up in different clothes, to serve the meal in different dishes.

I went down to Texas from Kansas City last Autumn in a new pullman car. I had gone from Toronto to Chicago on a train which carried three cars—and may be others, but I speak of three. There was a pullman parlour-car, a pullman sleeper, and a dining-car. There was one person in the parlour-car; I was the only passenger in the pullman car—I had a private car; and when I went into the dining-room I was the only one there—three heavy pullman cars, taken hundreds of miles for the accommodation of three people. It is no wonder the railways are hard up. My fare would not even pay for the axle grease for such a journey.

At Kansas City I got on a new car. It had just been turned out of the shops, and was on its maiden trip. It was a parlour-car, a sleeping-car, and a dining-car, all in one. There was a pullman official on board, and he undertook to explain to me all the intricacies of the car. He took me into the kitchen, and told me how it was operated by the Philippino cook. He said they would be glad of any suggestions, but I told him I was not an expert in that business. He told me his business was travelling over all the Continent, to watch how the meals were served. He took from his pocket a book, and in that book was a pass on every railroad in America, a pullman pass besides. He could get on any train anywhere. He was not supposed to be known, but he hovered about the kitchen, looking in the door to see how they did it. He made a point of keeping his eyes on the service as the meal was put upon the table, to see whether it was well done, whether it was attractively served, watching the garnishing of the dishes and the general effect produced.

It would not be a bad idea if we had some kind of inspector to watch preachers, to see how they serve the meals. A bit of parsley is rather cheap, but it makes things look a little more attractive. There is a right way, and a wrong way, of doing things. Sometimes you will feel, as you hold your congregation in review and examine the record of your own ministry, "It is about time I was preaching again on faith", or it may be the great principle of grace; it may be the doctrine of sanctification, some aspect of the Spirit's ministry; or again you will feel, "It is time I was exhorting the people still further to exercise the ministry of intercession". You may observe the prayer-life of the church declining. Then the question will arise in your mind, "How am I to present that old truth in a new way? I have nothing new to say on the subject. I have to say the old truths in a way that will challenge the attention of the people, and fix it in their memory."

Would it occur to you that such an opportunity is presented in this chapter? It tells the story of how "Joab, the son of Zeruiah, perceived that the king's heart was

toward Absalom", and how he sent to Tekoah and found a wise woman, and gave her certain instructions, reciting to her a certain story, a parable out of his own mind. He said to the woman of Tekoah, "Go to the king and tell him this parable, and see what he says in reply. Thus you will plead indirectly the cause of Absalom." It is a fine illustration of how the Lord deals with the rebel in the far country, and how He brings the rebel home.

I.

For example, it is said that Joab "perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom". There is your first point. **JOAB READ THE KING'S HEART AND KNEW WHAT WAS HIDDEN FROM THE MINDS OF ALL OTHERS.** I suppose the majority of Israel's statesmen were disposed to congratulate the king on the happy and easy solution of a very difficult political problem. Absalom had given them all great concern, and it seemed likely he would become a disturber of the peace of the kingdom. When, without action on their part, Absalom had gone beyond the bounds of his father's dominion, had taken himself yonder to Geshur, I can well imagine their saying, "That is a very happy settlement of the difficulty. We shall not be bothered with Absalom any more."

I have felt like that myself when there has been some awkward man in the church. I have wondered what to do with him. He was always running counter to the church's interests. You know the type. You will always have them, in big churches and in little churches, people who seem to join the church with the idea that it will afford them opportunity to magnify themselves. They are like the man of the story who was candidate for eldership in a Presbyterian church. He came before the minister and board of elders before the meeting of the congregation. They enquired as to his fitness for the position. He was asked if he could conduct a meeting, and said he could not. Could he lead a prayer meeting. "No." Was he able to teach in the Bible School? "No; I cannot do that." "Could you visit the members of the church, and read the Scripture with them, and pray?" "No; I have never done that." "Could you catechise the children, and inquire as to their religious state?" "No; I fear that is beyond me. I have never done that." At last the minister said, "You are a willing candidate for the eldership: what can you do?" "I can object."

There are people like that everywhere. I have had them before now; and have said to myself, "I wonder what I shall do with that man?" Then he has voluntarily resigned. He has gone to Geshur, and our trouble has been ended.

When anybody offers his resignation like that, do not ask him to reconsider it. Never, under any circumstances, ask anybody to reconsider a resignation unless, of course, it be on a great issue where it is openly and frankly submitted, as a Prime Minister would submit his resignation, to test the feeling of the House where some great principle is involved. When somebody gets up the miff tree, or does wrong as Absalom did, and runs away to Geshur, you will be wise to let him stay there.

In this particular case, Joab discovered that the king was not happy about it. However other people looked upon it, the king's heart was "toward Absalom". There is a suggestion as to the very heart of the Christian revelation. Do not make any mistake. God can treat rebels as man cannot, for God can bring a rebel back

from a far country, and change his heart—but you cannot. And because you cannot it is often better to leave him there until his heart is changed.

Be that as it may, the distinctive thing about the Christian religion is that the King's heart is toward Absalom. You are studying in your course the main principles of certain non-Christian religions. In some seminaries they have a course in "Comparative Religions", where the religions of the world are compared one with another, and with the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But you will find this about all religions: they are founded on the assumption of there being some estrangement between the individual soul and "whatever gods there be", to use Swinburne's phrase. They do not know God, but they know there is some sort of god, or many gods—millions in some cases. They know they have offended the deity or deities, as the case may be. And in any heathen religion there is the assumption that the only way by which the estranged soul can be brought into happy relationship with the offended deity is for that soul himself to make some kind of atonement, somehow, to lay up a store of merit. But in no heathen religion is there the idea that the King can be kindly disposed toward the rebel, that a holy God can love a sinful man. That conception is foreign to the human mind. Men never dream of it apart from the revelation of God in Christ.

The Pharisees were staggered by the conduct of our Lord when He received sinners. They said, "He cannot be a good man. It is impossible that He should be a prophet and consort with sinners." It was then He uttered the three parables in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, to one of which we gave our attention last Sunday evening. That is the cardinal principle, the principle upon which you will have to preach as long as you preach; and it will always remain a truth that is foreign to all natural, human, conceptions. It can be communicated to the human mind only by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Men may subscribe to it theoretically without believing it, that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When we had made no move toward God, while we were "enemies in our minds by wicked works", even then "God commendeth his love toward us". But as Joab read the heart of the king, so the Lord Jesus has read the heart of the Father in heaven, and Himself reveals, manifests, that great central truth.

II.

JOAB FOUND SOMEONE TO PRAY, somebody to cooperate with him in a ministry of intercession. Joab had himself the privilege of access to the king's presence, but instead of going himself he sent to Tekoah and found a woman to pray. That is what our Lord does. Study the Old Testament and the New, and you will find that invariably before God works a work of grace He communicates His secret to someone, and inspires that one to pray for the very thing that He plans to do. The blessings of grace invariably cast their shadows before them in the form of a desire to pray. When God would bless His people, there will ever be a quickening of the prayer-life of such as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I could give you several examples, notably the case of Abraham. The angels came to his tent; they were entertained, and went on toward Sodom. But one, the Angel of the Covenant, our Joab, remained with Abra-

ham. In the record there is a divine soliloquy, where God communes with Himself. Jehovah, the Angel of the Covenant, says, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Then He divulges His secret. He tells Abraham that He has come down from heaven, and is on His way to Sodom to find out for himself "whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know". When the Angel said that to Abraham, Abraham was aroused. He said, "That is where Lot lives. If judgment falls upon that city, Lot will be consumed with it." Then he prayed before the Lord that the city might be spared for the sake of, fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty—ten. But there were not found the requisite number. Abraham's faith was not equal to the situation. He did not say, "Spare it for the sake of one." But the Lord was better to Abraham than his faith, for it is said, "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt." Lot was saved in answer to Abraham's prayer.

God did not go to Abraham's tent, He did not go to Sodom, in order to destroy Sodom: He could have done that without coming down. He came down to earth in order that every mouth might be stopped, and all of them become guilty before God, to prove the blackness of their iniquity; and, having done so, to save Lot: the angels hurried Lot out of the city, and he and his daughters were saved.

Whenever God thus wills to save a soul He finds somebody, somewhere, to pray for that soul. We talk about being "called" to the ministry—and I hope none of you will ever become ministers unless you have been called of God. I think the most helpless and pitiable object in the world is a man who finds himself in the ministry when he ought not to be there. Better be anything than a minister unless God has called you. I should not hesitate to say it, do not be a minister if you can help it. "How shall they preach except they be sent?" I would rather see the Seminary graduate one man a year who has been definitely, unmistakably, called of God, and in whom He has put His Spirit, than I would see fifty graduated who perhaps have a true knowledge of the Word, who may have made a fine scholastic record, and are as well genuine spiritual men, but who yet have not been gifted and empowered by Heaven itself to proclaim the everlasting gospel. You might better be a street-sweeper, a chimney-sweep, anything at all, than a minister, unless you are beyond all possibility of doubt called of God. There is no seminary that can make a preacher of a man unless God has equipped him, and called him. You must find that out for yourself. But if you are called to preach, you may be sure that somebody will be called to listen to you.

There is another call. This was not a call to preach: it was a call to pray. I believe that many of God's people are definitely called to an intercessory ministry. There are many good people who have no gift, natural or acquired, that would justify their attempting the task of publicly preaching the gospel. You would never think

of buying a three-legged horse, and certainly if a race were to be run such an animal would never be entered. There are certain qualities of mind, and certain physical qualities, that are indispensable to the ministry of the gospel.

I used to be on a credential committee in the old Convention. One time a man came before that committee, when I was not present at the meeting. He seemed to have an idea he had not made a good impression, and he sought me out in my home to ask me to do my best because he felt the committee was not favourably disposed toward him. "What did you come to see me for?" "To get you to speak a good word for me." "Do you want me to tell you the truth?" "Yes." "Then give up the idea of trying to preach." (He was just a little bantam.) "But you never heard me preach," he said. "I do not need to hear you." "How can you tell that I am not called to the ministry?" "There is not enough of you to be a minister. The service would be half over before anybody would know you had arrived." When a man fitted for the ministry steps on the platform he does not need to speak to announce himself: before he opens his lips everybody in the house knows he has arrived. With the very first word he touches the back wall and everybody in the building listens. There are others who mumble away, and people are inclined to ask, "Has the service started?" The minister has been there some time without the people's feeling it. Men of that sort are useless in the ministry.

But thousands of people who cannot preach, can pray: "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

That is our vocation: every believer is called to pray. We used to have a member of this church, an old lady, who lived in a little attic room. She did not need any newspaper to learn about Jarvis Street Church. We never had blessing in this place, but she knew about it in advance. When I went to see her she would say, "I was hoping you would come. You had a great time on Sunday?" "Yes." "I knew it. The Lord told me about it." I do not believe that woman spent an hour of her waking moments that she did not pray for God's blessing upon this place. She is gone now, and I am free to say it. She was a pensioner of this church, and for years had nothing to live on but what this church provided. But I believe she was one of the greatest assets we ever had. She was a woman of Tekoah whom our Joab had laid His hands upon and called to pray.

There is an appropriate way to pray: "Feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on new mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead." There is a kind of life that is appropriate to the Christian. I knew a minister, one of the jolliest men I ever met in my life. It was a benediction and a tonic to be in his presence. But there was never anything said by him, with all his fun-making, that was out of keeping with the most serious business of the Christian life. I have a vivid recollection of being in a group of ministers some years ago. This brother was as happy as could be. He had that merry heart that doeth good like a medicine, and scattered good cheer everywhere. That particular day the men were convulsed with laughter, they had a rollicking time. I like that. I love to laugh—at some things. (One dear brother some years ago—he has gone to glory now, and knows better—but in

the Sunday evening prayer meeting he very solemnly asked the Lord so to deal with the Pastor that he would say nothing in the public service that would make the people laugh.) On this occasion when all the brethren were having a happy time this brother who was the senior of all of us suddenly said, "Come, brethren, let us pray." Down on his knees he went, and the heavens opened. His laughter was not incongruous with his prayer.

There is a way of being happy without discrediting the gospel we preach. There is also a foolish jesting which is "not convenient", and which should never have any place in the life of a Christian. I do not plead for a long-faced religion, I say only it is a serious business to be an ambassador for Christ, whether as a preacher or as an intercessor. If the things we believe are true, and we believe them to be true, then it is right sometimes that we should mourn before the Lord, and be as one "that has a long time mourned for the dead".

III.

The woman of Tekoah went before the king trained by Joab; and armed with a petition the king would be compelled to grant. People must be trained in the school of prayer. It is far easier to preach than to pray. This woman was brought from Tekoah and trained by Joab until she knew how to pray. Joab put the words into her mouth, gave her her prayer; and she went into the presence of the king with a prayer that was not her own. That is the only kind of prayer that reaches God's ear. No prayer is heard in heaven that does not first come down from heaven. All true prayer is indited by the Holy Spirit. Our Joab always puts the words in our mouth. Well do we pray, "Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Read the story of how the woman related the parable, how David committed himself, and of how she interpreted the parable,—and David learned that it was an indirect plea for Absalom's return. I will not go into the details of it, although it is all instructive. When she had done praying, David said, "Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak." Then David said, "Where did you get that prayer? Who taught you to pray like that? Tell me. Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? That does not sound like you." We must get our prayers from heaven—only then can they reach heaven.

The Lord will not hear your prayers. He hears no prayer that we ourselves originate. When the woman of Tekoah comes into the presence of the King of kings, He always listens for Joab's voice. The prayer that God answers is the prayer He inspires.

The king never said, "No" to Joab. He said, "Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again."

This story, I suggest is a useful illustration upon which you may have the scriptural doctrine of intercession.

Mind you, these are only illustrations, and they will not go on all fours. The king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face." That is not the way our King does. When He calls Absalom comes home, He receives him into His immediate presence, and wills that he should abide with Him, and eat at His table.

IV.

Here follows the story of Absalom's beauty: "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Therein lies another great principle. Very often the things that are ugly, essentially evil at heart, are outwardly very beautiful and attractive. Absalom wore long hair—longer than some of the women wear now. He "polled" it. He went to the barber once a year. That would not do for us, would it? And "he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight."

"So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face." I fear there are many people who profess to come back to Jerusalem that dwell apart from the King. You can never be sure that the work of reform and regeneration is genuine until you find people living daily in the King's presence.

Presently Absalom sent for Joab, and Joab would not come. I remember a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon on that text: "Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him." He sent a second time, and he would not come. "Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he had sent again the second time he would not come. Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire"—"Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom." That was Spurgeon's sermon; taking it out of its context altogether, he used those verses, legitimately, to show how the Lord deals with us. He sends for us, and we do not come. Then He sets our barley fields on fire—and we come in great trouble to see what it is all about.

"Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me. So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom."

We have a story following this, the story of Absalom's rebellion that is capable of many applications. It is of enormous illustrative value in almost every direction. It is the story of our fight in the Old Convention. It is the story of the fight against Modernism everywhere. It is the story of the present rebellion against the Lord's Anointed, and the following of the dashing young Absalom by multitudes of people. We shall look at that later. I hope these rapid glances at these Old Testament histories will show you that you need never want for an illustration of the principles of the gospel so long as the Old Testament is with you. That is enough for to-night.

JARVIS STREET ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Jarvis Street Church was held Friday evening last at eight o'clock. As Jarvis Street Church elects Deacons only every second year, there were no elections beyond the appointment of treasurers and other executives. There was a good attendance of members.

The treasurer's report showed total receipts to have been \$52,437.92, of which \$24,876.60 was for general expense, and \$27,561.32 for missions and benevolences. The amount of money received was, of course, very much less than in prosperous years, although it was nearly twice as much as was the church's income when the present pastor began his pastor-

ate twenty-four years ago, when the church was supposed to be the richest Baptist Church in Canada.

Nothing need be said more than is said in the Annual Report of the Deacons, which we publish herewith:

REPORT of The Deacons' Board of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, as Presented at the Annual Meeting Held on Friday Evening, April 27th, 1934.

"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad", is the language of our hearts, at the close of another church year. It has been a year of varied experiences, as all years are, but the hand of our God has been upon us for good, and in spite of national depression, and widespread distress, we have come through, and

"His love in time past forbids me to think,
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer we have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help us quite through."

And so we praise God, and take courage.

The financial statement, just given, is a wonderful record of His goodness toward us, for which we praise His Name; for not only has He given us temporal blessing, but much spiritual blessing has been ours also. To His praise, we record that there is no "root of bitterness" among us. Perfect harmony exists, as it always should in the family of God. Because of this, we have been very conscious of the presence of God in our midst, and under the faithful ministry of our Pastor, many have been brought to the Lord.

In these days of spiritual declension, it is an unspeakable blessing to have such a Pastor, one who is fearless and bold, and who never fails to declare the whole counsel of God. When more and more, preachers everywhere are departing from the old truths, we rejoice in having a Pastor who is utterly fearless of man,—and true to his God: The fads, fancies and follies of present-day preachers and teachers, find no place in the ministry of our Pastor. "Thus saith the Lord" is always his declaration and upon this he firmly stands. This being so, it is not surprising that the Lord honours His word, and His servant, and gives many tokens of His favour. It is seldom a Sunday passes without some following their Lord in baptism.

Our large Bible School is a source of thankfulness and gratitude to God. It is an inspiration to see the large numbers who attend School in the morning at 9.45,—often more than 1,200 being present—most of them remaining to the morning service; the average attendance for fifty-two Sundays through the unusual heat of last summer, and the equally extraordinary cold of the last winter, was 1,084; but best of all, many of these young people are deciding for Christ, and following their Lord in baptism.

The Toronto Baptist Seminary, which is a department of the Church, continues its good work, with a large attendance of students. Many have already gone forth as Missionaries and Pastors of churches. A splendid work is being done in training young men, and young women, for future service for God.

Mention must be made of the valuable service rendered by our choir and orchestra who voluntarily give their services to the Lord under the able direction of our organist, Mr. C. L. Penney, and choir leader, Mr. W. J. Hutchinson, who are worthy our best thanks for their efficient services.

"Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them"; and we are thankful for the numbers who gather for prayer during the week in our regular church prayer services, in addition to those held in connection with the School. This is no mean thing: many a Pastor would preach better if he had a company, though few in number, who would uphold him in prayer.

We have three regular meetings for prayer during the week, in addition to those of the School. The Tuesday night meeting is a missionary prayer service when news from home and foreign fields is given, and special prayer is offered for missionaries and their work. In connection with this Church, we have thirty members who are serving the Lord in foreign lands.

The Thursday night prayer service is held in the Church, and is largely attended. After a prayer service, lasting about three-quarters of an hour, the Pastor gives a Bible lecture to the Seminary students, and the large and appreciative audience, who gather for the address.

Our Saturday prayer meeting is always well attended, and always a time of blessing. Our people love to gather for praise and prayer. There is no set address but our Pastor usually gives a short talk, and the service is bright and helpful, so that we often go away saying:

"We have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below".

Mention must also be made of the Radio Service, broadcast over CFRB every Sunday night, and which reaches thousands who love to listen in. Hundreds of appreciative letters are received at the office, telling of blessing received, and in thousands of homes, hospitals, and out-of-the-way places, the message reaches with comfort and blessing.

Seventeen of our members have been called home during the past year, as follows:

Mrs. Henry Barron, Mrs. Isabelle Brown, Miss Louise Cuyler, Miss Chrissie Gow, Mrs. Minnie Dwyer, Mrs. E. B. Harrison, Miss Eunice Le Drew, Mrs. Edward McDowell, Mrs. Isabelle McFarlane, Miss Lillian Minore, Mr. Charles Moore, Mrs. Elizabeth Nixon, Mrs. Thos. Rackstraw, Mrs. H. Sibbick, Mrs. A. T. Sowerby, Mr. Joseph Stacey, Mr. C. H. Wisker.

"They are gathering homeward from every land

One by one, one by one;

As their weary feet touch the shining strand,

Yes, one by one.

Their brows are enclosed in a golden crown,

Their travel-stained garments are all laid down;

And clothed in white raiment they rest in the mead,

Where the Lamb doth love His saints to lead.

"We, too, shall come to the river side,

One by one, one by one;

We are nearer its waters each eventide,

Yes, one by one.

The waves of the river are dark and cold,

But we know the place where our feet shall hold."—

Praise the Lord!

We must make mention here of the valuable work done by our Church visitor, Rev. A. H. Barham, who visits our sick members, some in hospitals and some in their own homes, where his comforting ministrations are much appreciated.

And so we bring to a close this brief report of the Lord's goodness to us during the past year. With confidence we look forward to the future, under the continued leadership of our beloved Pastor, guided by the Holy Spirit. We again place on record, our continued affection for him, and our sincere appreciation of him. No other Church, we believe, is so highly favoured as this Church and we pray that if the Lord tarry, Dr. Shields may continue to be the Pastor of Jarvis Street Church for many years to come.

Again, we praise the Lord for His goodness to us as a Church, for the unity of the Spirit that exists among us,—complete freedom from discord, and an earnest desire for the glory of His Name. We are thankful for the large number who attend our services; and with renewed confidence in a covenant-keeping God, we commence another year, resting in the assurance that the Lord is with us.

Signed on behalf of the Deacons' Board,

GEO. GREENWAY,
Vice-Chairman.

JARVIS STREET SERMONS IN OTHER TONGUES

A few weeks ago we received a request for permission to translate some of the Jarvis Street sermons into the Bulgarian language. Money was contributed by a GOSPEL WITNESS subscriber for this purpose, and we expect soon to hear of the sermons being translated and published in that language. We have before heard of parts of sermons being translated into Chinese and other tongues. Just this week we received the following letter from Cairo, Egypt:

Dr. T. T. Shields, Cairo, April 13th, 1934.
Toronto, Canada.

Dear Dr. Shields:

Greetings from Egypt in our Saviour's name.

No doubt you will be surprised at this letter, but the good Book says honest confession is good, so I had two of your sermons (Easter ones) which I found in an English Christian Herald, translated and printed in the little Arabic paper called the "Morning Star".

Would you please give me permission to translate and print some of your sermons in my paper? Lots of things do not translate into Arabic well.

Of course, if you do not wish it, say so. Thank you for these two anyway, and my three thousand four hundred readers will thank you also.

God bless you, is the prayer of this missionary and preacher.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Faith Randall,
El Tera El Bulakia No. 9,
Shubra, Cairo, Egypt.

P.S.—I am a Canadian.

Attached to the letter was a copy of the paper referred to containing the translated sermons. Of course, permission will gladly be given. We rejoice that it is our privilege thus to speak to others in that ancient tongue.

Now comes a letter from London, England, written at the dictation of a blind person. It was not written to us directly but forwarded for our information and encouragement. The letter tells us that many of the sermons of THE GOSPEL WITNESS have been written in *braille*, that is, in raised letters for the blind, and circulated among blind people. The letter contained also a copy of a little booklet in *braille*. It explains that these blind friends were much interested in the story published in THE WITNESS of a prisoner in an American prison who heard our service by radio, and wrote us about it. In his letter he quoted three verses. These have been written in *braille* and put in booklet form for circulation among the blind.

We ask our readers to pray that God's blessing may follow the message from Jarvis Street in THE GOSPEL WITNESS, in these various translations, and by radio to countless thousands of people.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

The Secretary-Treasurer's Itinerary

During the Secretary-Treasurer's visits to the various churches recently he has noted, with pleasure and much joy, a better spiritual condition among the churches. The prayer meetings are well attended. The people are attempting great things for God, and are expecting great things from Him. The material depression is proving to be God's opportunity for a spiritual awakening.

The good news from the churches where special services have been held, the record of God's faithfulness, and the story of the conversion of many souls to Christ, are indications of a better spiritual condition.

Annual Meeting—York Road, Guelph

The first Annual Meeting of the York Road Regular Baptist Church, Guelph, was held on April 18th. The reports of the Year's work were very encouraging. The church was organized with about thirty members, and in this past year the membership has doubled. Over fifty-five have confessed Christ as Saviour, and at the present time half of these have been baptized.

During the last four weeks nineteen have followed their Lord in the waters of baptism. Next Sunday there will be a number more baptized. They are having better attendance at all services. The Sunday school is averaging one hundred and seventy, while the attendance at prayer meeting has grown to such an extent that it was necessary to move out of the smaller room in which they were meeting into the main section.

"We do praise God for what has been accomplished here in Guelph," writes the pastor, Rev. H. H. Chipchase. "In our own strength we could have done nothing, but in and through Him we are more than conquerors."

Twenty-Fourth of May Rallies

London Area—Briscoe Street Regular Baptist Church, corner Briscoe and Cathcart Streets, South London.

Special Speaker—Rev. A. J. Lewis of Kitchener.

Kinsman Quartette of Toronto will sing at all services.

Toronto and Hamilton Area—Stanley Avenue Regular Baptist Church, corner of Stanley Avenue and Lock Street, Hamilton. Welcome home for Miss Minnie Lane of Liberia.

Special Speaker—Rev. James McGinlay, President of the Convention.

The Invictus Quartette of Toronto will sing.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 9

No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 20 SECOND QUARTER May 20th, 1934

EZRA'S EXPEDITION

Lesson Text: Ezra, chapter 7.

Golden Text: "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."—Ezra 7:10.

Bible School Reading: Ezra 7:1-28.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Psalm 119:81-96. Tuesday—Zech. 8: 16-23.
Wednesday—Mal. 3:1-6. Thursday—Matt. 9:32-38. Friday—1 Tim. 3:11-16. Saturday—John 1:1-9.

I. EZRA'S RETURN, (vs. 1-10).

In Ezra we come to the study of another of the leaders of the post-exilic period. Zerubbabel, the first leader, had departed this life, and some sixty years had intervened between the events recorded in the previous chapter, and the history made known in our lesson. In Jerusalem the religious services had been resumed in the rebuilt temple, but the people had lapsed into a state of carelessness and compromise, necessitating a spiritual quickening. To effect this Ezra was raised up of God. It is not without interest to note that the men used to lead the people back to God had their residence outside of Judea. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were all members of the dispersion. God knows where to find the men He desires, and He sometimes brings them from afar to do the work which those at the centre of things are neglecting. Note the tendency of human beings to backslide from pure religion, and the gracious attitude of God in granting periodical revivals.

The account of Ezra's expedition, continued in the following chapter, opens with a brief record of the genealogy of that leader, wherein his descent from Aaron is made clear, (vs. 1-5). He was, therefore, a member of the priestly class, and one of the natural leaders of his people. Concerning him certain additional matters are recorded. First, "he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given" (v. 6). The term "scribe" was originally "used for town recorders and registrars of the census. Under the later kings of Judah persons bearing this name were attached to the court as the writers and custodians of state documents. The scribes of later days were guardians and interpreters of the written Torah, the sacred law. They not only studied and taught this complete law; they interpreted and applied its precepts". The law was the source of authority for the national life of Israel, therefore, Ezra was peculiarly fitted to guide his people in the way they should go. He was well acquainted with the law.

We are then informed that the hand of the Lord his God was upon him, (v. 6), intimating divine favour, and resulting in the bestowment of royal favour. In this intimation God is given the glory for the success of Ezra's venture. There is no limit to the power of God, and on behalf of His own He is both able and willing to work wonders. See Joseph, (Gen. 41:37-45), Daniel, (Dan. 2:46-49), and the promise to the Christian, (Eph. 3:20). After a statement concerning the persons who went up to Jerusalem with Ezra, (v. 7), and the duration of the time spent on the journey, (vs. 8, 9), three things are mentioned respecting Ezra's relation to the law, (v. 10). He prepared his heart to seek it, to do it, and to teach it in Israel. We have already noted that he was a "ready scribe in the law of Moses". Such proficiency was not reached by chance, nor was he born with such knowledge: it became his because he had prepared his heart to seek it. This implies a decision of the will, and the carrying out of that decision in reading and study. There is no royal road, or short cuts to learning, either of the Word of God, or of other matters: the way must be trod with patient labour. Observe the necessity for systematic, continuous reading of the Scriptures.

The second thing noted respecting Ezra and the law is that he prepared his heart "to do it". After such reading

there must come obedience thereto. The Bible contains much interesting information, but it is not meant to be used merely to satisfy the intellect. Its teaching must be put into practice. To this end it has been given, and only in this way can it be properly understood, (John 7:17). Note the necessity for living the Bible, for carrying out its precepts in daily life. Profession of Christianity is insufficient in itself: there must be the holy life as an evidence of the reality of the profession, (Eph. 1:4; James 2:17). The third thing of note is the teaching of the law. This is in its proper order. First, knowledge; second, obedience; and third, propagation. Note the need then, and now, for the teaching of the Word of God. The world is suffering for lack of it, and many church members are ignorant of it. The duty of each child of God is to make it known.

II. EZRA'S COMMISSION, (vs. 11-28).

The first decree authorizing the return of the Jews to their native land had been issued by Cyrus, and according to the laws of the Medes and Persians was still in force, but inasmuch as another company of the Lord's people was about to return, and a considerable time had elapsed since the issuance of the last decree, it was wise for obvious reasons again to make a declaration respecting the matter. And it was also of great importance, and very necessary for Ezra's sake, for it constituted his commission. In it we find several things. First, authority is given for others to go with Ezra, (v. 13). This meant liberty for whosoever will to return. Second, Ezra was given authority by the king and his privy council to make inquiry concerning the condition of affairs in Judah and Jerusalem, for the purpose of instituting regular government therein, (v. 14). Third, direction is given respecting the disposal of the silver and gold given by the king, and the people, for use in Judah, (vs. 15-20). Fourth, the command is given to the treasurers in the western part of the empire to meet the needs of Ezra from the public treasury (vs. 21-23). Fifth, exemption is granted to all associated with the house of God from toll, tribute, and custom, (v. 24). And sixth, on Ezra is bestowed the authority to appoint magistrates and judges and to punish all law-breakers, (vs. 25, 26). For such a favourable commission we do not wonder Ezra expresses his thanks to God, (vs. 27, 28).

In the granting of this commission the mercy of God toward His people is evident. Although they were under His discipline, yet He did not forget them. We have noticed this before, but it is well that we should ever keep it before us, for the attitude of God remains the same to-day. He always deals with His people, whether Jew, or Christian, in mercy, but He is ready also to manifest the same toward the sinner who repents. He is treated in an ungrateful manner by men in general, yet He is willing to pardon and cleanse from all sin, when application is made to Him in sincerity by the one affected thereby, (1 John 1:9). In addition He is ever seeking the highest interests of men, and blessing them with the best from His store. Note also the presence of His grace to aid His people, (2 Cor. 12:9).

There is also presented to the Jews in the commission an opportunity for increased service of their God. On the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem there would be greater facilities for such service which would give a new incentive to religious activity. There was also a reinforcement in numbers which would be encouraging. Such an addition to their numbers and possessions would possibly not be expected by the returned exiles in Judah. It is clear they were not in a very prosperous condition spiritually, (9:1, 2), consequently their religious services would be languishing, and discouragement would be within the hearts of the faithful. This new company with its presents and power would therefore be a distinct encouragement. God knew what was needed, and sent the help necessary. It would be well if we would trust Him more, and worry less, (1 Pet. 5:7).

The motive of the king is worthy of consideration. He was actuated by a desire to please God, and escape the consequences of His displeasure, (v. 23). Though not a worshipper of God, his commission was given for the Lord's sake, implying, what we have observed on former occasions, that God is able to use the most unlikely instruments in the carrying out of His purposes. His sovereignty over the whole human family must be recognized, convincing us that we truly have a great God. Note also, the generosity of the king, together with his foresight, wisdom, and power.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 9

No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 21 SECOND QUARTER May 27th, 1934

EZRA, HIS COMPANIONS, AND TREASURES

Lesson Text: Ezra, chapter 8.

Golden Text: "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." Ezra 8:31.

Bible School Reading: Ezra 8:15-36.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Deut. 4:30-40. Tuesday—Ex. 14:10-18. Wednesday—Ex. 14:19-31. Thursday—Ps. 126:1-6. Friday—Heb. 11:17-22. Saturday—Matt. 15:21-28.

I. THE COMPANIONS OF EZRA, (vs. 1-14).

The record of this chapter is a continuation of the history of Ezra's return to his own land, related in the preceding chapter. He was the leader, and there went with him several thousand individuals of both sexes, some of whose names are mentioned in the list of this section. The Jews were generally most careful respecting the preservation of their genealogical records, and we can understand the importance of this when we realize that which depended upon such carefulness. Their recognition as Jews depended, in some measure, on this, as well as the sphere of their service. The thought also is not foreign to this that those who are named are known to history as those who returned to Jerusalem at this particular time. There is no doubt about their participation in this important event. They were willing to brave the dangers and suffer the hardships incident thereto, and deserve the credit thereof. In the great crises of life many fail to do their duty, who later desire to gain credit for work undone, and sometimes their claim is mistakenly granted by men, but in the great eternal record the truth is told, and credit is given only where it is deserved. Note the fact of the heavenly record, (Rev. 20:12), the future test of works, (I Cor. 3:12-15), and the necessity for faithfulness in the Lord's service, (I Cor. 15:58).

II. THE GATHERING AT AHAVA, (vs. 15-30).

In order to make proper arrangements for the journey, Ezra appointed a rendezvous for the returning exiles at Ahava, a place somewhere in the region of Mesopotamia, although its site is not known with certainty. On their arrival at this place it was found there were none of the sons of Levi in their midst, (v. 15). These men were necessary for the service of the temple, so Ezra constrained some of them to go with him, (vs. 16-20). It seems somewhat peculiar that being freed from taxation on their return, (7:24), no member of this tribe should manifest a desire to return on this occasion. There may have been a legitimate reason for this apparent lack of interest, but on the other hand it may have been due to satisfaction with their lot, or disinclination to suffer inconvenience and danger in the journey to their own land. As Levites one might have expected them to be in the lead with the prospect of temple service before them, instead of failing to join the company until specially requested to do so. Note the many these days who through lack of interest, and disinclination to suffer inconvenience, fail to do their duty in the Lord's service. They are not good soldiers of Jesus Christ, (II Tim. 2:3, 4).

Before proceeding on their journey Ezra proclaimed a fast, and besought God for guidance and protection on the hazardous march to Judea, (vs. 21-23). Generally on a journey of this kind soldiers accompanied the people for protection against marauding Arabs of the desert, but on this occasion such protection was not requested because so much had been said about the power of God manifested on behalf of His own, and against all His enemies, that Ezra was ashamed to ask the help of man, lest it belie his former testimony. The prayers of the company would, therefore, be intensified, and being in earnest, and in harmony with the will of God they were answered.

Several things are in evidence in this record. First, there is the fact of seeking God. Many movements are undertaken

in the world without ever thinking of God, and humanity is suffering at the present time because in its leadership, and in the bulk of its membership it fails to seek God's face. Note the necessity for seeking God for salvation, (Is. 55:6, 7), for revival, (II Chron. 7:14), and in trouble, (Ps. 50:15). We need the assurance of His approval of our conduct, and require His guidance and protection. In the second place observe the combination of fasting and prayer. This meant putting God first, concentrating on communion with Him, and implied sincerity of purpose. It gave evidence also of the fact that the people were willing literally to wait on God. It would do us good to miss a meal or two in order to wait on God. We might then be more alert in our communion and supplication, and have time to become conscious of God's will. It was not without a purpose that the early church fasted and prayed. And the Holy Spirit directed the members while engaged in this manner, (Acts 13:2, 3). Note the necessity for the correct attitude in prayer, (Ps. 66:18), and for proper alertness in spirit, (Col. 4:2). Many are too sleepy even in prayer meetings to be of much use either to God or man.

The testimony of Ezra with its resultant manifestation of faith and works is worthy of consideration and emulation. He bore witness to his God before those who knew Him not, and then when the critical juncture came he failed not to act in accordance with his testimony. It is comparatively easy to give voice to pious remarks respecting the protecting care of God: it is quite another thing boldly to trust the Lord in the time of danger. In thus trusting God for protection on the journey and refraining from requesting a guard of soldiers, Ezra was bearing in mind the possible effect of his failure to trust to Divine aid. To fail meant to nullify his testimony, and bring discredit upon God. To trust God meant glory to His name. Ezra trusted, manifested both faith and works, and gave testimony to the reality of God. Note the boldness of his conduct, his utter dependence on God, the careful arrangements made for the journey, (vs. 24-27), and his charge to the carriers, (vs. 28, 29). Faith in God does not imply release from human responsibility. The use of common sense is still permissible.

III. THE ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM, (vs. 31-36).

After making the necessary arrangements for the journey, Ezra and his company set out for Jerusalem, and at length arrived at the end of four months' travelling, (7:9). The responsibility of such an expedition was great. The way was long and dangerous. It was a risky venture with men, but with women and children in the company, and no accompanying escort it was almost foolhardy, yet all arrived safely at their destination, (v. 32). Ezra's faith in God was justified. The hand of their God was upon the people, and He preserved them from the power of their enemies, (v. 31). Those who trust God wholly find Him wholly true. He never shames those who put Him to the test. The study of this incident is encouraging to the child of God, for by it he is strengthened in his determination to trust God in times of perplexity and danger. He desires us thus to trust Him, (Mark 11:22), nothing wavering, (James 1:6), and in doing so we give Him an opportunity to manifest His power, and we bring glory to His name. Note the necessity for practical faith, for faith that will meet and stand the test.

For three days the returned exiles abode in Jerusalem, (v. 32), and on the fourth day they delivered up their precious burdens, (v. 33). Care had been taken to make a record of all they had brought with them from Babylon, and to the praise of God everything arrived in safety, (v. 34). Following this a thanksgiving service was held at which burnt offerings were offered unto God, (v. 35), after which the king's commissions were given to the various officers, and they furthered the people, and the house of God, (v. 36). Several things stand out prominently here. First, the manifestation of gratitude to God. The people had been under His protection, and had partaken of His blessing, and they chose the divinely appointed way of expressing their appreciation. Second, there is the thought of dedication found in the offerings, the dedication of the whole unto God, typical of our Lord Who offered His all on the cross for us; and of our dedication of ourselves in Him. Note our duty in this respect, (Rom. 12:1, 2). Third, the fact of the general helpfulness manifested by the new arrivals. Their presence was felt by the people, and the house of God received benefit. Church members should take note of this. Are we nominal or real members of the church? Is the work benefited by our presence?