

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

HEIRS TO A GREAT FORTUNE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, July 1st, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

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"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—I. Peter 1:3-5.

Once again for our instruction and comfort I would have you survey the Christian's inheritance, as the believer's share in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I.

Let us think of THE ABOUNDING MERCY WHICH HAS INSPIRED IN US A LIVING HOPE. What a great difference the coming of Christ into a human life makes! Look abroad and see how many there are who are all but hopeless. Life to them has been full of disappointment and disillusionment. The record of the past has very largely been a record of failure and defeat. One meets people everywhere to-day who are out of love with life because they have tasted so much of distress and disappointment. For them life has lost its charm. What a record of self-destruction the last few years have provided! In this country more than have been published, in the United States, in England, everywhere, there have been men who have lost hope, and without any prospect for the future, and having proved the vanity of all earthly things, they have put an end to life. Perhaps there has seldom been a time when this world has contained so many people who would agree with the sentiment of the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

How utterly hopeless, I say, life has become for a great multitude of people; when the greater part of a man's life is spent, when his best years are behind him, the years of youth, of vigour, of creational power, that can come to him no more; in the evening time, his castle

crumbles about him and as a sense of the failure of it comes upon him, he gives up in despair. Even where things are not quite so hopeless, the hope men cherish can scarcely be called a "living" hope. The world is full of Micawbers still, who spend their time waiting for something to turn up, dreaming of something that may come to them by some stroke of good fortune, they know not how. Life is little more to them than a dream. They have no "living" hope, no hope that is well-founded.

There are others whose hope is centered in some beloved personality, it may be a husband, it may be a son. How proudly have I heard a mother say on more than one occasion of her son, "I depend upon him; he is my right arm." And yet how much of the prosperity of life, the prospect of its enjoyment, hinges upon the continuance of one life! That is rather an insecure foundation to build upon. As a matter of fact, we were born to things that are mortal, things that slip away from us. There was a time when some of you thought of a person of thirty years of age as being well on along the road. And forty! Well, that is a little past middle life. I remember when I used to think of a man of forty as being rather old. I do not like to think so now! I remember a friend saying to me years ago, "I used to think of a man of fifty as a man who was nearing the end of things, but when we begin to approach it ourselves we somehow view things differently."

But how short life is at best, and how subject to

death everything we touch and handle! And what little of real hope there is for any of us!

But here is the difference which the faith that is in Christ makes. We are "begotten". We are "born again". We are regenerated "unto a lively hope". We are given a new start in life. We are given a new copy-book, with a clean page. Life discovers new resources, and there is a new prospect. Everything is changed because we have been begotten again, born again.

I have seen in the papers the portrait of a little child, a little boy or girl of a year or so of age. We are told that he or she is heir to a great estate, millions of money, born to it, with reasonable prospect of at least a brief enjoyment of it. Most of us were born to rather narrow limitations; and to mortality, all of us. We all have looked upon children that the educationists now describe as "under-privileged", children born into poor families, of parents scarcely able to maintain themselves, with no resources to educate their children or to give them a reasonably good start in life—we have looked upon them and said, "What prospect have those children?" So could we say of all of us, for that matter. But we are now begotten again. We have a new hope.

The Christian's hope is centered in a living Personality. It is not a dream. It is more than the baseless fabric of a vision which inspires us, for our hope is centered in One Who is alive. That is an important consideration, is it not, that our hope is built upon One Who is alive forevermore? A Friend? Yes. Some people have fewer friends to-day than they had four or five years ago. Many friends are only fair weather companions, for when fortune forsakes one, they follow suit. Our hope is centered in One Who is a Friend indeed.

We speak with sorrow of those who have crossed the river. Not so must the Christian ever speak of Christ. Ours is a living and abiding Friend. Call Him what you like! A Brother? Yes; He is that—a big Brother too, and He is alive! A Champion? Did you ever need anybody to champion your cause? He is that, equal to every possible emergency in life, a living Champion. A Surety? Such Benjamin needed when he stood speechless before the governor. And Judah stepped forward and said what he had said to his father, "I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever." How eloquently Judah pleaded the cause of his brother! So have we a Surety Who is our Intercessor, Who "ever liveth to make intercession for us": He is a Defender Who stands between us and all harm, a Saviour indeed in the fullest, the deepest, the broadest, the highest, sense. I care not what term you employ that is significant of one who helps. Such an one is the Lord Jesus, and He is not subject to death. Our hope is in Him.

But will you observe that *this living hope is ours by reason of His resurrection?* We do not sufficiently emphasize the resurrection of Christ. With great power the apostolic preachers gave witness of the resurrection of Christ. They preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. That was the emphatic note of apostolic preaching, that He who had been crucified was now alive, and alive forevermore.

Peter, the very man who wrote our text, had suffered an eclipse of faith; and so had the two who walked their dreary, sorrowful, way on the Emmaus road when they met the Stranger—and they wrote their hope in the past tense: "We trusted that it had been he which should

have redeemed Israel.—A few days ago we were full of hope, but now everything is in eclipse. He has left us. And beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." But you remember the evening of the third day, how they came together from every quarter? The news had been broadcast in some strange way, and they all had one tale to tell, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." I have little doubt that when Peter penned these words that experience came back to him. He remembered the twilight hour, the dropping down of the deep darkness, and the starless night; then the breaking of the morning, and the rising of the sun when Jesus again appeared. Now he says, "He is alive." He was begotten again with a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And ours is a "living" hope. "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" a power has been released whereby we all may be born again, we all may stand upon resurrection ground. I have been long enough in this pulpit to have seen some of you grow a little older. We are all getting older. We do not like to admit it, but we must. I once took my friend, the late Dr. A. C. Dixon, when he was visiting me, to a doctor. He said, "There is something wrong with my ears. Have you a good aurist in town? I wish you would take me to the best specialist you have." I told him I would make enquiries as to the best ear doctor in Toronto. Then I took him to the man who had been recommended as our greatest Toronto authority in that department. I waited outside in the car, and when Dr. Dixon came out I asked him what the doctor had said. "Oh, he only smiled and said it was nothing but *anno domini*." He was getting a little older, that was all.

As we get older we find we cannot do what we did when we were younger. There is a reason why they will not take old men in the army. I know the man says, "I can do as good a day's work as ever I did," but he cannot. Fifty years cannot stand up under the same physical strain that thirty years can bear. Our friends and companions and helpers little by little go down the hill and lose something of their strength. But here is One Who is risen from the dead. He was only a young Man when He died. His strength was undiminished! He met the master of all men. He met the conqueror of all conquerors, and made him lick the dust. He put His conquering heel upon his neck, and triumphed over death and the grave. And, blessed be God, death hath no more dominion over Him.

Our hope is centered in that living Saviour, superior to all powers in earth and in hell. Did He not say, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? Poor old Toronto is one hundred years old! She is celebrating her birthday, and pluming herself and putting on her fine robes, making herself look as young as possible. And we admit she is rather good looking, considering her age. But we who have been born again, belong to a city that never grows old, a city that will never celebrate its centenary, but unto the ages of the ages it will be as fresh as it is now, "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

And He Who is King over all is the Author of an eternal salvation, the Ground and Inspiration of our living hope. Is it not a great privilege to be a Christian? When you contemplate it, does it not make you feel like saying, "Hallelujah"? Are we not rich with such a hope?

II.

Now a word about THE LOVE THAT HAS WILLED US THIS GREAT ESTATE. If we had nothing but Jesus we should be well off. If He gave us nothing but Himself we should be rich forever. We have nothing apart from Him, but in Him what vast wealth is ours!

He has willed us something. It is an inheritance. It is ours by reason of our birth into the divine family on the one hand, and by reason of the will and testament of Him Who has bequeathed us this vast estate. Do not say it is a costly thing to be a Christian. We lose nothing, I tell you, by being a Christian, nothing at all—except what we ought to lose. I heard a man say years ago that Jesus Christ had stooped to become the sinner's scavenger! He "taketh away the sin of the world." That is all He ever takes from any of us, our sin. He takes away only that which would destroy us. But He enriches us inestimably when we believe on Him. He has bequeathed us an inheritance.

What sort of inheritance? It is "incorruptible".

Nearly all the old cathedrals have staffs of men constantly at work upon them because, solidly constructed as they are, time leaves its mark upon them, and they have to be renewed. We know a little about it in this building. It is a large building, and it is made of stone. But even stone will decay. Even stone deteriorates; and buildings need renewing.

Did you ever dream of being rich? Suppose you were to wake up to-morrow morning and discover that by some strange act of somebody you had fallen heir, let us say, to *Casa Loma*—The uninhabitable castle on the hill? Suppose you owned it, what would you do with the castle on the hill, with its eight acres of grounds, and the stables with no horses in them? The city has become owner, but does not know what to do with it. I hope they will not destroy it, for it is a magnificent pile, a monument to the architect if to nobody else. What would you do with it? What will it do with itself? Let it stand there, and even that mighty structure will decay. I have not been in it, but I have no doubt that even now it would require thousands of dollars to put that new building in such a state of repair as to be habitable.

Everything in this world is corruptible. Moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. How people have learned in these past years the corruptibility of things terrestrial! How the worm eats them up! Estates that were supposed to be of great value are now worth almost nothing. But here is an estate that is "incorruptible". There is no power in earth, no power in hell, and certainly no power in heaven, that can destroy the quality of our property. Would you not like to have a house like that, that nothing could destroy? Would you not like to have a car like that, that could never wear out? Would you not like to have a suit of clothes like that, clothes that would wear forever—"incorruptible"?

That is the possession of the Christian. Upon any part of that inheritance that is yours, whatever it is, the moth has no power; the rust has no power over it. It cannot be corrupted. It stands. It is made of incorruptible material.

And it is "undefiled". How would you feel if someone were to leave you some money that was made out of whiskey? A man left me, with all the other ministers of the city of Toronto, a share in a brewery. I got official

notice that I was entitled to a share in the brewery. I never claimed it. I read of a Baptist minister playing golf, and he "made it in one," whatever that is; and won the prize. The prize was a barrel of beer—but he did not claim it. I should think not.

You would find there are a good many inheritances that are not undefiled, if you knew how they came to be, how the money was originally acquired. There may have been blood in it, in some instances. But the inheritance that is ours has been procured for us without violation of any principle of divine morality. It is ours in strict accord with all the qualities of a holy God. Without doing violence to His own holy nature He has made princes of paupers, and millionaires of mendicants. It is an undefiled inheritance, and you need not be ashamed to use any of it, because it is founded upon sound principles.

And it "fadeth not away". That, too, is a good thing. Do you know anything that does not fade away in this life? A twenty-dollar bill—that is too big; perhaps you have not seen one for an age. Let us put it down to a dollar. Break it, change it, and in an hour or so, you feel in your pockets for the change. What happened that dollar bill? It faded away! There was nothing left of it. It is a common saying that "money talks". Perhaps you have heard of the man who said, "The only thing it says to me is Good-bye!" Certainly it fades away.

I knew a family who thought they had an inheritance, a substantial competency. The estate was put in the hands of the executors, and it seemed as though they never would get the thing wound up. Year after year passed by, and there was still something pending. The executors were postponing the day when the estate would be closed. At last they wound it up, but by the time the lawyers and the executors had been paid, and the claims against the estate had been settled, the heirs got the papers—the inheritance had utterly faded away; there was nothing left. But this inheritance will not fade away: it must remain intact.

III.

Why? BECAUSE IT IS "RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU." *It is reserved.* I do not mean to say that things in this country are absolutely secure; they are not. People lose money here. We have a few thieves here—some native, and some imported. But a little while ago, when the banks were breaking in the United States, people came across at Montreal, Windsor, and elsewhere to deposit their money in Canadian banks. They said, "It is not safe in our own country: we will take it to Canada, and get them to reserve it for us." I hope they got it all back. Things can "fade away" even in Canada, or in England, or in the United States. If you wanted to secure an inheritance to-day, if you had some money you wanted to put where you could not possibly lose it, in what country would you invest it? Not in Canada. Hosts of people have lost money here. Not in the United States, not in England. I do not know where you could invest it.

During the war I was with a friend in London who said, "I am coming back next year with my wife." I said, "That is fine." He said, "It is not going to cost me anything either." "How will you manage that?" "I am buying up German marks." "What will you do then?" "It will only be a little while and Germany will have recovered herself, and the mark will be at par." I expect he still has his German marks!

Where can you put anything in this world with the assurance that it will be reserved? I know of no place. But our inheritance is reserved. It is reserved by the mighty power of God, and He could preserve it even here if He wanted to. But it is reserved—where the devil cannot get at it. It is reserved "in heaven" (Hallelujah!). Thieves break through and steal here, but there will be no thieves in heaven. There will be many people in heaven who once were thieves:

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day,
And there have I though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away."

There will be company promoters and stock brokers, and all sorts of people in heaven—but they will have changed their business. The only people in heaven who will not be out of a job will be the preachers. I feel sorry for the rest of you! Of course, you singers will have a pretty good time too. We shall have plenty to do yonder. But our inheritance is reserved "in heaven".

And it is reserved in heaven "for you"—not for somebody else. Sometimes an inheritance is well taken care of. It is reserved, but for somebody else than for the person for whom it was intended. This inheritance was left in the last will and testament of the Heir of glory. That is what we celebrated this morning when we took the bread and cup, and we heard the Lord say, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." By the terms of that will He bequeathed to this poor sinner a salvation that will last forever. Our names are written in heaven, and the inheritance is reserved for you if you are a Christian. Nobody can get it. You will have your inheritance, and I shall have mine. We shall all be satisfied with our portion. It is reserved in heaven "for you".

Somebody said of a certain case, "Was it not too bad? If the man had only lived a little longer he would have been rich, but he died before he came into his inheritance." Very often you will find in a will something to this effect: a certain amount of money is left for a certain purpose, but in the event of the beneficiary dying in advance of the testator, it is provided that the estate shall pass to somebody else who is named in the will. Thus one may die without coming into his inheritance. But we are sure of ours; it is not only "reserved in heaven for you," but you are described as being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation". The inheritance is reserved for us, and we are kept for the inheritance.

For how long? "Ready to be revealed at the last time." "The last time." We have "the earnest of our inheritance," just a little to go on with. We know little about the inheritance, and I can tell you only a little. Nobody has ever dreamed of, or imagined, the glory that is awaiting those who are in Christ, but it will be "revealed in the last time". Meanwhile, we shall be maintained by grace as princes who are heirs of glory.

I heard my father tell a story once—I think it was a home-made parable of his. It was to this effect. A man took his little boy with him to see some property. He said, "I am going to show you a beautiful house and park. I have just fallen heir to a great estate, and I am going to inspect it; and I want you to come with me." They went, and they came to the lodge-gates of a great park. Yonder in the distance there was a great mansion, and a magnificent avenue led up to the mansion. As

they drove through the gates the new proprietor was saluted by the lodge-keeper who recognized his new master. He turned to the little boy and said, "How do you like it, son?" "Is this ours, Daddy?" "Yes; this is ours." By and by they came up to the mansion and entered the great hall. All the servants assembled to greet their master, and one of them conducted him through the house, every room of which was luxuriously furnished. The little boy was at his father's side. As each new wonder came into view he looked up into his father's face and said, "Daddy, is this ours?" His father had but one answer, "Yes; this is ours. Not mine, but ours; everything is ours."

Are you a Christian? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you received Him? "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Thus we become the children of God, begotten again to a living hope. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." He has been appointed "Heir of all things", and He says, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." How rich we are in Christ Jesus! Are you saved? Do you know it? Can you read your title clear to mansions in the sky? If you can, say, Hallelujah (Chorus of Hallelujahs). Let us pray.

O Lord, we bless Thee for all that Thy grace has provided for us in Christ. Help us that we may receive it gladly, gratefully, and live in the enjoyment of it. For Thy name's sake. Amen.

THE MENACE OF PACIFICISM

There is nothing that can more certainly effect a lawless, and, ultimately, an utterly chaotic condition of society than the preaching and practice of the principles of pacificism. It ever appears as an angel of peace. It pleads for charity, and denounces always the principle of force.

The doctrines of pacificism are dangerous to any society, whether they are of a religious or political complexion. That which demands recognition as an angel of peace is everywhere and always a promoter of discord and disaster. Peace is greatly to be desired in all legitimate relations of life. We are to "seek peace, and ensue it". Our Lord is called "the Prince of Peace". But it is instructive to observe the whole passage in which He is so called. It reads: "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

The One Who is called "the Prince of Peace" is a Governor, for the government is upon His shoulder. He is called Wonderful, for there is much of mystery about Him. But He is a Counsellor, and always deals with His human creatures as intelligent beings who are capable of receiving instruction. He promises to guide with His eye those who will be instructed and taught in the way that they should go, but only on condition that they do not behave like the horse or the mule, "which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle". In other words, if they will not receive instruction, they must be controlled as creatures without understanding. But the government is always upon His shoulder.

And behind all such counsel there must be force; hence He is called "the mighty God". Force, however,

benevolently exercises; therefore, He is "the everlasting Father". And, as the outcome of it all, He is "the Prince of Peace".

So also is it written in the New Testament. He is likened unto Melchisedec, "King of Salem", "Priest of the most high God", Whose name is thus explained: "First being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace." But there can be no abiding peace without righteousness. We are sent to preach peace by Christ Jesus, but it is ever a peace that is founded in righteousness. The doctrines of pacificism, even though preached in the Christian name, are, philosophically, and in the nature of things, anti-Christian.

Religious pacificists are opposed to contention or controversy of any sort. Peace must be maintained at any price. Hence it postulates a society composed of many elements which are, in their very nature, incompatible. What a heterogeneous mass this will make: creationism and evolutionism; supernaturalism and anti-supernaturalism; revelationism and rationalism,—in a word, Evangelicalism and Modernism! But the blending of all these into one is the programme of religious pacificism. Ecclesiologically and ecclesiastically, it advocates the union of non-Episcopal with Episcopal bodies, independency with hierarchy, Protestantism with Romanism. That these bodies incorporate and exemplify principles which are as opposed as light and darkness means nothing at all to these religious pacificists. Only a radical change of nature can rend possible the fulfilment of the millennial promise that the lion and the lamb shall lie down together. But these religious pacificists assume to have discovered a theological and ecclesiological alchemy which can convert all opposites into pure gold with which to pave the streets of the New Jerusalem.

Religiously, this pacific angel is clad in robes of charity, and smiles upon all the errorists of the world. Notwithstanding, her eye can blaze with fire, and her lips give utterance to words as deadly as a scorpion's sting; and, removing her gloves from shapely hands, and her shoes from dainty feet, she discloses the talons of a vulture toward all who question the efficacy of her pacificism. A religious pacificist can be friendly with anybody and everybody except those who content "for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints".

Among the most conspicuous examples of this religious lunacy there is no movement that more certainly embodies it than that of the Oxford Group Movement. The Oxford Group leaders are lovely and pleasant toward everybody but those who stand uncompromisingly for the principles of Evangelical Christianity. With them, the Oxford Groupers will have nothing to do.

This religious pacificism has been the devil's own instrument to effect the demoralization of all former evangelical denominations of this Continent and in England. The Reavely Glovers and the Carliles in England, the Truett's and Fosdick's and Matthews', and other of inconspicuous names in Canada, can be friendly with anybody but with those who refuse to compromise respecting the essential principles of Evangelical Christianity. For all such they have nothing but the bitterest invectives. Thus the battle for the Book and for evangelical principles has been won nowhere by Modernism: Modernism has been victorious

because the citadel in every case has been surrendered by professed evangelicals of so-called pacific principles.

Nor is pacificism less dangerous as a political principle. No nation in the world has contended more valiantly for the world's liberties than the British. Together with France and Belgium, and the belated moral support of the United States, Britain saved civilization in the Great War. But, as a Britisher, frankness compels us to say that it is doubtful whether we deserved the honour. Britain was unprepared, and she was unprepared because of the prating of political pacificists. We heard a speech from one such in the British House of Commons in nineteen hundred and thirteen, the year before the Great War. Preachers in England and in Canada boldly declared that war was for ever ended: it could never take place again. We recall an extended discussion we had on a train with a former Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons in the Spring of nineteen hundred and fourteen, when the subject of the discussion was a speech he had delivered in the House, advocating principles of pacificism, and opposing military preparation of any sort.

The same doctrines are being taught again. Preachers in Canada, in Toronto, have been delivering addresses which, in our judgment, are as devoid of sense as they could possibly be. Their alleged arguments and plausible platitudes set every sound philosophical principle at defiance. The same thing is being preached in England. Of course, one has only to await the logic of events to prove the fallacy of all this. The sad part of it is, however, that these doctrines may cost, as they have cost before, the lives of tens of thousands of men.

We are proud of our British birth and citizenship, but every day we thank God for France. It seems to us that she is about the one nation that has refused to disregard the lessons of history. She is, at this hour, the greatest influence for peace in the world. We hate war. We hate the necessity for the application of force in any discussion. We long for a millennial day when all shall know God from the least to the greatest; and when men and nations will do right, not because they are compelled, but because they love righteousness. But until the disposition of the horse and the mule is eradicated from human nature, we cannot afford to be without a bit and bridle. Affairs in Europe seem just now to be moving rather quickly.

We confess ourselves to be utterly surfeited with the vapourings of ignorant men who know all about the Antichrist, and what he is going to do, where he is to come from. We are filled with shame for some who have no shame themselves, and who disgrace the whole cause of religion by vulgar and un-Christian appeals. As for example, a certain religious place in Toronto, recently advertising someone who knows all about Russia, had, as an inducement to hear the man speak, in the last line of the advertisement, "It is Dr. Blank, who was offered a piece of human flesh on the train in Russia."

We are ashamed of these attempts to exploit present-day conditions. It were wiser to learn simply the lessons of history. When Napoleon and other such tyrants failed, there is no possibility of Hitler's succeeding. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Those who love and preach violence for the sake of violence, almost inevitably are at last destroyed by the

thing they have preached.

We pray that the day may never come when Britain will take the sword for the oppression of others. Notwithstanding, her sword should ever be ready for the defence of principles that are indispensable to a state founded in righteousness. All Europe has been sick for a long time now, and the disease which has paralyzed all nations with fear seems, to use an ugly phrase, that is yet pathologically inescapable, to be "coming to a head" in Germany. The breaking of that horrid boil may have the effect of letting the poison out of Europe's blood, and give her a chance to live again. Individual Germans by the tens of thousands there are who love the Lord, and ought to be beloved of all who love Him; yet Germany, as a nation, has been the world's greatest criminal since nineteen hundred and fourteen—and, indeed, before. She has never been punished for her awful crimes. She has a practice among her militarists which requires an officer in disgrace to commit suicide. We have long believed that that is exactly what Germany will do for herself. It has been the way of the Judge of all the earth in centuries past to allow wicked nations to destroy themselves. We should not be surprised to see Germany inflict such punishment upon herself as no combination of nations in the world could possibly inflict.

It is as true of nations as it is of individuals. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." A terrible judgment awaits Germany. It may very speedily fall. We are not free from sin, but we are sure that we are absolutely guiltless of any responsibility for beginning the Great War. The blood of the millions who died in that conflict will be, by a righteous judge, required at Germany's hands. Let us walk softly, as we say simply and confidently with Abraham of old in face of the impending doom of Sodom, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

THE ROMANCE OF THE GREAT PREACHER'S PRINTED SERMONS

How Spurgeon Gave Wings to the Glorious Gospel

(From *The Christian Herald*, London, June 21, 1934)

"Fly abroad, thou mighty Gospel," sang a good woman with ecstasy after a missionary address. Her eyes were uplifted as she sang, and she was quite unconscious of the collection-plate at her elbow. "That's all right, sister," said the deacon holding it. "It'll fly all right if you give it wings! Here's your chance."

Great as were the congregations which listened to C. H. Spurgeon preaching, and wonderful as were the results of the spoken messages, these were but as the horse-drawn vehicle of fifty years ago in contrast to the airship of to-day compared with the vaster congregations and mightier influences associated with those sermons printed.

God-given Publishers

In his *Autobiography*, Mr. Spurgeon tells of his mistake, as an amateur author, in accepting only £50 from a Mr. J. S. Virtue for his book *The Saint and His Saviour*, which had an enormous sale. "Any other of my works I entrusted to publishers who knew how to treat me more generously."

This reference was to Mr. Joseph Passmore and Mr. James Alabaster, of whom he said: "Our relationship

has been of mutual benefit, and our business arrangements such as Christian men would desire so that in all things God might be glorified. The young partners began in a very humble fashion in Finsbury. The Lord prospered and blessed them there."

The very speedy and unprecedented success of the Spurgeon publications made it difficult at times to cope with the extraordinary rush of orders; but "by setting themselves manfully to the task, they were able to lay a solid foundation for the future well-being of the firm."

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The First S.S. Boy in New Park-street Chapel

In almost the last number of his monthly, *The Sword and Trowel*, which Mr. Spurgeon personally edited, for April, 1891, he said:

"Fifty-eight years ago, Joseph Passmore was the first boy to be enrolled in the Sunday School of the new chapel in New Park Street. He was a nephew of Dr. Rippon, then the venerable pastor. March 1, 1840, he joined the church by baptism, and in 1862 was elected deacon. Mr. Passmore walked home with us to our lodgings in Queen's-square on the first evening of our visiting London, and from that day our friendship has been of the most intimate character. With some trembling, the weekly publication of the sermons was commenced, but it has not been intermitted these six-and-thirty years, neither has there been a jarring note in all our fellowship through the printing-press. His partner, Mr. Alabaster, though a member of another denomination, is a brother in the Lord, whom we highly esteem."

Of sermon literature, Alabaster and Passmore's issue of the weekly *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, had the largest circulation in the world. They started publishing Mr. Spurgeon's great Sunday morning sermons in 1855.

"Seldom a day passes," said Mr. Spurgeon in referring to his printed sermons, "and certainly never a week for years past, without letters from all sorts of places, declaring the salvation of souls by means of one or other of the sermons."

* * *

Our Own Publication of Sermons

The founder of the *Christian Herald*, Rev. M. Baxter, was keenly alive to the value of good sermons through the medium of a popular weekly journal, and made special arrangements with Mr. Spurgeon for one other than his Sunday morning discourse to appear regularly in this paper. Instances of blessing following include this one sent direct to Mr. Spurgeon from Glasgow:

"About two years ago, a sermon of yours entitled *The Search Warrant*, appeared in the *Christian Herald*. I had long been anxious. The evening this sermon came, I went away into the country to read it. When sure I was alone, I stood and cried to God in prayer, for just one thing, that Spurgeon's sermon might be the means of saving my soul that night. I opened the *Christian Herald* and read it with great attention. The Holy Spirit was with me, and when I got half-way through, brought home to me the words, 'The very simplicity of faith makes the difficulty.' Back I went to the beginning, with firm resolve to read it simply. Then I saw . . . the glorious, 'altogether lovely' form of our wounded Emmanuel. Christ was everywhere, and even myself had vanished, for I was a new creature.—Your loving son in Jesus."

The Irish Boy's Gift

From Massachusetts, U.S.A., a correspondent wrote to the preacher:

"A gentleman gave three volumes of your sermons to an Irish boy. He gave them to a friend of mine. This friend was anxious I should read them. I did not want to read the 'dry stuff', but she pleaded so hard that I took one to please her. I had read only a few lines when I was convicted of sin; but it was about two years before I received the assurance of forgiveness. One day, as I was reading your sermon on *The Blood* the full light came. I understood what faith was and I believed. I do all the good I can with your sermons by lending to others and praying the Lord to bless them."

* * *

A Pugilist Converted

A well-known boxer, at one time the unbeaten lightweight champion of the world, was converted while keeping a public-house in Cardiff. Telling the story, he said:

"Imagine me, a publican and pugilist, devoting hours after 'stop-gap' to ponder and cry over Spurgeon's sermons." Leaving the public-house business, he was later much sought after for laying the foundation-stones of chapels in Wales.

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A Murderer Brought to Christ Through a Sermon

In a summary Mr. Spurgeon himself gave of this part of his ministry, he said:

"As soon as the publication of the sermons began, the Lord set His seal upon them in the conversion of sinners, the restoration of backsliders, and the edification of believers. To His praise, I rejoice to write that it has been the same ever since. Remarkable cases of blessing through the reading of some of the very earliest are representative of many similar miracles of mercy wrought by the Holy Ghost through the years following.

"On June 8, 1856, I preached in Exeter Hall from Hebrews vii. 25. The sermon was published under the title, *Salvation to the Uttermost*. More than thirty years after, I received the joyful tidings that a murderer in South America had been brought to the Saviour through reading it. An Englishman, in a state of drunkenness, had committed a murder, for which he was imprisoned for life in Brazil. An acquaintance had sent him a parcel of reading and between the leaves of a novel he found a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon in which he referred to Palmer, then lying under sentence of death in Stafford Gaol. This, of course, arrested the attention of the prisoner.

To bring home the truth of his text: "He is able to save to the uttermost," Mr. Spurgeon remarked that if Palmer had committed many murders, yet if he repented and sought God's pardoning love in Christ, even he would be forgiven. "If Palmer may be forgiven, so may I," said the poor man in Para Gaol, Brazil. To a friend of Mr. Spurgeon who heard of the case when visiting Para and went to see him, the convert said: "I sought the Saviour, and, blessed be God, I found Him. Though a murderer I have not sinned beyond the uttermost."

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Spurgeon Among British Seamen

After his visit to Ireland about the time of the '59 revival, Mr. Spurgeon gave delighted witness to the ship on which he crossed the Irish Channel, having be-

come "a floating church, a very Bethel," and that "when I came back by another steamer, the same kind of work had been going on among these sailors. I walked among them and talked to them. They all knew me. One man took out of his pocket an old leather-covered book and said, 'Do you know the likeness of that man in front?' I replied, 'I think I do. Do you read those sermons?' 'Yes, sir,' he said, 'we have had your sermons on board ship, and I read them aloud as often as I can. If we have fine weather coming over from Kingstown, I get a few round me and read them a sermon.'"

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Sermons Read by Invalids in Five Separate Rooms

Dr. Alex. Keith, an eminent writer on prophecy, in his last illness asked a friend to write to Mr. Spurgeon:

"His chief joy on the Sabbath is to hear one of your sermons. The reader is a little maid; and he avows that he has the best preacher and hears the best sermon in town. . . . I am commissioned to give you his grateful thanks for the rich feast you give him. He, moreover, wishes me to say, that while spending the winter at the Bridge of Allan, two or three years ago, your sermons were read by invalids in five rooms of the same establishment every Sunday."

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How He Got His Sermon Topics

"When I have to preach two or three sermons in a day," Mr. Spurgeon continued, "I have asked my Master for the morning subject, and preached from it. I have asked Him for the afternoon's topic or evening's portion, and preached from it, after meditating on it for my own soul's comfort, not in the professional style of a regular sermon-maker! Such simple food has done the people far more good than if I had been a week in manufacturing a sermon, for it has come warm from the heart just after it has been received in my own soul. Therefore it has been well known, well tasted, well felt.

When a Canary Helped Him

"Often texts have come to me in a remarkable way. While living at Cambridge, I had, as usual, to preach in the evening at a neighbouring village, to which I had to walk. After reading and meditating all day, I could not meet with the right text. I was, as Bunyan would say, 'much tumbled up and down in mind.' Just then, I walked to the window and looked out. On the other side of the narrow street in which I lived, I saw a poor canary bird upon the slates, surrounded by a crowd of sparrows, all pecking at it as if they would tear it to pieces. In a moment that verse came to my mind: 'Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her.' I preached upon the peculiar people, and the persecutions of their enemies with ease and freedom to myself and comfort to my audience."

"Thus the Pulpit and the Press," commented the Rev. M. Baxter, "like twin angels, have compassed the world with the utterances of one man, who stands out in bold relief, not as the most accomplished orator, but as the most popular preacher of his age."

The circulation of the sermons still goes on in our own pages and through the Spurgeon's Sermons Society, which distributes them as funds allow in five different languages.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 9

No. 3

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 32 THIRD QUARTER August 12, 1934

MORDECAI EXALTED

Lesson Text: Esther, chapters 5 and 6.

Golden Text: "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles and they were read before the king."—Esther 6:1.

Bible School Reading: Esther 5:1-8; 6:1-11.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Psalm 59:10; Tuesday—I Kings 21:1-13; Wednesday—Job 5:1-11; Thursday—Daniel 4:28-37; Friday—Matthew 10:24-31; Saturday—Luke 14:1-11.

I. ESTHER BEFORE THE KING (5:1-14).

In our former lesson we noticed the plan of Mordecai for the salvation of the Jews, according to which Esther was to appear before the king and intreat for her people. In this lesson we are informed of the carrying out of the plan: Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house. Here she waited until invited to draw near to the royal throne. It was at such a time, if ever, that anxiety would be hers, for the reaction of the king to her uninvited presence would mean either life or death to her. Persian monarchs were absolute in their sway over the lives of their subjects, and capricious in the exercise of their power. It was, therefore, most dangerous to incur their displeasure. Esther risked her life in entering the royal chamber unbidden. Note her courage and her purpose. She was in the presence of the king as the saviour of her countrymen.

It was fortunate for Esther, and for those dependent on her efforts, that the king received her graciously: "She obtained favour in his sight", and she "drew near and touched the top of the sceptre", in acknowledgement of submission to the royal will. God is not mentioned respecting this favourable reception, but without question it is to be attributed to His power, as in the case of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:11), and that of Daniel (Dan. 2:19). God works on the hearts of men, and carries out His purpose through them, making even the wrath of men to praise Him (Ps. 76:10, Ex. 9:16). In this case the purpose was the preservation of His people. He had promised the continuation of this race, and therefore could not permit their extermination (Lev. 26:44). The Jews are an interesting study from the aspect of their divine relationship.

Having admitted Esther into his presence, the king asked her to state her request, and promised a favourable answer thereto. Superficially, this would seem to have been the proper moment for disclosing her purpose; yet wisely Esther refrained from making it known. She would have courted failure in the open court, with others present, particularly when her mission affected the monarch's favourite. She therefore invited the king and Haman to a banquet (v. 4), and after their acceptance of the invitation she invited them to a second banquet, at which, according to promise, she intended to make known her request (vs. 5-8). In thus bringing the two main persons together in the privacy of her chamber she was manifesting wisdom of a high order. She was not ignorant of human nature, and she acted in accordance with the best psychology. Perhaps her woman's intuition helped her, but it is better to think of a higher power affecting her actions. By her plan the king was brought directly under her influence, and thus would naturally be more favourable to granting her request. And the chief enemy of her people being present, the royal displeasure would more quickly and surely fall upon his shoulders. It is of interest to note the patience with which the plan was carried out, together with its simplicity and effectiveness.

The effect on Haman of his supposed favour with the queen is set forth with brevity, in simple yet graphic language. He "went forth that day joyful and with a glad heart." He informed his wife and his friends of his good fortune, and boasted of his prominent position, and the special favours bestowed upon him. But there was a fly in the ointment in the person of Mordecai (vs. 10-13). The presence of this man with his unbending attitude nullified the pleasure arising from his favourable position at court. This proclaims Haman as a small man, proud in spirit, and deficient in the higher qualities of character. There are some people who never seem to get over slights, real or imagined; and they trouble themselves about them to their great dispeace of mind, and frequently to the havocing of their spiritual life, and the disturbance of the collective Christian life. We should learn to live above the distracting things of life where nothing shall affect us detrimentally (Ps. 119:165). Note the conference of Haman with his wife and friends respecting Mordecai, and the advice given concerning the manner of dealing with him. The advice of friends is not always of the best kind. It is too often influenced by friendship rather than governed by wisdom and justice. Especially is this so when pleasing the individual takes the place of seeking his highest welfare. A true friend will always place righteousness before convenience or favour, and is well worthy of being listened to (Prov. 17:17). Better heap coals of fire on an enemy than seek to do him harm (Romans 12:20), and better settle our own troubles than embroil others in our disputes.

II. MORDECAI HONOURED (6:1-14).

Leaving Haman preparing to take vengeance on Mordecai, the writer gives us a record of an incident which frustrated that vengeance, and influenced future history. In a former lesson we noticed the action of Mordecai in discovering and making known the plot against the life of the king. His action at that time went unrewarded, but a record was kept of it in accordance with eastern custom, and at this later day this record was brought to the king's attention, and the discovery made of the lack of reward. Note the significance of the discovery being made at this time, and the interesting circumstances attending it. It could not have been made at a more opportune time, for if delayed, Haman's request for vengeance would be preferred, and if earlier, Haman's humiliation would not be complete. A great deal depends sometimes on little things, as in this instance, on the loss of sleep. See also Joseph's errand and its result (Gen. 37:14), and that of David (I Sam. 17:17).

The desire of the king to reward Mordecai is then made known, and is accomplished in a rather interesting manner, in accordance with the advice of Haman. The latter had no intention of honouring one whom he hated, but thinking the king could mean no other than himself when he referred to the one whom he delighted to honour, he suggested giving the highest honours to such an one. It is quite evident that self-interest was at the root of this advice. Haman hoped to have these honours paid to himself. He had been preferred before the other princes and lords, but he was not satisfied, and he was willing to accept further honours from the hands of his master. His self-conceit is clearly manifest in his thought that he was the only one whom the king would delight to honour. A man is in a precarious position when he imagines he is the greatest of men, and that all must bow before his superior knowledge and power. Pride should have no place in any life. It is but a sign of weakness of character, and leads to humiliation and destruction (Prov. 16:18).

The humiliation of Haman wasn't long delayed, for immediately on the conclusion of his advice the king ordered him to do unto Mordecai as he had advised, and in accordance therewith he escorted through the town the man whom he hated, and proclaimed before him that the same was done because the king delighted to honour him. On his return he informed his wife and friends of his humiliation, and they comforted him with the assurance that his enemy, being a Jew, was bound to fall before him; and with this ringing in his ears he hastened to the banquet of Esther. Haman had begun to fall, and speedily he would reach the end of the road, and sink into a despised and disgraced grave. Better if he had never sought revenge, for his plot only acted as a boomerang, and the gallows which he had erected for Mordecai bore the weight of his own dead body.