

# The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES.  
AND IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.  
\$2.00 Per Year, Postpaid, to any address. 5c Per Single Copy.

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

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Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada.

Vol. 13, No. 34

TORONTO, JANUARY 3, 1935

Whole Number 659

## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

### NUMBERING OUR DAYS

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, December 30th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."  
—Psalm 90:12.

Prayer by Rev. W. Gordon Brown

Much have we, O Lord, for which to give Thee thanks. Great has been Thy goodness to us, abundant Thy blessing. We thank Thee for the joys of this season of the year, for the fellowship; for the good will; for all the light and love Thou hast put into the world and enabled us, by Thy goodness, to see. We rejoice in these, the gifts of Thy hand. We have come that we may give thanks to the Offerer of every good and every perfect gift which comes down from above from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

And yet, Lord, these joys of earth seem to go from us as quickly as they come, and all about us to change. One day we may be in the house of rejoicing; another, in the house of weeping. We thank Thee for the steadfastness of Thyself. And we come this morning that we may, by Thy goodness, lash ourselves to Thee, that we may lean upon Thee to be bound to Thee by the strong cords of love, accepted by our devotion. Yet we come very humbly, with reverence and godly fear, recognizing our weakness, our foolishness, our sins. Grant to us, most merciful Saviour, once more a renewed consciousness of sins forgiven, a trust in the promise that says Thou wilt blot them out as a thick cloud, take them from us very far.

We rejoice in the atonement of Christ, in His finished work, and in our share in it, that He died for us, and, therefore, we died with Him. Help us, then, since now we live, no longer to live unto ourselves but unto Him Who died for us and rose again. Grant that we may realize the truth of Christ in us the hope of glory, that so we may live a life of faith, experiencing more and more of His power, His grace, and His glory. Oh, that Thou wouldest this day make these things real to every heart in Thy presence, that they may gain fresh strength and courage for life's way, and that those who do not know Thee as Saviour may be constrained, in some mysterious way by Thy power, some way, perhaps which they do not understand, to come to the Saviour now, to receive Him, and to enjoy the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Bless the larger interests of our prayers, the work of Thy kingdom everywhere, the missionaries of the cross in distant lands, home missionaries on difficult fields in this country, in the northwest, to the south of us, everywhere, wherever Christ is named. Oh, may the word be accompanied with

power; may the Holy Spirit fill them with His own energy! that this may be a day of salvation in Zion, when this one and that one may turn to God, and become children of God and heirs of God through Jesus Christ.

Lord, hear us in these our petitions, and all others that we should ask, since we present them in His worthy Name. Amen.

I suppose most of us began our education by learning the alphabet, and by learning to count. It was a great day when the baby could say, "One, two, three", and a few other numbers. But in the beginning, to our infant minds, these words represented words; not numerals; they had no relation to each other. Then the little mind began to work, and the child learned that one and one make two, and that one and two make three, and perhaps, three and two make five, and so on. Little by little we learned to count; and by and by to multiply, to add up figures, to subtract. How clever we thought we were!

Now is that what the Psalmist means when he asks for a lesson from the great Teacher on how to count: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"? Does it mean, merely, to enable us to understand that this is the three hundred and sixty-fourth day of the year nineteen hundred and thirty-four; and that we have but one more day before we shall begin a new year? It is not very difficult to count after that fashion, is it? If you have not a very good memory, if you cannot hold things imaginatively before your mind, all you have to do is to get a calendar and count, and you can easily reckon up the days of the year. Surely he meant far more than that!

I.

So, then, we are to begin with this: WHAT DID THE PSALMIST MEAN WHEN HE SAID: Teach me to number my days?

What does it mean to number our days? I think it must mean at least this: *accurately to estimate the value of a day*. You have seen the teller in the bank counting over his bills,—so many pieces of paper. Perhaps, first of all, they are all of one denomination; and he comes to a large one, and instantly he pulls it out, and counts again. A one dollar bill is not a five, and a five is not a ten. Did you ever see a one hundred dollar bill? They used to be about once upon a time, but I do not suppose many people see them now! And that means more than one dollar: it means one hundred dollars, not one hundred cents.

Now what is a day? Twenty-four hours? One hour having sixty minutes, each minute sixty seconds? Oh, it means more than that! How can we estimate the value of a day? How they slip past us! How prodigally we spend them, as though there were no end to their supply! So teach us to number them that we may know the value of every sunrise, and the importance of every sunset, as the day and its record passes into history, never to be recalled.

I suppose we can recall some great days in our time. I went away for a holiday—perhaps some of the rest of you did, too—in August, nineteen hundred and fourteen, just the first of the month. And then there came a day when I rose in the morning, and it was just like many another day—a beautiful summer's morning. The birds were singing, and the waves of the lake lapped the shore, and one could smell the woods about. What a lovely day it was! At evening we learned that that day Germany had unleashed the dogs of war! Our hearts stood still as we said, "What does this mean?" On the calendar it was just one of many days. But it was a tremendous day when the cabinets of all the governments of Europe met, and one declaration of war followed another, until shortly the whole world was in flames, and millions of men stood to arms. What a terrible day that was when somebody gave the casting vote, when some will said, "Let it be war!" How this poor old world has been bleeding ever since! And oh, what blood, what tears, what broken hearts, what blasted lives, what indescribable sufferings has come to this world because of the coming of one day!

There was a day farther back than that, there had been many days of war, when Napoleon stepped into his carriage and said: "I am going to measure myself with this Wellington." Wellington had fought many of Napoleon's marshals, but he had never met Napoleon, and Napoleon had never met him. He measured himself with our great English general; and when Wellington lowered his glasses, and he saw that the field was won, it is recorded that with great emotion he exclaimed, "Thank God, I have met him at last!" That was Waterloo! And that was a great day, was it not? It set the course of history for a century. What a pregnant day it was!

So could we go back to other days when a babe was born who was called Luther. Little did people know what had come to the world when that babe first cried, and indicated that it had arrived. "In which time Moses was born!" That was a great day, was it not? And then, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king." Ah, that was the greatest of all days, when God came to earth. And when at last on another day He bowed His head and cried: "It is finished!" what marvellous things were accomplished, when the God-man died, as we read this morning,

in our room and stead! Can you estimate the potentialities of that day? Do you know what may be accomplished in a single day, just one day, properly employed? Ah, we ought to count our days, not as we count dollars, nor as we count, or would if we could, thousands, or even millions! It was Napoleon, who, when he had given one of his marshals orders on one occasion, said, "Now, sir, use dispatch: Ask me for anything but time, and I will give it; but that is the one thing that is beyond my control." Ought we not to make it a matter of conscience as Christians? Ought we not earnestly to endeavour rightly to appraise the value of a single day? I think that is what the Psalmist meant; rising in the morning, dare I say it, almost afraid to be alive, meeting the dawn with fear and trembling, because of the inestimable possibilities wrapped up within the hours of that day's opportunities, he cried, "So teach us to number our days."

Well then, I think it means *to make the best of them, to make the best of every day*. I heard a man say once that he had long made it a rule of his life to give all his money into his wife's charge. He said, "I earn it, but she has a far better idea of its value than I have; she knows better how to spend it than I do; and what is more to the purpose, she knows better how to save it than I do. Therefore I just hand it over to her, for she can make a dollar go twice as far as I can." There are some people who can make a dollar go a long way. And, how much some people can accomplish in a single day! So ought we to number our days as we number our little money and say, We must make the best of this. It will not go very far. I have not much to spend, and I shall have to get as much as I can:

"Give every flying minute  
Something to keep in store."

Now the best time to make the best of a day is while the day is young, and while it is at its beginning. The best time to save your money is not after you have spent it, but before you begin, while you still have it—not to pull a long face and say, "I wish I had known". Thus, not at the end of life must we say, "If only I had my life to live over again how different it should be!" You cannot live it over again. Nineteen hundred and thirty-five has not come, but when it is ended, many who live to see it through will look back upon wasted days and hours that have been squandered, and for which no value has been received at all. Let us make the best of every flying minute.

And, of course, it must mean *to recognize how few days we have*. There are men here this morning—not a few I doubt not—older than I. I have to labour to persuade myself sometimes, to convince myself, that I am not a young man of twenty-one. I feel as though I ought to be. I find it difficult to persuade myself that I have been standing in this pulpit for a quarter of a century. It seems like but a day; it seems but yesterday that I preached my first sermon. But twenty-five years have gone. In the natural order of events there cannot be another twenty-five years, and we had better begin to count up our days, and say, "There cannot be many more; they will soon be gone." Have you something to do in nineteen hundred and thirty-four? Is there something that ought to have that date on it? There is only one more day. The time will come—we do not know when—when if we are to do the thing that needs to be done in life, there will not

be another day, nor another hour: opportunity will be dated "To-day"—"While it is called, to-day." Now, it must be done. We have no time to waste. Oh, may the Lord teach us to number our days so that we may not be guilty of the criminal folly of spending them as though there were no limit to them!

It is a foolish thing when a man is in possession of sufficient means to maintain himself and his family, just to squander his money. Oh, these horrible beer parlours! You may well hate them. I hate them with perfect hatred. I look upon them as trap-doors to hell itself, and I abhor the very names of the men who are responsible for their iniquity. May God's mighty hand of judgment rest upon them, if they will not repent. There men squander their money, pour it out, and come to want, as the drunkard always does.

But, my friends, that man is not much worse than the man who idles away his time. You hear people talk about "pastimes" as though they had so much time they do not know what to do with it, and they must needs find something to occupy their minds while they pass it. We are exhorted to "redeem the time", to "buy up" the opportunities. What if we had to give account of our time as the man who goes to the factory in the morning, and punches the clock, indicating the time of his arrival, or, if he is working at a piece of work, must register the time of its beginning, and the time of its completion, so that every minute may be counted. Then by and by the hours on his time sheet will be put down in a book, and the customer will be charged with every minute employed in that piece of work that has been done for him. But let me tell you, my friends, God has a time clock, and the angels are recording every day and every hour and every minute, writing down what we are doing, how we are spending our time. Another year is nearly gone, and what have we accomplished?

## II.

IF WE ARE TO STUDY, WE MUST HAVE A TEACHER. If you would learn French you must have someone, who can speak French, to teach you. If you would study some branch of science, you must have somebody who is expert in that department of knowledge to instruct you. If you would become an expert in mathematics, you must have a skilled teacher of mathematics. Whom shall we select as our professor to teach us this divine science of numbering our days? The world, the flesh, and the devil cannot teach you. They can teach you how to waste your time. But there is only One Who can teach us the value of a day, and He is the One Who makes the sun to rise, and set. He is the only One Who knows the inestimable potentialities of a single hour. A single hour, did I say? A single moment! Look at that brakeman who had but a fraction of a second to act, and he made a mistake and turned a switch, and fifteen lives were blotted out, and thirty or forty more wounded. Only a second, that was all. What terrible issues may flow from a wrong action performed in a second of time! It is well that we should put ourselves under divine instruction, and sit at the feet of the great Instructor, and say, "O Lord, teach me to number my days, for I am afraid to live apart from Thy direction."

And *we must have light*. I do not believe you can know the truth of anything apart from God. "You mean

that an unconverted man can never know the truth about anything?" I mean exactly that. Truth is relative always, and if this be true here, it is because something else is true yonder; and unless I can see this in relation to that I do not know what this is. I do not believe anybody can know any truth without divine illumination, in any department of knowledge—I care not what it is. There is far more than is generally supposed in that great saying of our Lord: "I am the way, the truth, and the life". He is the Norm, the one Standard by which every thing and every body must be measured for time and for eternity. And it was He who Said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Study the record of the life of our Lord, and see how He crowded things into a day, having no leisure so much as to eat. He must be our Professor, and we must learn of Him; for we can never know the value of time until it is brought into the light of eternity. We shall never be able rightly, accurately, to appraise the value of temporal things until we see them in eternal perspective. That is the meaning of that saying of the apostle Paul: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—unconditionally? No!—"while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." He said, "I cannot understand the things that come to me; never can I rightly appraise them until I bring them into the perspective of eternity, and relate time to eternity. Then I shall know."

So when we know that our days are but fragments of the eternal circle, and that by our living to-day we are relating ourselves to eternity, we shall be able to number our days. There are so many things that now engage our thought that will appear trivial, childish, in our estimation when once we get that perspective. We shall care less for human opinion, and more for God.

And we must put ourselves under the divine Tutor, join His class; make Him our Professor; pray to Him constantly to teach us to number our days. What for? "That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom".

## III.

WHAT IS WISDOM? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? Do you remember what a climax Job lead us to in that twenty-eighth chapter: "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed it. . . . Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. . . . And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." The Psalmist said: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"—that we may learn this greatest of all wisdom: to fear God. In New Testament language the Holy Scriptures are said to make us wise"—wise to get rich? No—"wise unto salvation". To apply our hearts unto wisdom is to receive Him Who is, Himself, Wisdom. It can mean nothing less than that. So teach me to number my days that I may come into right relationship to God through Christ, and so abide.

I spoke of days. It was a great day when you received Christ, was it not? There are some of you who can look back to a day which was the day of all days, when Christ

Jesus came into your hearts, and life began anew. That is what I covet for you—not a new resolution, not a Happy New Year merely, but a holy New Year, effected by the reception of Jesus Christ into your hearts.

There were some dark days a year or so ago, and I suppose they are continuing for a good many. There was a man—I do not know his name, and there were thousands like him, for I have no particular man in mind—and one day he said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." But the next morning he learned that everything had collapsed, and that he had nothing left at all. That was a tragic day, was it not? But oh, what a day it would be if, being poor, rising in the morning we should say, "Well, what shall I do to-day? Where shall I turn to-day?"; and before sunset you should find yourself heir to a vast fortune that you could never lose! That is what it means to apply your hearts unto wisdom: to receive Christ, and with Him an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away"; to be rich forever and to have put within you that power which is the potentiality of all victories, so that at last even with death in view, you will be able to say, as did Paul: "Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I covet for you a victorious year, and I speak thus on this last Sunday before the New Year begins—for next Sunday it will be several days old, should we live to see it. May God teach us to number our days. And the best we can do is to receive Christ this morning, welcome Him ere the old year passes. Go with Him into the new year, every day yielded to Him, that He may teach you to follow Him, and to make the best of life.

Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, once again that Thou dost not leave us to ourselves, but dost condescend to our ignorance. Oh, teach us this morning to number our days. Make us all wise unto salvation, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Let us sing:

"O happy day, that fixed my choice,  
On Thee my Saviour and my God;  
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad."

## THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC HONESTY IN BUSINESS AND POLITICS

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,  
Sunday Evening, December 30th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."—Matthew 5:13.

Prayer before the Sermon

We thank Thee, O Lord, once more for the truth that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. We thank Thee for the coming of the Daysman, Who is also the Dayspring from on high. We bless Thee for the Mediator between God and man, Who lays His hand upon us both. We thank Thee for His birth, His earthly life, and for His vicarious, expiatory death, His dying the Just for the unjust to bring us to God. We bless Thee for,—

"The Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
Where sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains."

We thank Thee for a place to which we can come with assurance of access to the presence of the Holy One, to present our petitions before His throne. For this marvellous manifestation of Thy grace to us in Christ Jesus, for the infinite stoop of Deity—taking all our sins, and with them all our woes, upon Himself, that we might become partakers of the divine nature—this evening with all our hearts we thank Thee.

May the Spirit of truth this evening minister to all hearts the truth of this glorious gospel of the happy God, that so we may be brought into communication with Thee, and have access to all the resources of Thy grace, and the privilege of appropriating the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. May we all be thus enriched today.

It may be that some here this evening have heard of Thee only by the hearing of the ear, but have never beheld Thee with the eye of faith. They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. It may be there are some who know not that they are sick, and therefore know not their need of the Physician of souls. May the convicting Spirit deal with all such! May we submit ourselves voluntarily and unreservedly to divine examination, that we may know the condition of heart and conscience, of imagination, memory, and will; and so may come to understand that the whole man is sick and the heart faint. Lord, come to us, for we need Thee, whether we know our need or not:

"We need Thee every hour,  
Most gracious Lord;  
No tender voice like Thine  
Can peace afford."

We would be instructed out of Thy Book. We remember that its precepts and principles are not indigenious to this earth, or to the carnal minds of men. They belong to another realm of life. They have to do with other authorities and other responsibilities. Teach us the idiom of the divine speech. Help us to understand, O Lord, what Thou wouldst speak to us. Give us of Thy grace, that we may receive the truth in the love of it. May our hearts be hospitable to Thy word, so that without reserve we may gladly receive Thy word; for as we gladly receive it, we shall be enabled to obey it.

We beseech Thee to look upon every member of this congregation. Deal with us individually. Make us to know that Thou knowest that we are here, that Thou hast taken account of us, and that Thou hast come to address the word of Thy truth to heart and conscience. Forbid, O Lord, that we should ever assemble in this place in any formal way. Make this an auditory of the divine voice. Make it a place where God Himself shall speak. Make it the workshop of the Holy Ghost, where a work shall be done that will last through all the cycles of eternity. Bless us with a sense of Thy presence. Too often we are like Jacob; when Thou hast withdrawn Thyself we say, Surely the Lord was in this place; and I knew it not. Thou art in this place. We have Thy word for it: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. With a true faith, help us sincerely to appropriate that promise, that we may abide consciously in the divine presence. Make us to know that God is here.

Look upon all congregations assembled in the name of Christ. Bless, by Thy gracious Spirit's power, we pray Thee, every witness borne to the saving power of Christ. Strengthen the hands of all those who work for righteousness; and oppose, we beseech Thee, those who work iniquity. Bring to repentance all evil doers. May the grace of life be given this day to multitudes. Throughout the world may there be a turning to Thee of the broken and the contrite heart.

Help us as we further sing Thy praises. Cause Thy light to shine upon Thy holy Book to-night, and then make it shine into our hearts, and so let the power of Thy Spirit enfranchise our will, that, knowing the will of God, we may go out and do it, and thus adorn the gospel of God our Saviour in all things. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Christ was addressing His disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Surely there is much of sound ethical teaching for the Christian believer in that principle. Our re-

ligion is not merely a theory, designed for mental exercise and entertainment one day a week, having no special relation to every-day affairs in the individual life, and in the life of the community.

## I.

Look for a minute or two at THE METAPHOR OUR LORD EMPLOYED. Let us see something of its teaching, and then something of its application to ourselves, and to the Christian church in the day in which we live.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." We are to remember that this word was uttered by Him in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Were I a chemical expert, able to analyse to the full this figure, and tell you all that men have learned about salt, I am sure that no demonstrated fact in respect to this element would be out of harmony with this pregnant saying. Our Lord never used a figure without knowing all that was involved in it.

The salt of the earth is a very important part of the earth. I have been interested in enquiring into it a little. I have found that, according to estimate, if the oceans were dried up, the salt deposit that would remain, the residue, would amount to four and a quarter million cubic miles of salt; and that the block of salt would be fourteen and a half times the entire bulk of the Continent of Europe. But over and above that, there are great veins of rock salt. There are salt mines in England that have been in operation for centuries, and are still operating, with abundant stores upon which to draw. There are salt springs to be found. Not all the salt of the earth is in the oceans, but in the earth beside.

When the Maker of all things said, "Ye are the salt of the earth", He was not thinking of your little salt-cellar. He had a much larger and profounder view of the principle involved in that metaphor than appeared probably to His contemporaries who heard Him in the days of His flesh.

What is He speaking about here? He said that salt is remarkable for its saltiness, for its savour. That is to say, it has a distinctive characteristic, a something about it that distinguishes it from everything else. That something is that which belongs to its very nature and essence, its saltiness.

There is something about a Christian that should distinguish him from all others. Salt is not a standard of whiteness—though it may often be white. The Psalmist prayed, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." That was his standard. Salt was not remarkable for its colour, for its softness—for it may be hard. Nor is it remarkable for its moisture, though it is soluble. It is remarkable for its saltiness. That is its distinguishing characteristic.

The Lord said to His disciples, "There is something about you that must distinguish you from everybody else. You are to be as distinct and separate and marked for a peculiarly essential quality as salt itself: "Ye are the salt of the earth." He did not even say, "Ye are salty", just flavoured a little. He said, "Ye are salt. It is of your very nature; whatever this thing is that distinguishes you, it belongs to you. It is as inseparable as saltiness is from salt." There ought to be that distinguishing factor in every Christian—as there ought to be about Christians collectively—which will differ-

entiate them as individuals, or in the mass, as a body, from all other individuals, or from all other bodies. There should be a quality about us that marks us out as a separated people.

I have never heard of anybody, boy or girl, going into a store—or grown people either—saying, "Give me some salt tablets." You have never heard of a young man's presenting a young lady with a box of salt, have you? He may give her a box of chocolates, but never a box of salt. And yet it has its use. It may not always be pleasant, but it has its distinctive use. So have Christians, and so has the church.

What is that distinctive quality? *Saltiness*. Long ago Job said, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" The white of an egg may be very nutritious, it may be very useful; but it is very unpalatable without salt. That is in perhaps the oldest book of the Bible, but I think it is quite up-to-date. We still need a little salt when we eat eggs. Job said he could not eat them without salt. Salt is a corrective of insipidity. There are a great many things that are excellent in themselves, that are nutritive; they contain the vitamins and calories necessary for a well-balanced meal, according to the scientific standards, but they are not pleasant to the taste without salt. You need some condiment, something to make them palatable.

Life itself is rather insipid. People get tired of the sugar that is in it, of all the sweetness of it, of all the honey. After a while they get so weary of it that they do not want to live. I suppose there never has been a day in all the world's history comparable to the last three or four years for the number of suicides. Only a very small percentage of them are reported in the press. But people have become surfeited with life: they have no taste for it.

There is a colloquialism that is very expressive. I do not like slang, but sometimes it says a great deal in a word. You have met with people who have been what they called, "Fed up", with life,—more politely, surfeited. What they need is a little salt.

I remember some years ago having a few friends to dinner in a hotel where I had occasion to meet them. We had a private room, and dinner was served. It was a fairly good dinner—I know, because I paid the bill. I called for the waiter and said, "Look here. What do you mean in a hotel like this by serving a dinner without a bit of salt on the table?" "I am sorry, sir; but there is a supper-dance to-night, and nearly everything is in use." "But you must get us some salt. I have guests, and the dinner is getting cold." He did not come back, and I rang again. I got another waiter—but no salt. I rang, and got another waiter—but no salt. Then I said, "Send me the head waiter, or the manager." A man came. "Look at this", I said, "I invited a few friends to dinner, and you have served the dinner; but it is cold and ruined." "Why?" "You will not give us a bit of salt, and we cannot eat until we get it."

How many people there are like that, trying to dine, trying to enjoy life, without salt. They cannot enjoy it. It is not appetizing. "Ye are the salt of the earth."

I believe it is part of the function of the Christian religion to make life palatable, to make all God's good gifts useful and palatable by the use of salt, that distinctive quality of the Christian life: "For every

creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."

I believe, too, that that is true of the church: that a church ought to minister something to the very atmosphere of the city in which it exercises its ministry. I believe this church ought to make life, somehow, sweeter and more wholesome for those about it. There is an indirect, as well as a direct, influence. We ourselves must be the exemplification of these principles, and somehow discover the secret of joyous living because God is with us; and then together, each augmenting whatever grace the Lord has given to others, help to make life palatable.

What do I mean? I do not know how better to illustrate it than this. How many of you have lived in England? or Ireland—that is just as good. And I suppose the Scotch would say Scotland is better. Don't you Canadians be cross with me when I say this, but do you know that you cannot find beef in this country like you can in England? I care not where you go, nor how much you pay for it, whether it be the beef of a prize animal, this country cannot produce beef like the Old Land. You cannot get butter in this country like you can in England. They cannot make it. You cannot get cream in this country like you can in England. "But we have good butter? and good cream?" Yes. But you cannot get very far from the sea in England. The salt is distilled upon the pastures. There is a quality in the very atmosphere that never obtains in a continental country. It gives a flavour to everything you eat, a natural saltiness you cannot get artificially. The sea does it.

While it is true that Christians have always been in the minority, has it occurred to you that everything that is best in British common law has come from this Book? Has it occurred to you that our whole system of jurisprudence is founded upon the Mosaic economy? Before you get home to-night you will probably see a red light on the road, indicating an excavation or an obstruction in the street. If the city did not put that red light there, and you stumbled over that obstruction and were injured, you would have ground for legal action against the city for the damage incurred. "We are up-to-date." Are we? Do you know where that provision came from? From the Book: "If a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them." A red flag in the daytime, and a red light at night, and all the other safeguards protecting human life and property, are, in principle, found in the Book.

How did these principles find their way into our legal system? They gradually found their way into our system of laws. Yes. But were all our legislators Christians? No. How did they get there? Queen Victoria said the Bible was the secret of England's greatness. And if she has lost anything of her greatness it is because she has departed from the Book. The principles of our holy religion are as salt which helps to make life endurable, even to those who do not know whence the salt comes.

Many a man goes to court confident that he has a just case, and that the laws of this country will protect him, who is unaware from whence these laws sprang. "I do not go to church," says one. "I have no use for religion," yet he would not have a shadow of a chance

if it were not for the principles of the Bible which are built into the foundation of all British law. "Ye are the salt of the earth."

Salt is a *great preservative*. There are others, but it is one of the safest; and its preserving qualities are so marvellously combined with its palatability that the housewife, who is not a scientific dietician, but rather an empiricist, can safely use it.

Salt is a natural preservative, and a very safe one. It preserves while making things palatable at the same time.

There is in life a law of deterioration and decay everywhere. It is natural for things to go down unless they are held up. That is why you use salt in some things that you put in bottles to preserve. "Ye are the salt of the earth", and it is for Christians, as individuals, to preserve some things from corruption and decay. How I have seen it in a home. Here is a man who sometimes seems to have the very devil—or a legion of them—in him. His vicious temper has been transmitted to his children. But there is a mother, a godly woman, in that home who represents God there. You would expect that family to go to ruin—and they would if it were not for the salt in it. But how mother restrains the progress of corruption! How she influences those children, restraining them! And even her husband, while he would not admit it, is held in check. In the course of my ministry I have seen many instances where families have remained respectable, law-abiding, decent people as long as mother lived; but when mother was gone the family disintegrated. Without the salt there was putrefaction and decay.

My dear friends, such a restraining influence ought to be exercised by the church. Men and women who know the Lord Jesus, exercising their influence collectively as well as individually, ought to be as the very salt of the earth in restraining evil.

I have known of a certain workshop where from the employer to the humblest employee, every man in it had a profane tongue—and a tongue that was worse than profane—until there came into that place a young man who was a Christian. He did not preach. He was not constantly exhorting. But he bore his witness. He stood for the things of God, until at last there was not a man in that place who would think of using an oath in his presence. Salt had been put into the mass of corruption. Not all of them became Christians, but they were preserved from running to an excess of riot.

If the church of Christ is what it ought to be in our day it will make itself felt in business, in politics, and in every sphere of human activity. I will tell you how presently. I do not mean to say that we must apply the principle of coercion. We might not be able to do so if we tried. Of course, if it should occur that a Christian man should be elected a legislator he must put the flag to the top of the mast, and let it be known who and what he is, and be true to the principles of the gospel. But whether or not, if you are salt, you will make yourself felt—in the office, in the store, in the shop, everywhere. There is no excuse, just because he is being paid a certain wage, for any Christian man, a man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ, to allow himself to become partner in known evil. We may be involved in things without knowing it, but as soon as we know it we must free ourselves from it: "To him



that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." We cannot keep our consciences without being true to the highest principles of our holy religion.

If men and women everywhere, who sing the praises of God on Sunday, who profess faith in Him, would go out on Monday everywhere, and by the grace of God practice the principles of the Christian religion, something would happen in a good many offices, in a good many workshops, in a good many business houses. You will not need to do a great deal of preaching; the practice of the principles of the gospel you profess will be preaching enough. You may not be able to quote many scriptures, but that will bring the weight of Scripture to bear upon other lives. "What possesses this man", the unbelieving world will ask, "while nearly everybody practises dishonesty, and secures advancement by false pretences, he maintains his integrity and says, 'God helping me, I will not do it?'" That ought to be true if we are the salt of the earth. And when and where it is true, we shall exercise a preserving influence.

Salt is *one of the greatest of all sanitary agents*. I do not know about it scientifically, but I know I am right. Think of how every shore is washed by the salty waves. When you set sail upon the ocean there are no germs there. Everywhere the air is pure because there is plenty of salt. So ought it to be, dear friends, where the Lord's people are. They ought to purify the very atmosphere in the country in which they live. You remember the City of Jericho, how they said to Elisha, "Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." And from that time forward the water became a life-giving stream.

What is needed in our day is that salt should be put into the springs of life—into the homes of the people, into offices, and shop, and school, that the Lord might heal the waters.

## II.

"But if the salt have lost his savour"! Did you hear that? "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is second grade? It is sold at a discount? No! No! It is either good, or it is good-for-nothing. If it is good for nothing it is utterly cast out. "If the salt have lost his savour . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men." Salt that ceases to be salt, that loses its saltiness, is no good for anything else. Salt is good only for the purpose for which it was designed.

If the individual Christian loses that distinctive, distinguishing, characteristic, which differentiates him from everybody else, then he is good for nothing. There are a great many good-for-nothing Christians, people who six days of the week are not known to be Christians by their fellow-men. They have lost their saltness. They exercise no influence for good, or for God. What are they good for? "They are good for nothing." I do not think there is anything the world despises so much as a false professor. Let us be genuine salt, or cease to call ourselves salt, or we shall be "cast out, to be trodden under foot of men".

Here is a standard by which to appraise the value of a church: either it is a heap of salt, or it is "good for nothing". You say, "It does a great deal of social service; it feeds the poor. Our church distributed a great many baskets last week. We have a very eloquent minister in our church. He says many fine things. We all like to hear him preach; we quite enjoy him. And you ought to hear our choir." But that is not the divine standard—"Ye are the salt of the earth." According to that appraisal, the one reason for which the church ought to exist is to preach the gospel to the salvation of sinners, to bear witness to the grace of God before a sinful world. A church must be as salt, or it is "good for nothing". Unless we are doing that, we deserve the contempt of all men, and should be "cast out, to be trodden under foot of men".

By that standard many churches would cease to be. There are churches that are anything but salt. They are not standards of righteousness, they are not influences which the workers of iniquity fear in any degree.

## III.

HOW CAN THE CHURCH EXERCISE SUCH A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE? What can we do in the present situation? Invoke the arm of the law? No! I believe in the separation of church and state. I believe the church, as a church, must mind its own business, leaving to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. How can we do it?

*The church must keep itself clean.* It must be careful to have nothing in it that is not salt. There is no place in the membership of any New Testament church for men or women who are partners in the world's iniquity! "Do you mean to say, sir, that Christians are better than other people?" Hear what I say: we must accept the implications of our profession. If Christians are not better than other people, by God's good grace, in all walks of life, then they are good for nothing. We ought to be better people. The fact that a business man is a Christian ought to be an absolute guarantee of honesty and uprightness in all his business dealings. Not that he will advertise it, not that. And that the fact that that man is a Christian down in the shop, ought to be a guarantee to his employer that he will not purloin his employer's time; that he needs no watching; that he will conscientiously do his day's work, serving the Lord Christ. If the salt of which I speak is put into life and conduct in all walks of life, we shall not need labour unions. When it comes to pass that it is known that a man who is called a Christian is a better husband, a better worker, a better citizen—better in every way, in the sense that he is true to these ethical standards that should guide us in all our conduct—then we shall be as salt. When that is true of a church, it will not be without influence however poor it is.

You have read about short weights recently. I do not know that there has ever been a day when public morality has been lower than it is to-day. I do not know that there has ever been a day when business ethics were worse than they are to-day. Have we nothing to say about it? Can we do nothing to remedy such conditions?

Let me ask two or three questions. What if it be so that the man who presides over some great corporation,

paying his employees starvation wages, giving inferior quality and short weight to his customers, what if it be true that the men responsible for the administration of that concern are members of a Christian church? What ought to be done with them? Let me weigh my words, and speak carefully. I know whereof I speak. Many of the leaders of finance, many of the executives of these great corporations, are members of so-called Christian churches; and many of them are officers in Christian churches. Many of the members of the Legislature elected to support the present Government, probably are members of Christian churches so-called. These great financiers, responsible for the fabrication of these great combines which suck the last drop of blood out of workers, producers, and consumers, many of them occupy high places in so-called Christian churches. Is it possible that while that continues the world at large can have any respect for churches that tolerate those iniquities?

"What can be done about it?" Let us take a hypothetical case as an example. I will suppose a case. If some man were a member of this Jarvis Street Baptist Church, and it were proved that he was guilty of dishonesty in business, keeping back the wages of his employees, or short-weighting, or whatever it may be, what ought this church to do? Would it be enough to say, "We are very sorry"? I will tell you what I am sure this church would do in such a case. If that man were worth the millions of Ford, this church would say to him, "Make restitution of your ill-gotten gains, and publicly acknowledge your sin, or else until you do so this church will withdraw the hand of fellowship from you; for the world must know that this church has no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but must reprove them." Or, suppose a member of this church were a member of the Ontario Legislature, and when the Legislature is called—if Premier Hepburn ever condescends to call it—when the Legislature is called, and this thrice-abominable course of the Hepburn Government in respect to the liquor traffic comes up for endorsement by the Legislature, if that member of Jarvis Street Church were to support the Premier in that iniquity, what would this church do? I feel sure this church would unanimously take the action I should propose. I know what I would ask it to do! I would say to the church that no church abiding by the standards of the Word of God can afford to retain in its membership any man who would make himself responsible for the continuance of the iniquitous beer parlours; and that, therefore, any member of the church voting for its continuance as a member of the Legislature must cease to be a member of the church.

What would follow? If every Christian church in Ontario, in Canada, were to set up the standards of the Word of God, that every member of that church must be as salt, that the members of that church must stand for righteousness in all relationships of life—if that church were to say to such heads of corporations, and others who were proved to be guilty of dishonest practices, "You cannot continue those practices and remain in fellowship with this church"; if the church of Jesus Christ were to arise and expel from its membership, if they would not repent, all workers of iniquity, no matter how rich or influential, saying, "We are the salt of the earth, we will stand for the principles of righteousness enjoined upon us by the Word of God", there would be

a revival within a week. People would say, "At last we have seen a religion that counts for something. At last we have found an institution that keeps its skirts free from the blood of all men."

That sort of treatment would be more effective than the exaction of any legal penalty. It is the course enjoined in the Book: "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Some one may object that we should have a small church if we did that. It might be small, but it would be very influential. Your salt-cellar is the smallest vessel on your table. A very little salt can do much work. You may mix cornstarch with it and make it go further, but only the salt will be salt. That is the weakness of the church to-day: what ought to be salt is something else. But a little real salt will make a meal palatable. "Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Such a ministry the church of Jesus Christ ought to exercise in respect to public questions, making its influence felt in all relationships of life.

The main thing is to produce salt, to make people Christians.

Have you, as the Scripture says, salt in yourself? Has the grace of God put within you that new, preserving, element that will make you a minister of good to everybody you touch? If it has, then let us ask God's grace that we may exercise it. If it has not, let us ask Him to make salt of us, and by His grace to change our nature so that we may really fulfill our function, and do our part in the affairs of the world.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee for leaving us in this world, for giving us something to do. We thank Thee for the high honour that is ours, though our citizenship is in heaven, we are here as a colony representing the King and His government. Help us to live as becometh saints. Help us as Thy people more than ever before to recognize our responsibility to God. Help us to be true, and use us for Thy glory.

Bless any here to-night who are unconverted. Bless any in whose lives the application of the principles we have been discussing would bring a crisis. Help the man or woman to cast his situation on Thee, and do that which ought to be done by one who would follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Hear us, and help us, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

#### A CORRECTION

On page seven of last week's GOSPEL WITNESS, the first column, and the fourth line of the fifth paragraph, there was a sentence as follows:

"Why should Christian men boast of the release from the thralldom of 'revolution'?"

We distinctly remember personally correcting the proof at this point by crossing out the word "revolution", and writing in the margin as plainly as we could the word "revelation", which was in the copy. But for some reason this escaped the eye of the final proof-reader at the publishing house, hence "revolution" took the place of "revelation" in the sentence quoted. Such an error is rather annoying,—the only saving thing about it being that it was so absurd that many readers would recognize it as an error. Our readers will please accept our humble apology.