

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE VICARIOUS VICTIM OF THE HORRIBLE PIT

A Sermon by Rev. John Wilmot

Of Highgate Road Baptist Church, London, England

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, August 4th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.  
"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.  
"And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."—Psalm 40:1-3.

Prayer by Dr. Shields:

We are assembled, O Lord, that we may worship Thee. We desire to acknowledge Thee as our Maker, Redeemer, and Friend. We come to Thee this morning in the name of Jesus. We thank Thee for every one in Thy presence who has been washed in the blood, whose natures have been renewed, who have been born again, who have been made children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

And we who thus plead, come to Thee this morning as Thy children. We have not always honoured Thy name; we have not always adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Many of us have lived, at times at least, impoverished lives, lived at a poor dying rate,

Fond of our earthly toys,  
Our souls could neither fly nor go,  
To reach immortal joys.

This morning we would remind ourselves of the wealth of our inheritance in Christ; that Thou hast blest us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as Thou hast chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Thee. O Lord, help us that we may put on our beautiful garments, that we may appropriate the rich treasures of Thy grace; that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, having put on the whole armour of God.

Enable us that we may dwell continually under Thy shadow, that we may find refreshment always in Thy banqueting house, that as we receive dainties from the King's table, and revel in the luxury of angels' ministry, we may become like princes of the blood; we may be enabled by grace to exemplify more perfectly the great gospel we profess.

Help us, O Lord, that as we come to Thy table this morning we may come without trust in ourselves; that our confidence may be wholly in Him Who died and Who rose again. May the hour spent thus in obeying Thy commandment, be an hour of real communion and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and with each other, by virtue of our common faith in the one Saviour!

Our needs are peculiar, as ever. There are no two of us circumstanced exactly alike; no two of us have precisely the same dispositions, nor are we beset with exactly the same temptations, nor confronted with the same difficulties. But there is infinite variety with Thee, O Lord. Thy grace is adequate to meet every possible human requirement.

So help us that we may come to Thy great storehouse this morning, that we may find grace to help in time of need, something that will fit us, something that will equip us for all the battle of life. Give comfort, or instruction, or courage, or whatever we may need this morning, so that we may go from this place as giants refreshed with new wine.

Command Thy blessing, we pray Thee, upon Thy servant. Speak through him this morning. May the word which he shall preach be profitable to us all, because it shall be mixed with faith. So would we commend to Thee his congregation in London, and all other congregations of the saints, and all other ministers of the gospel who proclaim Jesus crucified. Let this be a day of triumph and progress in the gospel of Thy grace throughout the world, that the name of our glorious Lord may be glorified.

Hear us in this, and draw especially and sensibly near to us this morning, we pray Thee, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

We are to observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper at the conclusion of this service, and I desire, if I am able, to speak a few words which may be appropriate to the great subject of our remembrance in the observance of that divine appointment.

The apostle has instructed us that as often as we eat the bread and drink of the cup we proclaim the Lord's death. And the observance of the feast is appointed until the Lord shall come.

We especially think, then, of the Lord Jesus Christ in His sacrificial death for us. This Psalm, I believe, pertains to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and particularly to His sufferings consummated upon the cross at Calvary.

I do not know if there are any in this congregation whose native land is Scotland, but if so, you may be familiar with this Psalm as it is set and sung in the services of that land. In many of the churches in the far north the congregations still sing only the Psalms, never any hymns of human composition. I recall that when I first visited Scotland a number of years ago now I went to Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh—built in connection with the God-blessed ministry of the late Mr. Joseph Kemp whose preaching you enjoyed here—and the service began with the singing of the words of this Psalm in the following stanzas.

"I waited for the Lord my God,  
And patiently did bear;  
At length to me He did incline  
My voice and cry to hear.

"He took me from a fearful pit,  
And from the miry clay,  
And on a rock He set my feet,  
Establishing my way.

"He put a new song in my mouth,  
Our God to magnify:  
Many shall see it, and shall fear,  
And on the Lord rely.

"O blessed is the man whose trust  
Upon the Lord relies;  
Respecting not the proud, nor such  
As turn aside to lies."

So would they sing. And I suppose, my friends, the words of this Psalm fit into Christian experience in certain respects. How many there are who rejoice that they have been lifted from the horrible pit, and set upon the Rock! But it is always important, in our study of Holy Scripture, that we inquire as to the intention of the Holy Spirit in the passage considered and as to the subject of which divine testimony is there given.

Who is the speaker of these words in Psalm forty? Who is he who in the first instance says: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry"? The psalm is a psalm of David, but David spake by divine inspiration, as his "last words" testify: "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. XXIII: 2), and he further said, "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." David was a prophet (Acts II: 30) and spake, not of himself, but of Christ. And so here, we do not read far before we find an answer to our enquiry, in the words of verses six, seven, and eight, which are quoted and confirmed in the New Testament, where in Hebrews, chapter ten, they are applied to our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

You will notice that there is no change of person here. The first person used by the speaker in the opening verses is continued in these words, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart." We are always safe—and never really safe otherwise—when we interpret the Old Testament Scriptures in the light cast upon them, and by the use made of them in the New Testament. So we have here revealed the identity of the speaker of these words. They were pre-written of the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, and thus it must be, in the first instance, that He is the One waiting patiently for the Lord to hear Him; and then heard of

God and His feet placed upon a rock, and His goings established, and a new song put in His mouth, the outcome of which will be that "many shall see", and, beholding, shall "fear and shall trust in the Lord".

### I.

I believe that the words in the first instance should bear this meaning. Let us, then, consider them according to this rule.

First of all; we have *the patient waiting of the Saviour*. "I waited a waiting" as the words may be expressed, conveying, perhaps, little to us in English, but doubtless having fulness of meaning in the original Scriptures. "In waiting, I waited"; "I perseveringly waited"; "I waited long for the Lord to hear me." Our Lord Jesus was waiting throughout the whole of His life for the consummation of His mission. When He came into this world, this passage informs us, He said, "Lo, I come, to do Thy will Oh God"; the only One in Whose heart was the law of God, that law being God's *expressed* will, in which He delighted. He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, and God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. When conversing in the temple with the doctors of the law He said He must be about His Father's business. He later told his astonished disciples, himself an hungered and thirsty (His disciples having gone away to buy meat, as He reclined on the well at Sychar) that He had meat to eat which they knew nothing of: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to *finish* his work." So did He patiently wait till the work was finished. Our Lord pursued the ministry to which He, as Son of man, was appointed when He came into this world, and in the body prepared for Him He did the will of God perfectly: But He was not "heard", in the sense of His being heard in this Psalm, until He had finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."

You will remember how, in anticipation of the perfecting of His ministry on the cross of Calvary He said in prayer: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was". And why? "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And on the tree, as with His expiring breath, He said with a loud voice: "It is finished!" meaning, surely, that the work of atonement was finished, that righteousness had now been wrought, the law fulfilled, and the whole programme of redemption was finished, the types and shadows had passed away, and eternal salvation was now accomplished by the sacrificial life and ministry and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus we read: "A body hast thou prepared me" in the quotation of these words, and the Spirit's interpretation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, whereas in the text of the Psalm, the sentence is "Mine ears hast thou opened". This may refer to the boring of the ear of the willing slave according to the law of Exodus XXI: 6, for the Son of God humbled Himself, and took upon Him the form of a slave (Phil. II); or again, to the prophecy of Isaiah L. 4-7, where as the obedient servant of Jehovah, He daily received His Father's word. Thus did the Lord Jesus become incarnate and in the body prepared for Him He did the will, and performed the Law of God, patiently waiting till all was accom-

plished. In the ordinance, the bread represents His body and the wine His blood, and the two are symbolical of His sacrificial death which consummated His earthly mission. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, from His birth to His death, was engaged in performing the will of God in the body which was prepared, and in waiting He waited until the consummation of God's purpose should be approved in His being "heard"!

Secondly it is suggested that *He was raised from the dead by the act of God*: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay." Thus did God eventually hear His cry, and He heard it, and answered it, not in word only, but in deed, in a mighty act displaying omnipotent power. He was attested as the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, we are told in the Epistle to the Romans. Wicked hands, human hands, crucified Him, nailing Him to the tree, but God raised Him from the dead.

What is represented by the "horrible pit", or, pit of tumult, and the "miry clay"? However deeply sunken in sin and shame we sinners may have been, there is not one of us who had fallen to that depth to which the Lord Jesus Christ descended, as our Substitute, in order to save us. Think of that Holy One, equal with God, and Who through eternal ages had enjoyed the Father's presence and pleasure, making that tremendous condescension and descent even down to Hades: "He descended into hell" the Apostles' creed has it. We may sing in very truth:

"But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed;  
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through  
Ere He found His sheep that was lost".

Our Lord went down into the very depths of death. That pit of tumult would surely represent His conflict and wrestling with the powers of evil, with the devil himself, as at the very end He still waited patiently for the Lord to hear His cry. And what a "cry" was that which came in His agony on the tree: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet He was always confident that the Lord would hear Him. "I know that Thou hearest Me always". Therefore, He predicted that He would be raised again the third day; and to save sinners from that awful abyss, He was Himself brought up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. In another Psalm, He said, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." But His soul was not left in Hades, neither did His flesh see corruption. He was heard of God, and raised from the dead by God's mighty power.

Further, our Lord Jesus, heard of God in resurrection, is *firmly fixed as upon a rock*: "Thou hast set my feet upon a rock" would signify that danger is now forever past, principalities and powers are spoiled, and He Himself holds the keys of death and hell. The rock of divine appointment fulfilled, of redemption completed, and of righteousness vindicated! He can never, never die again. He lives by the power of an indissoluble life. Never again will the Lord Jesus be the victim of wicked hands and be crucified and slain. He says: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys (the authority) of hell and of death." He is exalted above every name that is named, and established and enthroned forever as God's King (Ps. II.).

Then His goings are said to be "established". Our

Lord, though now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, is still in a waiting attitude: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He sat down on the right hand of God *henceforth expecting* until His enemies be made His footstool. The goings of our Lord Jesus in the future are established. We believe that His goings were established in the past when He came into the world, being commissioned as God's Son and Servant and our Substitute, to do the will of God, which will was completed when He offered Himself as a sacrifice upon the cross. He never deviated one hair's breadth from that appointed path. He always did the things which pleased His Father. He set His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem, the place of death, and when some, astonished, pitied Him, He rebuked them. There were no unforeseen contingencies in the appointed earthly goings of the Lord Jesus. They had been established from the foundation of the world. Every item was included in the programme of God His Father, Who sent Him. And our Lord Jesus Christ was fully cognizant of these things whereto He was sent; they made up His life's history. He knew what He was about. It had been written to Him who should be born in Bethlehem: "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah V.). His goings forth included His coming out of eternity into time, thus, "when He cometh into the world, He saith, Lo, I come to do thy will". And now, raised from the dead, and firm upon the rock, His future goings are also established.

For even His present glorification is not the end of the mission or the ministry of the Lord Jesus. By His present priestly intercession, we are being saved. But He waits until the sound of the trumpet, as do His people on earth, until the last hour, the last time, until it shall be proclaimed in heaven: "The sovereignty of this world is become the sovereignty of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Then shall His goings be universally manifest.

"He is not a disappointment,  
He is coming bye and bye,  
In His word I have the witness,  
That His coming draweth nigh.

"All the scoffers may despise me,  
And no change around may see;  
But He tells me He is coming,  
And that's quite enough for me."

Do you know those words? Nothing can happen in this interval of His absence between His ascension into heaven and the time appointed for His second coming, to prevent the fulfilment of it. The goings of the Lord Jesus are established; and we, with the utmost confidence, may look for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Then these further words will be fulfilled in Him: "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Did you ever meditate upon the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ will sing this new song? I cherish the thought that our Saviour will lead the choir of heaven. You may recall another Messianic Psalm where these words are written concerning Him, and that they are quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee". The time is coming when there will be assembled around the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, the whole innumerable host of His redeemed, and while they shall sing—yes; and

they shall sing this new song for it will be the peculiar privilege of the redeemed to sing the song of their Redeemer—yet *He* will sing; He will lead the mighty anthem of praise. The Lord Jesus finds His chiefest joy in His redeemed; they constitute His inheritance. For this joy which was set before Him, He endured the cross. His delights were with the sons of men at the beginning, when man was created in perfectness, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy". But sin and guilt brought grief into the heart of God, and for our sakes, the Son of God became "the Man of Sorrows". And now He has recovered that which was lost by the payment of the great price of His life-blood; and the lost is restored, and the joy of salvation, and of our Lord will sing this new song in the midst of His redeemed. Why a new song? Because this song has as its composition the record of the events of His earthly mission, and chiefly of redemption by His blood; Of those things which *He* hath done, He shall sing; and we shall sing with Him.

## II.

What results are effected by this wonderful story? "*Many shall see, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.*" My friends, is not that the appointed purpose? Is it not ordained that the testimony of Jesus Christ in this gospel should be effectual in the salvation of sinners? Do we not tell of *His* achievements? and this life-giving message is used of the Spirit to the quickening of sinners dead in trespasses and sins. Many shall *behold*, that is, gaze and with wonder perceive, the meaning of this story of the sufferings and triumphs of the Lord Jesus, and become attracted to Him, and fear, or revere Him, and rely upon the Lord. In that which Christ Himself suffered we may see the enormity of our sin. I remember reading these lines often used by Mr. Spurgeon—I think he must have been very fond of them—respecting the sufferings of Christ:

"In His spotless soul's distress,  
I behold my sinfulness;  
Oh, how vile my lost estate,  
Since my ransom was so great!"

If we would form a correct estimate of our sinfulness, we shall find it in beholding the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, our Substitute. We cannot understand the depths into which we have fallen, the criminality of our sin, until we view them in the light of the amazing sacrifice of the Son of God. I can readily receive the fact of the punishment of the wicked, the existence of hell, when I perceive in some measure, what God's Beloved Son endured, Who descended into hell, forsaken of the Holy Being Who cannot look upon sin! I can see, when I view His suffering, what would have been the end of my sin, but for salvation procured by His substitutional sacrifice.

Thus, my friends, in that pit into which He went cannot we see the pit into which we should eventually have been imprisoned had He not saved us? And in His resurrection from the grave, with His feet now upon the rock, we behold our salvation; being lifted out of the pit, and set upon the rock. "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption." You were singing this morning at the conclusion of the school session of Jesus being "a Rock in a weary land, a Shelter in the time of storm". He is indeed the Rock behind which we may hide from the storms of judgment; but

He is the Rock upon which our feet are founded, and we are secured against ever sinking into the pit.

You remember the words at the end of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where we are told of the mighty power of God which raised Jesus Christ from the dead, being to usward who believe. And then in chapter two (avoiding the chapter break), the Apostle proceeds to say that that same power has quickened us: "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." As our Lord Jesus was raised from the literal sepulchre by the mighty power of God, so are sinners, believing in Him, quickened and raised as from death's dark sepulchre, and set upon the rock.

And their goings also are established. The path is appointed for us; we are not wanderers: we are pilgrims. Do you know the difference between a pilgrim and a wanderer? A wanderer is one who roams about without any objective. A pilgrim is a person who has an objective. A pilgrim is one away from home but journeying toward home. The Lord Jesus did not suffer and die that we might have another opportunity, to afford us another start, to extend our period of probation. He does not say: "You failed the first time, see how you will fare this time. Try again?" No; the Lord has mapped out for His redeemed a programme, and we follow Him to triumph; we shall reign with Him: The plan for our life is made. *Our* goings are established.

There are times, of course, when through our wilfulness and failing we seem to step aside from the plan of God. Israel did so. And Israel's history is written for our learning. I do not believe that because Israel murmured Moses was commanded to strike the rock out of which the water came. That rock was Christ. It was a type of the Lord Jesus and of salvation in Him; and a type is not some fortuitous event: it is something designed by God and the history is fashioned according to the type. You look in the stores' windows and you see the model of a man or a woman? How did they fashion the type? From the reality already existent. And whence is the typical history, but from the Reality in the eternal mind of God. Hence I say that God's intention was to supply Israel with water from that rock in the desert because of Christ, the Reality. It was not His will, however, that they should complain and murmur as they did. He could and would have provided it, apart from their sinful murmuring, for they were disciplined to trust Him. So do we, in disbelief and default, step apart from the appointed way. But the prodigal returns! The Shepherd goes after his sheep and seeks it until he finds it and brings it back, rejoicing. By His grace we are made to return to the established ways of the Lord.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." We should seek, with care, always to tread in the way appointed, following our Saviour.

And then may we not contemplate our highest joy in *His* song; that we shall participate in that of which our Saviour Himself will sing; "which things also the angels desire to look into"!

"Holy, holy, holy!"

Is what the angels sing,  
And I expect to help them  
Make the courts of heaven ring.  
But when I sing redemption's story,  
They will fold their wings,  
For angels never had the joy  
That our salvation brings."

### A PROPER SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

We have often been amazed at the utter lack of a sense of obligation displayed by many professing Christians. It is difficult to find men and women who will deliberately accept responsibility, and thereafter faithfully discharge the obligations involved in the position they have accepted.

Religious irresponsibility is almost a disease. When a person accepts a position in a secular organization, he does so with a full understanding of the obligations involved, and endeavours as a matter of course to fulfil his duty. The fireman does not expect to be permitted to wear a uniform and remain comfortably in an easy chair in the firehall when the bell rings, and thus allow a building to be destroyed by fire. He is there to answer the call. The policeman's uniform represents responsibility. Our light and water and telephone services have become to us almost as indispensable as the air we breathe. We expect the light to come on if we turn the switch, the water to flow if we turn the tap, and the telephone service to operate as we call our number. But none of these things would be of any value if the service were spasmodic or intermittent.

We remember travelling in a pullman-car from Toronto to Chicago when, for nearly the entire journey of five hundred miles, we were the sole occupant. It was virtually a private car. Why did it run? Because the train was advertised to run at a particular time, and to carry certain equipment; and its full duty was discharged though there were few passengers.

The locomotive engineer, when he steps into his cab, does not expect to sleep through half the journey, nor yet to allow his train to take care of itself while he reads a book. The ship's captain must be a man who has a full sense of responsibility, or who would care to be numbered among his passengers? We could multiply illustrations of the principle that the machinery of life goes on because there are people who, having accepted responsibility, are faithful in the discharge of their duty.

But how different are conditions in religious life! Years ago we knew a man who was the superintendent of a Sunday School. Talking with him in his office one day, he referred to some of the difficulties of business life, to which we replied, "You do not know anything about business, nor of the difficulties of carrying on a business." At this he smiled, and kindly enquired what his Pastor knew about business; to which we answered, "A great deal more than you do; otherwise, we could not carry on at all." Again he asked for an explanation, and we replied something in this vein: "Suppose you were to come down to your office some morning, and after seating yourself at your desk, and spending perhaps a few moments in meditation respecting the day's work, were to press a button calling one of your assistants, but received no reply. You press another button, connecting you with another office—but there is no reply. You press a third, and someone walks in, to whom you say, 'Tell Mr. So-and-So to come to my office.' But Employee Number Three replies, 'I'm sorry, sir, but he is not here this morning.' To which you reply, 'Is he ill? Has he sent any word?' 'We have heard nothing, sir. His desk is not occupied, but I know nothing of the reason for his absence.' 'Then tell Miss So-and-So to come.' 'I am sorry, sir, but she is not here either.' The same enquiry is pressed—with the same answer. After a while you discover that about half your staff have taken

French leave, and have not even telephoned to explain their absence. In such a case, what would you do?" He replied, "You know very well what I would do. They would have no chance to return: their places would immediately be filled."

To that we said, "We are not surprised that you should assume that attitude. Then"—if for a moment the Editor may speak as a Pastor—"that is why I say, sir, I am a better business man than you are. You are the Superintendent of a Sunday School. It is your duty to be on hand at the appointed time, but when it suits your pleasure or convenience to be elsewhere, it does not trouble you; nor are you always at pains to send a substitute. That is true of a great many church members, but I, as minister, have to carry on, and get the day's work done with half a staff. If you were to treat your business as you treat your church, you would be bankrupt in three months. No business could stand the treatment that is meted out to the church by its members."

That man's attitude is illustrative of the attitude of a great many people. It is particularly true of many who teach in Sunday School. They do not take their responsibility seriously. They seem not to appreciate the importance of the position they occupy, nor to recognize what tremendous issues depend upon their faithfulness.

This principle ought to have some application to Christian people at vacation-time. We recognize the necessity for taking a holiday, and for some form of rest and recreation of body and of mind. This must often involve change of place, and absence from one's accustomed task. The preacher needs a vacation occasionally—and so do the people. At least they need it in Jarvis Street! The Sunday School teacher cannot well be out of town and in town at the same time. We recognize, and fully and freely acknowledge, that we all need to be freed for a little while from responsibility, so that we may recover ourselves; or, as Andy says, "unlax". But no preacher worth his salt can go away and forget his congregation. Nor can any good teacher dismiss the spiritual interests of his or her scholars from mind. Therefore a proper sense of responsibility should enable us to recognize the importance of our task, and not to leave such service as our positions ordinarily require us to render, unprovided for.

But how is that sense of responsibility to be developed? We have known people, even some ministers who seemed to be on fire for the Lord. We were moved by their prayers; by the intensity of their zeal, as it appeared; by the apparent sincerity of their declaration of interest in the salvation of men. But we have been disappointed, and almost stunned, to observe that what seemed to be a profound spiritual concern was little more than the froth of a religious emotionalism which was blown away by the first breeze that promised a pleasant sail on the lake, or some other pleasurable indulgence.

Surely the religion of Christ is for the whole man, and we need to bring to our task a sanctified intelligence. We need to teach ourselves, and others, how serious a thing it is for mortal man to be given a place in the divine programme, and that the execution of the divine purpose involves our faithful discharge of duty. We ought to recognize that our religious duties are as binding upon us as is the duty of the sun to rise in the morning. We cannot, without sinning against God and our fellow-believers, and against those who as yet know not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, lightly leave

our work, to do our own pleasure, whether on the Sabbath or some other day.

But we mortals are weak. The will to do is with us, but how to perform, often we find not. Our declarations of purpose may be perfectly sincere, but their fulfilment may fail from want of will-power. Hence it follows that we can "carry on", and keep on "carrying on", only as we are borne forward by a Power not our own. In our youth we stumbled upon two or three optimists in different places who were then in pursuit of the principle of perpetual motion. They assured us that they were on the eve of discovering it. They had no difficulty in setting their machines in motion: their trouble was to make the motion perpetual. They usually lacked one or two wheels, one or two weights, or one or two inclines—something that would utilize a perpetual natural force. But so far as we ever learned, the nearest approximation to the perpetual was found in their pursuit: they never arrived.

Thus in various forms of religious service we have known of the election of committees, the holding of conferences, and the appointment of more authoritative bodies dignified by the name of commissions—all of them charged with the task of finding some means of "carrying on". They did not know it—or at least they did not state the fact in so many words—but they vainly conferred with a view to discovering the secret of perpetual motion in the realm of religion. There is but one secret, and that resides in Him Who is the Eternal Spirit. Only as we know Christ, as we grow in His knowledge through an increased intimacy with Holy Scripture, and do the will of God from the heart, knowing something of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, through the abiding energy of the Holy Ghost, can we so faithfully discharge our duties as to be able at last to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

#### ABOUT "THE LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING"

Elsewhere in this issue we reproduce the leading article from *The British Weekly* of July 11th by Dr. Hutton, the Editor, entitled "The Liberty of Prophecying". We print the article because it has in it many good things which THE GOSPEL WITNESS has been endeavouring to teach for some years. But to some of the positions taken by the writer we venture to offer a respectful dissent, or at least in respect to them, to ask one or two questions; but first heartily to approve the principle that the purpose of Christianity is that we should "proceed upon it". What other purpose could it possibly serve?

We may have related a certain story in these pages before, but if so, it will serve a further purpose now. Once we enjoyed the personal friendship of a minister, who was a very rich man. One beautiful winter morning we called upon him in his hotel. He was sitting in his room at the window, flooded with sunlight. He had a black silk apron spread across his knees. Excusing himself for not rising he said, "I am busy with my friends; come and I will introduce them to you, and you to them." I sat down beside him, and then he showed me a collection of gems which he carried about with him: diamonds, rubies, opals, emeralds—precious stones of many sorts,

some of them but partially cut. He held them up in the sunlight for my admiration. They were marvellously beautiful, but frankly we did not covet them. They might be useful for the adornment of a princess; but their only value to us would have been to turn them into cash, and convert them to some useful purpose. But my friend had pockets especially made in his clothes to carry these gems about with him. It was an expensive hobby which not one preacher in a million could indulge.

But we have known Christian people make the same use of Christianity, or the doctrines of Christianity. They did not "proceed upon them", but merely carried them about with them for purposes of discussion and exhibition. We have known not a few to boast of their evangelical orthodoxy, and then to hold it up as my friend might have exhibited his favourite diamond, to explain how much better it was than some other stone of the same size.

Surely there is nothing new in Dr. Chalmers' dictum, nor does Dr. Hutton suggest it as a novelty. His article is rather an admonition to ask for the old paths. But Dr. Hutton seems to think there is no necessity for defending Christianity. We admit the invulnerability and invincibility of Christianity. Its divine Author, in His sovereign act of expiation and reconciliation spoiled principalities, and powers, triumphing over them in it. We have never feared the spoiling of the gospel, nor the destruction of the Bible as the word of God; and we admit that all the world needs is that it should be let loose. Notwithstanding, whatever the reason, it must be admitted that the greater part of the New Testament is apologetic. Our Lord setting the example, His apostles without exception defended the truth against error; and the Apostle Paul declared that he was set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel. We are admonished, moreover, to "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints".

We admit, however, that Christianity merely on the defensive will never accomplish anything. We must "proceed upon it". We must press the battle to the gate. We must put on the whole armour of God. We must endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We must run with patience the race set before us. Use what figure you like, we must "proceed upon it". Forgetting the things which are behind, we must press toward the mark. As our friend, Mr. Wilmot, told us in his sermon appearing last week, we must "go on". We must grow up into Christ in all things. And we agree most heartily that the best way to defend the gospel is to let it loose; to preach it with all one's might; to put its precepts, and principles, and promises, to the proof, and in demonstration of the Spirit and of power prove it to be of God.

We always enjoy Dr. Hutton's references to dogs. We rather think we understand something of the saying, "Love me, love my dog." Dr. Hutton's dog is probably the best in the world except ours. In any case, he was well able to put a stop to the caddie's stone-throwing—but not while he was held in leash. There is a sense, of course, in which the Word of God cannot be imprisoned, or in any way confined. God is a sovereign God. Notwithstanding, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course, or run, and be glorified. Our present difficulty, however, consists in this, that the educational institutions to which Dr. Hutton refers, established at great sacrifice, for the training of ministers to preach the Word of God, have



busied themselves forging chains to hold that Word in leash. Ministers abound to-day who do not believe the Bible, and in their hands it is held in leash with chains of unbelief.

We rejoice in Dr. Hutton's experience in which he says that he has never known of a minister of Christ suffering in his person or in his influence because of his fidelity to some uneasy truth which leaped at his touch from the written and accepted word of God. We are, however, certain that as a result of years of the preaching of Modernism there are many churches which will not receive sound doctrine. Notwithstanding we believe that every minister who will be faithful to the Lord will find that the Lord will stand by him, and support him in his determination to declare the whole counsel of God.

Dr. Hutton's article is a most useful one, and with these slight reservations which we have named, it has our cordial assent. We print it herewith that we may share with our readers the enjoyment and the definite spiritual blessing which came to our own soul in the course of its perusal.

### THE LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING

From *The British Weekly*, London, July 11th.

The purpose of Christianity is that we should proceed upon it. That is a dictum, a saying—what in these days we should call a slogan—of the great Dr. Chalmers. I should have enclosed the words within quotation marks had I been quite confident that, in my recollection of a remote reading, I had not deprived the saying, as he uttered it, of something of its original force.

The words, even as I have quoted them, have in any case something of that astonishing and revolutionary quality which first attracted me to them in my youth.

#### I.

The purpose of Christianity that we should proceed upon it!

What could be simpler? What could be truer? What course, with regard to Christianity—as a final wisdom concerning life or as the Word of God to man—is more likely to equip us for any study of Christianity, to lead to a real knowledge of its origin and its method and its necessary implications, than that *we should proceed upon it*?

It is *here* that we have allowed ourselves to be side-tracked. We have been too ready to "defend" Christianity. But Christianity is nothing if it is not a tide! You may build a dam to control a tide; and with regard to Christianity the world has been shrewd enough to take care that this is done—the world with its establishments of religion and its conceding of privileges with conditions.

But it is none of our business as Christians to mitigate or reduce Christianity! The only course, face to face with the world's alleged ignorance or its curiosity as to what Christianity is, or as to the justice or wisdom of its claims, is for us to lift up the sluice-gates and let it out upon the world.

But to defend Christianity! That seems an insolent and preposterous proposal. Let it go! Let it out! Let it loose!

#### II.

Like the poet Browning, I also once upon a time "crossed a moor with a name of its own." But there any likeness between his experience on that occasion and my own completely ceases. I was accompanied by a dog on its leash, a Bedlington terrier. There were many unengaged caddies about, who, finding time hang heavily upon their hands just then, hailed our approach as providing a change. They proceeded to cast stones from the shingle at my dog. There was no end of stones washed smooth and white by the immemorial friction of the tides. I do not charge those idle lads with malice. One might even suppose that they were correcting their sense of distance, so that they might be further qualified for their vocation as caddies. They began to make quite excellent play. The stones came nearer; though, once again, all without malice, as I was ready to believe. Still, my Bedlington had his own point of view; and

he rather than I seemed to be the target. We were too far apart for my expostulations to carry in the wind. My dog looked up at my face. As I stooped down to loosen his leash, "Be careful, Spunk!" said I. I knew he would not hurt them.

But I was not prepared for such a triumphant strategy as he carried out. In ten-seconds he had cut off the only way of escape for them, and had frightened them into the sea! He himself did not wet a foot. But he kept them there. I decided that five minutes would enforce the lesson sufficiently. After five minutes I called him off. He was a well-bred little creature, entirely free from vindictiveness. He had nothing of the long dark vengefulness of human beings. He came away quite happy. For him the incident was closed!

Who would not like to be alive in a world in which Christianity had been let loose for even one year?

#### III.

What hinders it, then? Well, there are many hindrances, and first, with ourselves, who are Christians; and in the forefront of Christians we must put those who hold office in the Christian Churches—especially in such Churches as make a boast of freedom.

And yet in the case of these—who hold office as preachers and teachers in the Church, the blame rests not entirely with them. For their behaviour, as always, takes a diagonal line between what in their hearts they would fain do, and what is permitted them by circumstances, by the habits, prejudices, conventions, expectations, demands, of those who are about them. It takes perpetual grace to save any of us from following the line of least resistance. We tend to fit in. We may even sink so far unwittingly as to apply to our subtle compromises the words of St. Paul, though these are altogether irrelevant to our case,—words about "being all things to all men that some may be saved." The nearest we might truthfully go would be to amend St. Paul *in loco* and conclude, "that some may be composed."

Here, indeed, is a matter which is of the utmost gravity for the days that are upon us. I believe it is not too late here in this land—as now it may be too late in Germany or in Russia—for Christianity to show its face to the world with its main New Testament features still recognizable! But the sands are running. A little more compromise, a little more "prudence", a little more pressure from quarters which have the power to press, and we also shall one day realize that we have sold the pass!

#### IV.

And yet what can our fathers have meant by insisting, say, that those who ministered in the things of God should be educated and scholarly men, if they did not mean that the Christian faith should always have as its exponents men qualified to represent Christianity as a system of essential wisdom—rooted in history—having its context in philosophy, and having something to say, at one time in support, at another time in condemnation of the recurring moods and passions of men.

Why ask one who has dedicated the dew of his youth to Christ as Lord and Master to spend some eight years of study in the literature of the soul, in classics, in history, later in the original texts of the sacred Scriptures—Hebrew and Greek—unless you are going to permit and encourage such a youth, now grown man, hence forward to speak as an ambassador for Christ; with the background and balance and authority, not merely of a good man, but also of an able man!

Our fathers, certainly in the traditional Free Churches, denied themselves to the point of sacrifice in order to provide institutions of sacred learning, supplementary to the secular learning of the schools, so that thus the *ministry* of those ordained of God to minister amongst them *might not be blamed*, either for lack of spirit or for lack of intelligence.

For myself, I have never had much to complain of in the way of restraint upon my freedom to expound the Word of God in the presence of my people.

Here, indeed, may have been my security. Preaching in my own formative days was almost entirely expository. Preaching rested, however imperfectly, upon the honest exegesis of a passage or pronouncement or principle of Holy Scripture. Behind the humblest preacher stood that august Authority. True, it was always possible to take a text out of its context and make it a pretext for saying something

which one wished to say, and was yet afraid to take upon himself to say. But a preacher lost more than he gained by such cowardice.

## V.

Never in the course of my very long experience and never amongst the vast number of my brethren in the ministry who have shared this confidence with me—have I known of a minister of Christ suffering in his person or in his influence because of his fidelity to some uneasy truth which leapt at his touch from the written and accepted Word of God!

In those churches which declare that "the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us," let this Word of God be indeed declared—as it is in Amos, in Isaiah, in Jeremiah and in all the prophets; as it is also in the Psalms, not avoiding certain Psalms, because of their terrible pronouncements, but rather seeking protection from God, lest we should be found with those who let loose upon themselves such a doom!

Let it never be concealed from those who hear, that the rigour and keenness of those ancient Scriptures are not weakened, but rather are quickened and made still more inward, by the Word and Message of Christ; even as it is written: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!"

One consequence will be: Such preaching will not be despised. Such preachers will never be able to speak from this source and merely beat the air. The sins which Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah denounced in the name of God are still alive, and alive in the midst of us! Good people still faint as they behold what looks like the irresistible good fortune of sensual men. The world is mad and bad and sad, as it always was; though the occasions and the signs differ. And since God is God, the same yesterday, and to-day and forever, things will work out as they always have worked out, when God's Truth is let loose upon the world.—J. A. H.

## REV. JOHN WILMOT'S VISIT

Jarvis Street has been greatly privileged during July by the ministry of Rev. John Wilmot of Highgate Road Baptist Church, London. Mr. Wilmot is a really great preacher. Last week and this we have shared our good things with our readers by publishing one of Mr. Wilmot's sermons. He preached in Jarvis Street morning and evening July 14th and 21st, and the mornings of July 28th and August 4th, taking on these two latter Sundays the open air service in the evening, while the Pastor preached within. In addition, Mr. Wilmot gave the Bible Lecture three Thursday evenings. On every occasion our hungry congregation were treated to what one of our friends would call a "bang-up" dinner.

The Editor of this paper has delighted in the opportunity of coming to know Mr. Wilmot intimately, and together we have motored something over two thousand miles. Mr. Wilmot returns by S.S. *Letitia* from Montreal, sailing August 9th. Mr. Wilmot will always be a most welcome visitor to Toronto, and to Jarvis Street pulpit. We all thank God for his ministry, and wish him *bon voyage*.

Among the many good things we heard from Mr. Wilmot we reproduce, at the request of many, the verses below, which were written by Mr. Wm. Luff who, we believe is still living, and was once a member of Highgate Road Church.

## NATURE KNOWS NO NOVELTIES

The modern church had all things new—

New prayers, new hymns, new preaching;  
And though they read the old Book through,  
They found therein new teaching!

For in their notion of revival  
The ancient things had no survival.

So when the Spring came back to earth  
The church had half-expected  
New flowers and trees would spring to birth,  
And old things be rejected.  
But lo, old buttercups and daisies  
Came as of yore, to show God's praises.

The leaves came on just as before,  
With just the same unfolding;  
The fruit-trees just the same bloom bore,  
No leaf through shame withholding.  
And once again in woodland bowers  
We saw anew the dear old flowers.

The blackbirds sang the same sweet song  
Among the same old bushes;  
The cuckoos' spring-call heard so long,  
The music of the thrushes,  
Were just the same, and sweet as ever,  
For Nature's gospel changes never.

So as I only know one God  
In Bible and creation,  
I doubted of the path men trod,  
Their new-found revelation.  
And 'til the meadows bear new daisies  
I'll preach old truths, and sing old praises.

## NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

## Here and There

Word has been received of the safe arrival in England of Mr. and Mrs. Mellish and Miss Lane. They expected to sail for Africa on Saturday, August 3rd, and will be on the ocean at this time. Remember them in your prayers as they journey from us.

Rev. Morley R. Hall, of Calgary, is supplying for Rev. Alex. Thomson of Mount Pleasant Road Baptist Church, Toronto, on August 11th. He will speak at Stouffville on Friday, August 9th.

Rev. H. H. Chipchase, of York Road Baptist Church, Guelph, had the joy of baptizing three believers on Sunday evening, July 28th.

## Bethany Baptist Church, Winnipeg

The Pastor, Rev. Byron Welch, had the joy on a recent Sunday of baptizing three adults, the firstfruits of his ministry since his ordination in August, 1934; and it is the earnest hope of this body of believers that it is but the beginning of revival blessings.

## Vacation Days

Rev. H. L. Davey of the New Cess Station, Liberia, writes that they have closed their school for the holiday. The next day Danny started walking off the Mission and when halted and asked where he was going, replied, "I'm going to Vacation". We fancy that most of our Church Treasurers have gone "to Vacation" too. This is just a gentle reminder that our Missionaries must live during the summer as well as the winter!

We should also like to remind our readers that we have another lot of Cent-a-Meal boxes on hand, and shall be glad to send to any desiring them.

## Obituary—Mr. and Mrs. Lorne MacAsh

On Wednesday, July 31st, Mr. and Mrs. Lorne MacAsh met their death through drowning at Bear Lake, Timagami. The funeral service was held on Monday, August 5th, from Central Baptist Church, London. Rev. P. B. Loney of Runnymede Road Baptist Church, Toronto, conducted the service, assisted by Rev. Oscar Boomer of Miner's Bay, Mr. Robt. Brackstone of Cannington, and Dr. McNair of New St. James Presbyterian Church, London.

Mr. and Mrs. MacAsh were Missionaries to the Indians at Bear Lake, having taken up their residence there last June. Mr. MacAsh was a member of Central Baptist Church, London, and Mrs. MacAsh, formerly Miss Lillian Archer of Miner's Bay, was a member of Runnymede Road Baptist Church, Toronto. Mr. and Mrs. MacAsh were both students at the Toronto Baptist Seminary. They were married by Rev. P. B. Loney on May 19th, 1934, after which they went to Bear Lake, Timagami, to commence their labours among the Indians. They loved the people and were greatly beloved by them. Already they had seen the fruit of their labours in the conversion of several souls. Mrs. MacAsh had graciously opened her home to the Indian girls and had entered whole-heartedly into the work with her husband.

Mr. and Mrs. MacAsh were well-known in London and Toronto, and also Miner's Bay, and were highly esteemed by all. They will be sadly missed and their tragic death is deeply regretted.

The funeral service was largely attended. Telegrams of sympathy were read from Rev. James McGinlay, pastor of Central Baptist Church, who was unable to be present, and from Dr. T. T. Shields, President of the Toronto Baptist Seminary. Interment was held at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, London.