

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

### CHRISTIANITY AND SOME OF ITS COUNTERFEITS

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 13th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."—I Corinthians 1:18.

#### Prayer before the Sermon

O Lord, we thank Thee for the quiet calm of this the evening of Thy day. We thank Thee for the privilege of being where Thou art. We marvel at this, that God in His infinite grace should have made it possible for sinful men happily to dwell in the divine presence. We thank Thee for the cleansing blood, for the great fact of redemption in which many of those present in this house this evening rejoice.

We pray that the Spirit of truth, by Whose inspiration the words of Thy holy Book were written, may be present with us this evening hour, to tell us what they mean. We remember that it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. We pray for that revealing ministry, that it may be exercised in the experience of the members of this congregation. Give to us, we pray Thee, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the personal knowledge of Christ. Let us not be content with the letter of Thy Word, but rather give us spiritual discernment that we may see and rejoice in the things that are hidden from the carnal mind; for the things Thou hast hidden from the wise and prudent, Thou hast revealed unto babes. Help us to be as babes in Thy presence this evening, that those of us who are Thy children may rejoice afresh in our inheritance in Christ; that any whose minds may be confused because of the babel of voices which call them hither and thither, may have their thought of Thee clarified, that they may hear a Voice behind them saying, This is the way; walk ye in it. Make the way of life so plain to us all that not one of us shall be under any misapprehension as to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

We thank Thee for the gospel of Thy grace. We thank Thee that when we could not climb up to heaven, when we could not scale the ladder whose top reached even to the skies, Thou didst come down to us in the person of Thy Son, and in Him Thou didst make possible the realization of the Babel-builders' dream, a city and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven, that should make us a name. We thank Thee for the name that is above every name. We thank Thee for Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We

come, Thou Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this evening that we may worship Thee. Accept the adoration of our hearts. Accept the praises which we bring. Grant, we beseech Thee, as we open Thy Word under the tutorship of the Divine Spirit, that we may be made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. As thou didst gather Thy disciples about Thy feet, and privately explain that which Thou hadst publicly declared, so give to each one of us the priceless advantage of that private and personal instruction; for it is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, said our Lord, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. So teach us that we may all come unto Thee. Verify Thy gracious promise, Him that cometh to me, I shall in no wise cast out.

Hear us in this our evening prayer, for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

I might have selected any one of a hundred or more texts which would have served my purpose equally well as the one which I have announced. I have announced it for the sake of the principle which it contains, namely, that salvation, coming through the preaching of the cross, consists in the "power of God". That is to say, it is of God, that He is the Saviour, and that no man can save himself.

I will tell you why I thus speak this evening. Some years ago I was a member of the Ministerial Committee of McMaster University. All the students who were candidates for the ministry had to come before that Committee; and, having been examined by the Committee, they were given a certain rating. They were rated as Class One, Class Two, or Class Three. The beginners were, of course, always put in Class Three. The practice was for the Chancellor, as a student was introduced to the Committee, to name some member of the Committee to question him. Before the student came in, one of the professors who had a record before him, told us all that he knew about the student who was next to be admitted.

There was a certain student whom the professor described as rather an impossible man. He said he had little hope of him. He did not know what to make of him. At ordination councils ordinarily the candidate is asked to give a statement of his conversion, showing that he is saved; then of his call to the ministry, why he believes he has been called to preach the gospel; and then, a statement of his doctrinal beliefs, what he believes the Scriptures to teach. As one after another came in, the Chancellor said, "Mr. So-and-So, will you please ask this student a few questions?" They all put the stereotype questions: Tell us about your conversion; why do you believe you were called to the ministry? What do you believe?

When this man came in of whom the professor had little hope, the Chancellor turned to me and said, "Will you ask this man some questions?" I do not know whether he thought it was a particularly hard nut to crack, or whether he thought it was not even worth cracking! At all events, he selected me as the interrogator. I did not ask that young man whether he was converted: I assumed that. Nor whether he was called to the ministry: I assumed that he at least believed it. Nor did I ask him to tell us all he believed, for there was a procession coming, and we had no time thoroughly to examine into their doctrinal position.

I asked him a simple question: "Mr. So-and-So, how do you enjoy preaching?" "Very much, sir." "How do the people enjoy it?" He smiled a little. "Well, perhaps I ought not to answer that question—they come anyhow. And some of them say they have been blessed." He was very modest. I said, "Where do you get your texts?" "Out of the Bible." "I suppose you do. Perhaps I ought to have put the question in another form. How do you select them?" "I do not know that I have thought particularly about that. But now that you mention it, I think I can say that I get my texts in the homes of the people." "In the homes of the people? Do you go around asking the people what you shall preach?" "I do not mean that. I feel it a duty to see the people as frequently as I can, and before I go I always ask the Lord to direct my steps. The moment I enter a home I make it perfectly clear that I have not come to make a social call, but that I have come as a servant of Christ, to find out where they stand in relation to Him. I begin at once to find out something of their religious condition."

He did not put it as I now put it, but what he really told us was that he was very much like a physician who, when called to see a patient, opens his bag, and first of all takes the patient's temperature, tests the pulse, and uses his stethoscope; to ascertain the patient's general condition. "I enquire," said this student, "as to their religious state. Very often they have problems. They say, 'Pastor, I am glad you called this afternoon. There is something that has been puzzling me.' I try to answer their questions, and to answer them from the Word of God. When I get home after an afternoon's experience like that, having quoted the Word of God all the afternoon, there will be several texts standing out in my mind as though to say, Preach me! Preach me! I usually select one of them. I have not thought of it before, but that is how I get my texts, while dealing with the people."

"Do you call that preaching?" I asked. "I am here to learn, sir. I do not know much about it. I am only

beginning. Perhaps I am all wrong. But you asked me what I do, and I have told you." "You think that is your business, Sunday after Sunday, to go into your pulpit and use that precious hour answering these questions that people have been asking you during the week?" "I fear that is what I have generally done. It may be wrong, and I am here to receive instruction." "What is the result? When Sunday comes, and you preach a sermon from one of these texts, what follows?" "I find people usually come to me and say, 'I am glad you preached that sermon this morning. That is a problem that has been troubling me.' The people upon whom I have called had problems that were typical of the problems and difficulties of many others; and in trying to help the few, I have found I helped the many." "And that is your idea of preaching, just to answer these questions?" "Yes, sir; but if I am wrong I hope these gentlemen will tell me." "Young man," I said, "I hope you will never get away from that. That is preaching. We are not commissioned merely to deliver sermons, to prepare essays: we are here to grapple with the great problems of life, to bring them into the light of God's Word, and seek to answer them from His Book, the Book of eternal wisdom. Go on like that, and you will have a useful ministry."

When that young man went out, the professor said, "I am amazed. I think we had better put him in Class One!"

I shall follow the example of that student, and assume this evening that questions which have been asked me recently by people with whom I have had converse, are representative of questions that occupy the thought of other people; and thus, in seeking to answer their questions, perhaps I shall answer yours. For, after all, this is the question of all questions, What is it to be saved? How are we saved? How may we be absolutely sure we are saved? These are the important questions.

Sometimes even the Lord's people are greatly troubled, harried, by the devil. Before the children of Israel left Egypt, Pharaoh was content to send his taskmasters with whips after them. He set them over the people. But after they had got clean out of the land, and were making for a new life, he sent all his horses and chariots of war. And many a believer has found that he has been far more troubled of the devil after he has received Christ than before—or, at least, when he has resolved by God's grace to leave Egypt behind him. Then he finds that all the dogs of hell are howling after him. It may be that among the Lord's people here this evening there are some who have a doubt in their minds. They are not perfectly clear on this matter. There may be some who have been almost tempted to cast away their profession, instead of holding it fast without wavering.

## I

The essence of this text is—and to that norm, to that standard, I shall bring other things—the essence of this text is that the salvation that is in Christ Jesus brings to bear upon human life all the power of God. It comes *from* God. It is *of* God. It is *in* God. To that standard I want to bring SOME VERY CLEVER COUNTERFEITS OF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.

I do not want to be technical; I shall not weary you with technicalities, but you will allow me to use the

word, theology, without frightening you. Theology is very necessary. The Bible is the source of it, and I wish you could all become theologians, and know the very science of your salvation, the why and the wherefore of it, as well as the fact of it. It will be all the better for us to be thus thoroughly instructed in the things of God. But *there is a theory to the effect that the death and resurrection of Christ were designed to exercise over the lives of men a certain moral influence.* It is sometimes spoken of as "the moral influence theory". I am not now speaking of modernistic views of the Bible. Even those who accept the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture thus interpret the gospel; while believing that Jesus was God, divinely begotten, born of a virgin, that He lived a perfect life, they speak as though He died at last a martyr to His convictions, and left the world an example that we should follow in His steps. Thus they teach that the atonement was designed to exercise a certain moral influence over men, that its effect was and is manward, rather than Godward.

That is true, but it is not the whole truth. There is nothing more dangerous, often, than a half truth. It is true that Jesus Christ left us "an example, that (we) should follow his steps". Perhaps some of you remember the book by Charles Sheldon, "In His Steps; or, What Would Jesus Do?" It had a great vogue in its day. People were carried away with it. It was good enough so far as it went, but it was only a half truth. Of what profit will it be to us to know what Jesus would do if we have not the power to do what He would do? That view of the religion of Christ, of the salvation that is in Christ, in the last analysis, is a gospel of idealism, and sets before us the highest of all ideals, even the perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ; and, by setting that before us, we are to be so influenced by the sublimity of that example as to try to emulate Him, and do what He would do.

But, my dear friends, that makes the gospel, not a gospel of power, but a gospel of influence. There is a world of difference between influence and power. We all exercise a certain measure of influence upon the people with whom we consort, though we may have no power over them. The defect of that view is this, that at last everything depends upon my desire, my resolution, my assumed ability, to follow the example of Jesus Christ. But it appeals to human resource, resources of the mind, all the faculties of our being engaged in a strenuous endeavour to live the Christian life. I say, that is well enough as far as it goes. But I am reminded of a remark made by the great Dr. Joseph Parker. He said that when on one occasion he heard the great Polish pianist, Paderewski, perform, after he got home he felt like destroying his piano; for he felt it was useless for anybody to try to play after that. Of what value is it to have a lofty conception of life put before us if we are left to our own resources, to translate that ideal into actuality?

It is a very popular theory, but it leaves the impoverished soul vainly struggling to attain the impossible, with no assurance of ultimate perfection.

Let me name, because of its kinship in principle, although it is vastly different in many ways, *another counterfeit known as Christian Science.* That is a very popular kind of religion, which is neither Christian nor science. What is it in essence? It is a philosophy

of good cheer, a kind of religious Cuesism, an appeal to all our mental resources to summon our power to abolish evil by denying its existence. Thus, it would teach that the way to get rid of the ugly things of life is to deny the reality of their existence. The way to get rid of sin is to define it as an illusion of mortal mind. And a deliberate assumption of cheerfulness is supposed to dispel the shadows of life.

My friend, the late Dr. A. C. Dixon, used to say he could identify a Christian Scientist walking down the street; that the smile and invariable assumption of cheerfulness were so patently a religious varnish that no one could mistake it. It is forced by mobilizing the resources of the mind. One must bring himself into a mental state where he persuades himself that all is well.

I give you an example of that principle as applied to physical healing. Years ago there was a young lady in this church, a member of one of the families of the church, whom I knew very well. She married a dentist; I married her one beautiful June morning at seven o'clock. The husband was prosperous, and they seemed to get on. They went to live in the north end of the city, and I saw little of them for a number of years, touching them only occasionally.

After some years I heard that this young woman had been very ill from a heart affection. At that time they had a little girl of some three or four years. One day I called on the young wife's mother, and enquired for the daughter. "How is Gladys?" "Very much better. Very much better. She has received great help from Christian Science." "You amaze me." "Yes; she has been greatly helped. She has been attended by a Christian Science practitioner, and is so greatly improved that her husband has reached the conclusion that all she needs now is a change of scene." This was early in the week, perhaps about Tuesday. "As a matter of fact, Gladys left for California yesterday. We have her little girl here; she is staying with us until her mother returns. Gladys' husband thinks she will be quite well when she has had a change."

I said, "Mrs. So-and-So, I do not want to be a gloomy prophet, but I am concerned about Gladys. Did she go alone?" "She is going to friends, but is making the train journey alone. Why are you alarmed?" "If Gladys had organic heart trouble, it is still there. A physician will tell you that you can apply certain drugs, say, strychnine or digitalis, that will stimulate the heart; and for a brief period the heart will seem to function normally. Has it ever occurred to you that there is such a thing as a mental stimulant?" "What do you mean, Mr. Shields?" "Gladys had already wearied of the struggle, had she not?" "Yes, she was very discouraged, and was going down under it." "Your Christian Science practitioner, herself vigorously healthy physically, probably, came in and reinforced Gladys' failing will by her resolution; she administered a mental stimulant." "I do not know whether that is true or not, but Gladys certainly is very much better." "I hope I am wrong. If it was only a functional disorder, her recovery may be permanent, but if it is organic, it is only temporary relief she has received."

At the end of that week the mother called me. I had said to her, "I fear when Gladys gets to Los Angeles, and there is nobody there to re-enforce her will, and the effect of that stimulant wears away, there may be a dangerous

reaction." The mother told she had just received a telegram from Los Angeles. She said, "Gladys arrived. They got her off the train, but shortly after she arrived she died; and we have had a wire enquiring as to the return of the body."

O these damnable healing cults! These heretical systems! What had that young woman been taught? To depend upon herself—but the disease was still there, and untouched.

The same principle is applied to moral questions, to the general art of living; and the trouble that is within, sin, deep-seated, is left there. It is organic, imbedded, with death at the heart of it—and is never touched by the invocation of human powers. People are taught to believe that it is not there. This so-called Christian Science is but a religion of the mind.

Let me name another counterfeit that is very subtle. I have heard of experts who spend their lives handling money in banks, being deceived by counterfeit money. A man has to be a clever artist, to counterfeit a genuine bill, has he not? To engrave the plate in such a way that it cannot be detected from the genuine requires great skill on the part of the counterfeiter. But behind the genuine there is a deposit of gold; there is an authority; there is a promise to pay—and behind the promise, ability to pay. The mere piece of paper, even when it is genuine, is only a guarantee of certain invisible wealth stored away in the state treasury. The counterfeit may be almost an exact facsimile, it may be just as truly a work of art as the original bill, but it has nothing behind its promise to pay.

The devil has counterfeited the religion of Christ, and issues many counterfeits by which the unwary are deceived. Let me name another, that which is called *The Oxford Group Movement*. I refer to it only for purposes of illustration. You say, "That makes no appeal to the intellect." I should think not! It is devoid of any intellectual content. It is suited to people who do not think at all. It is one of the biggest frauds, one of the greatest conglomerations of nonsense, ever foisted upon men in the name of religion. You will not be troubled about thinking in the Oxford Group Movement. You do not need to re-think your position, no matter what you are. You may take advantage of any benefits the Oxford Group Movement has to offer, and remain whatever you are—Roman Catholic or Evangelical, Trinitarian or Unitarian, Fundamentalist or Modernist, Supernaturalist or Anti-supernaturalist. Indeed, as our American friends would put it, you may check your brains when you join the Oxford Group. You will not need them; there is no opportunity for their use. So long as you can wear a dinner jacket, you may be what you will. Oxford Groupism is not an appeal to the intellect, but an appeal to man's social instincts. Think, for example, of their house-party principle. Any of us could, if we tried hard, be on our best behaviour for a week! Would you like to go to a good hotel and live comfortably for a week—put on your evening clothes, and mix with a company of agreeable people who slap you on the back and say, "This is a great life"? It is a hail-fellow-well-met sort of affair that says, "Let us forget all about the storm, and enjoy ourselves." That is the very antithesis of the Christian religion. The Christian religion was not made only for a comfortable hotel drawing-room: it was made for the highway and the battlefields of life. It was made for a life of strenuous endeavour. Oxford Groupism is the substitution of human fellowship for divine fellowship.

We ought to have human fellowship. I used to know a very distinguished lawyer, a man whose position in life gave him entrance anywhere he wanted to go. He said to me once, "Pastor, I have had opportunity to test all sorts of circles of human fellowship, but this side of heaven there is no fellowship like the fellowship of the saints, notwithstanding all our faults." That is true. Do you not believe it? I have met the nearest thing to angels in the church of Christ that I have met anywhere. I have met angels of another colour too! But the devil counterfeits that Christian fellowship.

Let me take another example. I do not want to offend you: I want only to save you from error. Consider that strange phenomenon known as Pentecostalism. You say, "I know a great many godly people who are Pentecostals." So do I. I have not the slightest doubt that vast numbers of them have been genuinely converted. But they are terribly mistaken.

A man was converted here some years ago. I believe he was converted; I have never doubted that he was a genuine child of God. But he came under this influence, and soon after came to me and said, "Pastor, I want to tell you of a very wonderful experience I have had." "Yes?" "I do not want you to argue with me: I want to tell you my experience. Let me say at the outset that nobody can rob me of that experience. It is no use to argue. I have come to tell you about that experience." So he told me of some emotional upheaval that had taken place—he did not call it that; he called it "my baptism". Again and again he said, "You cannot argue me out of that experience." "Why do you talk like that?" I said, "I do not want to argue you out of anything. But let us open the Bible." "Never mind that. I have had that experience!"

What was he doing? He was making his "experience", whatever it was, the supremely authoritative thing in his life, instead of bringing that into the light of the authority of the infallible Word. It was pure subjectivism, without any objective authority. That is Pentecostalism. I do not mean to say there are not many people who have thus been caught, who love the Lord. I have no doubt there are many. Indeed, its appeal is to people who desire the best that God has for them. But it is a subjective experience. All these counterfeits throw men back upon their own resources. They have that in common.

## II.

What is the religion of Christ? It is something, first of all, outside of ourselves. It is "the power of God". Not something in me, but something in Him; not dependent upon me, but dependent upon Him; not guaranteed by me, but guaranteed by Him. It is all in Him! "The preaching of the cross . . . is the power of God." There is no diminution of the ideal; there is no lowering of the objective standard, for your moral influence advocates cannot too highly magnify the Lord Jesus. You cannot exaggerate the glory of Jesus Christ. Exalt Him! You cannot too greatly exalt Him, for "him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour". The ideal is there—but the gospel promises me a power not my own to deal with all the problems of life.

The gospel promises me a power to deal with the past, with the record of my sin, all that is written against me in God's books. Christian Science cannot touch that. Use your imagination as you may, resolve as you will,

what is written is written. You cannot change your record by your own power.

Is there anybody who can blot it out? Is there any power that can deal with the record of a human life, and obliterate it so that even God cannot see it? That is the gospel: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins"; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Would you not like to have them blotted out? Hezekiah said, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." I do not know where that is—but I know it is where the devil can never find them.

Salvation is "the power of God". It does not deal with sin as Christian Science does, by denying it, but by recognizing it, and blotting it out so that even an angel cannot find it again. It is "the power of God". Nobody but God can do that.

So, my dear friends, the gospel of Jesus Christ undertakes to apply to these fallen natures of ours the creative power of God, not taking the old man and putting him to school, to teach him how to think; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". Only God can create. Salvation is "the power of God", creating us anew, implanting within us His life, and the germ of His likeness, insuring that in due time we shall be "without fault before the throne of God".

How I should like to elaborate that, but I must leave it with you.

What I want you to see is that the resources of Deity are behind the promises of God, so that the gospel, salvation, is in Christ, and not in you. It is "the power of God".

What sort of power? Sometimes we use illustrations that cannot go on all fours. Years ago somebody gave me a book on electricity and its similitudes, that subtle energy which nobody fully understands, but is marvellously illustrative of spiritual power. The energy that drives this organ, that drives the fan that pours fresh warm air into this auditorium, the energy that lights these bulbs, is all impersonal; it does not radiate from any person. The gospel is not only power, it is "the power of God". It is a personal power. It is a power that resides in the Trinity, in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

And it is a power which He monopolizes, and which He never delegates to another. It is a power which no one may enjoy without personal union with Christ. It is "the power of God". Therefore salvation is not in an institution. It would cease then to be personal. It is not in a church; not in a religious system of any kind; not in any sort of ethical philosophy; not in any idealistic religion. Salvation is inseparable from the person of God as manifested to men in the second person of the Trinity. You cannot have it apart from Him.

Years ago I met a man as I was going out to the Pacific Coast, a business man of size I should think. He asked me about our publicly-owned electric light and power. Sir Adam Beck was then living, and I told him what I thought of him and his dream for this Province. I do not know who this man was, but he lived in one of the Pacific cities, I think Portland. He impressed me as rather a commanding personality. When I told him about it he said, "Yes; but the day will come when your Sir

Adam Beck will die, and what about it then? How will it be managed then?" That has been a question since. I refer to it, not for discussion, but for the purpose of illustration. Here is a system of power, here is a salvation of power; and it is resident in a Person—and, blessed be God, a Person Who can never die; "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Our Jesus can never die. He is "alive for evermore"; "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ all the way through. It is "the power of God".

If that be so, *who is authorized to make a contract with us, guaranteeing to us through all eternity an adequate supply of this power?* Only the One in Whom the power resides. The Word of God is the contract. To receive it, and believe it, is to be undergirded with divine power for evermore.

Is that not a salvation worth having? Going back to my illustration: behind this promise, behind every promise of God, lies all the power of God. We have recently received some five-dollar bills from the new Bank of Canada. Perhaps you have seen some bigger—I have not. What is behind that bill? A deposit of gold. What is behind every promise of God? God Himself, and all there is of God, to implement His promises. That is what it means to be saved, to have His cheque, bearing His signature, and stamped with heaven's own stamp, "Accepted". It guarantees salvation for time and for eternity.

## SUNDRY LESSONS FROM DAVID'S LATER LIFE

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

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

*Fourth in the 1934-35 Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on Biblical Theology, which Subject is Included in the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary*

Lesson Text: II. Samuel, chapter twenty-one.

"Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the Lord." Famines are by no means uncommon. I suppose it would not be an exaggeration to say there is nearly always some part of the world suffering from want.

But David enquired of the Lord concerning the famine. What has the Lord to do with the material world, with the result of our sowing, of our physical labour, with the fruits of the earth? There are those who mock at people who pray for rain, or who believe that a personal God has to do with this material universe. Some years ago I received a magazine from the United States containing an editorial which, if I remember correctly, was entitled, "Fundamentalism Gone Mad." A short time before I had been in the southern part of Indiana, and while there a tornado swept over the country. It touched the outskirts of the city in which I was ministering. On returning to Toronto I spoke on this subject, "Does God Control Earthquakes and Tornadoes?" The sermon was published in THE GOSPEL WITNESS, and came under the eye of the Editor of the magazine to which I refer, and in his article he

said that anybody who believed that God has anything to do with the physical universe ought to be confined within an asylum; that it was "Fundamentalism gone mad". That, of course, is the inevitable result of the acceptance of the evolutionary hypothesis. By that philosophy God is removed from His world.

But David enquired of the Lord to ascertain why there was a famine. There was no meteorological office in those days. But had there been, I do not think David would have enquired of science to discover why a famine had come upon the land. David believed there was a very close relation between the physical and the moral universe. Hence he believed there was some ethical reason for that famine. He knew it was not because the people were indolent, and had failed to plow their fields. They had laboured as at other times, but they had had no harvest to reap.

Is it not necessary that we should once again recognize the principle of divine providence, that the Lord is not only our Creator, but that He is also our Preserver, He is the Ruler of this universe; and behind such a physical phenomenon as a famine or any other disturbance of the elements, a tidal wave, for instance, there may be a moral explanation? In the beginning, when God had made all things good, it would appear there were no thorns or thistles, until the earth was cursed for man's sake. It was by man's sin the very nature of the earth was changed, and it became natural for it to bring forth briars and thistles. Surely it is a truth we need to keep very carefully before us.

"The Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." Therefore David's enquiry was abundantly justified. There was moral ground for this physical distress. Again the earth was cursed for man's sake, and the principle laid down in the opening chapters of man's history is found to be still operative in the providence of God.

That brings before us a very interesting chapter of history, and another principle which it will be profitable for us to understand and remember. You will recall that when Joshua was marching triumphantly through Canaan, taking possession of the land, there came to him one day a company of men who presented every appearance of having come from a far country: "They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us." Because he believed that they came from a very remote part of the country, or from some other country, Joshua concluded a covenant by the terms of which he promised them immunity, that they should not be destroyed as other Canaanites were to be. After he had made the covenant he discovered that they were Gibeonites, and that they lived near at hand. They excused themselves by saying they had heard of his victories, how God had smitten his enemies before him, and that they were afraid, and had taken this deceptive method to extract the promise of safety from Joshua. Having made the promise, Joshua felt himself bound to observe it. The Gibeonites were made hewers of wood and

drawers of water to Israel; they were not put to the sword as others, but were allowed to live.

Centuries have passed since then. Many generations have lived and fought since the covenant was made between Joshua and the Gibeonites. Now at this late day David is told that the famine is the direct result of Saul's breach of that covenant. Saul, as ruler of the nation, was bound by the covenant which Joshua had made; therefore, because in his zeal, he had slain the Gibeonites who were not pure Israelites, but related to Ammon, God visited the land with judgment.

We hear a great deal now about being ruled "with a dead hand". For example, there was a man who was a member of this church for many years. He amassed what was in that day regarded as a great fortune: he left more than a million dollars to the cause of Christian Education. He established, first of all, a college, Toronto Baptist College, and then a university, McMaster University. That university was established for the propagation of evangelical principles. Every member of its faculty, according to the terms of the charter, is required to be a member in good standing of some evangelical church, and every member of the theological faculty is required to be a member in good standing of a Regular Baptist Church.

Some of you know how we protested against the violation of that covenant. That money was left for the propagation of the principles that we, in this place to-day, hold dear and endeavour to preach. Senator McMaster was a simple believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a "Regular" Baptist. He believed in the Book, and he established a university, and left the product of his life for one purpose, to perpetuate, in the lives of others, the principles in which he believed.

When travelling on a train some time ago, I met a man with whom we had had sharp contention in days gone by, a man who had taken the opposite side. When he saw me on the train, he came and sat beside me, and said, "I hope we are good friends?" "I have nothing against you personally," I replied, "although I do not agree with some things you believe." Then he said, in effect, "I admit that, according to the terms of the McMaster charter, you are right. I frankly admit that Senator McMaster's money is being used for a very different purpose from that to which he dedicated it." He was at that late date at least frank. The action of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec involved the looting of a legacy, it was a clear case of utter dishonesty; and such a gross breach of trust in business affairs would put its perpetrators in the penitentiary. Here was a vast sum of money solemnly dedicated to one purpose by covenant, and accepted by a great body of Christian people in trust—then that trust is absolutely violated, and the money used for the teaching of principles diametrically opposed to those for the propagation of which it was left, namely, the propagation of Evangelical Christianity as historically interpreted by Baptists.

What of it? The God Who took account of Saul's breach of Joshua's covenant will take account of the Baptist Convention's breach of the covenant made with Senator McMaster in the long ago. It is just as impossible that spiritual blessing can come from heaven upon an institution now established in dishonesty, if there be a God in heaven, as it would have been for blessing to rest

upon the Israelites. We shall see what we shall see, if not fully in our day, then in the days to come.

Such violations of covenant are common in our day. "Truce-breakers" are everywhere. All over this Continent great institutions that were founded by godly men have been filched from their rightful owners and prostituted to the devil's own purposes. They are given up to the making of unbelievers rather than believers. Yet churches that support that perfidy wonder that they have no spiritual blessing. There is a famine in the land, a famine, not of bread, but of hearing the word of the Lord. Well would it be if the Davids of our day were to enquire the reason for it. They would find that it is because they are a company of truce-breakers, of covenant-violators, because to them a solemn promise means nothing. I had it from a graduate of McMaster. He laughed about it, and defended it, but said, "You were perfectly right. McMaster University stands for the very opposite of all that Senator McMaster intended.

That is the principle here taught, the sacredness of covenants; and as it applied in that direction, it must apply also in national law. I have often been impatient with some things in London. London is an aggregation of paradoxes. London leads the whole world in many things, and in some things it seems to lag behind everybody. Here you see, for instance, a building packed away in a great thoroughfare, trying to do business. They need some alterations, they need additional space—but they can neither buy nor sell. "Why in the world do they not move?" you ask. You do not understand. Back of it all there is a covenant; you cannot move the land. "But why should we be bound by things that were signed a couple of hundred years ago?" We must not regard a covenant as a mere scrap of paper, even if it puts us to inconvenience to observe its provision. If there be any glory about old England and the rest of the Empire, it is because in many particulars nationally she has avoided this mistake.

An American friend told me that travelling among the Arabs in the East he found them frequently swearing "by the word of an Englishman". He discovered that the officials that were sent out as representatives of the British Government were men of such high class, who felt the responsibility of their representative positions, that when one of them, speaking representatively, said, Yes, the Empire spoke. That settled it. Or if he said, No; that settled it. There was no argument about it. Those semi-civilized tribes had come to recognize that the word of an Englishman was to be depended upon. I do not say that is true of all Englishmen! I have known some of whom that could not be said.

We are all familiar with the "scrap of paper" incident so prominently discussed during the Great War. And perhaps it would be well for us sometimes, when difficulties encompass us, and troubles swarm about us, if we were to go to the Lord as David did, and inquire as to the reason. Perhaps we should sometimes discover a surprising reason—and a way out of our difficulties.

David said unto the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?" David recognized the principle of the payment of a price; an atonement was necessary in order to remove the curse. I believe that is true of the world at large. I believe the atonement that was in Christ Jesus has a far wider sig-

nificance than any of us have ever dreamed. It atones for our sins. I have heard the question asked very often, "Is healing in the Atonement?" Again and again I have heard people who are opposed to the teaching of divine healing cults say, "Certainly not." I think they are wrong. I believe healing is in the Atonement—which does not mean that we may, and must, be healed whenever we ask for it. I believe the resurrection is in the Atonement: but we may not therefore demand an immediate resurrection. I believe that every blessing that comes from the hand of a holy God, to any of us, comes as a result of the Atonement. I doubt whether the world itself could have stood—judgment must long ago have fallen—had not our gracious Lord stood in the breach. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The grace that insures our salvation, involving resurrection and ultimate perfection before the throne of God, is in the atonement and reaches us by virtue of the atoning work of Christ.

The Gibeonites said there was only one way out, an atonement by blood; and by the blood of the one responsible for the violation of the covenant; and if not through him, then by those who had his blood in their veins. Here is a mystery. It is difficult for us in our day to understand these things perhaps, but you will remember there was a theocratic form of government in which the king had direct access to God, as did the seers. As a special, direct, revelation from heaven in some way we may not understand, the word and will of God respecting particular matters were communicated to him. Atonement was made by Saul's sons. It is a terrible story.

In the midst of it there is an interesting verse that will enlighten us—try to recall it sometime when your head is like a piece of wood! It will be so sometimes. I mean it will be a little more wooden sometimes than others, and your thinking-machine will not work! Perhaps you can find here an illustration on which to hang the whole gospel: "But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul." Mephibosheth was a child of wrath, even as others, by nature. He too was a son of Saul. But he had been mentioned in a covenant of grace. Another covenant had been made, between David and Jonathan, and David could not honour one covenant by breaking another. He respected that covenant of grace, and on the ground of that covenant of grace Mephibosheth became an object of mercy—and he was spared.

You ought to be able to preach a sermon from that text: a child of wrath, a covenant of grace, and an object of mercy.

It is worthy of note that special care was taken by Rizpah of her own two sons, and of the other sons of Saul, and "David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: and he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded." I should not like to over-

emphasize the fact, but I think you will find that the teaching of the Word of God is to the effect that men who are godly men always showed a wholesome reverence and respect for the human body. Abraham had his burying-place. I remember a friend who said to me once, "I do not care where I am buried. I do not care what becomes of this old tabernacle when I am done with it." I do not think God would have us speak of the human body after that fashion. I know it is sin-stricken, but some day by miraculous power we shall have new bodies that will have some relation to these; the same in identity, yet fashioned like unto His glorious body.

We have from the fifteenth verse a very interesting story. There is a parallel to it in Chronicles. Poor David finds himself at war again with the Philistines: "And David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint." And you will too! You will get tired of the war after a while. When the Great War began people talked about getting to Berlin before Christmas. There were thousands ready to follow the beat of the drum. But long, long before it was over, everybody was tired of it. But for that great man, Clemenceau, I fear France would have given up. She was like David, tired of it all. You must not write bitter things against yourself if you get tired sometimes, still less appropriately may you denounce others.

I remember my father's telling me that when he was a very young man he had a wretched day of preaching. Did you ever have a Sunday like that? I had one myself once. One? Hundreds of them. But I think of one in the very early days; I had preached only about a dozen times. But I went home that night, and I could eat nothing. I felt ill. The next day I was not hungry—nor the next. All that week I was ashamed to go out on the street; I really was. I felt if I went downtown even the boys would point at me and say, "See that fellow? I heard him try to preach last Sunday. He must think he can preach." I was ashamed to look myself in the face to shave!

My father said he had an experience like that. He went home to his lodging very tired of the fight—wary in the battle. Some sympathetic brother followed him and said, "Never mind, Brother Shields; if you die, we will bury you"! That was a word of consolation, was it not? The poor preacher said, "I feel as though I never want to preach again. I think I will give it up; I think I will resign." But this man who had a world of sense said, "I would if I were you—but not to-night. Ask the Lord to give you one more great Sunday. Live for that. And then some Sunday when the Spirit of God has carried you away into the seventh heaven, go home and resign."

That was good advice. He knew no preacher would resign under those conditions. Do not conclude that some strange thing has happened to you if you feel sad sometimes. David will keep you company. David! What a hero he was! What a man of war from his youth! What victories he had to his credit! Yet here it is written, "David waxed faint"! So did the disciples in the garden—and the Lord understood them. He said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." You will have to lie down under the juniper tree and go to sleep, like Elijah; and have an angel give you something to eat, and put you back to bed. It is wonderful what good a long sleep will do! Things will look better in the morn-

ing. Do not make too many decisions when the Philistines have been worrying you more than usual.

You will get some Philistines in the church—enough to keep you humble. This to you young preachers—or any preacher. Pass it on to anybody you know, with my compliments; any preacher who becomes puffed up and conceited must be seven-eighths of an idiot to begin with! If he had any sense he would find enough in his ministry to keep him humble. The Philistines will keep him humble. And if they do not do it, some mother in Israel will help them!

And you young preachers will meet this gentleman Ishbibenob. When you catalogue your mercies, thank the Lord you were not given a name like that! "Ishbibenob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David."

I suppose a man with a name like that might be justified in thinking he could do almost anything! He was a son of the giant, and his ambition was to match himself with David. It was rather a compliment to David that a man of that calibre wanted to try his strength with this one who had once been called but "a stripling". But Ishbibenob was "girded with a new sword," and he thought to have tried it on David! Beware of the man with "a new sword", he will be on the watch for an occasion to use it, like a little boy with a new sleigh longing for snow.

You will meet giants. If not in the flesh, then you will meet "the strong man armed, (who) keepeth his palace", and all his kith and kin that belong to a race of giants. When you meet the forces of evil you will find them championed by giants. "But Abishai the son of Zeruah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him." That was a feather in Abishai's cap, to be permitted to succour David, and that by killing a giant with a new sword.

I wonder are any of you young men disposed to think you are rather independent? I have known some such young men—very young men!—who thought they were sufficient unto themselves. They cared for nobody's friendship. They were under obligation to nobody. They needed nobody's help. I have in mind some people at the moment who are like that. They can afford to dismiss everybody as though the world were made especially for themselves. If ever there lived a man who could have done that, it was David. But there came a time when David was faint, and even he was glad to have help from Abishai. He succoured David. Learn to be thankful for friends and helpers.

What a splendid figure the Apostle Paul was! How gloriously independent with a holy independence, he was! He said it was better that he should die than allow anybody to make his glorying void. Read those biographical passages in his epistles, and see how often he remembered those who succoured him: "Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life." He described Phebe as "a succourer of many." He described certain others as men who had been "a help" to him. You remember how he speaks of the one who, when he was in bonds, visited him: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently,



and found me." Do not be so high and mighty as to think you do not need anybody to help you. There may come a time when you can boast with some show of reason that you can stand on your own feet, but you will not have fared long on the way before you will have David's experience, and you will be glad of Abishai's help.

If you cannot be a David, perhaps you can be an Abishai; you can help somebody else. There are many men who have risen to conspicuous places, and have received the plaudits of the people, who did not deserve much of it. Perhaps the major credit belonged to the man's wife, his mother, or some person who did his thinking for him: a Colonel House behind a President Wilson. If you cannot be one, be the other. Succour somebody, and the Lord will bless your effort.

"Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel." Keep this principle in mind. There was a time in David's life, when he was very young, when nobody considered that he amounted to much. The people generally were not very sanguine of his efforts to slay Goliath. They thought, if Goliath hits him, there will not be much loss. They were not very apprehensive of the impoverishment that would befall Israel were he killed. But after years of victory to his credit the people said, "Your life is so precious we will not let you fight any more. We will stand between you and the foe."

Perhaps after a while you will be worth something. I went to meet the great Russell Conwell at the station one day. He could just barely lift one foot before the other, and could scarcely speak because of a heavy cold. A professional nurse got off the train with him. She said, "I will speak for Dr. Conwell. It is impossible for him to lecture. We must get him to an hotel, and call a doctor." Dr. Conwell just managed to make me hear as he said, "The insurance company would not let me travel alone. They sent this nurse with me, paying all her expenses, to keep me alive." He was worth something to them, for he was insured for a great amount of money in the interests of the institutions over which he presided. The insurance company, as a matter of dollars and cents, endeavoured to keep him alive as long as they could; and they sent a nurse along to look after him.

You must not expect that just yet! But human life sometimes acquires value with the multiplication of the years. We must, of course, be prepared to win our spurs as David did, and not immediately expect the place that this mighty man of God attained when he was getting toward the eveningtime of life.

We come now to the eighteenth verse: "And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant. And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareegim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant."

That is our programme, fighting giants, right to the end of the chapter. As soon as you kill one, another will take his place. You will always find that evil is

championed by a giant. There is a succession of giants. The devil finds some man somewhere to stand up and do his business. You need not be jealous of those who have gone before you and say, "All the giants were killed before I was born." There are some giants still, and perhaps you were born to kill them. That is in the spiritual realm. We must always be prepared for the most formidable kind of enemy.

You can never fight the giant with his own weapons. David was eminently wise to refuse to fight the giant while clad in Saul's armour. Had he done so, Goliath would have fulfilled his threat. You remember what David said to that great champion of the Philistines?—"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

The church of our day is busy trying to fight giants with their own weapons, with bow and spear. Down in the Southland the Southern Baptists were a great people, a spiritual people, standing solidly for the Book. The war came, and organizations raised millions of money. The Baptists said, "If money can be raised as easily as that, we can raise money that way for the spread of the gospel." They set out to raise seventy-five million dollars. They were like Andy: they thought it was "in the bag". They spent it before they got it. They appropriated hundreds of thousands to this institution, hundreds of thousands to that institution. It takes more wisdom to spend money than it does to make it. Many a man has been wise in the making of a fortune, and foolish in the spending of it—or his children. The Baptists responsible for that could not raise seventy-five millions—with what result? There is not a department of the life of that Denomination to-day that is not almost overwhelmingly in debt. In Texas they are millions in debt, and not getting enough contributions to missions to pay the interest on their debt. Why? Because they attempted to use carnal weapons, whereas "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

"The silver and the gold are mine." The Lord's work was never made to pause primarily for want of money. You cannot fight a man who has four and twenty fingers and toes. They actually try to do that musically. You cannot play the devil's score. He has an extra finger. You cannot reach that extra note. If you try to match the devil on his own ground, you will be out-matched, overwhelmed, always. Stick to David's sling and stone, or whatever it may be; but go in the "name of the Lord of hosts". That is the only way to win the Lord's battles.

For every giant in history, there was a hero in Israel. God always finds a man in Israel to match the giant of the Philistines. Big as they were, they licked the dust. All those who conquered the giants were directly related to David: "They fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants." Does not that remind you of the great text, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"? He slew the father of them all in that great victory on Calvary. He achieved a victory, potentially, for every one of us; as we abide in Him we shall always be triumphant. May He make us victorious for His name's sake, Amen.

# The Union Baptist Witness

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## LIBERIA FACTS

"Liberia, the only Negro republic in the world, is an experiment in self-government. Its very name means Freedom. It owes its origin to the American Colonization Society, founded in Washington, D.C., in 1816, to provide a homeland for freed slaves.

"The first group of Negro colonists sailed in 1820. On July 26, 1847, a Declaration of Independence was signed and a Constitution was adopted. The flag of the republic consists of eleven stripes, alternately red and white; the field, blue, bears a single white star. The three colours indicate the three countries into which the republic originally was divided; the eleven stripes represent the eleven signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; the lone star indicates the uniqueness of this Negro republic. The seal of Liberia bears the motto, 'The love of liberty brought us here.'

### The Country and Its People

"In the vast continent of Africa, the second largest in the world, Liberia occupies but a corner on the West Coast, just above the equator. Something over a million and a half people live in its area, which is about the size of the State of Ohio, and for the most part covered with forests. Though the coast line is 350 miles long, there are no good harbours; vessels must anchor at a considerable distance from the shore, passengers and cargo being handled by means of surf boats. The country is well watered by many rivers. The climate is tropical, with a rainy season from April to October, which is the cooler part of the year, and a dry season extending over the other months, February being the hottest. During this season the temperature often varies from 40 to 50 degrees in twenty-four hours.

"The Country is in communication with the outside world through regular steamship lines and by wireless and cable stations at Monrovia. About 12,000 English-speaking Americo-Liberians, descendants of American Negroes, live along the coast. In the interior are 1,500,000 aboriginal people representing many tribal and language divisions. With the exception of two powerful tribes which are Mohammedans, they are pagan animists.

### Liberia Among the Nations

"The Treaty of Versailles confirmed Europe in the possession of Africa, which had long been parceled out among European powers. At the Paris Peace Conference Liberia was represented by its President and was admitted to membership in the League of Nations as a self-governing republic.

"An increasing demand for rubber, especially to provide tires for American automobiles, led an American rubber company to gain a concession to clear and plant a million acres in Liberia. The success of such an enterprise depended upon the development of harbours, roads and other improvements which the Liberian government had long desired, and for which a loan of five million dollars was arranged by a group of American bankers.

### Missions in Liberia

"Christianity was established in Liberia at the time of its founding. Among the first colonists were men of missionary zeal. The first foreign missionaries sent out by the Methodist Episcopal and Protestant Episcopal Churches went to Liberia in 1832 and 1836. Two American Negro Churches have established missions there. These various denominations are at work to-day, but still concentrate most of their activities at Monrovia and other points along the coast."

The Union of Regular Baptist Churches opened work among the Bassa People back from the Coast in the early part of 1929. Since the establishment of the first station at New Cess another station at Geah-bar Zondo has been opened. A good work has been carried on at both of these places, and

our missionaries have reported real progress. There is a native Church at each Station, and the joy of seeing a number follow their Lord in baptism has been an ample reward for all their labours.

### What About the Interior?

Owing to these difficult times, the Board of the Union has not been able to gratify the burning desire of the Missionaries to push further back and establish other gospel lighthouses. There are Bo Jesi, Troba Town, Nencon, and other places still further back waiting to hear of the grace of God. It is impossible to make advancement unless the churches are aroused to the awful peril of men and women who are dying and passing into eternity, who have never heard the gospel in their own tongue. Everybody who has had any experience in the homeland must realize that the people in these so-called Christian lands have had at least the opportunity of hearing the gospel. If this were not so then their plight would be equal with any in Liberia. Since this is not the case then we owe it to those who have never had the same opportunity as has been afforded us. We therefore plead that the Churches and the members thereof may enter somewhat into the opportunity that is ours and the responsibility which is placed upon us in giving forth of that wherewith we ourselves have been blessed of God.

As Regular Baptists we have a message for darkest Africa. Our Missionaries are willing, having left all for His sake, fathers, and mothers, brothers and sisters, and houses and land, to be your representatives and ambassadors for the Lord Jesus Christ in that dark land.

Human love is often measured by the value of our gifts, and nothing pleases the donor more than grateful appreciation. If this be true, and everybody knows it is, then should anything less be shown to the Giver of every good and perfect gift? He has given unto us eternal life, and has even adopted us into His great heavenly family and made us to become partakers of His Divine nature, and yet His cause and kingdom suffer loss at the hands of His professed children. Pray that the Lord may stir us up, that we may all enter upon this New Year with a determination to do greater things, under Him, for dark Liberia.

The obstacles could be enumerated, but they are as nothing in His sight for all things are possible to him that believeth. Believe with us. Trust in Him, and this will be the greatest year in the history of the Union. Set aside an increased definite amount, in proportion to your income, and the increase shall be for the advancement of His cause among men and the blessing will be ours.

### WHEATLEY

We have rejoiced greatly in the blessing upon us at Wheatley, particularly in the past few months. We believe the present blessing is the result of labours of the past few years coupled with the tenacious persistence of the faithful people at Wheatley by continuing in the face of many disappointments, and it gives us much encouragement for the future. Two men with their wives and one young lady were recently converted at our Campbell side-road work, and all five followed their Lord in baptism on Sunday, December 23, 1934. Another baptismal service is to be held in a week or two when at least three more are expected to pass through the waters in obedience. The baptism itself is the result of direct blessing from the Lord who laid it upon the hearts of His people to give toward the cost of its installation; some of these having no connection whatsoever with our cause, in fact one contributor was a member of another church situated in Wheatley itself. We recognize the hand of God in all this, and the song of our hearts on this occasion is "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

W. LEMPRIERE.

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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No. 1

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 4

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### TRIUMPH OVER ENEMIES

Lesson Text: Psalms 3 to 7.

Golden Text: "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call upon him."—Psalm 4:3.

Bible School Reading: Psalms 3 and 4.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—II. Sam. 16:5-14; Tuesday—I. Sam. 16:1-7; Wednesday—Exod. 33:12-17; Thursday—Hab. 1:12-17; Friday—John 14:22-31; Saturday—I. Pet. 5:8-14.

#### PSALM THREE

Psalm three is Davidic in authorship, and is related to the sad experience of that king during the revolt of Absalom his son, when his enemies rose against him, and his life was in jeopardy (II. Sam. 15:17). In the psalm there is a reference to those enemies, to his divine Protector, and to his safety in the Lord's care. Encouragement may be derived therefrom by the child of God, beset by enemies, in the consciousness that the God Who was able to protect David, and likewise Daniel and his three companions (Dan. 3:25; 6:22), is able and willing to look after His own in the present day. And if He is for us, who can be against us?

The psalm falls naturally into four sections: the first, relating to the trouble of the psalmist (vs. 1, 2); the second, to the Protector of the psalmist (vs. 3, 4); the third, to the trust and confidence of the psalmist (vs. 5, 6); and the fourth, to the salvation of the psalmist. In the first section, observe the reference to enemies, and to the statement of enemies respecting God's attitude toward the psalmist. There are always some like Shimei who, when a child of God is in adverse circumstances, vent their spite on him, and express wrong judgment concerning him (II. Sam. 16:7, 8). Such an experience should not discourage us, but rather should it give an opportunity for strengthening faith, by testing the promises of God (II. Pet. 1:3-7).

In the second section note the words used to describe the power of God manifested on behalf of the psalmist. God was his shield roundabout; his glory, while others were slandering him; and the lifter up of his head, when the attitude of others would bring discouragement to him. God also answered the psalmist's prayer. David was thus well protected, and having experienced the presence and power of God, his faith was strengthened in relation to his present and future troubles. In the third section, note the psalmist's trust. The fear of enemies has been taken from him, and he can lie down and sleep. The heart is kept in a tranquil state when the presence of God is consciously realized (Is. 26:3, 4). In the fourth section, note the prayer to God for action, and the confidence of faith in accepting salvation as already accomplished.

#### PSALM FOUR

Psalm four, like the previous psalm, is of Davidic origin, and relates to a similar subject, if not to the same period in the psalmist's history. There is a difference in the presentation, however, in that while referring to trouble, there is in addition an appeal to the wicked to cease from sin, and submit to God. The psalm may be divided by content into three sections. In the first, there is a prayer, wherein may be observed the significant title ascribed to God; the psalmist's enlargement in distress, denoting relief from the pressure of trouble; his call for mercy; and his request to be heard. Note the reality of God's deliverances (II. Sam. 22:1-3), and the blessedness and comfort of prayer (Phil. 4:6). In the second section (vs. 2-5) there is an appeal to sinners to cease from sin, and serve God. Observe here the questions relating to enemies, and their general attitude toward vanity and lying. Note also the declaration respecting the blessed position of the godly person. He is set apart by the Lord for Himself. This has already been made clear in former lessons, but needs reiteration. The conde-

scension of God may be emphasized, together with the divine purpose; and the blessedness of such a position. The saint has been set apart for God, having been divinely chosen for this purpose (Eph. 1:4), and sealed as the Lord's own (Eph. 1:13).

The exhortation which follows is logical in its order: "Stand in awe, and sin not." The holiness of God should inspire all with awe. Note this attribute of God (Lev. 11:45). Following the negative virtue of not sinning, there should be the positive one of communion; and the evidence of true repentance is seen in the righteous sacrifices. In these days we trust the one and only acceptable Sacrifice (Acts 4:10-12). The third section (vs. 6-8) relates again to prayer. Note the reference to the unbelievers, the petition of the prayer, the thanksgiving for gladness of heart, and the confident trust of the psalmist in the protecting power of God.

#### PSALM FIVE

This is also a psalm of David containing a prayer concerning enemies, and expressing trust in the divine power. There are two sections; in the first of which the psalmist assures the Lord of his desire and decision to enter the divine presence (vs. 1-7); and in the second he prays for guidance because of enemies (vs. 8-12). In the first, observe the manner of approach to God, with the earnestness and sincerity manifest therein. Also the time of prayer (v. 3). It is of interest to note our Lord's action in relation to this (Mark 1:35), and the benefits to be derived from early communion with God. Note further the attitude of God toward wickedness (vs. 5, 6). In the second section observe the threefold petition respecting guidance, implying the necessity for help in the presence of enemies, and of right living before them (Ps. 39; Col. 4:5); also respecting the wicked, denoting zeal for the divine righteousness; and respecting the righteous, who put their trust in God.

#### PSALM SIX

Psalm six records a prayer of David for deliverance from enemies, and is expressive also of confidence in the divine power. Several things are worthy of note therein. These are: the psalmist's appeal for mercy, reminding us of the gracious invitation to come before the throne of grace and obtain mercy (Heb. 4:16); the appeal for deliverance, directing attention to the divine Deliverer (Rom. 11:26); the reference to the dead (v. 5), to which we must add the further revelation of the New Testament respecting the condition of saved and unsaved in eternity (II. Cor. 5:1-9; Luke 16:19-31); the severity of the psalmist's trouble (vs. 6, 7); and his confidence that he had been heard in his prayer (vs. 8-10). Observe the conditions for prevailing prayer (I. John 5:14, 15).

#### PSALM SEVEN

Psalm seven is another prayer of David's respecting his enemies; the content of which may be divided into three sections. In the first (vs. 1-5), the psalmist expresses his trust in God, prays to be saved from his persecutors, and declares his innocence of transgression. It is only when our heart condemns us not that we have confidence in approaching God (I. John 3:21). In the second section (vs. 6-9) there is a request to the Lord to arise in judgment. There is a manifest desire in this petition for the ending of wickedness, and the establishment of righteousness; a consummation devoutly longed for, and most beneficial when it takes place. In the third section (vs. 10-17), the certainty of divine judgment is emphasized. Observe therein the psalmist's declaration respecting his defence (v. 10); God's attitude toward righteous and wicked (vs. 11-13); the foolish attitude of the wicked (vs. 14-16); and the closing ascription of praise to the Lord (v. 17). It is clearly evident from the teaching of this psalm that sin does not pay; for in accordance with what is sown, so is the reaping (Gal. 6:7). Haman is an outstanding illustration of this (Esther 7: 9, 10), also Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:3-5). Joseph's life is an encouragement to righteousness (Gen. 50:20).

#### A CORRECTION

In last week's lesson exposition, first column, under caption "Psalm One", fifteenth line, the word "sinner" should have read "scorner".

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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No. 1

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

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### THE EXCELLENCY OF THE DIVINE NAME

Lesson Text: Psalms 8-11.

Golden Text: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."—Psalm 8:2.

Bible School Reading: Psalm 9.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Jer. 2: 31-37; Tuesday—Exod. 7:1-6; Wednesday—Prov. 10:14-21; Thursday—I. Cor. 4:1-8; Friday—Luke 9:46-50; Saturday—II. Tim. 1:8-12.

#### PSALM EIGHT

This psalm has sometimes been termed the "night psalm", in contrast with psalm nineteen, which is a "day psalm". In the one, the heavens as they appear at night are referred to; in the other, the heavens as they appear during the day. The theme of the psalm is the excellency of the Lord's name, implying His revealed character. The excellency is stated (v. 1). Note the character of God, and the greatness of His glory (Matt. 17:2; Rev. 4:3). The excellency is manifest in the talk of young children (v. 2). The idea would seem to be that out of the simple speech of children God has erected a strength, or fortress, which has confounded the enemy. Children by their simplicity and faith have glorified God, and testified to the excellency of His name. Note New Testament references to children (Matt. 11:25; 18:1-6). Man also in his original creation, and in the fact of his present existence, gives similar testimony (vs. 3-9). Note respecting this the condescension of God in considering him, as made clear in the statement concerning the heavens, and the question relating to man. God is infinite: man is finite. But God is interested in His own handiwork, and loves the highest form of His creation (John 3:16). Man was made in the image of God, and a little lower than God (v. 5). He has been given dominion over the lower forms of creation (vs. 6-8; Gen. 1:26). Sin has affected man's testimony to his Maker, and has marred the Maker's image, so that the voluntary testimony to the excellency of the divine name is lacking on the part of multitudes; yet involuntarily the presence of man on the earth testifies to the power and glory of God. Observe the prophetic significance of this psalm in relation to our Lord (Heb. 2:5-11); and also the privilege, responsibility, and opportunity of man in relation to God and creation; and the blessing of meditation on the works of God.

#### PSALM NINE

Psalm nine is one of praise to God for deliverance from enemies. There is first, the declaration respecting praise (vs. 1, 2). This was given with the whole heart. Whole-heartedness should ever be manifest in our attitude toward God (Col. 3:23). Then follows the record of triumph over enemies, due to the power of God manifested on the psalmist's behalf (vs. 3-6). David on numerous occasions could give such testimony. Note the comfort and blessedness of being right with God, and of being on His side in any controversy. Ultimate victory is then a certainty. From local judgment the psalm proceeds to universal judgment. The enemies disappear, but God endures forever, and "hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness." Observe the certainty of such a future judgment (Heb. 9:27); its character (I Cor. 3:13; Rev. 20:12, 13); its consequences (I Cor. 3:14, 15; Rev. 20:14); and the kind of life which ought now to characterize us in view of the same (2 Pet. 3:10-12). To the wicked such a judgment is fearful to contemplate; but to the child of God there need be no fear, for God, to such an one, is a refuge; and He will not forsake him (vs. 9, 10). Respecting the refuge, note its nature, its security, its eternal durability, the persons sheltered therein, the possibility of whosoever will taking advantage thereof, and the way in which one

may enter through Christ. The blessedness of occupying such a position may also be emphasized, with its calmness of spirit, comfort, and joyful expectancy.

The knowledge of the blessing of God leads to praise, and the psalmist calls upon others to join with him in expressing his joy unto the Lord, and declaring "among the people his doings". Note the joy of salvation (Is. 12:3; John 15:11; I Thess. 5:16), and the duty and privilege of bearing witness to the Saviour (Acts 1:8). Another reason for joy is God's remembrance of His own in the judgment (v. 12). Such people escape the judgment for sin (Rom. 8:1); although they are judged for their works (I Cor. 3:13). The psalmist's prayer for mercy follows (vs. 13, 14). Observe the motive manifest in the same. The consideration of the wicked is then intimated (vs. 15, 16), with their future fate; and the certainty of justice being exercised on behalf of the needy. And the psalm closes with a petition to God to arise and judge the heathen. Note the earnestness manifest throughout the psalm, and the confidence in the favour of God on the part of those who trust Him. The contrast between the righteous and the wicked is also worthy of attention.

#### PSALM TEN

Psalm ten, like nine, relates to enemies, but with some difference, in that while the latter is one of praise for deliverance from foreign enemies, the former is a petition for deliverance from the domestic variety. In the latter the work is done; in the former the work is yet to be done; and the psalmist is confident that God will hear his prayer. The psalm opens with questions relative to the Lord's inactivity in the presence of wickedness (v. 1). Sometimes in these days, when so much wickedness is to be observed, we are apt to ask similar questions. We are inclined to think that God should intervene and put a stop to iniquity. It will aid us at such times if we remember that this is God's day of grace, and that later, in His own time, judgment will come upon the wicked. After the questions, there comes a record of the evil deeds of the wicked; wherein we observe: persecution of the poor; disregard of God, or virtual atheism; presumption; cursing; deceit; fraud; and murder (vs. 2-10). And such fearful conduct is manifested in the belief that God will not see it. Note the likeness of those sins to present-day social conditions, when so many act as if God were non-existent.

The knowledge of these conditions leads the psalmist to pray; and like conditions should constrain us to do the same. We should certainly bear testimony against sin, but before we do so, and as we do so, we should be much in prayer. It is of interest to note how readily and naturally men of God in biblical times turned to God when affected by stress or trouble, as Moses (Ex. 32:31-35); Joshua (Josh. 7:6-15); Nehemiah (Neh. 1:4-11); and Daniel (Dan. 2:17). In the psalmist's prayer there is a call for action, a reminder of God's knowledge of sin, and of his helpfulness to the fatherless (v. 14); a request that He would sweep away wickedness (v. 15), and a statement of faith respecting the answer to the prayer (vs. 16-18). Observe the nature of the prayer, in its boldness, definiteness, earnestness, confidence, and zeal for the glory of God. Many of our prayers are too indefinite and indifferent to amount to much in the realm of practical spiritual affairs. A study of scriptural prayers is beneficial for all.

#### PSALM ELEVEN

This is another psalm arising out of the trouble of the psalmist. He is evidently surrounded by enemies, with little human prospect of overcoming them. Prudence urges him to flee from his position; faith says, "Trust in God" (vs. 1, 2). So serious is the trouble that it is said the "foundations are being destroyed"; and in such a case, "What can the righteous do?" In the struggles of life there are times when the flesh would urge us to flee from the conflict, and find rest in some quiet out-of-the-way place, or merely in inactivity. Let us remember on such occasions that victory is gained by those who faint not (Gal. 6:9). God "is in his holy temple" (v. 4), and the righteous can trust Him. He tries His own people, and "him that loveth violence his soul hateth". And later judgment will fall upon the latter (vs. 5-7). God is not indifferent to the actions of men, and His future attitude toward them will be governed by their present conduct.