

The Gospel Witness

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

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

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Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada.

Vol. 13, No. 41

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 21, 1935

Whole Number 666

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

DAVID'S REPENTANCE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Canada, Sunday Evening, February 17th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

Psalm Fifty-one

Prayer before the Sermon

Humbly, O Lord, we bow in Thy holy presence, making mention of Thy righteousness, of Thine only. Therefore do we come where the blood is sprinkled. We thank Thee that through Him Who is our Mediator, we have access to Thy Throne. We bless Thee for the rent veil through which we may come into the holiest of all.

Give us this evening a sense of the nearness of God. We live in the flesh. We are influenced by the things we see, by our senses. No man hath seen God at any time. God is a Spirit. How shall we know, O Lord, that we are in Thy presence when we cannot see Thee, when we cannot hear Thee, nor touch Thee? We have Thy word for it. Thou hast promised always to be in the midst of Thine assembled people. Therefore we know that Thou art here to-night. But give us that spiritual sense which will enable us to realize the divine presence. Make every one in this place to know that Thou art here.

We desire, O Lord, to have direct dealing with Thee to-night. So we would pray that every individual within these walls may know that God Himself has answered the cry of His people; that as Thou didst fill all the place where they were sitting at Pentecost, so Thou dost fill this place with Thy presence.

Then, O Lord, we pray that the Spirit of God may prepare our hearts for the reception of Thy truth. It is not easy for any one of us to receive the truth in the love of it. Our carnal natures are biased against all that is of God, and only as the divine Teacher instructs us, and opens our hearts as He did the heart of Lydia, opens our understandings as He opened the understandings of those He met on the Emmaus road—only then can we really understand those things which Thou hast hidden from the wise and prudent, but art pleased to reveal unto babes. We would be as babes before Thee this evening. Give us submissive hearts and wills, that we may really sit at the feet of the divine Instructor and be taught of Him.

It may be, O Lord, there are some in this service for whom the service is especially designed, and for whose sake Thou wilt speak this evening. Discover that man, we pray Thee; make him to know that Thou knowest he is here, that all the record of his life is open to Thee. Deal with us every one after this fashion, O God. Make us forgetful of the nearness of each other in the overwhelming sense of the presence of God.

Bring sinners to repentance. Teach us what a terrible thing sin is. Give us a clear view of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Save us, we pray Thee, with Thy great salvation. Make this night an occasion to be remembered by some through all the countless ages of eternity as the night in which they passed from death unto life, and from the power of Satan unto God. Thus glorify Thyself through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

My text this evening is a very long one, the fifty-first Psalm, the Psalm I read to you a few moments ago. I shall not read it again, but if you have your Bibles with you, please open them at Psalm fifty-one, that we may have this rather long text before us.

I frequently receive letters from people whom I do not know, which indicate that it is no uncommon thing for us to have in this congregation men and women who know something of the plague of their own hearts. Letters reach me often from afar, from people whom I have never seen, and may never see, begging me to tell them what they must do to be saved. Sometimes someone will write and tell me of the terrific struggle, the battle within himself which he is fighting, asking if there be any possibility of victory for such an one.

Suppose there were but one man, or one woman, in this congregation this evening, really desirous of knowing how to be saved, What would my duty be? To think first, perhaps, of many who feel no need of a physician because they do not know they are sick, and thus to minister to their diversion and entertainment? Or should I endeavour first of all in the name of the Lord to bring some healing word to a stricken soul? I know how common it is in our day to gloss these things over, to administer opiates to awakened consciences, to endeavour to get men into an emotional frame where they will not be troubled. But it is a dangerous thing to heal a wound too lightly, to administer a plaster when the poison is still there.

I met a woman one day with a poisoned hand, and it looked as though it were going to be quite serious. "What is wrong, Mrs. So-and-so?" I asked. "I scratched my finger, and I closed up the wound without properly cleansing it. There was some poison left in it, and it is giving me a great deal of trouble." It might easily have been fatal if the poison had got into the blood-stream.

Who of us here this evening, if he will be honest, will not have to confess that he has many a battle with himself? Everyone of us becomes conscious of an inward fever, a stubborn moral distemper, that sometimes makes us half afraid? I shall not ask you to follow a divine Leader to the battle, if what you really need first is a divine Physician in hospital. People must needs be healed before they can fight, cleansed before they can conquer. Therefore I shall try to probe deeply this evening, using the Word of God as an instrument; for the text I have read to you brings before us the story of a great sinner, one of the greatest sinners of all time, the story of a great backslider who lapsed into dreadful sin, a sin indeed so dark and heinous that I suppose we should have voted to put him out of the church, and to give him up for ever. Few of us would ever have believed that such an one could be restored, and brought back to God, and made a saint again. Sin is such a terrible malady, so terribly destructive of human character and life. I would not dare to speak of it this evening were I not able, at the same time, to speak of a great remedy. I have often thought, if I were a physician, and I knew that one of my patients was death-stricken, that, if he were ready to go, I should not be very particular about telling him he was going to die. If I had no remedy for his disease, I do not think I should worry him by attempting to define it, and describe its ravages in advance. So also it were folly to speak about sin had we not a message of grace from a great Saviour. And it is because this psalm records one of the most conspicuous examples of what the abounding grace of God can do for great sinners that I select it to-night.

It may be you would not expect to find great sinners in a respectable congregation like this, I do not know whether such are here or not. I should not have expected to find so great a sinner in the palace of the king—but he was there. I do not know men's hearts but God knows.

I want you to follow me as I attempt an exposition of this story of a heinous sin, and of measureless mercy which brought a soul back into fellowship with God.

I.

To begin, then, it would appear from the record that DAVID DID NOT SEEK AFTER GOD FOLLOWING HIS GREAT SIN, BUT RATHER WAS RESTORED ONLY WHEN GOD SOUGHT HIM. That is the explanation, the philosophy, of salvation always. Always! "The Son of man," said Jesus, "is come to seek and to save that which was lost." He leaveth the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goeth out after the one that is lost "until he find it". That is always His way. Every one of you here this evening who is a Christian, if you examine the record of your own conversion, will find, without any exception, that the initiative was with God. God took the first step. He sought you because you would not seek Him.

That was a striking fact in David's experience. Oh that repentance and confession could immediately follow

our sin! From what trouble we should save ourselves if only we would immediately run to God. David writes his own biography in the thirty-second Psalm. He says, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." David kept silence. How long, I do not know; but for an extended period he made no acknowledgment of his sin to God.

That is one of the deadly effects of sin. There are certain diseases which cause delirium, and in some instances that delirium consists in a kind of mental inversion: the friend becomes a foe, and the foe becomes a friend. Everything is turned upsidedown. The fever of sin puts every man into a kind of delirium. He is not himself. He does not recognize his true friends—indeed, he runs away from his best friends. That was the effect of sin in the beginning. The first sinner hid himself among the trees of the garden.

Are there professing Christians here this evening who have failed to pray recently? Are there some who have prayed but mechanically, perfunctorily, without heart, without sincerity, or any kind of earnestness? Why? Why? Why are you so silent? Has something come between your soul and God, and instead of running to Him, are you running away from Him? We never need to pray so much as when we do not feel like praying. Never do we need to cry for mercy more than when, under this great delusion, we have come to flatter ourselves that we have no need of it. Here was a man who had known God. Sin came into his life, and he "kept silence". He did not seek the face of God.

Nor did he seek Him at all until God sent the prophet Nathan to preach to him. I would remind you that David was led to repentance through a searching sermon preached by one of God's servants to whom God gave a special message for David. David was quite a respectable hearer of the Word. Nathan preached parabolically. He told a story, and David leaped to judgment at once. Oh, it is always easy to deal with abstractions, to judge other people. I knew a minister once who said he had in his congregation a very penurious man, who was very well-to-do. He said, "I prepared a sermon especially for his benefit, and prayed that the Lord would see to it that he should be at the service that morning." He described the narrowness, the meanness of the man who refuses to honour God with his substance. He had rather a good time describing that miser, for such he was. "He was there, and was my inspiration", said the minister. "I fired away at him all the time. The service over, the benediction pronounced, that brother walked up the aisle with a smile on his face, and said, 'That was a capital sermon this morning, Pastor. I am so glad Mr. So-and-So was here. He needed that'!"

That is how people listen to sermons. We used to have a lawyer friend here who told me he was always somewhat suspicious of people who were supremely solicitous about other people's sin. When Nathan preached, David received the message; and pronounced swift judgment upon the culprit whom Nathan described—until the faithful prophet pointed his finger at him and said, "Thou art the man. Thou art the sinner. I have brought thee a message direct from God."

David felt it. He speaks here about "the bones which thou hast broken". The Word of God was sharper than

any two-edged sword, and it cut him in pieces—and he felt it. He recognized the truth of it.

Do you ever feel uncomfortable under the preaching of God's Word? Many people have gone out of this building feeling very uncomfortable. In fact, if the Spirit of God were not with us, I am sure this church would be empty; for there is nothing less palatable to the carnal mind than the gospel of grace. Do you know what it is to be cut to pieces? Do you know what it is for the Word of God to find you out, probe you, call you by name, and say, "Thou art the man"? Thank God if you do. If you have been uncomfortable in this place—or should be uncomfortable to-night—thank God for that.

Years ago I had in my home a lovely dog, a special pet. One day I received a message to say that the dog had been knocked down by a street-car, and I went immediately to get him. I took him home, and sent for the doctor. He came, patted him, talked soothingly to him. The poor little creature could not move his hindquarters. The doctor took a needle out of his case, and pushed it into that little animal's body. I shrank as he did so, but the dog did not respond. "His back is broken," the veterinary surgeon said. Touching a certain place in his back, he said, "He is paralyzed from this vertebra back." He took that ugly needle, and pushed it into the little fellow's flanks, but there was no feeling. There was nothing to be done but to chloroform him.

The Word of God speaks of some people who are "past feeling", people so paralyzed by sin that they can feel nothing. That is a dangerous condition to be in! Do you wince under the preaching of God's Word? Do you feel it cut you, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow"? Thank God if that is true of you. Thank God if you still have some feeling, if the Word of God can still wound you. It could and did in David's case.

It not only cut him, but *it was a revelation of the fact that God would not be ignored in his life.* I have heard men say that God never comes to a man without invitation, and that He never intrudes Himself upon men who do not welcome Him. That is not true. If He had never come to us until we invited Him, He never would have come at all. He came uninvited, and unwanted; and insisted upon recognition, as though He would say, "I am not going to let you elbow me out of your life."

Until God rebuked him for his wrong David had not a very clear conception of the nature of his offence in its Godward aspect. Sin against society, against his neighbour? Yes; against his neighbour only, until Someone came knocking at the door and demanded a hearing. "No, David; it is not with Uriah you are dealing. It is not with that vague thing called Society. No! David, you will deal with Me. Your offence is an offence against Me." We are moral beings, and we are responsible to a moral Being. It is not an abstract law we have violated. Sin is an offence against God. But the point I make at the moment is that God forced Himself upon David, through the person of the prophet, and demanded that he give Him attention.

Thus it was that David was sought of God; and, being sought of Him, *he obtained a knowledge of himself.* No man ever knows himself until he knows God; for nobody can ever tell him what he is but God. Nobody else knows, but He does. And when God dealt with David, he made the discovery that this thing which he

called sin was not an incident, or an external thing; but that it was a constitutional malady. It belonged to birth and blood. He discovered that it was something with which he was born, that sin went deeper than the skin, or the hand, or the tongue. He discovered that it was part of his very nature. It was in the blood, and nothing but the most radical treatment could reach it.

How much we need to know that, dear friends! Sin is not a mere incident, not part of an evolutionary process. Sin is the result of a great catastrophe, a dark tragedy. Something terrible has happened. This virus, this poison, this thing that has death in it, has got into the blood, until it has become part of the man. He discovers that he was "shapen in iniquity", that sin is an entail from other generations, a part of his very being. How I wish people could see that. You cannot cure small-pox by education. You cannot expel poison from the blood by denying that it is there. If only we can see that sin is a thing of nature itself, we shall realize that it needs radical treatment. I have often quoted Moody's saying, "We are a bad lot." And we are! You say, "You may be, but I am not." Yes; you are. We are a bad lot, all of us. What was true of David is true of every one of us.

Let me more particularly explain that *sin is an offence against a personal God.* You may violate a law of the realm, and although that law stands upon the statute-books in the King's name, it may have no relation to the King himself. You may see the account of a case in court, *Rex vs. Brown.* His Majesty enacts thus and so by and with the consent of his counsellors—in some cases he has very bad counsellors. They enact some very foolish measures—the beer and wine measure, for example. I should not like to blame the king for that; but it is a law which stands in the king's name. Every law of the realm stands in the name of the king, of course. But every law of God is a transcript of the King's nature. God's law everywhere is what it is because God is what He is. You cannot break God's law anywhere, in the smallest particular, without committing an offence against a personal God. That is a truth we need to learn. When God let His light shine into David's heart, he cried, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." All others disappeared. His soul was naked before God. He realized he had sinned against God.

All sin is against God, my dear friends. The revelation of God at the cross is a revelation of sin as well as of salvation. Sin drives the nails into the hands of Deity. When the soldier at last drove his spear into the heart of the Incarnate Word, he showed what sin does: it drives its spear to the heart of God. It never stops until it has done so. We can never know what sin is, we can have no appreciation of its deadly nature, until God in His mercy shows us that we have sinned against Him.

David further found that *he had sinned against his own conscience,* for he said, "My sin is ever before me." He thought to bury his sin in Uriah's grave, to cover it so that it would never appear again. But it came out of the grave that he had dug, and he said, "Day and night it is there. I cannot get away from it. It is ever before me. It is a perpetual nightmare, a horror of horrors that I cannot shake off." Then he learned that sin was not a trifling matter, but a terrible plague which issued in death.

III.

And thus learning of himself, HE LEARNED SOMETHING OF GOD, for you will have noticed how he begins his Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O God." Look at this in detail very briefly, will you?

How marvellous the mercy of God *that He should speak to us at all!* Why did He not let us go on in our sin? You do not need a concordance to find the story of the mercy of God. The whole Bible is a monument to His mercy. If God had not cared anything about us, He would not have written it. If he had not desired our salvation, He would never have sent His prophets to warn us. If God had not loved David, He would have let him go. It was because of His abounding mercy He sent Nathan to arouse him, and trouble him, and to say, "Thou art the man." David learned that: "According to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

It must fill the mind with dread for a man to know that the details of his life are recorded somewhere, as when a man who has fallen into the hands of the police, for instance. Think of a man's being photographed, and having his finger-prints taken, and all his record kept in every police department on the Continent. If he goes into any town, he is known; his record is there before him. That is bad enough; but what must it be to have one's record in the divine archives, in the heavenly files, ready for the day of the great assize when the judgment seat shall be set, and men shall appear before God! There will be no disputing the record up there. It will be of no use to say it is not true: they keep books accurately in heaven! When that dawned upon David, he said, "My record is in heaven! Oh, blot out my transgressions. Take them out of the files, I beg! Blot them out! Purge them away!"

Have you had your record blotted out? Ah, how we need it! There is only one thing that will blot out your record: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That will blot it out. David's plea was to God. Read the whole Psalm. It does not mention Nathan. It does not mention a priest. He names only the particular sin of "blood guiltiness", and his sin in general, as sin.

He mentions nobody but God. God! God! God! He stands before God and says, "I need help from God. I need the mercy of God, the forgiving grace of God. Nobody else can help me."

I read a day or so ago of that poor woman in Germany, who must bemoan the fact that ever it was said that a man-child was born. She has written to the President of the United States a plea for the life of her son. She thinks the President may help her. My dear friends, you had better take your appeal to the Supreme Court to begin with. The Judge of all the earth will do right. David said, "I will not bother with intermediaries. I will go right to God Himself—Have mercy upon me, O God."

I honour the church as a divine institution, but no church on earth can save anybody. I honour any statement of faith in so far as it is true to the Word of God. But no creed, however biblical, can save anybody. I honour the ordinances of God's house, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They have their place. But nobody in all the long history of the world was ever saved by baptism, and nobody was ever saved by observing what

our Roman Catholic friends are pleased to call the "Sacrifice of the Mass". There is no salvation in the church, or in the ordinances of the church—and let me tell you also that there never has been a human priest in all the world's history who was divinely authorized to grant you absolution. It is a lie. No man can ever stand between a bankrupt soul and God. Every man must come to God for himself.

David did. There is no other way of being saved. Present your plea to the throne. "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." We need no other priest, because we have a High Priest over the house of God Who has entered with His own blood into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Salvation is in Him.

David prayed for the blotting out of that record. He prayed, "Blot out my transgressions". Then he prayed too for the subjective work of grace, for he felt unclean in himself: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You know what is meant by the hyssop? When the death-angel was to pass over Egypt, the children of Israel were told to dip the hyssop in the blood, and to sprinkle it on the door posts and the lintel, "for the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you". "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Have you felt that cleansing? I have heard of soldiers during the war coming into London, with mud on their boots, kit on their backs, tired from the long journey before they got the ship, and from sitting in a crowded train from the coast up. When they got to London and were welcomed by those anxious to minister to them, and were asked, "What do you want first, something to eat?" every poor chap said, "No; let me have a bath. Oh, I loathe myself. Let me get myself clean." David said, "Wash me. Oh, wash me. Take the stain of sin away, the consciousness of it. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." God will do that for us all.

Then he continued: "Make me to know joy and gladness." Can you ever have joy again, David? Can you ever be glad again? Yes, the angel of joy will return—"That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Do you know what that is?

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

David further requested, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I

teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

What boundless mercy! That is all my message this evening. - It is the same old story I always have for you—what a mercy that no matter how great sinners we are, we can find forgiveness at the cross!

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

May He wash us, and make us clean, for His name's sake. Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee for Thy healing gospel, for the message of mercy from the Skies, for the glorious truth that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Help those of us who are Thy children to rejoice afresh in Thy salvation. If there are backsliders here, be pleased to call them back to Thyself again. Help them to receive the rebukes of Thy Word, its admonitions, its tender entreaties to return to the Lord Who loves them. Should there be one who has never known the joy of Thy salvation, we pray that such an one may find in Christ the Saviour he needs. Bless us now for Thy name's sake, Amen.

ADONIJAH'S VAIN AMBITION

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, February 14th, 1935.

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

(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson Text: I Kings, chapter one.

This book, of course, logically and chronologically follows upon the Second of Samuel, and is linked with the Second of Samuel by a record of David's declining years. The chapter opens with rather a pathetic picture: a leader, one who had behind him a record of great and glorious achievements, gradually losing his strength. That must inevitably come sooner or later to everyone, in every walk of life. It is the rule of life in this world. "The path of the just", I know, "is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day", the day that shall never end in night; but that carries us forward into the life beyond. In this life, if our years are multiplied, they are likely at the end to bring us only labour and sorrow.

Sometimes we are inclined to express surprise, and possibly regret, when some outstanding man is suddenly cut off. Take such a man as Abraham Lincoln: What a heroic figure he is in the estimation, not only of his own country, but of the entire world! And if the memory of the just is blessed, and if there be any real advantage in being thus remembered, then it was a blessing that Lincoln was cut off at the height of his popularity, and just as he had achieved his life's task. I have little doubt if Lincoln had long survived the Civil War, and if he had been forced again into the political maelstrom of his own country, all the glamour of those war years would have faded, and probably his would have been only one of the more prominent names in American history.

Look at the case of Lloyd George. What an extra-

ordinary man he has been! I recall being in England in nineteen hundred and fifteen, the first year of the Great War, before Mr. David Lloyd George became Premier. One was reminded of the days of the Iron Duke. It used to be said that England could not go shopping without asking the Duke's opinion. So influential was he in the life of his country that he was referred to on every possible occasion. In nineteen-fifteen if there was a strike anywhere, someone suggested, "Send for Mr. Lloyd George." If there was trouble of any kind, no matter what or where, the general demand was, "Send for Mr. Lloyd George." By and by he became Premier, and even the great Premier of France, Clemenceau, referred to him as the great British Premier who won the war, or words to that effect. He was the bulwark of civilization, and, humanly speaking, without him we must have failed. But when the danger was over, a swarm of political midgets got together and said, "There is no danger now, and as we cannot be seen while this giant is about: let us kill him." I have said again and again that, in my judgment, the blackest chapter in British history is Britain's ingratitude toward David Lloyd George. If an emergency should arise, the country probably would call for him overnight; for there are some men who are born for crises—and he is one. That is a disarming and penetrating word of the preacher's, "This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: there was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city: yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard."

David was a man like that. He was needed in many crises in Israel's history. But now he is growing old, and his strength is steadily diminishing. You will grow old by and by, if you live! Some of you students may grow old before I shall! I have seen men who were octogenarians at twenty-five,—and I have seen some men youthful and sprightly, like Brother Greenway, when a few years older than that! Life is not measured altogether by the number of our years. But it is well, while we are youthful—as you and I!—that we should look into the future, and make some resolutions.

I:

Among other things, I suggest that you *resolve never to get in people's way when you grow old*. We used to have a church clerk here who was very deaf when I came here—and who became more deaf later. He was a good man, but he did not know his usefulness was ended. He could not hear anything. He could not hear what happened at a deacons' meeting, or at a church meeting,—but he insisted upon writing a record of what he thought had occurred, or ought to have occurred. At the next meeting it used to take nearly an hour to get the minutes of that meeting straightened out. Then we appointed somebody to write the minutes of the meeting, and the old gentleman was to copy them into his precious minute-book—it was precious to him. The minutes were accurately reported, and then he transferred them to the minute-book in the form of a free translation! It was worse than ever. When they were read one said, "What meeting does this purport to record?" When he

became eighty years of age some friends arranged a little party for him, and made a presentation. He made a speech, and told us how long he had been clerk of this church; and then said, "When the time comes that I am no longer able to fulfil the duties of this office, I shall not need to be told: I shall know it myself!" The time had come at least twenty-five years before, but he did not know it.

It is a great pity when men who have been useful, stand in their own light in later life. The world has talked a great deal about Spurgeon this last year. He died at the age of fifty-eight, at the zenith of his power. Perhaps it was well he did. Alexander McLaren lived to be a very old man, and I remember he once remarked upon the loneliness of old age. There was a certain man in New York City who exercised a great ministry for nearly forty years. Then he ought to have retired—but he did not. He stayed on. In the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church there was one of the greatest Presbyterian preachers of all time, who made that great church what it was. He lived to be an old man, but retained his position right to the last. It was not intentional, but in the vestibule of that church there is a tablet to the memory of that great minister, and it says something to the effect that the Reverend John Hall exercised a great ministry in this church from such a date to such a date, and departed this life such a date. Then follows the text—"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God"! A most inappropriate text, I suggest, to be inscribed in such a connection.

David was growing old, and his personal influence was steadily waning. There had been a day when one word from David electrified the whole kingdom. Anything that David did "pleased all the people". But his strength began to decline. There was a time when nothing happened in the kingdom without David's knowing it, but now a fair-sized revolution was well under way—and David did not know anything about it. He was not particularly interested in current events. His powers were failing. He was still in office, he was still king; but he was a king without authority.

II.

I should like to call your attention to *some of the dangers that inhere in a situation like that*. I have often asked the Lord if it might be His will to let me go home of a Sunday night. I have never been able to pray to be delivered from sudden death. If I could have my way I should like to preach, pronounce the benediction, and go suddenly home to glory without a moment's tarrying.

But inevitably all institutions reach the place the kingdom of Israel had reached in the history before us. The king was growing old. Their leader no longer exercised that mighty personal influence which he had once exercised, and a ferment began throughout the kingdom. It always does. That is always the penalty any nation, any political party, any organization, pays for having been subject to any particularly conspicuous leadership. There is always at last a reaction.

When Charles Haddon Spurgeon died, bedlam broke loose in the Tabernacle. Every little Tom, Dick, and Harry, wanted to become boss. He could not be while Spurgeon lived. They all called him the "Governor". But when he was gone some sought an opportunity to shine. It was a very, very difficult situation.

Look back over the history of political parties in this country. There was a time when—I am not talking politics: I am discussing a principle—there was a time when the Conservative Party in this Dominion was Sir John A. MacDonald. While he lived, his word was law everywhere. When he died, the aspirants for the succession were not great men: they seldom are in such circumstances. There was no chance while he lived. His leadership was undisputed. As soon as he passed, lesser men aspired to leadership. There was a time when the name of Laurier in Canada was synonymous with the Liberal Party. Whatever Laurier said was law. He was a real leader: he led the people. When he died, there was nobody big enough to succeed him. In Ontario there was a time when the name of Ferguson was the Conservative Party. When he retired, there was no leadership. The Liberal leadership in Ontario is synonymous with Hepburn—and when he retires, unless he retires soon there will be no party!

But you see what I mean? I heard a man once say that the building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London was a great mistake. I enquired why. "Because there was only one Spurgeon, and nobody else could fill it." I replied, "He filled it for nearly forty years, did he not? Surely it was worth while building it for his ministry alone."

Look at this situation. Probably few people in Israel knew there was such a man as Adonijah. He was a brother of Absalom. He was not like Absalom. Absalom was a very brilliant man, and was very nearly successful in his revolt. He had a great following. But in all that rebellion nobody ever heard of Adonijah. Where he was, what he did, history does not record. But now that David is old, and can no longer go in and out before the army as once he did, "Adonijah exalted himself saying, I will be king."

It is surprising how many men are ready to assume leadership when no great responsibility attaches to the position! Have you noticed that? There was no dispute as to who should go out and fight Goliath. When David volunteered for that task, I have not read there were any competitors. "Let George do it." They clapped him on. Again and again he fought valiantly, and was victorious; but now there was a period of comparative calm; there were no external enemies to fight. David had been a wise and just ruler, and apparently there were no very great internal troubles to settle. And as the ship of state was sailing in tranquil waters, Adonijah looked up to the bridge and said, "That looks to be about the most comfortable spot on the ship; I think I will go up there myself."

You may always expect that. There will always be plenty of people aspiring to positions of prominence—just so long as such positions require neither the assumption of responsibility nor the exercise of great courage. When heroes are needed, when a nation trembles on the brink of ruin and the people look for someone to stand in the breach and deliver them, the competition is usually much less keen. But when the battle is over, and peace has been restored, you may be sure Adonijah will emerge from his obscurity, and nominate himself for the throne and the crown.

One of the most dangerous conditions for any church to be in, is to be absolutely at peace, without any external foes. You remember how Paul addressed the church at Ephesus? I have derived much comfort from that. I

wish I could so expound the Word of God, and so give people line upon line, and precept upon precept, as to train up a great church made up of men and women who have grown up into Christ, every one of them a stalwart Christian who could not be turned aside by any wind of doctrine, so that when my course shall be ended, I should be able to say, "There is a church that is as solid as a rock." But no man ever lived who could do that. The Apostle Paul had ministered for three years in Ephesus—that must have been equal to any other man's whole lifetime. For three years night and day he had expounded the truth, but when he summoned the elders to meet him at Miletus he said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock"—that was bad enough, but he also said, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

What! After they had enjoyed the benefit of Paul's teaching for three years! Yes—when Paul is gone. There is no telling what they will do after the departure of Paul! That is human nature. Great perils lurk in such situations, and always will. Perhaps you will say, "I cannot think of any Adonijah in this church." Nor can I. If I were to take the roll of Jarvis Street Church, and go from "A" to "Z", I should say, "There is no Adonijah here." But that, doubtless, was how they felt in Israel. Few dreamed of such a revolt as was then brewing. Adonijah was the last man in Israel whom anybody would have suspected. He was not a soldier of distinction. He had never displayed conspicuous qualities of leadership.

I do not know whether there was anything particularly kingly about Adonijah in appearance: I rather think there was not. An insignificant man needs good clothes, and certain men need a mark of some kind to give them distinction, if it is only a clerical collar. Adonijah aspired to a crown and said, "I will be king."

It might have been supposed that nobody would follow Adonijah. One could easily understand how Absalom would attract a following, but who would follow Adonijah? When Adonijah so resolved, one of the greatest surprises that David ever had came to him—and to many others in the kingdom. Who should stand at Adonijah's side but Joab himself! Joab! Commander-in-chief of the army! The most influential man in Israel joined hands with Adonijah.

Do you remember the story of Absalom's rebellion? How true Abiathar the priest was to David? How loyally he stood at David's side? He and Zadok went back to Jerusalem with the ark because David said, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Abiathar was a loyalist; and yet, wonder of wonders, he too, when David was old, left the king and joined with Adonijah. We will look at that more particularly in a later chapter: I point to it at the moment only to show you the unreliability of human nature.

Joab was shrewd enough to know it would never pay him to join with Absalom. Absalom was too big a man. Joab was unwilling to be anybody's vice-president *de facto*, whatever circumstances might make him *de jure*. He knew he would have had to play second fiddle to

Absalom—or carry his violin in its case, because he might not be allowed to play at all. It was otherwise with Adonijah. Adonijah might wear the crown, but Joab would be king—and after all these years of apparent loyal service, Joab turned after Adonijah, "though he turned not after Absalom".

What value has that for you students? Let me tell you. In nineteen hundred and twenty-one we had a revolution in this church. The membership of this church was tremendously tried. But there was a great company of people who stood loyally together for the things of God. They fought valiantly, and when the Lord gave us the victory, shouted, "Hallelujah." There was one man, a courageous man, a perfectly delightful man, not one in all the company more loyal than he. But when the battle was over, and the victory was won; when the next Annual Meeting came, he went to a great many people and said, "Do you not think I ought to be a deacon? Did I not fight well? Do you not think I ought to have an office?" It has long been a rule in this church that when a man seeks an office, the office always runs away. Because he was not elected a deacon, he left us. He "turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom".

Do you think that that is a very pessimistic view of human nature? There is not in all the world a greater pessimist than I am in respect to human nature. I have no confidence in it at all. I have a very intimate acquaintance with one representative of the race—and he bears my name. The bit of "old man" in me is so contemptible that if the "old man" in you is anything like him, I can place no dependence upon him. The only hope I have for human nature is in the grace of God, mine or yours, or anybody else's.

Glancing at the paper a few minutes before coming out, I saw a picture of a cat. Some dental student had taken this particular cat, and, to experiment, had extracted all its lower teeth, and left the poor creature bleeding for two days. That was one sample of human nature.

Many people are very sympathetic toward the man who has just received the death sentence for the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby. But what about Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh? What about their anxiety? What about the death of that darling child of theirs? What of human nature? Human nature has an almost infinite capacity for evil. When you think of what human nature does, not always with guns and knives, but sometimes in a very polite way, how it strangles people to death, drives them to despair for their own profit, how can we admire it? "Evolution" indeed! To what? The brotherhood of man indeed! Beware of Adonijah. He is a very respectable gentleman until a fitting occasion arises. Beware of Joab. You never know what Joab is going to do—or anybody else for that matter. It was David himself who said, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." You had better not trust the arm of flesh at all. If you receive help from men, be thankful for it; but if you get none, trust in God and be happy. This is a dark story, but it is written in the Book, and we must not pass it by.

Adonijah made a feast: "And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by Enrogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants." But there were some people he did not invite. Nathan the prophet

was not invited. Zadok the priest did not receive an invitation. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was omitted from the list of Adonijah's guests. So conspicuous were these omissions that it was generally remarked upon.

Did you ever feel a little neglected because you were not invited somewhere? It is a great distinction sometimes to be left at home! It is very often a revelation of the character of the feast. I used to be invited to nearly everything myself. I was occasionally invited to say grace at the Exhibition dinner! I used to be offered a great many compliments. But certain interests let me alone now. They do not invite me! I am not greatly offended. The other day there was a discussion as to whether I was included in the Mayor's invitation to discuss the moral welfare of the city. I was not, until after that appeared in the paper—then I received a special invitation direct from His Worship himself. I was not offended because I was left out. There was one worthy canon who very seriously proposed at that meeting that one way to improve the morals of the city would be to open the church buildings to provide dances for young people! I did not feel slighted for being omitted from such a conference.

When Adonijah was bent upon rebelling against the king, and he sat down with Joab to talk the matter over, he said, "Whom shall we invite?" I think Joab said, "It would be of no use to ask Nathan; he would not come; he is too loyal to the king. Nor would it be of any use to ask Benaiah; he slew two lion-like men of Moab, and went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow—he is a courageous man. He will have nothing to do with your subtle schemes." "Shall we ask Zadok?" "No! No! Leave him at home. Abiathar may come, but not Zadok." Adonijah drew a fine line of distinction between these men, and paid some of them a high compliment by not inviting them.

Let me ask some of you, young people a question: Do you find it difficult sometimes to resist certain temptations? Do you find it difficult to take your stand, and refuse to go to certain places? If you do, it is your fault. "Why?" Your position ought to be so universally known that people will not even ask you. That is why. It is no compliment to you to be invited to Adonijah's feast. We should make our attitude to the King so patent to everybody that when the invitations are sent out to do something that is derogatory of His honour, people will say, "Do not ask him. He would not come." What a fine thing it was that Nathan and these other men were so well known that Adonijah left them at home!

Nathan was a very discerning man, and he went to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, and said, "Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee; give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life and the life of thy son Solomon. Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words."

Bear in mind that some people need to be reminded of their promises. Do not complain that some men need to be told of their responsibilities and opportunities. Do not fold your arms and say, "Everything will come out

all right." Nathan was a wise man. He said, "We can prevent blood-shed. We will not fight Adonijah: we will put Solomon on the throne. That will settle the whole matter." Their programme was carried out. David said, "Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." David elected to be the executor of his own will. He did not leave it to be executed after his death. He said, "I am no longer actually king, and Solomon may just as well wear the crown. Then it will be settled, and I shall be sure of who will follow after me."

Sometimes, young men, you will face a crisis like that in your church. You will find some Adonijah who is determined to worm his way into an important position. You will tremble for the consequences. What ought you to do? Find your Solomon, and put him in the position first. Get him on the throne, and Adonijah will have to retire.

I once had a man like that in my church. He had been the bane of every pastor's life who had preceded me. I created a position for him, a position in which he could do no harm. I promoted him—and he really thought he was promoted, and rejoiced in the great honour. We created a senate with one member. We made him the member—and got him out of the way, and put Solomon in his place. That is often wise. It avoids much trouble. The proverb has it, "A stitch in time saves nine." That is true in the management of affairs. "Take time by the forelock", and anticipate these difficulties.

That is what Nathan did, and through Bathsheba he succeeded in bringing Solomon to the throne.

When Adonijah heard it, he was full of fear: "And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose; and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." Adonijah was afraid. He always is. The subtle man is never a courageous man. The man who is absolutely true and straightforward does not need to trust to his diplomacy. The truth will win. It has nothing to fear. But Adonijah, because he has no strength, must resort to trickery, subtlety, cunning. You have but to meet him on his own ground, and Adonijah will say, "I resign. I will not fight." Adonijah will run.

Solomon was a wise man, and began to show his wisdom when he heard of Adonijah's fear. He said to Adonijah, "You are not worth fighting. I will not fight with you. Show yourself a worthy man, and you have nothing to fear." "Will you let me go home?" "Yes; go home in peace—and mind your own business." There was no war because there was one wise man in Israel named Nathan. He avoided a long conflict, a real revolution, and a great deal of blood-shed. So may you, if in the management of affairs, you exercise a little tact and common sense, as Nathan did. Thus you will often avoid much trouble. We shall come again to this story of Adonijah and Joab in the next chapter, a very interesting study in psychology. Please read it in advance.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 10

No. 1

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 9

First Quarter

March 3rd, 1935

CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S CARE

Lesson Text: Psalms 23 to 25.

Golden Text: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."—Psalm 25:14.

Bible School Reading: Psalms 23 and 24.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Ezek. 34:11-16; Tuesday—Prov. 9:1-10; Wednesday—II. Sam. 6:14-19; Thursday—Luke 8:22-25; Friday—John 10:1-6; Saturday—John 10:7-18.

PSALM TWENTY-THREE

Psalm twenty-three is probably the most familiar psalm of the collection. Children are taught to memorize it; men and women find nourishment in it; and multitudes have been richly blessed through it. The psalm is so simple that a little child may understand the nature of its teaching, and yet such significance is inherent in its truths that older people find much food for thought therein. It brings to our attention in a beautiful way, under the figure of a shepherd, the loving care of the Heavenly Father for His own. The need for such care is evident, and the benefits derived therefrom are exceedingly great.

Sometimes the content of the psalm is divided into two sections; the one, relating to shepherd life (vs. 1-4); the other, to a banquet, with host and guest. But this spoils the continuity of thought, and is unnecessary to the proper exposition of the psalm. Rather should the theme of shepherd life be understood from beginning to end, with its picture of a day's experience in the life of a sheep. The keynote is sounded in verse one in the statement, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Note other references to the Lord as a shepherd in both Old and New Testaments (Is. 40:10, 11; John 10:11). Also the duties of a shepherd, his close relationship with the sheep, and the necessity to the latter of having a capable shepherd. Our Lord's characteristics as a shepherd are worthy of attention: goodness, knowledge, wisdom, power, watchfulness, continuity of life. As a result of having such a shepherd, the sheep do not want; which implies they receive their food, and do not go hungry. Those who trust the Lord have no need to fear starvation. Observe the nature of spiritual food, and its plentiful supply (John 6:51).

Following the nourishment of food, there comes rest in the green pastures of tender grass, succeeded by the refreshment or quenching of thirst by the quiet waters; restoration of soul or life, when wandering; and the leading of the sheep in the right path. In the east, the shepherd leads his sheep, and goes before them in the right way; and the Lord does similarly for His own. Such a way is not without its difficulties and dangers, however; and certain places have received their names from the perils existent in them. The "valley of the shadow of death" is one of these. This denotes the dark and perilous way we are sometimes called upon to traverse. Ordinarily it would cause us to be afraid, but with the Shepherd near, we "fear no evil"; His rod and His staff comfort us. Observe the comfort of God, and His ways and means of helping us (II. Cor. 1:3-5). Following this, there is the feeding of the sheep in the presence of enemies (v. 5). The shepherd has carefully inspected the feeding-ground. He has sought to drive away the snakes and the wild animals which would destroy the sheep. Perhaps, like David, he has met in mortal combat one of those animals, and has vanquished him (I. Sam. 17:34-36). But there still remain others, though they must stay a safe distance away. And in their presence the sheep feed quietly—and securely. Just as God feeds His own in the presence of their enemies. Then the end of the day comes, and as the sheep enter the fold they are inspected by the shepherd, and the bruised and weary ones receive attention; and are refreshed through the application of the olive oil, and the partaking of the water. And then in contentment the sheep lies down to sleep, assured of

the continuance of the goodness and mercy of God, and confident of abiding for ever in the house of God (v. 6).

PSALM TWENTY-FOUR

The background of this psalm is possibly found in II. Samuel, chapter 6, where a description is found of the bringing of the ark into the city of David. It is a processional hymn, sung on the way up to the ark's resting place; enquiring as to the character of the men who may dwell with God (vs. 1-6), and emphasizing the nature of the God Who dwells with men (vs. 7-10). The psalm opens with a declaration of God's greatness. The earth is His, the world and all who dwell therein. We are therefore His by creation; and in accordance with further revelation we are His also by redemption (I. Cor. 6:20; I. Pet. 1:18, 19). Note His power, wisdom, grace, and purpose in His twofold work. After this ascription of praise, the question is asked relative to the character of the persons who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in the holy place (v. 3), the figures being taken from the journey up the hill to the resting place of the ark, and the standing before the ark in manifestation of divine approval and favour. So unpleasant were the experiences of the men of Bethshemesh with the ark, that they asked, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" (I. Sam. 6:20). The Lord made it very clear that only certain persons could minister before Him in those early days, and He is just as particular in these gospel days (II. Cor. 6:17).

The persons permitted to stand before God were those with clean hands, pure heart, with soul not lifted unto vanity, and with a tongue which swears not deceitfully. Such a person is right internally and externally. God is pure, and He demands purity in those who serve Him. He is holy, and expects holiness (Rom. 6:19). He has made provision for our cleansing (I. John 1:7-9). Such persons are blessed in their condition, and receive blessing because of their state (vs. 5, 6). Sin in the life hinders blessing (Is. 59:2), but when it is put away the blessing of God is received in abundance. The second section of the psalm sets forth the glory of God, with a possible background of the gates of the city of David, and the procession of the ark and its attendant company before its portals. Note here the entrance of God into His house; also His greatness, His might, His nearness to His people, His condescension, and the wondrous privilege and delight of His people at His presence in their midst. God is the "King of glory". Observe the significance of this title, with its implications of rule, kingdom, citizenship, and eternal blessedness.

PSALM TWENTY-FIVE

This psalm is in the main a prayer for help in the presence of enemies. In the first section (vs. 1-7), the psalmist declares his trust in the Lord, and voices his hope in the divine deliverance, lest his enemies triumph over him. He then prays for guidance in the way of the Lord. Note the significance of the terms used—"shew", "teach", "lead", "wait"; and the necessity in the present time of seeking God's guidance in the affairs of life. This is followed by a request for remembrance of tender mercies, and forgetfulness of former transgressions (vs. 6, 7). Observe the blessed condition of the one who trusts in Christ (Rom. 8:1), and the divine disposal of his sins (Heb. 8:12).

In the second section (vs. 8-14), the psalmist records the goodness of God, manifest in His work toward those who trust Him. He is upright; he teaches sinners in His way; He guides the meek in judgment; and all His paths are right. Job discovered this (Job 12:1-6), as have others before, and since his day (Rom. 8:28). Those who serve God are richly blest, and His secret is with them (Prov. 3:32; John 7:17). They live near to the Lord, and are privileged to know His mind. In the last section (vs. 15-22) the psalmist declares his steadfastness toward God: his "eyes are ever toward the Lord"; and calls upon God to turn unto him, and have mercy upon him. He gives God praise for plucking his feet from the net (v. 15), then describes his trouble. He is desolate and afflicted; his troubles are enlarged, and his enemies are many; they hate him with cruel hatred. His prayer under these circumstances is for deliverance and preservation. God never forsakes those who put their trust in Him (Heb. 13:5); and we feel sure He heard the psalmist's cry, and will hear when we call unto Him.

THE CHAMBERS OF THE KING

To some of us prayer is synonymous with petition. Some prayers are merely a recitation of a catalogue of wants. Some prayers, if printed, would read like a column of want advertisements. Many of the Lord's children are disposed to regard the Heavenly Father as a Provider of bread and butter, and food, and clothes, and a Helper generally Who is to be sought in time of trouble.

Of course, He is all that, but He is more. And some members of the Bride of Christ seem to think of their divine Bridegroom as a Furnisher of supplies. And as a father may respond to the requests of his children who have no desire for his companionship, and as a husband may honour all the financial obligations of a wife who finds no pleasure in his society, so the grace of God abounds toward us; and He does hear the prayers which never rise above the low level of a child's cry for food, or a wife's desire for mere material good. But no argument is needed to prove that such prayers are not inspired by the atmosphere of the heavenly places in Christ; nor are they born of an experience of the spiritually luxurious chambers of the King.

The bride in the Song of Songs exclaims, "The king hath brought me into his chambers"; and Paul says by the Holy Spirit, "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". It is the believer's privilege to live in abiding fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Prayer is much more than petition: it is love. If we love God, we long for Him even as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. Prayer is faith. Faith is more than an element in prayer: it is prayer itself. No true believer can be absolutely prayerless. Faith is dependence upon God; and to be dependent upon Him is to pray to Him. Prayer is adoration. When we really pour out our hearts before God because He is God, we worship Him. Prayer is communion with God, the commerce of the human spirit with the Divine. Prayer therefore is less an act than an attitude; it is less an occasional exercise than a continuous experience. Prayer, in its true and full significance, is much more than a pauper's petition to a prince: it is rather a bride's communion with her beloved in his chambers; it is the resurrection joy of session in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

I.

Prayer is the response of the human soul to divine attraction. We were made for God as the rivers for the sea, and as the flowers for sunshine. True prayer is the breath of God in the soul. As vapour answers to the sun's attraction, so prayer answers the divine call: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek"; "The king hath brought me into his chambers." We pray as we respond to His constraint.

Our Lord Jesus taught His disciples that prayer is the cry of a child to its father,—“When ye pray, say, Our Father.” But prayer grows from an instinctive cry of need, to an experience of parental fellowship. The infant “with no language but a cry” does really pray. We would not make prayer difficult by any elaboration of a philosophy of prayer. Let us use the language of a cry if we have no other; but let us aspire to growth in spiritual things, and desire to be something more than

“an infant crying in the night”. That, alas! is where we fail! We do not grow; and in nothing is our dwarfishness more apparent than in the stunted character of our prayers. We cry too long! To the growing child there comes a time of awakening when parents become more than almoners. Crossing the ocean a few years ago, we remember to have seen a man in middle life, with his wife,—both in the full bloom of their manhood and womanhood—with two sons as tall as their father, and a daughter the image of her mother. These five were inseparable from each other; and daily walked the deck in happy fellowship, as though they cared nothing for the world without.

Nothing is more beautiful than when children awake to a realization of their parents' worth, and prefer their society to that of all others. So should we covet the privilege of residence in the King's chambers, for the sheer pleasure of being with Him. Then we should be able to say:

“That good I seek, yet not alone
The hungered heart to fill,
But as the angels nigh the throne,
Made swift to do Thy will:

“Thy will, unmingled, Lord, with mine,
That makes all service sweet,
And, charged with messages divine,
Puts wings upon my feet.

“No need to trim my taper's blaze,
No need of sun or moon;
The glories falling from Thy face
Make my unchanging noon.”

But there is a still closer intimacy than that of father and child. Prayer is the answer of a maturing spirit to the love of God, the prospective bride's response to the Bridegroom's wooings. Prayer is more than a duty: if it be a privilege to answer love with love, prayer is a privilege. The path of prayer is a lovers' lane; the place of prayer is love's trysting place. The essence of prayer is to come to our Beloved for His sake alone. It is a higher form of prayer to seek His presence to tell Him of our gratitude for all He is, and what He has done for us, than to come only begging further mercies:

“Art Thou weary of our selfish prayers?
For ever crying, 'Help me, save me, Lord!'
We stay fenced in by petty fears and cares,
Nor hear the song outside, nor join its vast accord.

“And yet the truest praying is a psalm:
The lips that open in pure air to sing
Make entrance to the heart for health and balm,
And so life's urn is filled at heaven's all-brimming
spring.”

II.

Prayer is the natural employment of those who dwell in the chambers of the King. If it be really true that the King hath brought us into His chambers, when we are consciously in His presence we shall learn to converse with Him in a very natural way. Prayer is natural to the spiritually-minded. We do not mean formal prayer, nor prayer that frames its thoughts in words: we mean, rather, that “spirit with spirit can meet”. The deepest communion defies expression. When the family circle

is complete; father with his book, mother with her work, the daughter playing softly yonder, the other children at their lessons, and each the happier because the other is there—that is true communion. We have all heard the story—whether apocryphal or not, we do not know—of Carlyle and Tennyson sitting an evening through in unbroken silence, one on either side of the fire; and when the evening was done and one was about to withdraw, the other said, "What a delightful evening we have had. Come and see me again." So prayer is often the silent enjoyment of the luxury of the conscious presence of God. We remember a husband's saying when his wife lay dead and we expressed our sympathy with him, that he was upheld by "a sweet consciousness of the presence of the dear Lord."

And on that Easter morning long ago, although many rumours were afloat, no one of all the disciples did really know that Christ was risen, until he or she felt His presence near. The proof of the resurrection is in our personal experience of its power; only as we sit together with Christ, in the heavenly places can we be sure.

III.

Those who dwell in the King's chambers find their prayers inspired by the view of life obtained from the King's windows. We ask and receive not, because we ask amiss that we may consume it upon our own pleasures. We live on too low a level; and our desires are correspondingly mean. We pray as though we were the children of a day-labourer instead of the children of a King; we aspire to nothing nobler than a peasant's spouse could dream of; and have no ambitions worthy of a King's consort. Swimming is learned in the water, flying in the air; and praying is learned in the presence of God. The Spirit of God is the atmosphere of prayer,—"praying in the Holy Ghost."

When we abide in the King's chambers, we learn what to pray for. Those who dwell in the tropics do not covet costly furs; a bathing beach is an unimportant adjunct to a winter residence in northern latitudes. Our prayers indicate the spiritual latitudes and the spiritual altitudes in which we dwell. In rare moments of spiritual exaltation, desire with respect to worldly concerns diminishes almost to extinction; while the spiritual blessings in heavenly places become correspondingly attractive. We cannot carry the base covetings of this lower life up to the royal chambers on the holy mount of prayer. Such low desires are dissolved in the pure atmosphere of the heavenly places in Christ.

"Above the storms and thunder-jars
That shake the eddying air,
Away beneath the naked stars,
Rises the Mount of Prayer!"

"The cumbering bars of mortal life
Here break and fall away;
And the harsh voice of human strife
Is silenced as we pray.

"And here by heaven's serener light
I see my nature true,
And all the pages, dark and bright,
Lie open to my view.

"On surface knowledge we have fed,
And missed the golden grain;
And now I come to Thee for bread
To sate the hunger-pain.

"No gift I bring, nor knowledge fine,
Nor trophies of my own;
I come to lay my heart in Thine,
O Lamb amid the throne!"

Life is never seen in its true perspective and proportion until we look from the King's windows. To one who has never had experience of these altitudes, it is impossible to explain; but those who have, even though for a short period, will remember that in the consciousness of God and of the soul's infinite relations, the things of time and sense were involuntarily subjected to a new appraisal. Our Lord was shown the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them from "an exceeding high mountain"; but they were without attraction to Him because He dwelt in the higher altitude and rarer atmosphere of the Divine Presence where it was His highest joy to worship Him. There is only one way for any of us to cultivate a less worldly and more spiritual view of life, and that is to live in conscious fellowship with Christ. Then the rest will naturally follow.

Prayer is never unanswered to those who dwell in the King's chambers. Unanswered prayers are letters to One Who dwells distantly from us. We wait to hear from Him. We dare not say that such requests are not prayers; but there is a more excellent way. Prayer, in its highest exercise, is conference with the Divine,—the child talking over his desires with his father, and accepting his father's wiser plan for him; not a wife writing to her husband for a replenishment of funds, but sitting with him in his chambers, consulting with him, and learning that the resources of his wisdom and wealth exceed her most extravagant desires:

"We doubt the word that tells us, Ask
And ye shall have your prayer;
We turn our thoughts as to a task
With will constrained and rare.

"And yet we have; these scanty prayers
Yield gold without alloy:
O God! but he that trusts and dares
Must have a boundless joy!"

AMONG THE CHILDREN

Some years ago the late Dr. A. C. Dixon told us the following story about Dr. Russell H. Conwell, the incomparable. Beyond almost any man we have ever known, Dr. Conwell lived for other people. Days and nights he weariedly travelled, lecturing, for many years, more than two hundred nights a year. The proceeds of his lectures he devoted to the help of poor students.

Often after a week of lecturing he would reach Philadelphia of a Sunday morning, sometimes having had to sit up all night without a berth. One Sunday after just such a strenuous week, Dr. Conwell preached in the morning, and on coming down from the pulpit accidentally overheard two women discussing the sermon, one of whom said there had been very little in the sermon for anybody that morning, while the other gave her assent to the statement. Dr. Conwell would not, in his modesty, have disputed the stricture; notwithstanding, this criticism rather depressed his spirit.

Sunday afternoon he went to the Bible School, as was his wont, and played the organ. The Superintendent of the Primary Department asked him if he would go into that department and talk to the little ones, to which Dr. Conwell

replied, "Yes; that is the proper place for me; I ought never to have left that Department." Accordingly, he talked to the little ones; told them stories in his inimitable way, and then said to them something like this: I want you to promise me that this afternoon at tea, when you are seated about the table, you will each ask your father whether he is a Christian, and if he says, No, ask him why he is not a Christian. Listen carefully to his reply, and next Sunday afternoon I will come again, and you shall tell me what your father has said.

Dr. Dixon told us one example of what followed. A little girl asked her father, who was a druggist, if he were a Christian, and he carelessly said, No. When she asked him why he was not a Christian, he flushed with anger and told her she must not ask such impertinent questions. In response the child related her experience of the afternoon, and how she had asked the question because Dr. Conwell had told her to. Her father said, "I will not allow Dr. Conwell to put such notions into your head, and to make you so impertinent. It is none of Dr. Conwell's business why I am not a Christian." Thereupon the little girl said, through her tears, "I am sorry, daddy; but I will tell Dr. Conwell next Sunday what you said, for he said I was to do that." The father said, "Oh no! You must not do that. I do not like Dr. Conwell's teaching you to ask me such a question, but I have great respect for him. It is a long time until next Sunday, and before then I will give you an answer."

That father, in common with many others, spent the week trying to find an answer to the question as to why he was not a Christian. Dr. Dixon said that Dr. Conwell baptized forty fathers on profession of faith as the result of that one afternoon in the Primary Department.

We told that story a week ago Sunday morning, and asked the children in the School to ask the same question of their parents. We have no doubt hundreds of them did go, and if so, blessing will follow. But we can relate only one incident in connection with it. One of our young lady teachers, who is a student at the Seminary, told us that one of her little girls asked her mother if she were a Christian; and she quite warmly replied in the negative. When she asked her why she was not a Christian, the mother said, "Because I am English." By which we presume she meant that she attended the English Church, but what she said was, "Because I am English." To this the little tot replied, "That does not matter, Mamma: our Pastor says that God can save even the English."

Our Hungry Children

The readers of this paper will have had a weekly visit from the eldest of our children,

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

throughout the year. The paper has maintained a consistent testimony, we believe, to the gospel of grace. During the year we have heard from a good many, most of whom were ministers, telling us that their income was so greatly reduced that they were unable to continue the paper. In not a few instances we have continued sending the paper, and in some cases the subscriptions have been covered by others' contributions.

We have maintained the strictest economy in the publication of THE GOSPEL WITNESS, but the fact remains that the subscription price does not, and cannot, pay our bills. We are therefore under the necessity of making

OUR ANNUAL APPEAL TO THE WHOLE GOSPEL WITNESS FAMILY

We believe it is not possible to estimate the blessing which the paper has been God's instrument of conveying, first, in the salvation of the lost; then in the edification and comfort of God's people; and, we are happy to say, in not a few instances, in affording some inspiration to

hard-pressed ministers who find their task particularly arduous in these trying days.

The end of our fiscal year will be reached March 31st, and we appeal to every member of the GOSPEL WITNESS family—**THAT MEANS YOU**—to send us at once as generous a contribution to The Gospel Witness Fund as is possible. You cannot send too much. We shall need all that our most generous friends can send us, to enable us to close the year without a deficit. Large numbers of religious periodicals have had to cease publication from want of funds. Hitherto the Lord has helped us, and He has helped us through His believing people who have fellowship with us in the testimony this paper has endeavoured to give. We have never needed your friendship, and fellowship, and practical help, more than now. **Please help us! HELP US ALL YOU CAN! AND HELP US NOW!**

All that we have said about the hungry WITNESS Fund we can say with even greater emphasis about

TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY

The work of the Seminary amazes us. We are only in our eighth year, and yet we have more than forty pastors and ministers preaching in Ontario and Quebec; a number in the Prairie provinces; some in British Columbia; several in the United States; one in Scotland; three in Jamaica; one in Central America; one in China; four in Africa; one in Palestine; and a large number of others who have taken the Seminary course, and as trained workers, have resumed their places in the churches to which they belong.

All this has been done without a cent of endowment. We need at least \$15,000 a year. We need about \$10,000 immediately. But do not let the large amount frighten you, nor say to yourself, "What I could give would be but a drop in the bucket." Let us have the "drop in the bucket", if that be all you can give us. We mention the larger amount to remind any of God's stewards to whom He has entrusted some of His funds, that there is no better place to invest money in distinctively Christian Education than in Toronto Baptist Seminary. Read the leading article in this paper and see the influence of theological seminaries upon the ministry of the day, and the reaction of their teaching upon home, and church, and state.

REMEMBER THE SEMINARY IN YOUR WILL

May we remind our readers also of their privilege in remembering Toronto Baptist Seminary in their wills. Many are being suddenly called away in these days. If you intend to remember us, please do it now. We know of some cases where procrastination in this matter deprived the Seminary of funds that their owners intended we should have. But do not wait until you die. Having given the Seminary a place in your will, send us also a contribution to meet our present need.

And over and above all this, join us in earnest prayer that God will move His stewards so to give of their substance that the need of these hungry enterprises may be supplied. In naming the Seminary in your will, to avoid all possibility of mistake, name it as "Toronto Baptist Seminary, Associated with Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto."