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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"WE BELIEVE AND ARE SURE"

A Sermon by Dr. P. W. Philpott

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, November 11th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."—John 6:68, 69.

We have to-day in the Protestant church two very distinct religions, religions that are essentially different in faith and practice; and the difference is becoming more marked every day. This condition has been brought about by the spread of what is known as Modernism, although that name, to my mind, is a misnomer. This teaching is not modern: it is as ancient as apostolic Christianity. The only modern element in it is its present method of operation. It used to assail the great doctrines of the Christian faith from without: now it conducts its campaign from within the household of faith.

The aim of Modernism is to set aside the authority of the Scripture, and I am sure that anyone who has given consideration to religious conditions during the last twenty-five years will agree that there has been put forth during that period a very widespread and determined effort to set aside the authority of the Bible as the infallible and authoritative word of the living God.

It tries also to reduce the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the level of man, and some Modernists actually go so far as to place Him intellectually a little lower than themselves. That is not an exaggeration. If you read at all, you will realize that that is a true statement of fact.

Not long ago I read in *The Christian Century*, which is the principal mouthpiece of Modernism in the United States, published in Chicago, this statement: "Christianity to the Fundamentalist is one religion: Christianity to the Modernist is another religion. The clash here is as pronounced and great as that between Christianity and Confucianism. Amiable words cannot hide this difference. 'Blessed be the tie that binds'

may be sung until doomsday, but it cannot bind these two worlds. The God of the Fundamentalist is one God: the God of the Modernist is another God. The Bible of the Fundamentalist is one Bible, and the Bible of the Modernist is another Bible."

That is a statement made by the Editor of the paper that speaks for Modernism in Chicago. Surely that is clear enough for anyone to understand. It seems to me that the time has now come for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, for all who are loyal to Him, to take their stand unflinchingly on the side of righteousness. There can be no effective testimony while this condition obtains in the church; there cannot possibly be any real Christian fellowship. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

There is no common standing-ground for the believer and the unbeliever, and if we would make our testimony effective in this day of apostasy we must cut ourselves clean from the camp that would take the crown from His brow, and the sceptre from His hand. I believe that where that stand has been taken all over the world, in this place and elsewhere, God is still set-

ting His seal on the preached Word as He has done in former days.

It will help us to understand the condition that prevails at the present time if we bear in mind that the Bible nowhere teaches that everyone who hears the gospel message will accept it. Some people seem to think that if the gospel is faithfully proclaimed to men, they will accept it. The Bible does not teach that if Jesus Christ is presented in all His beauty to sinners, all will receive Him. It teaches the very opposite. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

Paul teaches us that the gospel he preached—which is the gospel that is preached from the Jarvis Street pulpit—was a savour of death unto death to some: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Again he says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. . . . For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

I believe to-night the preaching of the cross of Christ, to the greater portion of this vast audience, is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Even under the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself when He was upon earth, not all men turned and followed Him. On one occasion when the Jews had become pronouncedly antagonistic to His teaching, they said unto Him, "Thou hast a devil." Again it is written, "And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Our Lord had been declaring His Kingship on another occasion, declaring that He had power to lay down His life and to take it again, and "there was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?"

And there is a division to-day—a sharp division—and for the same reason: because some would make Him less than God the Son, and those who know Him to be both Lord and Christ are determined, as God shall help them, to stand for the faith once for all delivered.

A great many years ago now a famous Scotch preacher, Dr. Robertson, preached in Scotland, on the subject, "The compelling power of virtue." He dealt particularly on what he called "the instinct of religion in every human heart." During his sermon he made this remark, "If virtue was to appear clothed in ex-

quisite grace it would be hailed with acclaim, exalted to a throne, and men would worship it." In the evening of that same Lord's day in Scotland, in the same church, the celebrated Dr. Erskine preached. Either from the irony of coincidence or from set purpose, he preached on the Incarnation that evening, and during his sermon he made this statement: "Virtue hath appeared on earth clothed in garments of spotless beauty, but instead of being exalted to a throne and worshipped, He was despised and rejected, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross—crucified between two thieves." It was not true in Christ's day, nor is it true in ours, that all who hear will believe.

It was in an hour when men were turning away from Christ in great numbers that Peter made this great declaration of faith: "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." In order to get the grandeur of it, the thrill of it, you have to go back to the fifth chapter of this Gospel, because all that you read in the fifth and sixth chapters is bound up vitally with this great confession of Peter's. There you have the record of the healing of the impotent man at the pool. John did not record that miracle to add another to the long list of phenomenal things that Jesus Christ had been doing, not to add another miracle to the great number of miracles that are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John picked these miracles—seven of them up to the cross—for a specific purpose, and six of them are not found in any of the other Gospels. Why did he record this miracle with a great wealth of detail? (Probably the narrative is longer than any other miracle in the Bible.) Why did he record it at this point? Because it was in connection with this miracle that a great crisis came in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

It was at this particular time that the smouldering hatred of the Jewish heart broke out. From the first they had refused to receive Him, but their antagonism had been more or less dormant. At this time that hatred broke out in all its bitterness, and it seems to be John's purpose from the fifth chapter of his Gospel to the crucifixion, to trace the development of that hatred until it culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by these same people.

It was the occasion of the most profound teaching that ever came from the lips of Jesus Christ. No one ever made such claims for himself as the God-man makes in these chapters. It was at this time that He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Oh, the thrill that must have given the people who heard it! Some of us, I fear, have become so familiar with the great truths of the Bible that we have lost a sense of their greatness. Listen to it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." That is almost the first passage I ever read in the Bible. It came to me as a foundation for my faith to rest upon. Then a little later in the same chapter He says, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

It was about that time when certain officials came from these Jewish rulers and high priests with authority to arrest Jesus Christ, and bring Him back prisoner. They came back to the council without Jesus Christ, and when the rulers saw them without the Master they said, "Why have ye not brought him?" And the officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." These constables concluded as they heard His teaching—this teaching I am talking about—that He was more than man. And we must come to the same conclusion. We must come to that place before we can appreciate the teaching of this Book. You can never understand the Lord Jesus, you can never understand His teaching, unless you see in Him—as you say you do when you recite the creed—very God of very God. He is either that or an irresponsible fanatic. It is a case of Deity or insanity. No man could make these claims unless he were more than man.

It was in this connection also that He gave that great discourse about the Bread of Life. He had fed the people with a few barley loaves and a few small fishes. Some of the leaders came the next day and said, "The people thought that was a wonderful miracle, but still they do not believe that thou art the Christ." "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?" Our fathers did eat manna in the dessert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." But Jesus Christ said in effect, "That was only the shadow: I am the substance—Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world . . . I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

This teaching of Jesus Christ transcends the utmost range of human wisdom or conception. Only the man of faith can receive that teaching. There were many people who professed to be His disciples who did not receive it. John tells us earlier that it was all known to Him: "And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." We may deceive ourselves—and others; but we cannot deceive Him. When this great crowd was gathered around Him the day before, they would have made Him a bread-King, but when He began teaching eternal truths, proclaiming Himself to be the Bread of Life, and saying, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," then they began to reason among themselves.

Human reason dethroned their faith, and "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." That is what is wrong with many people in our day: they are walking in the puny light of human reason, human philosophy—and the moment men do that they "turn back", and walk no more with Him.

I admit the teaching here is beyond the range of human wisdom. When these people turned away from

Jesus Christ, He did not call them back: He just looked after them sadly. Nor did He attempt to explain His meaning. He reaffirmed it in terms stronger than He had used before. There was no mistaking His meaning. He turned from the crowd that was leaving Him, and looking on the twelve who still tarried, He said—it seems to me with great pathos—"Will ye also go away?" And Peter, answering for the twelve, said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

The difficulties that confront a man when he turns away from Christ and His teaching are infinitely greater than the difficulties the modern school would have us believe are inherent in faith in Him. You ask me to give up my faith—faith in the God of my mother who died believing that Jesus Christ was her Saviour, and was taking her to be with Himself? My little baby boy died with these words on his lips, "Daddy, I am not afraid. Jesus is here with me all the time." I have been trusting Him these fifty-one years, and He has never failed me. He redeemed me by His grace, and has kept me by His power unto this good day. "Do you believe in miracles, Philpott?" Yes! for I have experienced many in my own life, and the greatest miracle of all was the redeeming of this poor soul from sin.

You ask me to give up faith in a Christ Who comforts in the hour of sorrow? Where can I go? Who else can meet my need? If I cannot trust in Jesus Christ, Whom I have trusted these years, to whom can I appeal? Some philosopher in the university? Some preacher who is educated above his intelligence? Where shall I go? I am forced to cry with Peter, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

The offer that Jesus Christ makes to the human soul is what the human heart is crying out after. He offers you pardon, He offers you peace, He offers you power, He offers you eternal life. He does not come to rob life of its joys. The only thing He takes from us is our sin. "I am come", He said, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." He will not put out the light: He will kindle it. And I suggest to you that the human heart is crying out for light and life. The individual heart may not always be conscious of its need. The man may have no words with which to express his heart-longing, but deep down in the inner soul every man needs the very thing Christ came to offer. "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Think of men trying to find a gospel to substitute for that! That is the message a dying world needs, the promise of eternal life.

Peter was assured. He was not disturbed when he saw the crowds leave. "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Let me ask a question: Did Peter understand all that was involved in his profession? Do you think Peter could have explained all that Jesus Christ had been saying? I trow not. After Christ's death and resurrection he was summoned to stand before the same council that had tried Jesus Christ, and they decided that Peter was an

"unlearned and ignorant man"—but Peter knew something that they did not know.

And we may know it too. Every man and woman here can have the assurance that Peter had: "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Why was he so sure? Because he knew Jesus Christ personally. Christianity begins with a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. The first step is the new birth. There are many things that we cannot understand in the Bible as natural men, no matter how highly educated we may be. Paul admonished the Ephesians in these words: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." But when we accept Jesus Christ something supernatural takes place. We receive the divine nature. We receive the Holy Spirit. He comes to dwell in our hearts and lives. You remember what Paul said to the scholars at Corinth?—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them." Why not, Paul? "Because they are spiritually discerned." But he said, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Blessed be God, no matter who you are, you may have the assurance that Peter had. He had it because he knew Jesus Christ as His personal Saviour, and we may know Him too through the Spirit's power.

If we receive Jesus Christ as Saviour, it not only gives us a clean heart, but an enlightened mind. Speaking of the coming of the Spirit, our Lord said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

I want to ask you a question—and I want you to make it the question of your own heart. Pilate asked, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" And I want to finish my ministry with you to-night by asking you that question. You do not have to be able to explain the miracles. You do not have to explain the story of creation, of Jonah and the whale, or where Cain got his wife. The question you must answer—which every man must answer—is this, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" If you answer that question from your heart to-night, the Holy Spirit will make real to you things that are now beyond your range of comprehension. He will "guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." He will give you the assurance that Peter had: "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Let us pray:

Our Heavenly Father, we are once again at the door, at the threshold of decision. We believe that in the hearts of some of these people Thou has wrought the miracle of grace. Give them, we pray thee, the courage boldly to confess their faith in Thee. We are utterly helpless. It is all Thy work. Salvation is of the Lord. And even Thou canst not come into men's hearts unless they bid Thee welcome. May some to-night bid Thee to come in. The latch is on the inside: may they open the door. Constrain men by Thy Spirit to accept salvation, we beseech of Thee, and to open the door to Thy forgiving grace. Bring some father, some mother, some of these young people to Thyself. Give many the assurance that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Hear our cry, for we ask it in the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

HOW WE OUGHT TO THINK OF GOD

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto

(Stenographically Reported)

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."—John 1:18.

An ancient sage observed, "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as sparks fly upward." With all the changes accomplished by the flight of time, and all the triumphs achieved by the accumulated wisdom of the ages, the sparks still fly upward, and still, alas! man is born unto trouble. Nor is this birthright of trouble peculiar to any age, or race or clime. Trouble is indigenous to all lands, and is associated with all seasons, and is the companion of all ages.

True, there are those who seem for a time to enjoy an unaccountable immunity, who, when the storm sweeps over others, are "left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers," but sooner or later the wind returns in its circuits, and the man exclaims, "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."

But there are times when trouble is at the flood, when levels of life which ordinarily stand above the tide and keep their floral beauty unspoiled are covered by the general distress. This is seen in the life of communities, and nations, as in times of pestilence, or famine, or war. But even then some mountain lifts its head above the flood, and there is not wanting some place where the dove of peace may find rest for the sole of her foot. But we have come through days when all the fountains of the great deeps of human life were broken up, until every brook became a torrent, and every stream a river, whose increasing volume of trouble grew into a world deluge.

And in all this I am not retailing the forebodings of a morbid, or doleful, or narrow, or doubting soul. I have spoken of conditions which thrust themselves before every thoughtful mind. We cannot shut our eyes or our minds to the fact that men's hearts are almost "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

What, then? Can a man ponder these things without feeling profoundly the all but impotence of the individual in the circumstances? Indeed do not all human powers in the aggregate seem helpless before the rising tide? Is there a higher Power than man's? Just as an individual, suddenly confronted with some great peril, instinctively utters the name of God, and by the very utterance, prays, so men in the mass are driven to serious reflection by the perils of the day, and, in view of the end of human resource, think of God.

How, then, shall we think of God? When we are driven to estimate our human experience in relation to Him, our thought of Him becomes cardinal to all our thinking. When you try to relate this sinning, suffering world to God, how do you picture Him?

I.

Let me try to show you THE INEVITABLE RESULT OF A MAN'S TRYING TO PICTURE GOD FOR HIMSELF. "No man hath seen God at any time." Could any artist paint a portrait of one he had never seen with any hope of producing a likeness? Would not the portrait be likely to be a composite of all other faces which had attracted the artist's fancy and been welcomed to his memory? And must not every human conception of God be a composite of ideas belonging to some realm with which men are familiar? What, historically, have been the results of human attempts to produce an image of the invisible God? They have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." The history of heathen religions attests the truth of that tendency. But when the superstition of idol-worship is abandoned, may not men make idols of their ideas? May they not bow down to mental images of God which are as unlike Him as the idols of the heathen? Is not God too often reduced to human levels in our thinking? Do not many, being without "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," change His glory into an image made like unto corruptible man? To some men God is no greater than can be measured by the rule of their reason; His acts, His providence, His word, are acceptable only if they fall within the range of reason's comprehension. Thus they erect standards by which to measure God, and their norm is "an image made like unto corruptible man." And it is the corruptible element of the human mind which dwarfs a man's conception of God. He cannot conceive the Absolute. He cannot guess at the Infinite as a carpenter guesses a few inches; he can imagine nothing which transcends human dimensions. How, therefore, can the motives, the purposes, and power, of the incorruptible God be understood when judged by the attributes of corruptible man?

The corruptible element of the mind as limiting our vision to the boundaries of Time, also renders us incapable of estimating plans and processes which outrun the astronomer's distances and outlast the everlasting hills, and outshine the brightness of the sun. Ah! my brother, a God whom your reason could measure and ration would not be big enough to manage this troubled world; and a God who was shut up to your calendar would have no time to make all things work together for good.

But have "birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" anything to do in determining man's thought of God to-day? We, at all events, make no material images of these things. Yet men think they have found in birds, and beasts, and creeping things the index to the divine mind and method in all realms. There is a naturalism which interprets God by the light of embryology, and by the light of the nature and movements of creeping things. If God is to be conceived of by what a man's own mind can imagine of Him, if the processes of His providence and grace are to be interpreted as being shut up to naturalistic channels, there is little to cheer us in contemplation of this troubled world.

By no such image of God can we be inspired to sing:

"O God our help in ages past,
Our help for years to come,
Our shelter in the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

"Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

"Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.

"A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

"Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

"O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home."

II.

If we cannot picture God for ourselves, HOW MAY WE LEARN WHAT GOD IS LIKE? It never was more important that men should have a true picture of God than it is to-day. When Lord Kitchener issued his call for the new army his portrait appeared in every paper and was even used by Government order to advertise his call. Later the portrait of Sir Douglas Haig was everywhere to be seen, and when Marshal Foch was given supreme command of the Allied armies I suppose there was not a village in any of the Allied countries whose inhabitants were not shown some pictorial representation of the Commander-in-Chief. And there was a sound basis for all this: we all wanted to have a mental image of the man who was to lead us out of our troubles.

And are not men consciously or subconsciously longing for a picture, a good picture, an adequate picture, of God to-day? To the cynicism which inquires, "Who will shew us any good?" there are many who respond, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us".

The assertion of the text is to the effect that no knowledge of God is obtainable except through Christ. In what way, in what aspects, has Christ "declared" God? Some will ask, "Is there not a revelation of God in nature? May not the voice of Science, therefore, teach us something of God?" Yes; "for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." But there is no revelation in nature which is not part of the declaration of the only begotten Son respecting God.

Let us hear the voice of Inspiration again: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men". And again: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist". And yet again: "God who at sundry

times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir to all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power",—thus Christ is set forth as the Author of Creation and of Providence: "by whom also he made the worlds",—"upholding all things by the word of his power". God can neither be seen nor heard, nor can His movements be traced, except through Christ. Through Him the qualities of Deity becomes visible and articulate.

What then, is the declaration of Christ in Nature by Creation? It is a declaration of law. Whatever else nature teaches about God it unmistakably reveals Him as a God of law. Science is here the handmaid of religion. Her business is to obtain accurate knowledge of facts, of the laws governing those facts, and of the causes which determine their relationship. I am not a scientist; but I can hear when Science speaks; and I have heard her say, that the whole created order is a perfect machine of marvellous design which unfailingly obeys the laws of its Maker, whoever He may be. Long before Sinai "burned with fire", in its very structure, had there been a man of knowledge to read the writing, it proclaimed its Maker to be the Source of law.

"Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker's name abroad;
And every labour of His hands
Shows something worthy of a God."

Revealed religion lifts us to a higher plane. It concerns itself with the realm of morals, it has to do with right and wrong. By revealed religion I mean that knowledge of God which is derived from what is claimed to be a divine revelation rather than upon what men have discovered of God through the study of His works.

The Bible gives us a history of man from "the beginning" in his relation to God and to his fellows. And again God is revealed as a great Law. The Word that speaks through the prophets is the same that speaks through earth and sun and stars. And the declaration of God in the Old Testament is to the effect that law and order obtain in the spiritual world as in the natural. Cause and effect are shown to be as inseparable in the moral realm as in the physical. There is nothing to suggest the possibility of ultimate moral chaos. The prophets as truly as the planets declare one element in the divine glory to be His invariable orderliness. Seed time and harvest follow in regular succession in the moral realm as well as in the physical.

But in the Old Testament dispensation there is another element for which men look in vain in nature. In nature, wisdom and power are seen in co-operative action; but they are wholly impersonal. In the pages of this Book a divine Personality emerges, Who claims to be superior to His works, and sovereign over all His creatures. And in this inspired record of the providential unfolding of His purposes there is the same orderly progression observable as in the lower realm of His operation. And that which unifies all the divine disclosures of the Old Testament is the promise of a still clearer and ultimate revelation.

No one can mark the divine transcendence, a God above His world and even above its law, pictured in the Old Testament Scriptures, and observe God's sovereign over-

ruling of all moral and spiritual opposition to His plans, without being filled with hope. And then at last, we have the mystery of the Incarnation proclaimed. Angels proclaim the coming of God to earth.

Now what is the "declaration" of the Incarnation? How and what is God declared to be in Christ? At Bethlehem, if I may dare, say so, God revealed that He is inseparably joined to man. Never could He forsake His world without abandoning the Babe of Bethlehem. And further, it is revealed that He will fulfil His plans by the exercise of powers undiscoverable to us. Christianity is a supernatural religion. Jesus was supernaturally born. But what we call miracle is the result of the operation of laws which transcend our knowledge and understanding. The birth of Jesus shows how God can come into human life, not in violation of law, but by means which are beyond our comprehension. We are therefore to conceive of God as one whose judgments are unsearchable and whose ways are past finding out.

So then, in Christ, behold "the image of the invisible God," at the same time bearing the likeness of man—not however, of corruptible man, but of man at his best, his highest and utmost—becoming such by means transcending our reason.

What then is the central truth revealed in Christ the incarnate God? All virtues are combined in Him, but what is the elemental quality of which all virtues are but manifestations? It is what the New Testament calls grace. It is more than love, it is love in remedial exercise. Jesus stands forth as the incarnation of the remedial resources of Deity. God is the great Repairer and Renovator and Restorer. He saves men by suffering for them and with them. And now we are at the veil of the Holy of Holies. Sin is pitilessly impartial and relentlessly cruel. No one of woman born has escaped its heavy hand. But of all its victims no one has ever suffered as Jesus did. There was no way of pulling us out of the fire but by going into the fire Himself. He has "declared" God to be a suffering God. Whatever the ultimate explanation of the mystery, this I know, sin hurts no one so much as it hurts God. The atonement means—ah, who dares to say all that it means?—but it means this at least, that the utmost of sin's penalty, falls upon Christ, piercing his very soul:—not arbitrarily, but of necessity, and in the nature of the case, as the only alternative to the sinner's destruction. Sin's deadly power is quenched in the blood of the Son of God.

"Oh, Love, thou bottomless abyss,
My sins are swallowed up in Thee!"

But not at the Cross alone and at last is God declared. The cry of the Son of God in the darkness is not the last word to be said about God. We must see Him in the glory of resurrection and behold in Him the ultimate sovereign triumphs of light, and life, and love.

And as we think of God in relation to the world's sin and woe, we are not to think of Him as watching His world from afar, separate from its griefs, unhurt by its sin, free from its sorrows, and unburdened by its woes. But rather we are to conceive of Him as dwelling in the midst of it all, and by some inexplicable condescension of grace, identified with its sufferings, feeling its want, sharing its hunger, bearing its grief, carrying its sorrows, touching its leprosy, crucified by its sin! And yet, and yet, unafraid of its darkness, undismayed by its rebellion, undaunted by its unbelief, superior to its

shame, sovereign of its destiny, enthroned above all its warring elements on the right hand of the Majesty on High—from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. And in respect to all the problems of life as we keep our eye on Him, God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness will shine in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But what of your own soul in relation to such a God as this? Our sins are many, but His blood can wash them all away. Life sometimes seems a tangled skein, but His hand is on the loom and

“The shuttle of the unseen powers
Works out a pattern not as ours.”

How foolish it would be, for any one of us to refuse to submit to such a God as the crucified and risen incarnation of redeeming Love has revealed God to be! I beg of you to trust Him! Trust Him to forgive your sins on the ground of the vicarious sacrifice; trust Him to give you eternal life as being Himself the Author of all life; trust Him to keep you and preserve you unto His everlasting kingdom, as the One Who “upholdeth all things by the word of His power”; trust Him to bear your burdens, to overcome by the power of His Spirit, your evil tendencies, to solace your loneliness, to explore the valleys with you and climb the heights with you, to lighten your darkness, and calm your seas, and to bring you at last through all the storms of life into a haven of peace and perfection and there to wipe away all tears from your eyes. For all this, trust Him now!

“THE LORD’S HAND IS NOT SHORTENED”

“Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.” The prophet is speaking at a time when the religious consciousness of the nation was very faint, when God seemed to be far off, and when the resources of Deity were no longer reckoned as possible human assets. But the prophet declares that the sun is only obscured, and not obliterated; the divine hand is withdrawn, but not withered; though there be no prayer uprising to the throne, the throne remains.

And there is a danger always of the soul’s losing its consciousness of God. We are prone to gild the days of old, and to write the miracles of grace in the past tense. We see, or feel, things slipping from our grasp. Many of our friends have left us and we have received no message from them. Those that remain grow away from us, their interests change, and we find ourselves to be elements of diminishing importance in their lives; our circumstances alter, our very neighbourhood is transformed; and we are conscious, perhaps, of a change in ourselves. We try to persuade ourselves that we are saner than we were: what we once cherished as ideals our aching, disappointed hearts now call vain fancies. We say we have become less visionary and more practical. We do not expect miracles now. We flatter ourselves that we are more tolerant than we were; our view of life is characterized by a broader charity. And yet we breathe a heavier atmosphere, and walk on lower levels because, forsooth, we have learned to take things as they are!

But are we sure we have changed for the better? Are we sure the ideals we so passionately cherished, were only fancies after all? Are we sure, has it ever been demonstrated, that the mountains whose summits we hoped to explore are really inaccessible? Were the principles we abandoned really an encumbrance? Do we not need to be reminded of the things which endure? The helpless boatman, at the mercy of the wind and tide, may see what appears to be a receding shore with dissolving hills—whereas the mountains are unmoved and it is he who is drifting away! We may well pray,—

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, Who changest not, abide with me!”

I.

Neither the hand nor the ear of God has suffered any diminution of strength. He still has power to save amid the most untoward circumstances. We think of the gospel as something which has no power to make a way for itself, but must come on a later train when someone or something has cleared and swept and garnished the house. Yet it won its earliest triumphs in the city which crucified Christ. It won its way in cities which were wholly hostile to its reception: Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Antioch, Thessalonica, etc. It was never dependent upon favourable circumstances.

He still has power to change the most rebellious hearts. To the natural enmity of the human heart there has been added a crust of unbelief formed by the insidious teachings of modern religious agnosticism. But no mind was ever more fortified against the truth than that of Saul of Tarsus; and yet the hand of God could strike the scales from his mind and make him to see. And the power of God is still the same.

He still has power to show Himself superior to the world’s enchantments. “This present evil world” can be very winsome when on her best behaviour: when arrayed in all the splendour of its sensuous delights it appears a very formidable rival of the Lover from the skies. But when He unveils His lovely face, His glory eclipses the utmost splendour of the world. God can save a man who has fifty thousand a year, and has studied theology in Germany, as well as He could save Moses!

II.

The ear of God is still acute and attentive. No change in the divine mind has alienated His resources from us. He has not shut Himself within His own works as behind prison bars because human philosophers have said He has. He can still hear us when we cry. The ear of God can still regard the human cry for the tender but mighty help of the hand of God.

It is still useful to pray for individual salvation, as Abraham for Lot, as Moses for Israel, as the church for Peter; it is not vain to pray for a manifestation of divine power and glory as Elijah did on Carmel; nor is it vain to pray for national deliverance as Hezekiah did.

III.

The hand and ear of God have not declined in strength during the term of our Christian experience. He had power to satisfy us once—why not now? Religion was more than a memory, and prayer more than a form. Why is it not now? Has the Bridegroom lost His charm, His voice its sweetness, His hand its tenderness, His arm its strength? Some of us, we fear, have reason to cry, “Where is the blessedness I knew when first I knew the Lord?”

The Lord was able to use us once—why not now? Can we not recall seasons of service and joyous fellowship to which we are now strangers? He used to answer our prayers; we could trace a direct connection between our praying and the effectiveness of our service. Can we do it now?

Self-examination will disclose the reason for the change. It is declared that sin has stayed the hand and obscured the face of God. We must know God as a power in our lives; we must live in fellowship with Him, as a Father Who hears His children cry, or we cannot retain the consciousness of His presence and favour. God must be used or we shall lose sight of Him. The progress of sin leads to moral blindness and insensibility, and ultimate self-deception: “Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.” The progress of sin leads men at last to regard the pursuit of holiness as a kind of madness. They speak lightly of spiritual values, and become irreverent in spirit. The holiest things become the subject of jest and merriment.

There is reason for hope in the promise of grace. Grace will take the initiative in the restoration, will give repentance, will enable us to return. Let us but yield to the constraints of grace, with reliance upon God obey the best impulses of our hearts, and the precepts of the divine Word—and the Spirit will lift up a standard against the enemy. The Redeemer will return to us on the simple condition that we turn from our disobedience; if we but do His will, He will come to abide.

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JOB LONGS FOR GOD

Lesson Text: Job, chapters 23, 24.

Golden Text: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"—Job 23:3.

Bible School Reading: Job 23:1-17.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Psalm 147:1-11; Tuesday—Prov. 28:20-28; Wednesday—Psalm 17:1-9; Thursday—Eccles. 3:14-22; Friday—Col. 1:21-28; Saturday—Hebrews 7:22-28.

I. JOB'S LONGING FOR GOD (23:1-17)

Job's arguments with his friends had convinced him that from them he could not expect justice respecting his present distress. Eliphaz had just accused him of great wickedness (22:5); and the object of all was to convince him of sin which he felt to be non-existent in his case. We are not surprised, therefore, that he longs for God, in Whose judgment he has perfect confidence. That he was not mistaken in his trust we are certain, for the Omniscient One makes no mistakes. He requires no one to inform Him concerning any case; and His love and mercy govern Him in His actions. From men we often fail to receive justice, due to antagonism, indifference, and inability to discern the right. But we may safely depend on God for just judgment. Note the blessedness of trust in such a just Judge.

The heavy burden borne by Job is manifest in the manner in which he expresses his longing for God. His complaint is bitter, his stroke is heavy; and he wishes that he might find God, and come before His seat, there to plead his cause before Him (vs. 1-4). He can find no relief in groaning; he is denied understanding and comfort at the hands of his friends; and his only hope is in God. We need not ask where we may find Him: in Christ we have ready access to His presence (John 16:24), and we are invited to come boldly before His throne (Heb. 4:16). Not only so, but in our Lord we have an advocate with the Father Who pleads our cause (1 John 2:1). We are accepted in Him (Eph. 1:6), seated in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 2:6), and treated as members of the family of God, which we are through Him (John 1:12). Note the blessings arising from such a position, and the corresponding duty to live in accordance with our holy exaltation (Eph. 5:8).

Job's desire is not only to plead his cause before God, but to know the words which He would say unto Him (v. 5). He was not concerned with that which man said about him. What he cared about was what God thought of him. Such is the proper attitude to adopt. God is the Judge of each person (Heb. 12:23). He is the One Whom it is our duty to please (2 Tim. 2:4), and if we act in accordance with His will we need have no fear of the opinions of men. We may indeed be sure that if we obey Him in all things, we shall be misunderstood by the world. It hated the Lord, and it will also hate us (John 15:18). It maligned Him; and it will also malign us (Matt. 11:8, 19). Let us, therefore, be careful to keep right with Him, and to esteem His commendation above that of friends or enemies. Job has confidence in God's judgment. The Lord would not use His omnipotent power against him, but would strengthen him (v. 6). He would then be able to plead his cause before Him, and have his righteousness declared by Him (v. 7). It is a comfort to know God does not use His almighty power against us. We are helpless before Him, and could not stand if He should deal with us in accordance with our sins (Psalm 130:3). His knowledge is used in His attitude toward us, but His actions are governed by His mercy (Is. 55:7). He is plenteous in mercy unto all who call upon Him (Ps. 86:5).

Disappointment is registered by Job, however, respecting meeting with God. He looks forward and backward, eastward and westward, and cannot perceive Him. Despite this, he is sure God knows about him, and that he shall come forth from his trial as gold (v. 10). He is sure of this issue from his trial inasmuch as he had been obedient to the divine

law. He had held to the steps of the Lord, kept His way, obeyed His commandments, and esteemed the words of His mouth more than his necessary food (vs. 11, 12). The child of God is enjoined to walk in a similar manner (1 Pet. 2:21; Rom. 6:4). Notwithstanding Job's upright conduct, the Lord continued to pursue His attitude toward him (vs. 13, 14), implying the divine sovereignty. Due to this, Job was afraid. He was faint, because, instead of being cut off from the darkness, the darkness covered him (v. 17).

II. DIVINE PUNISHMENT NOT ALWAYS EVIDENT (24:1-25)

In combatting the argument of his friends concerning the certain punishment of the wicked on this earth, Job shows the continuance of wickedness unpunished, and the fact that wicked people die naturally with no lingering suffering as their fate. He begins this part of his reply with a question relative to the subject he is about to expound: "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?" Job has no doubt as to the omniscience of God, and he is equally convinced that He has appointed times of punishment, but he wishes men to know of those times now. There is no doubt that, left to us, we would rule the world in a different way than that in which it is being ruled; but we must realize that, after all, divine wisdom is much higher than that which is of the earth; and God knows best that which is in the highest interest of the world which He created. And we can trust such wisdom.

The impunity with which wickedness was carried on is next cited by Job; first, in relation to openly committed sins (vs. 2-13) then respecting those committed under cover of darkness (vs. 14-17). In the first category such sins are mentioned as, removing landmarks, a serious offence (Deut. 19:14; 27:17), driving away flocks; and acting unjustly toward the fatherless, the widow, and the poor (vs. 3, 4). They rise early to proceed about their work of plunder, bringing suffering upon many (vs. 5-11). Men groan at their depredations, "yet God layeth not fully to them". They are permitted to continue in their wickedness without divine intervention. They go on their evil way unpunished. The problem of the continuance of evil has been referred to in former lessons. Note the scriptural explanation (2 Peter 3:1-9). In the second category such sins as murder, adultery, and robbery, are mentioned; with the dislike for such sinners for daylight. It is equally true in these days that men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). There is open wickedness, but there is a great deal more sin carried on under cover of darkness. We have but to think of the various spheres of human activity to realize this, and also of one's own tendencies and inclinations. There is thereby manifested the consciousness of wrong-doing, and the sense of guilt. Men know certain things are wrong, yet they do them, and so give evidence of the sinfulness of the old nature (Rom. 3:10, 23). Our Lord came to save from the power of sin (Col. 1:13), and through the new life which He gives we may live the overcoming life (Rom. 6:6-14).

Referring probably to the statements of his friends, Job mentions the swift passing of the wicked from earth (vs. 18, 19), and from the remembrance of others (v. 20); together with an instance of their wickedness (v. 21). He then, in contradiction of this view, states the prolongation of life of such persons. They are even raised from beds of sickness,—and this, in spite of the fact that God knows their ways. And when their end does come, they die as other persons, in full age, and not prematurely (vs. 24, 25). As intimated in a former lesson, there is truth in both of these views. Some of the wicked are cut off very quickly, while others are permitted to live to a good old age. We must remember in this connection that during this age God deals with all men in mercy (Luke 6:36). He is desirous of manifesting His grace toward the very worst, and would have them come unto Him for salvation (Acts 26:20). The time of judgment will come later, when all men must appear before the judgment bar of heaven to give an account of the deeds done on earth (Heb. 9:27). The principle of reaping what is sown, however, is also manifest on earth. The seeming exceptions to this, only emphasize the general rule. Sin brings its own consequences, and righteousness its own reward. It pays, therefore, to serve the Lord, both from the standpoint of earth, and that of eternity; although service should not be rendered from this motive.