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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

REVIVAL IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, July 22nd, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.
"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."—Psalm 138:7, 8.

Prayer before the Sermon

O Lord, our God, like travellers who come in from the hard and weary road to find rest and refreshment in some comfortable wayside hostel, tired and bruised and beaten by contact with the things of the way, we come to Thee this morning. We thank Thee for the privilege of coming. We thank Thee for the assurance that all the luxuries of grace await our appropriation and enjoyment. We thank Thee for the memory of Thy goodness: They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, Thy word declares. We are able this morning to recall innumerable mercies:

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

Because Thou hast been our Helper, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings we will rejoice—not only trust, but rejoice. We love the Lord because He hath heard our voice and our supplications, because He hath inclined His ear unto us, we will call upon Thee as long as we live.

Look upon this congregation, every member of it, every man and woman, boy and girl. Meet us, we pray Thee, in our peculiar needs. Speak to us out of Thy Word. Make us to know that Thou dost take account of all that concerns us, and that we are dealing with One Who knoweth us altogether. Make this service one of inspiration and joy, and of abiding help to every one in Thy presence.

Similarly, O Lord, let Thy morning benediction rest upon all the assemblies of Thy people wherever they are. Minister to them, we pray Thee. Manifest Thy presence. May the weary find rest, and the perplexed find direction and guidance! May those who are weak be strengthened, and those who are without Christ be saved!

Bless us all, Thou great Father in Heaven, since we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The Apostle Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable". Against that ancient wisdom, the moderns usually pro-

test, insisting that the chief values of the Christian life, if indeed there be any value at all, are of a temporal character: that the profitableness of the Christian religion belongs to the life that now is. Without doubt there is much profit in serving the Lord. Yet it must be manifest to every one, that if we lose our perspective, and our view of future things, our devotion to Christ, our relationship to Him, impose upon us certain temporal disadvantages: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." The genuinely Christian man is debarred from participation in many things; and in many a conflict, measured by human and temporal standards, he is defeated before the conflict begins. "Behold", said our Lord, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves". The very principles we profess disarm us, and make it impossible for us to do many things which are common to men of the world.

But there is an advantage in serving the Lord. We have the earnest of our inheritance. "We have enough"—as we sang just now—"yet not too much to long for more." We have enough to go on with, an earnest to keep us during the days of our nonage, until the time of the redemption of the purchased possession. We are heirs of glory, but as yet we are not glorified. But we are saved by hope; we live for the future: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". Faith links us to the realm of the invisible, even as it did Moses, of whom it is said: "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible", "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward". And because of his hope for the future, he accounted the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. The worst of the God-fearing life is better than the best that this world has

to offer. So that those of us who serve the Lord not only have a bird in the hand, but we have two in the bush as well. We are blessed for time and for eternity. Notwithstanding, we need the inspiration of hope, and hope that is seen is not hope. For if we see that we hope for, we enter into the present possession of it; but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

I shall try to tell you this morning that, good and blessed as it is to serve the Lord, the best is yet to come. The Lord has kept the best in store, and this text tells us something of what we have now, and something of what we shall have hereafter. I should like to send you away this morning with a song of hope and of good cheer. Our God is the God of hope, and we are exhorted to abound in hope through the Power of the Holy Ghost. I believe the Spirit of God is given to us that we may live hopeful, not hopeless lives; that we may be filled with joy, even in the midst of sorrow.

Here is one speaking by inspiration, out of his own experience, who declares, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

We may have *revival in trouble*, and *victory in conflict*, and *perfection at last*. That is a summary of the programme of grace.

I.

REVIVAL IN TROUBLE! How often we need revival, revival in the spiritual sense, in the sense of a closer walk with God, a revival of hope, of inspiration, of joy in the Lord. We all need it; none of us lives on the mountain top all the time, and even if we could, the mists climb up the mountainside. I have been on the top of a mountain when I could see nothing. You cannot very well get away from the clouds and storms of life, and you will need revival.

Here is a man who did not expect to be saved from trouble, to be immune to it, but said, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me." I do not promise you, in the name of the Lord, immunity from trouble. Were I to do so I should contradict your whole experience, for there is not one of us here who has not had plenty of trouble; and we may still walk in the midst of trouble; but if we do, the Lord will be there to revive us even in the midst of our troubles. He may not remove the trouble, but He will give us grace to endure it. His reviving grace will be our blessed portion and experience.

Very well, then, you are likely to walk in the midst of *some trouble of your own making*. Most of the trouble of life is of our own authorship: we are responsible for having brought it upon ourselves. There is a sense in which we are responsible for all our trouble, for if there were no sin there could be no trouble. We have sinned, and we share the inheritance of sinners. We have our portion of trouble: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward". But personally and individually we often bring trouble upon ourselves for while we have gone astray, all of us, like lost sheep, we have also turned every one to his own way; and it is having our own way, and doing our own will, foolishly and wickedly undertaking to manage our own affairs, that has brought

most of our troubles upon us. David was a man who had plenty of trouble, but his most serious trouble was that of his own making. Do not blame other people for your difficulties until you have taken proper account of them, and duly appraised their character, and placed the responsibility where it belongs,—and usually it will rest upon your own shoulders.

People may sometimes say, "He has himself to blame"; but that does not help a man when he is in trouble. If it be so that we are in a situation from which we cannot extricate ourselves, and it is a situation of our own creation, it is none the less serious, and none the less distressing. I know how men talk: "Oh, he made his bed, let him lie in it. He brought all these difficulties upon himself; let him extricate himself. He is only reaping what he sowed. He made a bad investment, and he lost all his money. It is his own fault." But that does not help him when he is hungry, does it? it only accentuates the difficulty. What fools we have been, all of us! How woefully unwise we have been! If only we could have those days to live over again, but we cannot, and we are in the midst of a situation, perhaps, of our own making. Israel had trouble in Egypt, but nothing like the trouble they had in the wilderness. And most of the trouble they had in the wilderness was because they refused God's direction. Most of us might have been out of the wilderness and in the promised land long ago—I do not mean in heaven, but in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus—gloriously triumphant, if we had not been so wickedly rebellious, and turned back at Kadesh Barnea. I am sure many of us can look back upon spiritual crises in life when the luscious grapes of Eschol were before us, and we might not only have eaten of them, but have gone in and possessed the land that flowed with milk and honey, had not blind unbelief, so sure to err, turned us back again into the wilderness.

Well, what of it? Blessed be God *He does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities*. If He did who of us could be saved? But here is the promise: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me"; though the trouble be of my own making, the Lord in His infinite mercy will come to me and revive me in spite of my trouble. If I cannot get into Canaan, then He will give me manna in the wilderness, and water out of the rock, and bless me in spite of my ill-desert. That is grace, my friends. There is no comfort in a religion of works—there is no religion of works—no salvation by works, at least. But if our peace and comfort and future joy were conditioned upon our own faithfulness, what a miserable lot we all should be! I remind you that whatever your difficulty, whatever your distresses, the Lord will come to you in the midst of it, and revive you in the midst of trouble.

Then *there are troubles that come upon us because of our obedience to the Lord*. I have known of men who lost their jobs because they would not compromise in matters of principle, and for a while they had to face the consequences. Many people get into a great deal of trouble because they have a conscience. Conscience is a great handicap in this world, according to temporal standards. You can win at any game if you violate all the rules. Someone may speak of a certain business man, saying, "He is a very shrewd business man". What they often mean is that he is a very ordinary man, minus a conscience. Any man can get rich when he has no con-

science, if he does not care about others, but plays sharp tricks on others, cutting short corners, violating every rule of the game. Of course, it is quite possible to succeed in that way; but if you refuse to do it, and say, "I must serve God", you may find difficulty. We read about how Moab and Ammon treated Israel this morning—it was just an allusion to their historic experience; now they treated them ill notwithstanding they spared them, instead of destroying them. We all can testify that no one has shown us such unkindness as the people we have tried to help.

I do not know what your particular difficulty may be, but perhaps you have been a little blue this last week, and you have said, "I really try to do what is right; I refuse to take advantage of others when I might do so. It means financial loss, keeps me back in the scale. And while others are in comfortable circumstances, I am where I am because of my conscience. My trouble grows out of my principle". If that be so I hope you will have plenty of that sort of trouble. The more trouble of that sort we get the better. But the Lord has said He will revive us in the midst of trouble. Jonah got into a storm by reason of his disobedience. The disciples on the other hand on one occasion were sent across the sea by the Master's expressed command, and when they were in the midst of the sea there arose a great tempest upon them. They feared they would perish, and they pulled hard against that contrary wind, and they may have reasoned: "It is a strange thing that this storm should come upon us while we are in the Master's will, while we are doing what we were told to do." Sometimes when you are doing exactly what you have been told to do you will run into a head wind. But remember, the Lord says, "I will revive you in the midst of trouble: I will not forsake you."

Then there are certain troubles *indispensable to the discipline of life*. Perhaps we have said—because we are foolish—"I wish I had plenty of money. I should like to have every sort of limitation removed. Of course, I know money has hurt other people, but it would not hurt me! Other people have forgotten God when they got money, but of course I should not." So we say. But perhaps we should be the biggest sinners of all. Certain troubles are necessary to the discipline of life. We sang well this morning when we sang:

"We thank Thee, too, that all our joys,
Are touched with pain".

It is a good thing that your children have mortality written across their brows. You would worship them if they had not. He has given us joys, but all with wings—and how quickly they fly away!

Do not complain of your troubles. When you went to the dentist, as he worked with his instruments, did he not soothingly say, "Now I will not hurt you any more than I have to". And when it felt as though a red hot iron had been bored right through he said, "Did that hurt?" Of course it did! But what did you go to him for? The policeman did not take you there. You say, "I had to go". Yes, and we need the refiner's fire, we need the lapidary's wheel, we need sometimes a physician at our bedside: "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word." Therefore, troubles are not only inevitable, but indispensable. But, blessed be God, though we walk in the midst of them He will revive us!

How many people have experienced a real spiritual revival in the midst of trouble! Losing temporarily, they have gained inestimably in spiritual health. Sometimes diminishing in physical strength they have gained enormously in spiritual power. Sometimes when even faculties seem to have lost somewhat of their power and zest, there has come an additional keenness to their spiritual discernment, until they are able to see the land that is afar off, to observe the King in His beauty. Perhaps someone here is saying, "If only I could get rid of" this or that; "If I could find deliverance from my circumstances, then all would be well, and I would serve the Lord." No, my friends; He will revive you in the midst of trouble.

You must keep the sheep? Very well, you will have to meet the lion and the bear. But He will give you strength to look after them. So of the Hebrews in the midst of the fire; the fire did not kindle upon them; and they had revival in the midst of trouble. Daniel prayed three times a day, and all he got in answer was to be cast into a den of lions. I dare say some of the wise men of Babylon said, "So that is what he gets for praying, is it?" No, no! the lions *plus!* You know the story of the angel in the lions' den. The Lord sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions. Some of us ought to have been eaten up long ago, and we should have been if God's angel had not been with us to shut the lions' mouths. Sometimes when you pray you will be like Daniel, or like the Hebrew children: you will get the fire and the lions' den in answer. But in that experience you will find a new fellowship with God, a new experience of His grace, for which you will praise Him for ever more. Thus we may have revival in Toronto.

II.

And here is a promise of VICTORY IN CONFLICT.

"Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies." I have heard it said of a man that he had not an enemy in the world. If he had not an enemy in the world, he ought to have had an enemy somewhere. There are principalities and powers against which we strive, and we all have an adversary. Were you ever hated by anybody? I have been. Of course, I comforted myself by saying I did not quite deserve it; but perhaps I did! It is not a very comfortable thing to know that you have an enemy who is angry with you, who would destroy you if he could, actually one who would cut off your head. Perhaps you think you have no such enemy. Yes, you have; if you are a Christian your life would not be worth a moment's purchase if God did not take care of it. I believe the promise in His word that, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" is literally true. And God's angels would not be set to guard us, were their protection unnecessary. We do not see the angels. The servant of Elisha did not see the chariots of fire until his eyes were opened. It is said of God's angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation". Some of you would have been killed long ago if the angels had not taken care of you.

I was driving up Yonge Street the other day, and there was a stream of traffic coming down. Mine happened to be the first car in the north-bound traffic. And a woman stepped right out from the side-walk in front of my car, looking north, but never looked south at all.

I was on the alert and stopped within a car length. Do not blame the motorist always. There are some of you who are drivers, too, who by all rules of the road ought to have been killed long ago. Some drivers scarcely deserve to be alive! I never drive without seeing some senseless incompetent who has been licensed to drive a murder-car. The roads are thick with them; I do not know how people escape the consequences of their recklessness. But I do believe God's angels look after us, and that is why we are here this morning. We have a spiritual foe. He tried to get at Job, but he could not even touch him until the Lord lengthened his tether a little. He took down a little of the fence. And He said, "Do not touch his life." And he could not touch Job's life. Jesus Christ was manifested to destroy him who has the power of death. Jesus said Satan was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth. That is old-fashioned doctrine, but it is true. And it is because He stretches forth His hand against the ruler of our enemies that we are spared. Specially is that true spiritually.

And, my dear friends, you may have other enemies, clothed with flesh and blood. David had. He was not so much troubled with the Philistine as with Saul. Saul would have killed him again and again. Human nature has a fearful capacity for evil, and when once a man or woman is given up to the devil, what dreadful things such an one may do. You have a real enemy.

I was in a Convention once—I do not know whether there was said was extravagant or not—but one preacher said to another, as he put his hand on my shoulder, "This man owes his life to the fact that he lives under the British flag."

My dear friends, even in your contention for the faith there is such bitterness engendered that people would kill you if they could do it with impunity. Modernism would build the martyr fires of Smithfield again.

A friend in this church told me a story some years ago. He appeared for a fellow-deacon in a case in court, and when all the evidence was in the counsel opposing the deacon denounced the deacon's lawyer by calling him names which were anything but complimentary. When he had finished, the deacon's counsel when asked to address the court, said, "I rest my case, my lord; I have nothing to say. I leave it to the judgment of the court." He presented no argument other than the evidence had afforded. It was not a jury case, and without leaving the bench the judge gave the deacon the verdict. When he came out, the deacon said to his lawyer, "Why did you not address the court?" "Because," he said, "I wanted the verdict, and I got it. I won your case." "Bother the verdict," he said, "I wanted to hear you thrash that man."

Alas, the old man is in all of us! You have heard the story of the man who went preaching, and after a while he discovered he was not fitted for that, and studied medicine, and was graduated and practiced. Someone meeting him, after he had become a physician, said, "How are you getting along?" "Oh, far better than as a preacher. I find that people care far more for their bodies than for their souls." After a while he wearied of the practice of medicine and abandoned it for the study, and then for the practice, of law. His friend met him again when he had become a lawyer and enquired, "How are you getting along now?" "Oh, better than ever; I have found people care more for getting

the better of each other than for either their bodies or their souls." How ready we are to fight an enemy! Do not do it, my friends. Leave that matter to the Lord. He said, "Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me." You need not worry about such enemies as oppose you because of your loyalty to the divine government. Leave them to the Lord, as David did, and you will be able to say: "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Never mind if they call you names. They will not hurt you. If they call you a liar, and you are not, do not allow their animadversions to worry you. You are promised victory in conflict. You will have conflict, you cannot escape it if you are a Christian. You will not be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. You will have to do like others who fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas. We are to endure hardness as good soldiers, in the confidence that the utmost power of Deity will be exercised for our deliverance. That is what is here meant: "Thy right hand shall save me." Ah, when God stretches forth His right hand, all there is of God, to give you victory—all enemies shall melt before you.

III.

And then PERFECTION AT LAST: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me". We are not perfect now. I feel it a duty frequently to remind you of that. A few people think they are perfect, and, of course, you cannot improve on perfection. It is useless to argue with infallibility. But you are neither infallible, nor perfect. Do you know what a Pastor is for: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints". That has long been a great comfort to me. It has taught me that I need never expect to see perfect saints, but that the minister is designed to lead on to perfection. We are not perfect yet, but we shall be some day, and we shall be presented before the Throne of God without a flaw in our characters, without a stain upon our garments, not a blemish upon our reputations. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more". Only God can do that. He will blot them all out, and perfect that which concerneth us. Some day we shall have robes that are pure and white, and we shall sing the songs of Zion in the presence of God, and even the stainless, holy, angels will never be able to find fault with us. We shall be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Is not that a great salvation? O wife, put up with that husband of yours! He is a trying man, but you must not expect perfection. He will be perfect some day, if he is a Christian. Of course, at one time she thought he was perfect! And his wife! An excellent woman! But when people live together they discover that there is still room for improvement. There is in all of us. Let us be honest. We are not perfect; but we look forward to a day when all these limitations shall be ended, and He will perfect that which concerneth us, not only ourselves, but all our circumstances.

How are you getting along? "Very well, except—" What is the matter? "Oh, I am all right, but my circumstances are not just as happy as I should like them to be—a good many things that seem to be untoward and adverse." The Lord will not only perfect us, but that which concerneth us. He said: "I go to prepare a

place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself"—a prepared people for a prepared place; a preserved people for a reserved inheritance: He will "perfect that which concerneth me". That being so—and it must be so, for He has said that His mercy endureth forever—the Lord will not get tired of us. How weary we grow in well-doing; but having loved His own, He loves them unto the end. God does not change His mind, and that is the sinner's ground of hope. His mercy endureth for ever, and I know that He will perfect that which concerneth us. That was what inspired David to pray: "Forsake not the works of thine own hands."

I could not pray every day were it not for the covenant promise of Jehovah. I would not dare to ask God to do for me such things as I need if He had not first of all told me that that is just what He is waiting to do. We are to come to the throne of grace with boldness.

Did you ever have a big bank account? Perhaps not, but perhaps there was a day when you had one that was big for you. And was it not "a grand and glorious feeling"? And when you went to the bank with a cheque filled out, did you say, "May I see the manager, please?" And then did you say, "I wish you would be kind enough to accommodate me by cashing this cheque"? If you did so, the manager would say, "Why, it is your right, man. The money is there awaiting your call."

That is what the scripture means when it admonishes us to come with boldness to the throne of grace; come to heaven's bank, because you have a great bank account, and you have a blank cheque, so to speak, bearing the signature of Him in Whose name the account stands. That is what I believe that scripture means: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you". Go to the bank and get what you need. For this the Psalmist prayed, "Forsake not the works of thine own hands".

I have tried to tell you in a simple way that if you are a Christian you are a rich man. Be happy about it. But is there someone here who is not a Christian? "Yes." Would you not like that big bank account? "Yes." Well the same One Who made a deposit for me will make one for you, and you have only to go and help yourself; first forgiveness, then all that follows after.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee for all Thou hast laid up for us in Christ Jesus. Help us that with a mighty faith every one of us may take possession of our inheritance, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

SHEBA'S REBELLION AND ITS ACCOMPANIMENTS

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Third in the 1934-35 Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on Biblical Theology, which subject is included in the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, December 13th, 1934

Lesson Text: II. Samuel, chapter twenty.

The revolt against David's rule, instigated by Absalom, has been quelled, culminating in the death of Absalom himself in the wood of Ephraim. The elimination of the inspiring cause of the rebellion had the

effect of settling the rebellion itself. As soon as Absalom was dead the hearts of the people turned back to David again, and they vied with each other to see who should do the most in bringing the king back. The leaders, however, in this matter were the elders of Judah, and it is said, "He bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants."

It is worthy of note at this point that human nature seems ever to have been disposed to make occasion for wrong-doing, and thereafter to find therein justification of its evil. One might suppose that all Israel would have joined with enthusiasm in the action of the elders of Judah, but instead of that the men of Israel complained that they had not been put on the committee! That a certain very commendable course had been taken, but that their co-operation had not been solicited! Thus they found occasion for grievance in the abounding loyalty of the men of Judah (Chap. 19: 41-43).

The men of Judah justified their initiative by saying that they were David's next of kin, and that their zeal for him was thus easily explained. Notwithstanding, the men of Israel insisted that they had ten parts in David, where Judah and Benjamin had but two.

That is like cantankerous human nature always. Probably if Israel had brought David back without Judah's co-operation, Judah would have been just as jealous. Thus it is still sadly true that even in the doing of good, men will find occasion to do evil. There could have been no question as to the value of the first apostolic miracle, both to the individual and to society: a beggar had been made whole. Notwithstanding, the apostles were made to give an account of the "good deed done to the impotent man".

We come now to consider the rebellion of Sheba. The preacher long ago observed, "The hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." As there are some people who find occasion for evil in the good deeds of others, there are some also who are always ready to take advantage of others' disaffection. Sheba knew of the little smouldering jealousy that led Israel to complain of Judah's zeal, and took advantage of it to lead the people of Israel once more in rebellion against David.

Between the men of Israel, and Sheba, the son of Bichri, the man who desires to pursue a straight and honest course will be subjected to the gravest provocations.

The rebellion of Sheba forced David to give immediate effect to a promise he had made, through Zadok and Abiathar the priests, to the elders of Judah: "Say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab."

Sheba's rebellion made the mobilization of the warriors of Judah necessary. Hence David commissioned Amasa to mobilize the army. The time given him was limited to three days. One can readily understand that in the rather chaotic condition of the kingdom at the time, Amasa's task was rather a difficult one. It is not surprising therefore that "he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him". David intended to honour Amasa, and free himself from the

dominance of Joab; for he had been greatly displeased at Joab's disregard for his command that Absalom should be dealt with gently, and he doubtless was further distressed by the fact that Joab had compelled an outward acquiescence in his act of justice.

That which he intended should honour Amasa only proved his destruction. It is not always an advantage to be thrust into a position of prominence. Very often it provokes others to jealousy, and not infrequently produces tragic results. Many a man, like Amasa, would have lived longer had he been left to serve in the ranks, or as a humble captain, instead of being advanced to the principal command.

Amasa's delay in effecting the mobilization of the men of Judah led David to turn to Abishai, Joab's brother. The king expressed his fear that Sheba's rebellion might prove more disastrous than that of Absalom. It was really a revolt of much smaller dimensions, and under a leader of far less ability. Perhaps David's fear was due to the long tension occasioned by Absalom's defection. David had probably become weary. We need to be on our guard against this principle. When men grow old, even the grasshopper becomes a burden. It not infrequently occurs that it requires much less to trouble even a strong man at the end of a hard day than at the beginning. It was because Sheba followed Absalom that David feared him more. Let us beware of the tendency to disheartenment which is always accentuated by multiplied troubles.

So the army was assembled to pursue after Sheba. It would appear that Abishai rather than Joab was in command; but Joab accompanied his brother, and the army was still composed of those who were called "Joab's men". It is difficult to depose some men. It is useless to appoint someone else to command the army while leaving Joab in a subordinate position. His great prestige, and his personal influence, will not be obliterated by his resignation.

Amasa's delay gave Joab his opportunity to reap vengeance upon him. In the course of their pursuit of Sheba they caught up with Amasa: "When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them." Here follows a description of Joab's subtle deception: "And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out. And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri."

Joab's action was unworthy of a brave soldier: it was the action of a cowardly murderer. Perhaps Amasa was personally a strong and brave man. It may be that Joab feared to meet him in open combat, and so took this treacherous method of destroying him.

This whole passage is very suggestive of spiritual truth. As David would have promoted Abner, who had been his chiefest foe, to the chief command of the army; and as now he proposed to make Amasa captain of the host in Joab's room, so divine grace is ready ever to blot out the record of the chiefest rebel, and make him one of the greatest saints. Thus the Apostle

Paul, who esteemed himself chief of sinners, and not meet to be called an apostle because he had persecuted the church of Christ—notwithstanding he had had part in the murder of Stephen, he became, by sovereign grace, the chiefest of all the apostles.

But Amasa lost his opportunity through tardiness or deliberate procrastination. Thus do men, by their wilfulness, run counter to the gracious purposes of God. We are admonished not to give place to the devil. But Amasa, by his tardiness, gave place to Joab; and furnished him with an occasion for the convenient execution of his treacherous design. Thus the procrastinator, or the one who merely neglects his salvation, by so doing, throws himself into the path of the enemy.

What an illustration we have here too, in Joab's conduct, of the methods of that spirit that "now worketh in the children of disobedience"! There is a spiritual Joab who has been a murderer from the beginning. He approaches his victims just as Joab did, wearing all his military garments, the girdle about his loins, bearing his sword.

Joab met his fellow-soldier Amasa as though to cooperate with him in pursuing the king's enemies. As he approached him his sword, as though by accident, fell out; and this afforded Joab an opportunity, without notice, to have his sword unsheathed in his hand. Thus the devil meets his victim. Thus he accomplishes his purposes in ways that seem to be quite natural.

Furthermore, Joab's salutation of Amasa is suggestive of the way in which sin and Satan approach their victim. With an enquiry after his health, and his kiss upon Amasa's cheek, Joab drives his sword into Amasa's body. So sin slays its victims with a kiss, and a profession of interest in his health and prosperity.

The unsuspecting attitude of Amasa is also worthy of note: "Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand." Was he careless? I think not. It may be there was nothing in Joab's record to justify any suspicion of the act he then contemplated, for Joab's right hand was engaged: it was with the right hand he took Amasa by the beard to kiss him. Therefore his sword, which he had with apparent carelessness lifted from the ground when it fell out of its scabbard, was in his left hand. But Joab apparently was ambidextrous: he could use both hands. It was with his left hand he murdered the unsuspecting Amasa.

We must beware of the devil's left hand. We must see to it that we do not allow ourselves thus to be ignorant of his devices.

Having slain Amasa, Joab and Abishai continued their pursuit of Sheba, "and Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway". The body of a man wallowing in blood in the midst of the highway would attract attention anywhere, and it is not to be wondered at that "all the people stood still". If the devil's murdered victims were left uncovered in the midst of life's highway, if the devil's work could everywhere be exposed to view; if, in short, men could see sin "when it is finished", instead of at its beginning when, with apparently great consideration, it enquires after one's health and offers a kiss, no doubt many would cease from following after Joab.

But "one of Joab's men stood by him". The devil never leaves what he does exposed to view without leaving somebody near at hand ready to cover it up. So

"when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab." Thus does the devil cover up his tracks, and hide from view his murdered victims—and thus men follow after him.

This story of Joab's murder of Amasa would afford a fine illustration upon which to base a temperance sermon, showing the murderous conduct of the liquor traffic.

Sheba was at last overtaken in Abel of Bethmaachah, and David's army besieged the place, "and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down".

There follows a story which has in it a world of wisdom. We remember to have read somewhere in Mr. Spurgeon's works words spoken at a time when the peace of Europe was being threatened by angry exchanges between certain European chancelleries. Mr. Spurgeon said that if the Czar of Russia and the Emperor of Germany, or of Austria, or whoever may have been the heads of the nations then looking angrily at each other,—that if these national heads would come out from their palaces and fight it out as man with man, he would be willing to hold their coats. Many wars have been fought on principle, and this conflict with Sheba and his associates had, of course, a sound principle at its base: it was a rebellion against constituted authority. But many wars have been like this, which was really the rebellion of one man who had incited a great many others to join him. Why therefore should hundreds be slain for the sake of destroying the influence of one man?

The wise woman of Abel discussed that principle with Joab, in asking why a peaceable city, and its inhabitants, should be swallowed up for the sake of one man. And Joab answered that if the people of Abel would surrender the one rebel, he would depart from the city. The woman thereupon promised that his head should be thrown over the wall. Having thus negotiated with Joab, the woman went, in her wisdom, to the people of the city, explaining to them that they would be accessories in this rebellion if they afforded shelter to one of the king's enemies. They therefore beheld Sheba, and cast out his head to Joab. Whereupon Joab and his army retired from the city—and the rebellion was at an end.

There is a principle of great importance here also. Sometimes a host of people are led astray by one man. It sometimes happens in a church that "one sinner destroyeth much good". One mischief-maker can spread the fire. One Sheba can raise a revolt. We need the wisdom of the woman of Bethel at this point to deal with the one responsible for the trouble, and thus save the many.

The rebellion being ended, we have in the remaining verses of the chapter a condensed account of the organization of the kingdom following David's return. Joab remained captain of the host; Adoram was chancellor of the exchequer; Ahilud was made archivist; Sheva was secretary-of-state; and Zadok and Abiathar were Archbishops respectively of Canterbury and York; while Ira must have been Lord Privy Seal or something of the sort. He apparently had little to do but be "a chief ruler about David".

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONVENTION OF THE UNION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES OF ONTARIO AND QUEBEC

During the past few weeks information has been received of blessing in our churches as a result of the observance of the day of humiliation and prayer, on November 11th last, and the consequent emphasis on revival. For this we thank God, and take courage. We are on right lines in this matter, and continuing in earnest supplication we shall experience a gracious outpouring of the Divine Spirit. This is what we desire, therefore let us in a special manner present our request for revival unto the Lord. He has been good to us throughout the year, and has richly blessed us; therefore in the spirit of praise, adoration, and intercession, let us give thanks for blessings received, and pray for a greater manifestation of the Divine presence and power.

It is encouraging to know of this gracious attitude of our Lord's. He is always willing to bless: but we must likewise remember our duty toward Him, lest by our forgetfulness of the same we hinder the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. God is our Creator, and Redeemer, therefore, we belong to Him in a two-fold manner. And, being His property, He expects the full use of it. He desires, and has the right to be, first in the life. This means first in thought, word, and deed, and in the disposal of our possessions. It is quite easy to sing consecration hymns, and to speak of devotion to God but we must in a practical way manifest our sincerity of purpose. And there is no better test than that of the unselfish giving of self and goods to the service in which we are engaged. As God's people, we should ever be at His disposal, to be used as He desires, in any place, and at any time. And in the matter of our possessions, whether many or few, we should make certain that God receives His due portion. The Israelite was commanded to give to Him both tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:7-12), and to present to Him the firstfruits of his increase (Ex. 23:19; Prov. 3:9, 10). The obligation of putting God first was impressed upon those ancient people. It was the firstfruits of harvest they were enjoined to give, not the lastfruits. God must receive His portion first, and rightly so, inasmuch as He had given the whole harvest. And so important was obedience to this command esteemed that future blessing depended upon it. In the spiritual realm the same principle is operative. Give in accordance with the measure of our prosperity (I. Cor. 16:2), and reap in relation to the same (II. Cor. 9:6). We expect God to put our interests first: are we giving Him the first place in our practical affairs? The Israelite, under law, gave God both tithes and offerings: are we taking advantage of grace to treat Him less generously? As we continue to pray for revival, and meet together from time to time, shall we make sure that we are acting honestly with God and manifesting a consecration of a practical kind. Then we may with confidence appeal to Him to do His part, and expect a gracious refreshing from His presence that shall make 1935 the most blessed year in our history. Keep praying, believing, looking up!

With kindest wishes of the season to all pastors and people,

Yours, in the service of the King,

ALEX. THOMSON.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 3

First Quarter January 20th, 1935

THE GODLY AND THE UNGODLY IN CONTRAST

Lesson Text: Psalms 1 and 2.

Golden Text: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."—Psalm 1:1.

Bible School Reading: Psalms 1 and 2.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Prov. 4:20-27; Tuesday—Gen. 39:1-6; Wednesday—Nah. 1:7-15; Thursday—Acts 13:34-41; Friday—Mark 15:1-14; Saturday—John 1:6-14.

I. INTRODUCTION

With this lesson we enter upon the study of a most precious part of God's Word. There is presented therein the second of the experiences of godly men, and the consolation which they found in their God. The psalms are of a devotional nature, yet permeating them there are prophetic allusions and spiritual implications which direct our attention to the Messiah in His suffering, and in His glory. There are one hundred and fifty psalms in our collection, relating, among other things, to simple praise of the Lord (Ps. 19), temple services (Ps. 24), complaints (Ps. 55), national history (Ps. 78), confession of sin (Ps. 51), imprecations (Ps. 109), and the Messiah (Ps. 110). The name of the writer is not given in each case, nor are the circumstances of the writing always mentioned. The titles would indicate that seventy-three were written by David; twelve have the name of Asaph attached to them; ten, that of Korah, or the sons of Korah; two, that of Solomon; one, that of Moses; one, Heman; one, Gethan; and fifty are anonymous. Some of the latter undoubtedly belong to David. When these were all brought together we know not, but it may have been in the reign of Hezekiah.

II. PSALM ONE

This psalm is fittingly placed at the beginning of the collection on account of its content, which describes the state of the godly and the ungodly, and the end of both; being in some respects a summary of the teaching of the book. The psalm is anonymous respecting authorship, though sometimes ascribed to David. In it there are two sections: the one relating to the godly (vs. 1-3), the other, to the ungodly (vs. 4-6). In the first, the virtues of the godly are set forth in a negative and a positive manner. Negatively, the godly man "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful". Note the descent manifest in fellowship with the wicked in walking, standing, and sitting; also the gradation of evil evidenced in the words, "counsel", "way", "seat". No person becomes a sinner overnight. It is by a gradual process that he reaches such a condition, and generally through the influence of others. The wise course, therefore, is to shun the company of the ungodly, from the standpoint of fellowship (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Taking a decided stand for God will settle our companionships, for those who do this are not welcomed by the wicked. The godly person is set apart by, and for, his God (Titus 2:14, Eph. 5:25-27); and must be willing to endure the same treatment as his Lord (John 12:18-21). Note the identity of the ungodly as including all who have not surrendered unto God through Christ (Eph. 2:12); and observe the privilege, responsibility, and opportunity, of the godly in bearing testimony against sin, and on behalf of righteousness through Christ (Acts 1:8; Rom. 6:11-14).

The godly man, from the positive standpoint, delights "in the law of the Lord", and meditates therein day and night.

In this way, and from this source, he derives nourishment and guidance. The Word of God is always with him, and governs his deeds. To Him the divine record is not dull reading. It is interesting, bright, instructive. And if in that early day the godly people took delight in meditating in the law, which forms but a part of our collection of books; how much more should we do so, when in our possession there is the complete canon of sixty-six books of both Old and New Testaments! Think of the wondrous historical, prophetic, and devotional, teaching contained therein, and the great privilege of receiving the disclosure of God's mind on the problems of life. The systematic regular reading of Scripture requires emphasis, together with the necessity for meditating thereon, and of giving obedience thereto. The result of living in such a manner is manifest in the life. Such a person, according to the psalmist, becomes like a tree, characterized by a settled or fixed position in accordance with the plan of the planter, a healthy condition, a fruitful experience, an evergreen or all-the-year-round freshness of life, and a prosperous service. Such a life is blessed beyond words, being unaffected by change of circumstances, and useful to those with whom it comes in contact. Observe the secret of such a life in its connection with the streams, or source of life. Its perennial freshness is due to contact with God.

In contrast with this life is that of the ungodly. They "are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away". The picture is that of chaff being blown away by the wind at the winnowing of the grain after harvest. Note the instability, fruitlessness, and death, implied in this figure, and the application of the principle to the life without God (Rom. 6:21; Eph. 2:1). The end of such a life is an eternity without God. They "shall not stand in the judgment", but shall be separated forever from the righteous (Matt 13: 40-43). Note the blessedness of the latter (Rev. 21:1-8).

III. PSALM TWO

Psalm two, like psalm one, is without a title, but we are later informed of its Davidic origin (Acts 4:25). The historical circumstances underlying the psalm are not stated, but the content seems to go beyond any particular happening in the life of the king, and to relate that which affects the Messiah; at that time, future. The psalm therefore belongs to the messianic class, and divides naturally into four sections respecting its content. In the first section there is a scene descriptive of men in rebellion against God (vs. 1-3). The picture is that of a tumultuous assemblage of people revolting against the government of God. They rage; they imagine a vain thing; they are led by their rulers; and they advocate complete severance of all obligation to God. In this they are but manifesting the attitude of the sinful human heart toward God (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7). Note the fulfillment of this in relation to our Lord's first coming (Matt. 27:20; Acts 4:21-31); and also in connection with the end of the age (Rev. 16:14; 19:19). The saints of God are likewise affected by it (John 16:33).

In the second section a scene in heaven is depicted, descriptive of the attitude of God toward His rebellious creatures; wherein there is disclosed the divine calmness, derision, and almighty power, in contrast with the disturbed condition of earth's inhabitants (vs. 4-6). Men cannot prevent God carrying out His sovereign purpose. His King shall be set upon the holy hill of Zion, and every knee shall bow unto Him, and confess Him Lord "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). Note the foolishness of rebelling against God, and the inevitable retribution to be meted out to the rebellious. In the third section the royal decree is published by the Son, declaring His eternal Sonship, and the universal rule which has been granted to him (vs. 7-9; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; Dan. 7:13, 14). Note the ultimate victory which this intimates, and the encouragement which it gives to those who proclaim the gospel in these days. The Lord's people are on the winning side. The last section records the divine appeal to men to be wise, and submit to the rule of the Lord (vs. 10-12). The appeal is made particularly to the rulers, as being the leaders in this rebellion. They are called upon to be wise, to be instructed, to serve the Lord with fear, to rejoice with trembling, and to acknowledge the authority of the Son. This denotes the merciful disposition of God; but the warning of coming divine wrath must also be observed.