

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
AND IN DEFENCE 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. 49

TORONTO, APRIL 18, 1935

Whole Number 674

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"JERUSALEM THE GOLDEN"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, April 14th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."—Hebrews 11:16.

In the beginning of human history the tempter whispered his first lie in Eden. He suggested that it would be more profitable for men to live for Now than for By and By. He has not changed his emphasis from that day until this. He has continued to suggest that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"; and that a house built on earth is really of much greater value than "many mansions" in the skies.

Even those who profess to believe the gospel have not wholly escaped the influence of that suggestion. There are not a few who are disposed to interpret the teachings of the Lord Jesus—and indeed the whole Christian revelation—in temporal terms. We are told that if we take care of Time, Eternity will take care of itself. They tell us that Jesus Christ came to make men honest—and that is true; but it is only a half-truth. They say that He came to teach men to love one another—and that is true; but it is only a half-truth. He did not come to teach men to love each other to the exclusion of God Himself. The emphasis is laid very frequently upon the practical value of Christian precepts. We very seldom hear nowadays about another life. Indeed, there are many evangelical, orthodox people who seldom speak about heaven. They know all about the millennium. They never weary of telling us about the millennium, about what a paradise this earth is to become. But seldom do you hear any teaching respecting the heavenly life beyond.

Nearly every quack in the economic and political world quotes some isolated saying of the Lord Jesus as authority for his particular nostrum. The Socialists of all sorts tell us that Jesus Christ was a Socialist. We are told that the main business of the church is to make this earth more habitable. That we ought to do so as

far as it is in our power, I readily admit. We ought to close the beer-parlours, and every other trap-door to hell. We ought to remove the stones of stumbling from the feet of little children.

But we must not lose our perspective. I believe we shall never thoroughly understand the Lord Jesus if we lose sight of the cardinal principle which He laid down. Speaking of His disciples He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." We must keep ever in view the fact that Jesus Christ came to relate us, not only to each other, but first of all to relate us rightly to God; and that He came not only to teach us how to live here, but how to lay up "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal".

The chapter before us is a record of the names of the heroes of faith—not of all of them. It is specifically said to be incomplete, for time would have failed the writer to record the names of all who had believed. But, having mentioned a large number, he then proceeds to tell of their accomplishments, of what faith enabled them to achieve in this world. He says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The faith of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and of the other great believers who preceded him, and those who followed him, did

not make this earth a paradise; for while they triumphed through faith, they suffered grievously for righteousness' sake. They are thus described in Holy Writ:

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

It is to be observed therefore that when their valorous deeds have been recounted, they are described as a company of people "of whom the world was not worthy". They belonged to another country; they were citizens of another kingdom; they owed allegiance to another King.

It is here said that their faith wrought in them a desire for "a better country, that is, an heavenly"; and that because of that, God was "not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city".

I shall try to speak to you this evening about the ministry of faith, what faith really does for the man who believes. John says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is important that we should know how to believe, that we should become great believers—not great doubters, not animated interrogation marks, continually asking questions with the air of one who believes them unanswerable—as though religious certitude were impossible. True Christians are believers because they know the Word of Truth.

What does faith accomplish in those who believe? Observe I do not say in those who *profess* to believe, but in those who really believe? They have heard a Voice speaking from beyond the river, from another country, and they make the Word they have heard the rule by which everything is measured, the scale in which everything is weighed, the light in which everything is viewed, the Supreme Authority by which all values are appraised.

What did faith accomplish for these men of whom the text speaks? It enabled them to *form an accurate estimate of earthly values*. It created within them a *desire for something better than this earth could possibly provide*. And it *ensured to them the possession of an enduring treasure*: "He hath prepared for them a city."

I.

TRUE FAITH PUTS A PROPER ESTIMATE UPON EARTHLY THINGS. If there is no life beyond, if our human existence is bounded by the grave, if it be so that there is no continuity of existence, that this life has no direct relation to, or effect upon, a larger life beyond the grave, then obviously we must attach a certain importance to the things we see, that would not inhere in them if they were but of a transitory character.

If anyone should propose to-day to build an electric railway between two points much travelled, thickly populated, with good paved roads between them, and try to

sell stock, he would find it rather a difficult matter. Nobody with sense would invest. People would say, "In a little while there will be no electric railways. Many of them have ceased to operate already. It is really a question whether there will be any railways at all after a while. I shall not invest money in the stock of a company that must soon be bankrupt. You must go to someone who has a different estimate of values than mine."

If we see that earthly things last but a short time, we shall not be so concerned about them; we shall not be so wedded to them. There was a suggestive principle laid down in the Levitical system respecting the year of jubilee. It was impossible in those days for anyone permanently to alienate a piece of property. Every fifty years the property reverted to the original owners, to the tribe to whom it had been assigned by lot when the children of Israel went into the promised land. A man could sell a piece of land, but it was subject to the limitation of the jubilee. If he sold it five years after a jubilee year, it had forty-five years of value; but if he sold it twenty-five years after a jubilee it had only twenty-five years of value. The nearer the date approached another jubilee, the shorter could be the tenure of anyone who bought the property. If one had offered a large tract of land to someone a year or so before the jubilee, and set the price at a figure it would have brought forty-five years before a jubilee, he would have been laughed at. The prospective purchaser would have said, "I will not pay that for two years' occupation. It would be valueless to me in a couple of years, and slip from my hand." This was the statute: "According to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according to the number of the years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of the years thou shalt diminish the price of it."

If we could remember that there is a boundary of time beyond which you and I can own nothing; if we could recognize that the man who counts his wealth by hundreds of millions will be no better off than a pauper when death has laid his hand upon him, and he is summoned to quit this sphere of activity, we should attach a much lower value to earthly things. If men could keep that always in view, they would not be so likely to live solely by this rule, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." The Christian revelation is a revelation of a life that is not discoverable by human exploration. It lies beyond a river which no man can ford. It belongs to a continent of which no one has any personal knowledge. Jesus Christ came down from heaven to teach us that there is a heaven; He came from another world to teach us that there is another world. He came in order to show us the transitoriness, the effervescent nature of all earthly things, to teach us that life is "even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"; to teach us, therefore, not to strike our roots too deeply into the soil of earth; nor to lay up treasure here, but to look yonder to another country than this.

The man of faith has heard, and has believed, a message respecting another land. That is one of the distinctive characteristics of a Christian. He may have read

many other books, but there is one Book that stands apart because it gives information about a world concerning which all other books that ever have been published are silent. The Bible is unique in that it speaks of something beyond the grave, beyond death itself. The believer has heard that message, and has received it, and believed it, and confessed that he is not living for time and sense, but is living for "a better country".

If that be so, a man may be very poor in this life—and yet be very happy. He may have to suffer every conceivable disability here—and still be possessed of a great peace in his soul. He knows that he is bound for another land.

But that does not necessarily make a man a simpleton. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, these mighty believers of ancient time, were men of substance, and men who knew how to use temporal things wisely. The fact that a man is looking for a city which hath foundations, that he knows a city is being prepared for him, does not disqualify him for the pitching of a tent. The man whose eyes have been opened to the glories of heaven, is not necessarily blind to whatever there may be of good upon earth. But the distinctive principle if we are Christians, is that we have learned we are here as a colony of a kingdom that is not of this world; that even the best and fullest earthly life possible to the believer is but segmentary, a fragment, a preparation for something richer and fuller, and which lies beyond. Such a view does not make a man unappreciative of the good things of earth; but it does give him a true prospective of life, and helps him properly to appreciate the value of things which he may use but for a short time, ere they must be entirely abandoned.

It is a good life God gives us under the sun. The fields are fruitful, the flowers are fragrant, the woods are vocal with song; the lakes and the rivers are serviceable; the plains grow harvests of gold; the valleys are highways of commerce; the mountains are treasuries of wealth; and the friends one meets are pleasant and often kind—but this is not our country. Why build houses of granite for creatures of clay?—"For the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush"—for all these faith sings her grateful song of thanksgiving and praise, but refuses to be held in thrall with things that pass away.

This, then, is faith's first lesson: to teach us that we are pilgrims and strangers, and have no continuing city here.

II.

FAITH TEACHES US TO DESIRE A "BETTER COUNTRY". I wonder if any of us here are so satisfied with things as they are, that we want nothing "better"? Think a minute, will you? An Irishman may boast of the Emerald Isle—and it is a beautiful country. I have been there on more than one occasion. But there is "a better country" than Ireland. I do not know whether I shall offend the susceptibilities of the Scotsman—for he is rather sensitive—if I tell him that, notwithstanding the

glories of the land of the heather, there is "a better country" than Scotland. There must be! If there were not, why did so many of them leave it? (Laughter). I think some of them must think that even this is "a better country"! Even England is not without its attractions! Some years ago when in London I met a man who was then a member of this church, a Canadian, who had never been to Europe until the occasion of which I speak. He told me of a Toronto friend who was often homesick for some of the beauties of the Old Land. He had sung its praises to him frequently. He had requested this Canadian, when he got to England, and had had opportunity to see the country, to write and tell him what he thought of it. On the day that I met this Toronto friend he said, "I have just written my friend in Toronto to tell him what I think of England. He may not think my letter very complimentary to him, but I told him that I was of the opinion that any man must be seven-eighths of a fool to leave it!"

We think this is rather a fine country, but let me tell you Canadians that there is "a better country" than this. I have sometimes come in on a ship to New York. I like to hear Americans talk when they get sight of their country. I have seen them smile and heard them say, "There is God's country." They used to say that—I do not know what they think of it now. I suppose our opinions are changing, our estimates of earthly values are generally changing in these days. But the Bible reminds us that we need a "better" than any earthly country. These men of faith had learned that great lesson, a lesson that is very simple, yet very profound. A man has made real progress when that conviction is wrought in his soul, that even if he had the wealth of the whole world, and freedom to roam whithersoever he would, he needs something "better", a better country than can be found on this planet.

They are the heirs of that better country who have believed the "better promises" of the "better covenant".

We need a better country *physically*. There are people who trot hither and thither looking for health. They go from one place to another, if they have the means to do so, searching for an agreeable climate. Some years ago I visited the desert city of Tuscon, Arizona. It is a manufactured city, everything about it is artificial—except the dust. It is built in the desert. The air is delightfully dry, and I found that it is actually a huge sanitarium—I was told that nearly every house in the city accommodated a tubercular patient. They had come from the ends of the earth to that desert city looking for health. Some of them found it, while others experienced no benefit whatever.

I remind you of something that is self-evident, when I say we need a better country physically. But why is it that we do not observe these things? Do you not want a better country, where you cannot take cold? where it is never too hot? where you do not need to be on guard against disease germs? where you do not need to worry about your diet? I wonder how some people live who have to study all these things. Indeed, I wonder how the race has survived so long! If what the specialists say is true, the wonder is that human life on this earth has not been terminated. We ought all to have died long ago. It is so common for people to be ill that it has become a habit with us, when meeting a friend, to enquire, "How are you?" Why do you ask that ques-

tion? "I hope you are well?" Why do you thus speak? Are people not always well? Alas, no!

Some years ago I visited the Canadian West, and some friends arranged a picnic for a Saturday afternoon. One of the friends who had been invited to the picnic went bathing in the bay during the week, and was drowned. That Saturday afternoon, at the very hour when we were to have been at a picnic, we attended a funeral. Picnics are turned often to funerals; the voice of merriment to mourning.

I asked the students of the Seminary to criticize the sermons of the Jarvis Street Pastor. They criticize the sermons of other preachers, and I thought I would turn them loose on mine, with the condition everything remotely resembling a compliment was forbidden. I was interested in one criticism: "I have heard it said, sir, that you are too emotional." I wish the criticism were more just. I wish I had power to stir people's emotions more than I do. But I shall not try to cast any shadow upon anybody's countenance this evening. Notwithstanding I must remind you that death is still busy. I was at the graveside Friday. It is no new thing. Personally I want a better country; I want a country where things are stable, where things are dependable. I go away occasionally, and scarcely ever leave home without hearing of the death of someone ere I return. I should like to be Pastor of a church in a city where there is no death. I should like to minister in a place

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end".

I have been in this pulpit nearly twenty-five years, and I never come into it that I do not look about to recall the faces of our loved and lost. Scores of people who used to worship with us, are here no longer. They have passed beyond this sphere of life, and I thank God I know that they have gone to a "better country". I want to go there myself. I long for a country where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away". How foolish we are to allow ourselves to be blinded to these simple, and yet sublimely important, matters! Not long shall we be here.

Many a time have I witnessed the case of a man who had large interests, to whom the world and all there is in it, seemed to be important—until he discovered he had—perhaps a pain in the chest. "I think I will not go to the office to-day," he said. "Perhaps it would be well to call in the doctor." The doctor came, and put the stethoscope to his ears and listened; then, rather carelessly said, "I think you had better rest." "Rest"! After he had cheerfully said good-bye, he beckoned the man's wife to follow him, and he whispered to her, "That is the end. He will not go to the office again. Be careful of him—he may go out in the fraction of a moment." All that he has laboured to build up in a long lifetime collapses; it is of no further value to him when the doctor has given his verdict, for he is only the herald of someone who will come later and lay his icy hand upon him, and command him to go!

I desire a country where there are better educational facilities; where there is every opportunity for the enlargement of the mind. What a delight to take wings and fly on a tour of exploration in the world of the intellect! These men of faith were men who lived beyond their time. They did not know less than others:

they knew more. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, held commerce with the skies. "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." It came to pass when Moses was grown—when he grew up—that he could not live in Pharaoh's palace any longer. He was too big for even the palace of a king. What a gigantic man he was! Daniel was prime minister in a foreign land, wiser than all the wise men of his day. Why? Because he kept his window open toward Jerusalem. Not because of that literal fact of course; but because of what it symbolized. He breathed the atmosphere and lived in the light and knowledge of another world. And yet these mighty men of faith, who had the Creator for their teacher, at last had to lay their lessons down before they were perfectly learned. The Lord came even to Moses, that very apt scholar, and said, "It is bed-time, Moses. I will put you to bed Myself." He took Moses up to Nebo's mount, and buried him there:

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there."

What a pity that men who have evidenced such unusual mental capacity should not be suffered to continue by reason of death! So Moses left school without graduating? No! No! He did but graduate into another school; he and others have gone on into another life, a larger life, where they shall go on learning for ever.

In his post graduate days Moses returned with Elias to talk with Incarnate Wisdom about the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Believers want to go to that city, a city that is better than this, "a better country", where they can continue their education in the things of God.

It is a city that is better in the moral and spiritual sense. This city used to be spoken of as "Toronto the good". If it be "Toronto the good", what would it be like if it were "Toronto the bad"! We are no better than other cities—although I hope, no worse. We are all a bad lot. How full of evil this city is! What folly to invest in it! Some years ago when I was on a visit to British Columbia I chanced to meet an Englishman of large wealth. He and his wife were making a tour of this Continent. We got into conversation, and among other things, talked of the wealth of that great Province,—the potential, undeveloped, wealth. And I said to him—it was before the days of the depression—"I have often wondered why some of you Englishmen of large wealth are not more interested in this country. Why do you not invest your money in a place like this, for instance? Why do not more of you come here and develop the enormous wealth of this Province?" He replied, "It is too far from home. It takes two weeks to get here, and two weeks to return. I could not look after my interests if I were to invest what I have so far from home. I have no intention of living here. My wife and I are only making a tour. It would be foolish of me to invest my capital in a country where I could not oversee my interests."

Are there not some people who are investing their capital too far from home? Earth is not "home" for the Christian. This is not home for the believer. Jesus Christ said in effect, "Do not make your investments

too far from home. Do not live for time. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, because you will not be here long, and here moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal. Invest in the better country where you are to live for ever." There are no moths there. Nothing rusts there, and there are no thieves to steal.

III.

Those who desire "a better country, that is, an heavenly", recognize the limitations of this earthly existence and say, "I was made for something better than this old earth can give me." It is said of them that **THEY ARE GIVEN AN ENDURING POSSESSION**, that "God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city".

Ah, yes; God is ashamed of some people. The music-teacher is ashamed of the pupil who cannot discern a discord, and who has no ear for sublime harmonies. Any teacher will be ashamed of the pupil who cannot, or will not, learn the lesson set for him. Some of us have reason to believe that God is ashamed of us. He must be ashamed of the man who does not detect the discord a sinful life produces in an ordered universe. He must be ashamed of the man who, while enchanted by the things which God hath made beautiful, fails to recognize that God hath set eternity in his heart. God is ashamed of the man who lives only to eat, drink, and be merry, or to buy and sell and get gain; or who lives with thought only of outward adornment without desire to be washed and made whiter than snow.

But *He is not ashamed of men of heavenly aspirations*. We may be far short of what we ought to be, but if our eyes are heavenward, He takes note of it. A dear old saint used to sit in this front seat, Mr. Henry O'Brien. He was past ninety years of age when, talking with him after a service, he told me of the conversion of a man at a mission where he worked. Tears of joy rolled down his face as he recognized the work of the Spirit of God in that man's life, bringing him to repentance, and causing him to cry out, "Mr. O'Brien, I should like to be a better man."

God is not ashamed of anybody who would like to be a better man, a better woman, who desires a "better country". He delights to observe that heavenly aspiration; for when we desire better things, He is ready to assist us to the possession of them. He "is not ashamed to be called their God."

What does it mean to call God, *God*? Can you tell me? Then let me tell you. After the resurrection when the disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Jesus again appeared among them, and said, "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas saw the God-man Who had died for him. He saw the wounds in His hands, and feet, and side; he saw the marks of the thorns about His brow. And he fell on his face and said, "My Lord and my God." Jesus was not ashamed to be called his God. He said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." We are to call God, *God*, as we see Him in Jesus Christ. And then He is "not ashamed to be

called our God": for He has prepared for us a city—a city that hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is God.

As I read this chapter to-day I was impressed with the fact that there is not a word in it about an earthly millennium. I know there is to be such a period, but it is relatively unimportant. All these heroes of faith looked beyond that, to a city, a city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". What a city that will be!

I have travelled a little, and have sometimes felt rather weary of seeing cities. Nearly everywhere I go friends say, "We want to show you the city." One cannot be impolite, but must accept their good offices. "There is our new hospital." I am glad they have good hospitals—I am glad we have. I thank God for them—and I thank God that I am on the outside. But indispensable as hospitals are they are scarcely an adornment. We need them because sickness is common to the race. Something over twenty years ago I first visited New Orleans. I was entertained by a friend who showed me the sights of the city. Where do you suppose they took me? To the most distinctive thing they had: the cemetery! That is the most extraordinary feature of New Orleans. The ground is so wet that they bury above ground: the cemetery is literally a city of the dead. Some sections of it are built like houses, with verandahs; and there are chairs on which one may sit and think of those who have gone before, and whose ashes are just within. But I would not choose to live in New Orleans because they have a good cemetery! I want a better city than that. I have actually been shown the jail, in some places as one of the outstanding features of the city. It is unfortunately necessary to have places of confinement where dangerous people can be kept out of mischief. But I have no desire for residence in a city remarkable for its jail. I want to go to a city where there are no hospitals because they do not need them. I want to go to a city where there are no cemeteries because there is no death. I desire a city where there is no jail because there are no criminals. I want a city that needs neither light of the sun nor of the moon: "There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

In some great cities we are shown the churches. In the Old World cities what wonderful church buildings there are! Westminster Abbey and St. Pauls, in London; and other great churches throughout the land, and in all the cities of Europe, how interesting are the great churches and cathedrals! I love to spend a few hours in Westminster Abbey and study the tablets and monuments; or in St. Paul's, with its tomb of Nelson. His bones are there. The great equestrian statue of Wellington. On every hand are the tombs or commemorative tablets of the illustrious dead. Those great churches are full of dead people. And many other churches are full of dead people too! We can find churches in this country which are little better than mausoleums, occupied by many who are spiritually dead.

But this city that God has prepared for us has no churches in it. John says there is not a temple in the entire city. They have outgrown all churches: "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Jesus Himself is the Light of the city. That is the

city He has prepared for us. Do you want to go there? Would you not like to be in that city? I often think of it, and long for it; and very often make Whittier's prayer my own. I quote it to you, and hope you will make it your own:

"When on my day of life the night is falling,
And, in the winds from unsunned spaces blown,
I hear far voices out of darkness calling
My feet to paths unknown.

"Thou who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O Love Divine, O Helper ever present,
Be Thou my strength and stay!

"Be near me when all else is from me drifting:
Earth, sky, home's pictures, days of shade and shine,
And kindly faces to my own uplifting
The love which answers mine.

"I have but Thee, my Father! let Thy spirit
Be with me then to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

"Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through Thy abounding grace—
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place.

"Some humble door among Thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows for ever through heaven's green expansions
The river of Thy peace.

"There, from the music round about me stealing,
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find at last, beneath Thy trees of healing,
The life for which I long."

MORE ABOUT SOLOMON'S WORK

A Bible Lecture by Dr. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, April 11th, 1935

Twelfth 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 7.

A glance at this chapter will suggest that it is rather a dry and uninteresting record. It is about as interesting as a set of specifications for a building. But though such a document would not be very interesting to the ordinary reader, it would be of very great importance to the builders.

There is nothing superfluous in the Word of God. Our evolutionary friends would have us believe that we have some things about us with which we could quite easily dispense. They call them "vestigial remains", what is left of a lower animal order from which we have been evolved! I do not believe it. I think we had better not only keep our two eyes, two ears, and ten fingers, and other members and organs whose functions we understand, but also all that God gave us, whether we understand their functions or not. There is nothing superfluous about God's work. And if science does not understand the function of any part of the body we had better patiently await science's further progress and discovery. Nor is there anything superfluous in

God's Word. If there are passages in the Word of God which you do not understand, you had better wait until you are wiser; then, perhaps, their meanings will appear. Meanwhile, rest assured they are there for some purpose.

The chapter before us gives an account of the building of Solomon's house, and of the house of the forest of Lebanon, and the making of the furnishings and vessels for the temple. We observed in a former lecture that the temple required seven years for its construction: Solomon was thirteen years in building his own house. By which we are not to understand that by his estimate it was nearly twice as important as the temple. The fact is, he did not lay one stone in the foundation of his own house until the Lord's house was finished. He built the Lord's house first; an illustration of the principle laid down by our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The psalmist said on one occasion, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." We are to put God's work first in order of time, and of importance.

It is true that the temple required only seven years in building, but we are to remember that David spent many years in preparing for the temple. When Solomon began the task he did but add to that which his father had done. "Thou mayest add thereto", David said to Solomon. The house was partly prepared, the material was assembled. David had made much preparation in his lifetime (I. Chron. chaps. 28 and 29), and Solomon brought it all together, and according to divine specification, fabricated the temple.

We are to remember too that Solomon evidently prosecuted the work of building the Lord's house with much greater zeal than he did his own house. The reverse is true of many people. Many are more interested in business than they are in the Lord's house. They give far more time to the things of the world than they do to the things of God. But David and Solomon both believed that the King's business required haste.

There is nothing to indicate that Solomon had such a vast army of workmen engaged in the building of his own house as were engaged in the work of building the temple. There were one hundred and eighty thousand regularly employed, beside the officers who were over them, in the quarries, and mines, and forests. It does not appear that any such number were engaged in the building of Solomon's own house. Altogether the indication is that the house of the Lord was given the first place. Notwithstanding, Solomon built a house for himself.

Have we any right to have a place to live in? I suppose everybody has. Even the furry and feathered creatures of His hand have their shelters. Our Lord said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Solomon was the ruler of the people; he was representative of all the people; he was the king. But what of that? Should any special honour be paid to the king? Yes. The Bible says so. Notwithstanding our present-day vaunted democracy, we are to "fear God, and honour the king".

Is there any place for the pomp and circumstance that usually surround the throne? I think there is. Perhaps

you will not agree with me, but I believe there is. Have you ever been in a British court, or a Canadian court? No matter how unimportant the case may be, whatever law is administered in this country, there is order and decorum. There is dignity. That is true not only of the higher courts, but of the lower courts. There is a reason for it.

I was in the United States a few months ago, and I was asked to interview a certain lawyer, who was a judge. As I went into the court-room he was supposed to be holding court. I said to myself, "What is this?" A man was seated on a chair, and people around him, two or three talking together. There was no order, no dignity. I have seen it in several instances in the United States: it is a feature of democracy from which we may well pray to be delivered. Do not begrudge the king his robes. There is a place for such accompaniments as are here described. In such matters it is quite possible to be penny-wise and pound-foolish. Solomon's house was magnificent.

He built for himself also a country home, "the house of the forest of Lebanon". It was made very largely of cedar, and I rather think in the forest of Lebanon itself. If he had many experiences like that in which he first displayed his wisdom, he probably sometimes wished for several homes. Doubtless he had enough to tax his nervous energy to the utmost, and was sometimes glad enough to get away to the forest of Lebanon. How would you like to be a king? How would you like to be the Prince of Wales? You would have difficulty in following his steps even for a little while unless you are very fond of work. The marvel to me is that he is alive—or the King either. Do you suppose you could endure the exacting labours of the President of the United States? It is no wonder he finds it necessary to board a yacht and get away from everybody occasionally. I feel like it myself! I often feel I should like to fly away. If one had an aeroplane, he might be tempted to do so, and never come back! I certainly would go for excursions occasionally if I were able—and I would not take you with me!

The principle is this, that God cares for His people. He makes allowance for our requirements. I read a story of the late Dr. Theodore Cuyler, who travelled much, lecturing or preaching night after night. He stepped off a pullman car one day, to take a little exercise while the trainsmen changed engines. He had his pullman check in the band of his hat, where the conductor had put it. One of the "brethren" who are often more legal than they know, and who would like to cast everybody into a legal mould, walking along the platform, met Dr. Cuyler. He held out a day-coach ticket and said, "Dr. Cuyler, I believe in saving the Lord's money." "Very good, brother," said the great preacher; taking the pullman check from his hat-band, "I believe in saving what the Lord values more than His money, His servant." It was indispensable to the service he rendered that some care should be exercised over the frame that was not made of steel. Perhaps that was why Solomon had a house in the forest of Lebanon as well as one in Jerusalem. Few of us can afford it, but let us remember that people in high positions, who are charged with very heavy responsibilities, do require some relaxation, some avocation.

We come now to the thirteenth verse, with which begins a record of the making of the furnishings for the

temple. We are told of a certain man called Hiram: "King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre." You will remember we met a Hiram of Tyre, who was king of Tyre, in the fifth chapter. This is not King Hiram, but an artificer in brass, whose mother was an Israelite, of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre. He brought to the work of Solomon the skill of the men of Tyre. You will recall that we observed that none were skilled to hew timber like the Sidonians; and apparently there was nobody in Israel so skilful in the casting and manipulation of brass as this Hiram of Tyre. Solomon brought him from Tyre for the express purpose of using him in fashioning the vessels of the temple.

It required great skill to execute the divine plan. It always does. There is a place for skill in the service of the Lord. We ought to exercise ourselves to be as skilful as possible, if we would be workmen "that needeth not to be ashamed".

Then, too, we must show ourselves "approved unto God". I believe there is no royal road to learning in spiritual matters any more than in the ordinary culture of the mind. If we are to be really useful in the Lord's service, we must address ourselves to the task of fitting ourselves for service.

I doubt not there are men and women even in this company to-night who have in them potentialities of which they have never dreamed, who imagine they are unable to do anything.

There are potential capacities for spiritual service in all of us of which we are wholly unaware. What did Paul mean when he admonished Timothy to "stir up the gift" that was in him, by the laying on of hands? It was a divinely-given power, but he was not to neglect it; but was admonished to use it, develop it, discipline it, so that he would become a useful servant of God. There is room for skill in the service of God, a place for downright hard work. I do not like the grammar of the cobbler's ditty, but I like the sentiment of it:

"If I were a cobbler, I'd make it my pride
The best of all cobblers to be;
If I were a tinker, no tinker beside
Should mend an old kettle like me."

Whatever we do, let us do it well. Let us seek to excel in the service of the Lord, whether it be singing, or teaching, or preaching.

Let us look back a minute. Hiram of Tyre was necessary to this work, and "Solomon sent and fetched him". You remember the record of the building of the tabernacle in the days of Moses? There was one of whom the Lord said, "I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee."

Someone perhaps may say that we must not expect the Spirit of God to help us in ordinary work. Why not? Whatever the work is, if it be plowing, or sowing, or building a house, or caring for a house; if it be sweeping a room, or washing dishes, He is our constant Helper. Another may think, "Anybody can do that." Can they?

You have not been in as many restaurants as I have, or you would not say that! There is a right and a wrong way of doing everything. In the days of Moses there was a man whom the Lord made wise in all these mechanical and artistic affairs, for the building of the tabernacle. But the Lord did not exhaust Himself on Bezaleel, for centuries afterward there appeared a Hiram of Tyre who was equally skilful in fashioning the vessels for the temple. Do not let us imagine that God has exhausted Himself on anyone, on any generation, or in any age. No one can excel, nor can anyone equal, the Master Himself; but if you look back over the record, it will appear that God has always had a man for the emergency,—a Wycliff, a Luther, a Knox. Men of force sometimes, to appear publicly and do things; men of infinite patience and keen intellect, who have quietly delved among manuscripts, and laid the foundation of biblical scholarship.

God has always had His Bezaleels and Hiram, and who shall say the most skilful Bezaleel has yet arisen? Who shall say God will not raise up another preacher as great as Spurgeon ever was? I cannot see any indications of such an one being found among us here! But if we cannot excel him, we can equal some others, if only we recognize the principle that God can fit us for our task. He did it in ancient times, and He can do it still.

The vessels of the temple were made of brass—they were not of tin, but of a solid, useful, material. There are some people who have a great love for the spectacular. There is a kind of evangelism that is rather superficial. It consists of exhortation. Let us remember that God's work requires good material. Wood, hay, and stubble, are poor materials for building, and are no fit substitutes for gold, silver, and precious stones. You will not waste your time if, in some little church, you are used of God to lead one young lad to Christ; if he sits at your feet, and you instruct and build him up in his most holy faith, even if by and by, as the full fruit of years of labour, you have nothing to show but one young man. One young man? Just one! One to whom you have given "precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little"; indoctrinating him, establishing him in the faith, fitting him to stand when all the winds are blowing, enabling him to become a veritable cedar in Lebanon, withstanding all the winds that blow. If that should be all you have to show, it will be a great "all". Thank God if He gives you the privilege of doing that. Better grow one mighty oak than a thousand reeds shaken by the wind.

Do not ask for immediate results always. Thank God when you get them, but do not be discouraged if sometimes you have to work with difficult material, if you have to be an artificer in brass—and that is much harder than putty. There are plenty of putty men, quickly made—and just as quickly destroyed.

The work of the temple was solidly done. I have not time to speak of the two main pillars of brass. Jachin means, "He is established"; and Boaz, "In it is strength". If you are permitted to fashion two pillars for the porch, and nothing else, you will have done something. You will have made some contribution to "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

But especially may I call you attention to the fact that *everything was beautifully fashioned*. The house was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. There is a place for

beautiful things in the service of God. The Preacher, in Ecclesiastes, observes that God had "made everything beautiful in his time". Do not despise the beautiful things. Indeed, our Lord said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (your beautiful works), and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The Psalmist prayed, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

There should be no place for coarseness or vulgarity of any sort in the service of the Lord. I hope you who expect to become preachers will study to cultivate the art of beautiful speech. Do not think that anything will do. Solomon said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." The gospel of the Lord Jesus deserves the very noblest expression possible; and you will do well to study to beautify your speech. I know the tendency of our day is to pick up the slang of the street, to introduce every sort of vulgarity into the pulpit. I hope you will never disgrace your pulpit—or your calling—by falling into that habit. I beg of you young men to shun the tendency toward coarseness and vulgarity of speech as you would shun a viper. Learn to abhor such vulgar speech and unseemly conduct as, under the influence of Premier Hepburn, is at present disgracing the Ontario Legislature. The man who speaks vulgarly, thinks vulgarly. The man whose similes and metaphors are all the reverse of edifying only reveals the character of his own mind. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Let there be lily-work, and carved figures of cherubim, and open flowers, in your mind. When you think beautifully, you will speak chastely and musically. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ deserves, demands, the most refined expression of which human language and the human voice are capable.

Which does not mean that we must be dumb, or dull, lacking determination; but it does mean that we ought to train our minds and our tongues, and as Christian men and women—not only as ministers—"adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things". There are words, there are conceptions, there are ideas, that are so coarse that they ought not to be so much as named among us. Christians are always on duty. Let everything be done as unto the Lord—and remember, He is "the chiefest among ten thousand", the One "altogether lovely". If you speak of Him worthily, you will be sure to speak of Him beautifully.

I cannot go into the particulars of this furniture: I wish I could. I think every verse is significant. Observe, however, that there is a *suggestion of progress, of enlargement, in the temple*. It was a replica of the tabernacle, and yet at some points that which was suggested in the tabernacle was enlarged in the temple. In the tabernacle there was a laver of brass in which the priests could bathe, and thus be made clean ceremonially before they served the Lord. In the temple there was a sea of brass—not merely a small laver, but a large container which was called a sea. Beside that, there were ten lavers of brass.

Without magnifying details, let me suggest to you that every facility was provided for the cleansing of those who would serve the Lord. "Be ye clean, that bear

the vessels of the Lord." I believe that the Lord's people ought to be clean people. Yes, literally! When one is genuinely saved, and really knows the grace of God, he will hate dirt. What is the definition of dirt?—*matter out of place*. I have seen men whose hands were not clean—I mean, literally. If honest toil has soiled them, we need not be ashamed. I do not mean that. But I think a house in which a Christian woman lives, ought to be clean. I have serious doubt about anyone's religion whose windows are so dirty that you can scarcely see out of them. "Do you mean that literally?" Yes; I do. I mean that when the sense of uncleanness comes to the soul before God, and the need of the cleansing of the precious blood, when spiritually we are made aware of our uncleanness, and we are led to cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean", if we are cleansed in the blood, we shall want to be clean all over, through and through.

Let us keep that in mind. One of you young men will go to a little church, perhaps, where they have no janitor, and will find the place untidy and dirty. A dirty church anywhere is a serious reflection upon the quality of religion that is professed by its members. Literally! Let us be clean—clean of speech, clean of life, clean of habit, clean in every way. Surely we have so been taught.

The vessels for the temple were without number, and without weight. Solomon provided so bountifully, and the temple was furnished so fully and elaborately, that there was no want of any vessel for any service that was required. The New Testament speaks of vessels, "some to honour, and some to dishonour"; and we are exhorted to be vessels unto honour, meet for the Master's use.

There ought to be in every church plenty of vessels for the Lord's service, plenty of instruments, plenty of channels through which His grace may flow. Our Solomon is lavish in the bestowment of His gifts, and He will provide if we ask Him. "Covet earnestly the best gifts."

The brass was on the outside of the temple: everything inside the temple was of gold. They had no carpet in the temple: it was paved with gold. It was lined with gold. Even the carved work was overlaid with gold. All the vessels of the sanctuary were of pure gold. Within, the temple was a mass of gold, the purest metal—and the original metal. Nobody can make gold. Even in this day of synthetic production, no chemist can make gold. The search of the ancient alchemists resulted in disappointment. No one ever learned how to turn baser metals into gold. Gold is something God made: no one else has ever made it. But wherever one looked in the temple, there was gold. Human hands had been used of God to fashion it in the particular form, but it was made of a material which God Himself had supplied.

Was it intended to teach us that when the great temple shall be finished at last, and the top-stone is put on with cryings of "Grace, grace, unto it", it will all be God's handiwork. Our great Master-Builder said, "I will build my church." He is our Solomon, His temple will be all of gold—"Not of works, lest any man should boast." May this simple lesson teach us something of the honour and dignity of the service of the Lord; something of the holy requirements that are demanded of every one of us. Nothing is too good for Him from Whom all blessings flow.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

Young People's Rally

A Young People's Rally of the Churches of the Hamilton and Brantford District will be held in the Hespeler Baptist Church on GOOD FRIDAY, April 19th. The afternoon session is to be in charge of the Runnymede Road Baptist Church Young People's Society, and the special speaker for the evening meeting will be Rev. R. D. Guthrie, of London. At the evening session a number of the recent converts of the work started in the City of Galt by the Hespeler Baptist Church will be baptised. Many of the other societies of the District will have a part in the programme, and a day of real blessing is expected. Please bring a lunch basket. Tea and coffee will be provided.

Hespeler

The Annual Business meeting of the Hespeler Regular Baptist Church was held on April 10th, with a large attendance of members present. The pastor, Rev. W. N. Charlton, presided, and after a short devotional service, reports for the year were received from the various departments of the Church. Financial reports showed that the year ended with a balance in hand with all bills paid, and the membership report showed seven additions during the year, six of which were by baptism.

A congregational supper will be held on Thursday evening, April 25th, when Mr. and Mrs. Mellish and Miss Lane, now on furlough from Liberia, will be present and speak.

Trinity, Niagara Falls

The Trinity Baptist Church, Niagara Falls, was greatly encouraged and strengthened by the visit of Rev. Frank Roblin, of Calvin Baptist Church, Toronto, who conducted two weeks of evangelistic services. A number professed conversion during that time. The week-night services were characterised by consistent attendances, while the Sunday services saw the largest congregations during the past two years.

This church is in need of baptismal gowns, and if any of the churches have gowns they are not using, the Trinity Church would appreciate the loan of some.

Bethany, Winnipeg

We are in receipt of a letter from Mr. Byron C. R. Welch, pastor of the Bethany Regular Baptist Church, which we gladly publish below:

"We greet you in the Saviour's name. Some time ago I was impressed with a desire to solicit the prayers of God's people in all churches of like precious faith, that they might have opportunity to join us at the throne of grace for the urgent needs of this work in Winnipeg, to which the Lord has called us in His service.

"Our brethren on the Foreign Field lay great stress upon the need of intercessory prayer in their behalf. Bearing this in mind I was conscious of not availing ourselves as much as we ought of the same channel of blessing. Are we not all workers together with God? So I feel that if our Missionary brethren recognize their need of prayer, we must do so too, and like them issue an appeal to the Churches for it.

"That you may know the details of our needs, may I trouble you with a brief record of our work? Four years ago ten people banded themselves together under the name of Bethany Regular Baptist Church, and since then have been working in a district in the west end of this city. For the last eighteen months this little group has assumed full responsibility for a pastor and his wife, the rent of the hall, which is \$25.00 a month, and all other incidentals of Sunday-school and Church work. As a Church we do not enter into debt for anything. We make no appeals for funds. The work is maintained by the voluntary offerings of God's people. In this respect the Lord has greatly blessed us. Our Church offerings for 1934 were \$750.00 in spite of the fact that only five out of ten members are wage earners, and only two of those earn above \$50.00 per month. All expenses have been met to date, and a small sum has been given to the Liberian Mission.

"I thank you for your prayers on my behalf in the past. I deeply appreciate your help, and have had much benefit

from it. The Lord will bless us again through the same medium. May every blessing of the Lord be your portion."

More News From Liberia

In a letter from Mrs. H. L. Davey, dated March 8, 1935, she writes, "We are busy these days getting Miss Lane's house, in which we are living, fixed up before the rains. For a family the rooms are small, but we shall be able to manage for a time quite well. We were very thankful that this place was spared. If it had had a thatched roof like the other houses, doubtless it would have also been destroyed.

The Lord is blessing the work these days. There is a different atmosphere, and the people come out well, and listen well. We pray that many will really believe and be saved. Our school is very small this year. We have already had quite an extensive cassava farm dug, which will give us a good deal of the food necessary to feed the few we have. Then our leper work is growing rapidly, and we hope to develop this considerably in the near future. The Mission to Lepers have been extremely kind, and are very interested in this work among these poor sufferers.

Our prayers and sympathies are with you all in these difficult times at home, yet I believe if the folk in our churches really felt the need as we do, if they had the vision of reaching out after these needy people here, money would not be lacking. Our hearts are constantly cheered here with the thought that the work is not ours, but the Lord's, and He does not suffer from depression."

Geah-bar Zondo

Mr. Percy Clubine has gone back to the Mission Station at Geah-bar Zondo, and tells us of the work in a letter dated March 8, 1935, which we quote in part below.

"I have got nicely settled here now, although there are a few things yet to be cleaned up and arranged about the house and mission. It is surprising how much dust and rubbish accumulates about the place when we leave it alone for a time. I happened to stay longer at New Cess than I had planned. At first I expected to stay only two months, but Mr. Hancox urged that I stay until he should come in December for the Christmas holidays. Since I was expecting to board with the Daveys, I travelled with little expense, leaving almost all of my things at Zondo. The little things which I brought to New Cess were such as clothing, books, typewriter, etc. Returning here, however, was much easier since I had one box only left after the fire. This was saved with a change of clothes or two because I had taken them to the Beach, having gone down to have an aching tooth extracted. I should like to have been able to bring back my typewriter and a few school books that I had. I also was much disappointed to lose all of my Bassa notes. The results obtained from a year of strenuous study and investigation of the language was probably my heaviest loss. However, I escaped very easily in comparison to the other missionaries. It is hard when I go to look up a word to see its exact spelling or tone, or to refresh my forgetfulness concerning a point of grammar, to find that the notes are all gone. I have already begun to do the work over again, and it is true that I retain more than I had first thought. One thing that is very good is the fact that I hear the language now much better, and if I have an idea to start with, I can often follow what is said quite nicely. Had I been able to retain my notes I believe that I could have made great strides with the language this year. Now, however, I feel that I am very much crippled, although what work I am able to do again will probably be better than before.

"You would have been amused, I am sure, to see the money cleaning bee that we had on my piazza the other day. I had started to clean some coins that had passed through the fire, but seeing that it would take me all day, I called some small school boys, and promised them a cent for every twenty coins which they cleaned. This, to them, was a splendid chance to earn money, and they set to work with a will, with sand, and water, and lime juice and ashes. Most of them were tired when they had cleaned two cents worth and promised to come back next day. It reminded me of the days when my father used to promise us a copper if we worked well. The thought of a shining new coin was enough to make us do our task with unusual speed and thoroughness. These little fellows, however, unlike myself,

did not believe in saving the copper until others could be added to it, but in an hour or two most of them appeared to buy pencils or scribblers or something useful. The African all over, I suppose is the same; money is meant to be spent, and that immediately.

"Tomorrow school starts again. There will be twenty boys in all, and I hope to see them progress nicely, if possible. I shall be rather busy here alone, with school, preaching, medical work, buying foodstuffs, etc., superintending clearing ground, repairing buildings, and doing language work. I shall try to make some week-end evangelistic treks on Fridays and Saturdays, but do not know whether I shall be able to manage much myself or not. However, the boys will be able to go out. Soon the people will be dispersed to their growing rice farms, and so scattered that this kind of work will be less effective. We had a very good attendance at Sunday-school and church to-day."

24th May, Young People's Rally

It is with pleasure we announce that a Young People's Rally will be held on May 24th, 1935, in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto. Everybody is welcome to attend and enjoy a day of spiritual fellowship and Christian instruction.

DR. J. FRANK NORRIS,

of Fort Worth, Texas, and

DR. PALMER MUNTZ,

of Buffalo, will be the special inspirational speakers. Dr. Norris needs no words of commendation to such a gathering. It will be a great one, and you should plan to be present.

Mr. Fred. Syme, and the well-known Kinsman Quartette will sing, and a more earnest and consecrated group of singers would be difficult to find.

Please announce in all your Church services, and prepare the way for a day of good things. Watch for further particulars through these pages.

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Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 10

No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 17

Second Quarter

April 28th, 1935

TREACHEROUS ACQUAINTANCES

Lesson Text: Psalm 55 to 57.

Golden Text: "In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."—Psalm 56:4.

Bible School Reading: Psalm 55:1-23.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—2 Sam. 15:7-12; Tuesday—Deut. 33:24-29; Wednesday—Dan. 6:10-17; Thursday—Mal. 3:13-18; Friday—Acts 4:23-31; Saturday—John 12:27-33.

PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

In this psalm David prays for deliverance from enemies, mentioning particularly some treacherous friend. The circumstances suit the time of Absalom's rebellion (II. Sam. 15:31), although they might quite easily be applicable to other times of trouble. There are three sections in the psalm. In the first of them (vs. 1-8), the psalmist calls upon God to hear his prayer, "because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me" (vs. 1-3). Evidently these enemies were active in their hatred. The reason for their attitude is not stated. It may have been due to the influence of some self-seeker like the king's son, or possibly to jealousy, or to some fancied wrong. It is not difficult for men in prominent positions to make enemies. Our Lord had many of them (Matt. 27:20); His apostles had to contend with them (Acts 4:1); and all who live godly in this day and generation must be prepared to meet them (John 15:20; 16:33). Note the comfort of prayer when afflicted from without. The oppression of enemies caused the psalmist great distress. His heart was pained within him; the terrors of death had fallen upon him, with fearfulness and trembling; and he desired to fly away from it all, and be at rest. Observe the greatness of the trouble, and the depth of feeling manifest in these statements. David was sick at heart, and desired rest. Fortunately we know where to find rest, as he did (Matt. 11:28). There are times when we desire to remove from the scene of conflict, but this is not always God's way of relief. He is able to give us peace, even in the midst of turmoil (Phil. 4:7).

In the second section there is a prayer to God to deal with the enemies (vs. 9-15). The request is made to swallow them up, and confound their speech, and thus defeat their counsels; after which a description is given of their wickedness. Violence and strife are in the city; the enemies go about upon the walk, and deceit and guile are manifest in the streets. This gives a picture of open wickedness, affecting greatly the life of the city. It is a time of revolt against constituted authority. The same spirit is manifest in our cities, although not always to the same degree; and is due to man's wrong relationship with God. After mentioning enemies in general, the psalmist refers to one in particular who formerly had been a familiar friend. They had taken sweet counsel together, and had walked unto the house of God in company, but in spite of this he had acted against him. He had proved himself to be a treacherous acquaintance. We are reminded by this of the one who betrayed our Lord (John 13:26). Concerning these enemies the psalmist prays that death might seize them, and they will go down quickly into the grave. Their own wickedness would bring judgment upon them, and hasten their end. Note the sadness of this treacherous desertion of David, and the heinous nature of the offence. We should be careful not to act in a like manner against Jesus Christ.

In the third section the psalmist expresses his belief that God would hear his prayer, and calls upon others to place their trust in the Lord (vs. 16-23). He states his conviction

that God would save him; then intimates that he would pray unto Him evening, morning, and noon. Note the necessity for more prayer on the part of God's people in general, and the advantage of regularity in coming before the throne. When one is in real earnest he will be found often in the presence of the Lord. A testimony respecting divine deliverance follows, together with assurance of answered prayer respecting the wicked; then an exhortation to cast one's burden on the Lord, and a statement respecting the fate of the wicked. Note the comfort of the promise concerning the sustaining power of God, also the shortening of life by wickedness; and David's hope, purpose, and victory. God does not forget His own. How may David, as revealed in this psalm, be taken as a type of Christ? How should we act, as children of God, toward our enemies?

PSALM FIFTY-SIX

Beset by enemies, David in this psalm expresses his confidence in God, and anticipates deliverance from his troubles. The psalm opens with a request for mercy, followed by a statement respecting the number and actions of the enemies. They fought against him, and sought to swallow him up. Note in this their hatred, aggressiveness, and evil purpose. Their attacks were real, and apt to gender fear. At such times David's trust was in God, and fear was dispelled. The presence of God banishes fear, for no man can stand in His presence (Rom. 8:31). Slander is a particular form of attack of these enemies. They wrest the psalmist's words, and mark his steps (vs. 5, 6). Our Lord was attacked in a similar manner (Matt. 26:59-61), and His followers may expect the same treatment. Note the injustice of such a mode of attack, the way in which it should be met (I. Chron. 16:11), and the necessity for carefulness in judgment of others, and in acceptance of depreciating statements respecting others, lest unconsciously they be slandered. Our purpose should be to hear and to tell only the truth.

Continuing his complaint, David prays for the humbling of his enemies, then mentions the divine remembrance of his tears (vs. 7, 8). Possibly an eastern custom of bottling tears is here referred to. God remembered the exile of His servant, just as He remembers the circumstances of each of His children (Luke 12:7). Note further the confidence of the psalmist in the power of prayer, and the favour of God. God was for him, therefore his enemies would be turned back. It is comforting to realize the presence and power of God; but in order to be blessed thus, we must, by pure life, live in touch with the Lord (I. Pet. 1:15, 16). Praise follows the declaration of confidence; ending with a petition for deliverance from falling (vs. 10-13). The person who fears God, and serves Him, need fear no one (Josh. 1:5). And such a person will be kept even from falling (Jude 24). How may we know God better, and learn to trust Him more? How should we act in the face of misrepresentation?

PSALM FIFTY-SEVEN

In this psalm there is found a prayer for deliverance, and praise in anticipation of it. The psalmist is again beset by enemies, and prays for the merciful interposition of God to save him from their power. Saul was David's chief enemy at this time, and the cave of Adullam was possibly the place of the latter's temporary abode (I. Sam. 22:1). The hand of man is raised against David, but in God he finds a refuge. Many others have found a similar resting-place—safe, sure, eternal, comforting, and free to whosoever will. Confidence in answered prayer is now expressed (vs. 2, 3), followed by a description of enemies, an ascription of praise to the Lord, and a statement respecting the fate of foes. David's trouble was very real, but his trust in God was not less so. He was suffering unjustly, but he felt confident of divine deliverance. Such an experience, though unpleasant, could teach the psalmist some valuable lessons (Ps. 119:67). The latter half of the psalm is taken up with praise (vs. 7-11). David's heart is fixed, or prepared, to sing unto the Lord among the nations: "For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." Observe the operation of the law of reaping what is sown (v. 6; Gal. 6:7), as in the case of Daniel's enemies (Dan. 6:24), and Haman (Esther 7:10); also the possibility of praise before prayer is assured (Mark 11:24). How may we cultivate fellowship with God? How may we increase the spirit of praise? How may we show our gratitude to God for His goodness unto us?

"OTHER LITTLE SHIPS"

This is the title of a new book just off the press by Dr. T. T. Shields (\$1.50). The book is composed of fourteen chapters, made up of fourteen sermons which have been selected because they have been especially used in the conversion of the unsaved, the comfort of those in trouble, in the edification of the saints, and some of them in steadying the faith of those tempted to be carried about by every wind of doctrine.

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"GO THOU, AND DO LIKEWISE"

Among other letters received this week, one contained the sum of \$10.00, to cover the cost of sending a copy of "Other Little Ships" to each of six ministers. Three of the ministers were known to the generous donor, and the books forwarded in her name, and with Easter cards bearing her good wishes. The other three ministers named were known to the donor by name, but she believed she was a stranger to them.

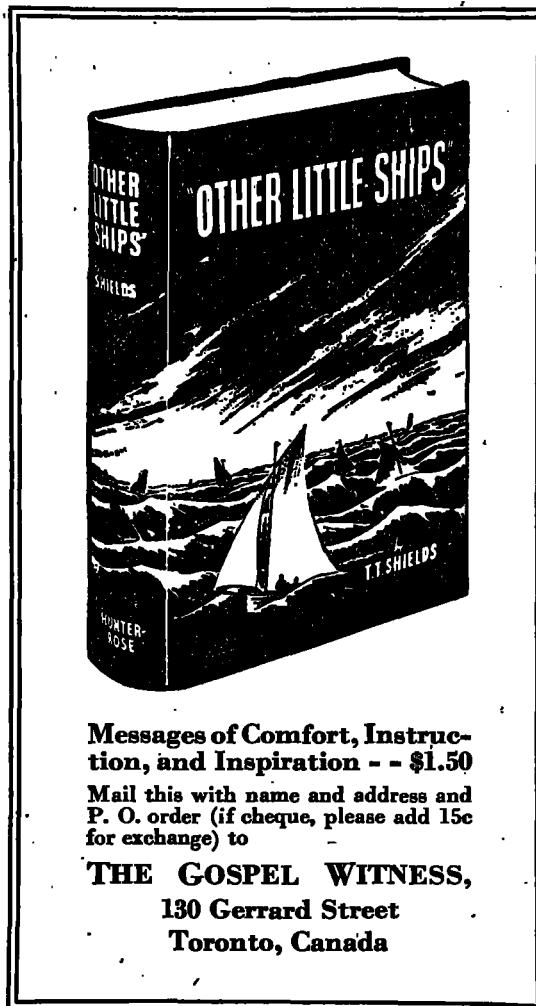
There are many ministers today who have little money with which to buy books, and who labour in difficult and isolated places. Perhaps some of our readers will be disposed to follow the example of the lady referred to.

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