

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

"WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES"

A Sermon by Rev. E. E. Shields

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 8th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."—
Revelation 3:22.

John was in the isle that was called Patmos. This was an island in the Ægean Sea, which is an arm of the Mediterranean. Patmos is one of a group lying between Greece and Asia Minor. The island is twenty-five miles in circumference. It is still called Patmos. Upon the island is the Monastery of John the Divine, where is a grotto which tradition says was the scene of this Revelation.

Incidentally, this island now belongs to Italy. It is one of the group to which Mussolini is sending his wounded soldiers.

It is a joy to know that although John was banished to Patmos, he was not banished from God. Ezekiel said that when he was among the captives by the river of Chebar, "the heavens were opened", and he "saw visions of God". Captivity cannot keep the Christian from Christ. No matter how one is situated—though you have been plunged into "the depths" or even into the "low dungeon"—the heavens may be opened to you, and you may have visions of God.

The words of our text constitute the closing words of the Lord's message to each of seven churches. John was commanded by the Lord to write certain things in a book, and to send it to the seven churches in Asia. I call your attention to the fact that by the command of God His prophets have *written* in past days. This was not the Asia of our day; nor was it Asia Minor, but the western part of Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the capital. It was a part of the Roman Empire. John had been banished to Patmos by the Roman Emperor "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." A man who had stood for righteousness, who had suffered for Christ's name sake, was one to whom God could speak, and who would be faithful in delivering the message received.

There is no doubt the seven churches were in existence at the time John had his vision. They were real messages to real churches. They were addressed to the "angels"—messengers—ministers—representatives of the churches, but were intended for the entire church in each case. At the close of each message the words of our text occur, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

A certain school of interpretation teaches that the seven churches represent seven phases of Christianity, or seven periods in the church's history, stretching from Pentecost to the second coming of Christ. That view should be examined with care; for we must remember that this view is, after all, only the opinion of men. That conception of things would put us in the Laodicean period—if we are at the end of this age—and the message to the Laodicean church would become a message to this age. This view may discourage some people, and cause them to say, "It is hopeless to expect anything better; it is useless to look for a revival." And yet, if properly understood, such a conception leaves room for revival, for the Lord calls upon even the church of the Laodiceans to repent, and to buy spiritual clothing and health and wealth from Him. Whether the seven churches represent seven periods or not, one thing is certain, originally they represented seven real churches, each having a separate life, and each displaying its own distinctive characteristics; and I am inclined to believe that from then until now, if we have not had fifty-seven we have had at least seven varieties of churches.

Christ is here represented as walking among the seven golden candlesticks, and holding the seven stars in His right hand. He explains that the candlesticks are the churches, and the stars are the angels—messengers—of the churches. Matthew Henry says, "It is well he holds

them in His hand, for if it were not so they soon would be fallen stars."

Here is the Lord, our Saviour, walking in the midst of the churches, on those feet of dreadful holiness, with eyes of flaming fire beholding the evil and the good. He knows precisely the condition of each church. He knows exactly the virtues and the sins and failures of each church. Nor does He pass over the individual in the mass. He does not attribute to the mass that which is true only of the individual. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men."

The message of the evening is a message to the church. It is to us. It is to you. It is to me. We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Saved by His grace? Yes; gloriously and eternally saved. But remember the admonition of John in one of his epistles: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." There are some Christians to whom an "abundant entrance" shall be ministered into the inheritance of the saints of light: there are some who will be saved as by the skin of their teeth. Saved! Yes; "yet so as by fire". They will suffer loss. Their life's work will be burned up, but they will be saved—as Lot was saved out of Sodom. Lot ought never to have been in Sodom; and it was by the prayer of someone outside the wicked city that he was sent out of the overthrow. This message ought to solemnize our hearts. Christ is coming—and He may come soon. But whether sooner or later, every one of us must "give account of himself to God."

Here is the message: "He that hath an ear"—have you an ear? Is it open? Can you hear the voice of the Spirit? Does Jesus Christ speak to you? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." As a train-dispatcher, or some railway chief, ticking off messages to particular stations—messages which would be heard in every station through which they passed—might say, "Let every station on the line listen", so the Lord bids all who are on the spiritual circuits to listen to every message: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

I.

LET ME MAKE A VERY BRIEF SUMMARY OF THESE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

Only one church out of the seven—and we are speaking of churches, and not sinners in the world—only one church, Smyrna, receives unqualified commendation. Philadelphia, which passes without censure, is nevertheless not praised. There are three churches which are commended, and also condemned. One church, Sardis, is declared to be dead, while having a name to live. A church! The Lord of glory pronounced against a church! But He said, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."

God never loses sight of the individual. The roll of the local church may not correspond with the Lamb's book of life; but the individual is never forgotten. He knows His own everywhere.

Of Laodicea He said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." But here is the

hopeful note, a note that should give us all courage: even to Laodicea He said, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

There is hope for the backslider. How gracious is His promise, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely"; "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten . . . And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed." We use the word *repent*, and rightly so, towards those who are unsaved; but let us lay this to our hearts, that in these letters to the churches, the churches are called upon to repent five times—and four times the word *repent* is used. Repentance is proper for the Christian, as for the unsaved.

But there is a vast difference. When a Christian realizes that he is wrong, he ought to be sorry; and when sorry, it is proper for him to about-face—turn around—be converted. We apply the term "converted" very loosely. It means to be turned again. A Christian can be born again but once; he can be converted, in the sense of acknowledging and turning from wrong-doing, many times. Our Lord said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." If I read my Bible aright, Peter had been saved in the sense of being born again long before, but the Lord predicted that though he should be overwhelmed by temptation and deny his Lord, he should be "converted" in the sense of being turned again, and that then he should strengthen his brethren.

II.

CHURCHES, AS CHURCHES, ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR PERMITTING THE CONTINUANCE OF EVIL DOCTRINE OR DOING WHICH MAY BE PREVENTED OR CURED BY DISCIPLINE.

It is written of God's people, "The children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing." Yet the sin was committed by one man. Nevertheless, the Lord held them accountable for the sin until the man was searched out, and the abominable thing put from among them. And, mark you, all power was gone from Israel because of one man: "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." God has His eye upon every member of the church, and knows where sin lies, if sin there be; but the whole church is held responsible until it deals with that particular individual. And will you observe: when Achan was dealt with, victory returned to Israel.

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul said, concerning the sin of one man, "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

Certain sins are characteristic of certain places. Toronto has some sin peculiar to itself as a city—although called "Toronto the Good". Every city of the world has something peculiar to itself, which a visitor senses. Go to Paris, Berlin, London—where you will—and you will find something about the atmosphere of each place that is peculiarly characteristic of it alone. It has come about by gradual process, moulded by the lives

of the people: They are what they are because others have been what they were before them.

Families have certain peculiarities. Some families are friendly: some are frigid. Some are proud, and some are humble. Although a family is made up of individuals, sometimes the members seem all of one cast. Some great influence has moulded them.

The Cretians were known, as a people, to be liars. Paul, by inspiration, said, "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars." It was characteristic of them; the leaven had spread through a whole people. We read of the philosophers and others who gathered at Mars' Hill, that "all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."

If you look at the churches that are sketched in these letters, you will find that one church fails in one particular and another has some other special sin. One is commended for this, and another for some other grace. The church, as a whole, is held responsible in these messages for the continuance of that which it is possible to correct either in doctrine or in practice. Every man, as a member of a Christian church, is responsible before God to see to it that the truth is preached, and that error is not condoned, or evil practices allowed to continue. Likewise, the church is responsible for the conduct of the individual.

III.

I now call your attention to SOME OF THE SINS ON ACCOUNT OF WHICH THE CHURCHES ARE CALLED TO REPENTANCE.

One is that of *condoning error*. Writing to the church at Pergamos, the Lord said, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate." A church is held responsible for ensuring the soundness of its doctrine; as it is responsible if error be condoned. Christ will judge the church. Not only will He commend it for its preaching of that which is right, but He will condemn it for such false doctrine as it condones.

It is still necessary for us to get a firm grip of this truth, that we are individually responsible, and responsible as a church, to stand for truth and righteousness, for the whole counsel of God, for the full revelation of God in Christ. It is only as we stand individually that we can stand collectively, as an uncompromising witness to the whole revelation of God.

It is necessary to say that, because in this day the idea prevails that it does not matter very much what anybody believes, so long as he lives a good moral life, and does nobody any harm. It is said, we are all going the same way, and shall all arrive at last in the right place, if we are but sincere.

From what source does such a notion as that emanate? It is contrary to the revelation of God. Suppose you desire to go to Winnipeg, and someone tells you that it does not matter which way you go, so long as you sincerely desire to reach that city? The fact is, you will not reach Winnipeg unless you follow the road that leads there. There is a way to go, and it is essential that you

know what that way is—and follow it. That is the only way to get there.

Does it not matter what you believe when you insure your life, or take out a policy against fire, so long as you are sincere? Ah, when you make application there you are very careful to read the provisions of the policy, and meet the requirements. These observations would be absurdly superfluous were it not that so many people seem to divorce religion from ordinary common sense.

For the same is precisely true in reference to the soul's salvation. A man may be sincere, he may be a good citizen, he may pay one hundred cents on the dollar, and yet miss eternal life. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is either true that all are condemned, and that there is to be a judgment-day, that except men repent they are eternally lost, or this Book is not true. By faith, and by faith alone, can any son of Adam be saved. And if that be true, these human guesses with respect to the revelation of God are lies which will lead men ultimately into utter perdition.

It is a joy to travel on the highways of this province. Approaching a dangerous curve in the road, a checkerboard confronts the motorist, warning him of danger. If you have learned to read the signs, you know exactly what is ahead of you all the way. I enquired about it, and was told that one man was responsible for the original idea of thus making the road safe; and because of those directions, thousands of lives have been saved. And not only so, but people have been able to go forward with assurance that they were on the right road, and were unafraid because the course was marked.

But suppose some demon were to go throughout the Province of Ontario and remove all the checkerboards, all the guides, all the posts and ropes at bridges, and danger signals; and announce that it is not really necessary to know definitely about these things, that as long as you start out sincerely with a desire to get to the end of the way, you will be safe? What would happen? Thousands of people, from every point in the province, would rise up and demand that the guide-posts be restored, and that such a man be brought to book.

But men can deny the Book, give the lie to the only guide to eternal life, to the only way whereby the sons of men can get back to God—and men praise them! Our business is to preach the gospel, and to insist that false doctrine shall have no place among us.

It is within the power of every individual in every church to stand for this truth. The Pastor of this church has been called a trouble-maker because he has insisted upon certain things. Under certain conditions it is our duty to protest. It is! If someone is teaching error, and leading men to perdition, if he is in your home, if you meet him on the street, if he belongs to your church, it is your solemn duty to condemn his course. God will hold you responsible, and you will have to answer at the judgment-seat of Christ, if you fail of your full duty in this respect.

It is not only the task of the preacher, but of everyone. We must not tolerate error. "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." We are safe when standing

by His Word: we are in danger when we begin to depart from it.

Consider the matter of baptism. That is not merely a Baptist doctrine. Every believer everywhere, who has repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, has the command resting upon him to be baptized. That is more than a Baptist doctrine; it is the command of the Lord. Every believer is commanded to remember Christ's death "till he come", in the Lord's Supper. Those are the only two ordinances that Christ gave His church. They are not primarily Baptist doctrines: they are in the Book; and we are divinely commissioned to teach men "all things", whatsoever the Head of the Church has commanded.

The church at Ephesus is called upon to repent for having left its first love: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." What! The church that was so highly commended? Is there a qualifying statement concerning it? Yes. "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." On what a high level did the church at Ephesus stand!

I speak now directly to you Jarvis Street people, and I know you will suffer this exhortation. This church has stood for truth, for discipline. It has been a place of prayer. Thousands will utter their praises in eternity that ever they crossed this threshold, and heard the gospel, and were led to Christ. It has been glorious. But have you stood any higher than Ephesus? Only one thing was needful to make that an ideal church; and I beseech of you, do not forget your first love. Never get away from your complete dependence upon Christ and His Word.

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen." Is there a possibility of our having fallen? I will not say. I only know it is possible. Here is One of Whom we read Who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, Who said to Ephesus, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." "Fallen", when one has stood for truth? "Fallen", when one cannot bear evil? Ah yes; our disposition is, to forget "the pit from which we were digged". We forget our first love, the day when we first felt our sin forgiven, when the heart welled up in love and thankfulness to the Redeemer for His eternal love, and the blood so freely shed on Calvary for us. He bids us put the clock back, and find ourselves again in the joy of that first consciousness of sins forgiven, and fellowship with God.

Is that true of anyone here to-night? Have you the peace which you enjoyed when first you knew the Lord? Do you really know that peace which "passeth all understanding"? Does the love of God dwell in your heart? Have you fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ? Is there interplay constantly between yourself and the Godhead? Have you fellowship with the Christ of Whom this passage speaks? Have you a consciousness that it is possible to enjoy something which you are at present not experiencing? Are you conscious

of a certain drift away from God? Would you like to get back where you were years ago? Have you left "your first love"? Or, can you truly say, "I am enjoying His love as richly to-day as when I first knew the Lord. I have peace to-day. I have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son to-day. I love Him more to-day than in that day when first He saved me."

Notice that *no heinous sin was charged against Ephesus*: simply that she had left her first love. Does that apply to you, to me? Is He looking at us, and saying, "Come back home"? Is He missing the clinging hand of His children? Do you pray to Him? Do you withdraw and shut the door and call Him, "Father", with a consciousness that you have caught the ear of the Eternal? The true worshipper must worship Him in spirit and in truth. If you do not thus worship Him, if you are out of fellowship with God, will you acknowledge it and return unto your rest, even to the Lord Who hath dealt so bountifully with you?

You have heard the story of the Indian who was lost in the woods? Imagine an Indian lost! Someone came across him and said, "Are you lost?" "No. Indian not lost: wigwam lost"! How stubborn we are! How unwilling to acknowledge wrong-doing! Yet the further we go in a wrong direction, the harder it is to get back. If you realize you are not living as closely to Christ as you might—and as you should—come back to God.

There are three prayer-meetings in this church every week, beside those of the School conferences; Bible lectures Monday and Thursday evenings; morning and evening services on Sunday. You are faithful in attendance, most of you. You probably know what you need yourselves. Do not rob your soul. Do not starve your spirit. Get together with God's people. Come back into the sunshine, into the warmth of fellowship, if you are away from God. It may be you were saved within these walls, but you have made a poor business of it; you have got into company that led you astray; the circumstances of your home-life have not been conducive to godly living—as a matter of fact, you find yourself weary, careworn, storm-tossed, to-night. You have not given up hope, but you have neither the fellowship nor the joy you once had. You have not the same confidence in your heart of the love of God that passeth knowledge. Will you not come back to Him to-night?

A minister called upon a particular man scores of times, to invite him to the house of the Lord at the hour of prayer. The man, a Christian, promised; but never came. At last, about the hundredth call, the minister was admitted by the gentleman of the house himself. He was taken into a room where a fire burned upon the hearth. They sat down together, and the minister reached for the tongs. He picked a live coal from the fire, and put it on the hearth by itself. The man watched, and the minister watched, with neither saying a word. The glow died away, and the smoke ceased. The red coal turned black: it was dead. The man said to his minister, "Do not say a word. I will be at prayer-meeting next Wednesday." It is difficult to live a warm, glowing, Christian life alone. Fellowship with God and His people is indispensable to a healthy and happy Christian life.

Do not be afraid to cry "Hallelujah". We are not saved by emotionalism, but we shall find our emotions stirred by the Spirit of God full often. Do not be afraid to let people know you are happy. I can't very well: my

face is not the right kind! But let people know that you know Christ. Spread the knowledge of His name. Bring other people under the sound of the gospel. There are tens of thousands of people in Toronto who need the gospel you know and by which you are saved. Some of them would be glad to come. Go and tell them about it, and seek to win them. Bring them to God's house. Resolve within yourselves that you will bring someone to church next Sunday. Rejoice in your salvation, and tell it out to others.

During the Welsh revival a young man who had just been saved was exceedingly happy, and was talking to an older man of his joy. He asked the older man, "Did you never feel like that?" "Yes; when I was first converted. But as you get along, and become established, it is different." As these two walked along they came upon a donkey drawing a cart up a hill, and at the middle of the hill the donkey stopped. No imprecations, no persuasions, of the driver could move him. Turning, the young man said, "I suppose, brother, he is established!"

That is humorous in the story, but there is nothing humorous in a Christian's being out of step with God, out of fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We all live far below our privileges. We have waded in shallow water instead of swimming in the ocean depths of His love and grace. There is no limit to the fulness of His love which He is ready to bestow upon us if we will come out into the sunlight. To-night, as never before, shall we resolve to be seekers of the Lord. It is not only the unsaved who need to seek Him: we all need to seek God constantly. We have all let opportunities to speak for Him pass, and sometimes wilfully; when we knew our duty, and did not do it. There is something wrong if the testimony of Christ is not on our lips all the time. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." "I . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Suffer the word of exhortation I have given you this evening; for I believe it to be the message of the Spirit. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." I ask all of you to go home and read those messages to the churches prayerfully and carefully, and allow them to speak to your hearts. Let us seek the Lord our God as never before, and He will do marvellous things for us, and through us.

My message to the unsaved is the same. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." He seeks you. Come home.

THE WEEK-END IN JARVIS STREET

Last Sunday the weather was somewhat inclement, and while the services had no outstanding feature, the general testimony was that it was a good day. The Pastor's brother, Rev. E. E. Shields, preached at both services. The evening sermon appears in this issue. The attendance at Sunday School was 1,275.

JUST TO REMIND YOU

Not so very long ago careful housewives were accustomed to have a fall and spring cleaning. At such times they turned their houses upside down, and inside out, in order to ensure that no dust should lurk in any corner anywhere. In later years we have become accustomed to hardwood floors, and rugs, and vacuum-cleaners, so that good housewives endeavour to keep their houses clean all the time, instead of making them clean on these semi-annual occasions.

So, too, we have known churches and other organizations which once a year endeavoured to balance their books. We have long been under the necessity of doing that in Jarvis Street, notwithstanding the majority of our members regularly support the work by their weekly offerings. But our many interests make it difficult for us to carry on without special appeals.

We have still nearly four months to run to the end of the year, but what a fine thing it would be if all our members would begin now to remember March 31st, and should they be in arrears endeavour to add a little weekly to their regular contributions, to overtake the arrears—and perhaps give a Christmas present to the Lord in the form of a contribution to the WITNESS Fund or Seminary Fund. But let us keep in mind that each of these interests requires constant support; so that when we approach the end of the church year we may have as little to do as possible.

AN EXHORTATION

The Pastor has read his brother's sermon in this WITNESS with great interest, and feels that the exhortation to Jarvis Street Church is most fitting. The Pastor ventures to add this word. The record of Jarvis Street Church, particularly during the last fourteen years, is a record of answers to prayer. Only God could have accomplished what has been accomplished; and nothing short of divine power can continue the work. We venture therefore earnestly to exhort the entire membership of the church, to be more earnest in prayer than ever. Of course there is value in private, individual, intercession; but God has made special promises to those who unite in prayer. We would urge the church, as a church, to be not only audibly, but visibly, in prayer. Let the prayer meetings be largely attended. As when Peter was in prison, prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him, so let there be ceaseless prayer for blessing upon the work of the Lord, that prison-doors may be opened to the captives, that many may be saved.

"TO TESTIFY . . . THE GRACE OF GOD"

The brochure with this title, reviewed by Dr. O. L. Clark in these pages recently, giving a short account of the life and labours of the late Pastor W. J. H. Brown, is now ready, and may be obtained through this office for twenty-five cents per copy (post paid).

A GOOD WORD FOR THE SEMINARY.

A father who has two sons in Toronto Baptist Seminary writes:

"Dear Brother Brown:

I have felt an inclination to write something like the enclosed with a view to commending the Seminary by speaking a good word for it. It is brief and condensed . . .

With kind regards and prayers,

Yours in Him,

"From the standpoint of a parent, and with a parent's interest, there are certain things which might well be said concerning the Toronto Baptist Seminary.

"The question arises, where shall we send our sons who may feel drawn to the Lord's work? Where shall we advise young people to go to get training which will train in the right direction?

"There are colleges which are tainted, to which a believer should never for a single moment think of recommending any young man who may be looking for better equipment. Indeed true believers should warn all against such Institutions and have nothing whatever to do with them. They are not for them. The Toronto Baptist Seminary, however, is a safe place.

"The tutors are not only sincerely sound in the faith and able, but they are also Spirit filled. The atmosphere is spiritual, the tone is right, the curriculum is extensively comprehensive, and speaking from positive knowledge, the writer affirms that it is a splendid Institution, seeking to bring glory and honour to God through the Lord Jesus Christ alone; it is a place where a young man may gain that profiting as will appear to all."

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

Western Ontario Pastors' and People's Conference

On November 28th, the Pastors' and People's Conference for Western Ontario met in the Essex Baptist Church, and all of the churches in the Conference were well represented.

The afternoon session began at 2.30, and the speaker was Rev. Wilfred Wellington of the Calvary Baptist Church, Windsor. Mr. Wellington gave a soul-searching message from John 12:24, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Following the afternoon session, a time of happy fellowship was enjoyed around the supper table.

The evening speaker was Rev. E. C. Wood of Chatham. His subject was, "Practical ways of living true to Christ". This was an excellent message, and many expressions of its helpfulness and inspiration were heard.

A Male Quartet, composed of Pastor J. Watt, Rev. E. C. Wood, Rev. W. Wellington, and Mr. Lyle Horner, sang at the evening service.

The next Conference will be held, D.V., at Chatham, on January 30, 1936.

Orillia

The Lord is continuing to bless the Bethel Baptist Church, Orillia. Sunday, December 1st, was a good day in every sense of the word. At the evening service the church was almost filled to its capacity, and a baptismal service preceded the gospel meeting, after which one went forward for salvation. For all these things they praise God most abundantly.

Tottenham

Mr. George B. Hicks of the Toronto Baptist Seminary is pastor of the "Gospel Mission" in Tottenham, Ontario, a village of some six hundred people. Two years ago work was begun four miles away in an Orange Hall called, "The Black Horse", named after a tavern that once stood nearby.

Sunday, December 1st, 1935, was the second anniversary of this work, and the Hall was filled both morning and evening. A number of the people on the farms around have no cars, hence cannot easily go to the village to church. When the mountain would not go to Mohamet, he went to the mountain, so have the workers in the Tottenham Gospel Mission.

The special speaker for the occasion was Rev. W. Gordon Brown whose messages were greatly enjoyed. His morning subject was, "Christ's way with men", and the evening subject, "The Fourfold Sonship of Christ". Special music was brought by Miss Anne Coghill and Mr. Austin Sime of Toronto.

A fine spirit is evident in the work, and not a few are regularly hearing the gospel who have not yet professed faith in Christ.

Long Branch

The visit of Rev. W. N. Charlton to the Long Branch Baptist Church has proved a real blessing and help. The Sunday school attendance has increased remarkably. The first Sunday after the special meetings the attendance was one hundred and twenty-one, and the following Sunday, one hundred and fifteen. This is the largest attendance since a special rally day in 1927. The evening meetings for adults were a distinct blessing to every one as well, and the pastor, Rev. Bernard Jeffery, is greatly encouraged in the work.

Resignation of Secretary-Treasurer of Union

At the Executive Board Meeting held November 25th and 26th, the resignation of our beloved Secretary-Treasurer, Rev. W. E. Atkinson, was presented and regretfully accepted. Mr. Atkinson explained he had accepted an unanimous call to the pastorate of Waverley Road Baptist Church, Toronto, and consequently his decision in reference to the resignation was final. The Board took suitable action in the recognition of eight and one-half years of faithful service of our Brother, and our prayers and kind wishes go with him as he enters his new sphere of service. His resignation takes effect December 31, 1935.

It was decided thereafter, in view of our present financial condition, that the office of Secretary-Treasurer remain vacant until after the next Convention, and that the President carry on the duties of that office until the next Board meeting in February, Rev. W. N. Charlton assuming the work of Recording-Secretary. This means additional duties and re-

sponsibilities for the President, and he would ask your aid in prayer and in other possible ways in the fulfilling the duties laid upon him.

Foreign Mission Work

The resignation of Rev. and Mrs. E. Hancox from the Missionary staff was also presented to the Executive Board at its last meeting. For purely personal reasons, Mr. and Mrs. Hancox felt it their duty to relinquish their official connection with the work in Liberia. The resignation, which takes effect on January 31, 1936, was regretfully accepted.

The non-return of Mr. and Mrs. Hancox to Liberia, and the impossibility of a single young woman travelling on the African boat, together with the lack of suitable accommodation on the field, have caused the Board to decide not to return Miss Florence Stacey to Liberia at present. They hope that this is but a temporary relinquishment of her services. The Board holds all three missionaries in the highest esteem and prays God's richest blessing upon them in their respective spheres of service.

The reduction of the Missionary staff does not mean any diminution of effort in the work. On the contrary, we desire to prosecute our cause both at home and abroad with renewed energy, building up and advancing our work at home, and looking forward to the time when we shall be able to increase the number of our workers abroad. Our humble dependence is in God Who has so faithfully aided us, and we expectantly look to you, His servants, to do your utmost to co-operate with us in spreading abroad the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Mt. Pleasant Rd., Toronto

On Monday, December 2nd, the Mt. Pleasant Road Baptist Church membership were the guests of the Young People's Society at a delightful banquet held in honour of the Pastor, Rev. Alex. Thomson, who had completed ten years of service with the Church. Mr. Hartley Britton, President of the Young People's Society, deserves great credit for the splendid and auspicious arrangements for the evening.

Rev. P. B. Loney of Runnymede Road Baptist Church, Rev. W. N. Charlton of Hespeler, and Rev. W. E. Atkinson spoke briefly at the table, and after a most enjoyable time of fellowship, the meeting adjourned to meet in the church auditorium at the hour of eight o'clock.

Mr. Britton presided, and in a few well-chosen words told of the desire of the young people to assist the pastor in every way that the work of the Lord might be helped in every possible way through the co-operation of his department. Instrumental selections were rendered by the Trio Orchestra, and Miss McIlroy sang two selections suitable to the occasion. On behalf of the Young People's organization, the President presented the Pastor with a Loose-leaf Reference Bible. A beautiful bouquet of flowers was presented to Mrs. Thomson, the Pastor's mother.

The main message of the evening was delivered by Rev. W. N. Charlton from the text: "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." He emphasized the need of consecrated men and women in the church to assist in taking the word of God to those who know Him not.

The meeting closed with the singing of a hymn and prayer by the Pastor. May his bow abide in strength, and may the work of the Lord continue to prosper under his Biblical and scholarly ministry. I am sure all the members of the Union wish our President God's richest blessing as he enters a second decade of his labours amongst the people at Mt. Pleasant Road Church. W.E.A.

Calvary, Windsor

The Calvary Baptist Church, Windsor, is rejoicing in the blessing received through the ministry of its new pastor, Rev. Wilfred Wellington. Two have already followed the Lord in baptism, and two gentlemen have recently been gloriously saved.

Missionaries on Tour

Rev. and Mrs. E. Hancox, and Miss Florence Stacey, accompanied by the Secretary, are visiting the Churches in the western part of Ontario this week. They will be at Wheatley on Tuesday, Essex on Wednesday, Windsor on Thursday, and Chatham on Friday, returning to Toronto on Saturday. Mr. Hancox will be preaching in Hespeler, on Sunday, December 15th.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 10

No. 4

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 52 Fourth Quarter December 29th, 1935

THE SONG OF SONGS

Lesson Text: Song of Songs, chapters 1 to 8.

Golden Text: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned."—Song of Songs 8:7.

Bible School Reading: Song of Sol. 2:1-17.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Ps. 45:10-17; Tuesday—Prov. 9:1-10; Wednesday—Is. 66:5-13; Thursday—John 10:11-18; Friday—Eph. 5:25-33; Saturday—I. John 3:1-19.

INTRODUCTION

Some difference of opinion exists respecting the authorship of this Song of Songs, but the voice of antiquity, and the internal indications, unite in ascribing the work to Solomon. He is referred to by name (1:1), and his curtains are mentioned (1:5), together with his horses and chariots (1:9; I. Kings 10:28, 29). The general content, with its geographical and other personal references would seem to apply to him. The book forms one of the five rolls read publicly at certain sacred seasons by the Jews. This Song at the Passover, Ruth at Pentecost, Lamentations on the ninth Ab, the date of the destruction of Jerusalem, Ecclesiastes at the feast of tabernacles, and Esther at the feast of Purim—concerning its canonicity there is no doubt. Its inspiration is without question.

Several views have been stated respecting the nature of the content. First, that it is a regular drama to be explained in accordance with the custom of the Jews of celebrating their wedding nuptials for seven days together, distinguished by peculiar solemnities. These seven days' celebrations are referred to as follows: chapter 1; 2:6; 2:7 to 17; 3:1 to 5:1; 5:2 to 6:9; 6:10 to 7:11; 7:12 to 8:3; 8:4 to 14. Another view would divide it into a series of twelve separate poems, or sacred idyls. A third view treats it as a parable representative of true religion, the Jewish people, and the gospel dispensation; while a fourth view emphasizes its allegorical nature. In connection with this last explanation, it is said that the name "Shulamite" (6:13), given the bride, and meaning, "Daughter of Peace", is the feminine of Solomon, "Prince of Peace". She, by turn, is a vinedresser, shepherdess, midnight enquirer, and prince's consort and daughter; and he a suppliant, drenched with night dews, and a king in his palace, in harmony with the various relations of the church and Christ. "The Song according to this view sets forth the fulness of the love which joins believers and the Saviour." It "furnishes the believer with language of holy love where-with his heart can commune with his Lord; and portrays the intensity of Christ's love to him." Another view declares that stripped of its poetic form, it relates an incident in the life of Solomon, when falling in love with a certain young woman, he removes her to his palace, and there seeks to influence her with the riches and power of his position; but failing to succeed in this, he permits her to return to her shepherd-lover, for whom all the time she has been longing. The song, according to this view, while furnishing spiritual lessons, sets forth the triumph of pure love. Whichever view is adopted, it is clear the song sets forth in endearing language the affection of two lovers for each other; and that the same spiritually may be applied to the relationship existing between Christ and His church.

CONTENT

It is hardly possible to give an outline of the content, so we shall follow the song section by section. After accounting the nature of the content, and attributing the song to Solomon (1:1), there follows an utterance of the bride concerning her lover (1:2-4). In this, she addresses words of affection to him, which fittingly express the attitude of the submissive heart to Christ. He is the Anointed One (John

1:41; Acts 10:38) Who draws His own after Him (John 6:44; 12:32); and gives them joy in His presence (John 15:11). Words are then addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem descriptive of the appearance of the bride (1:5, 6), and in likeness with the natural condition of the church. The outdoor life had darkened the skin of the maid, but sin has affected the state of all, and in them there is no good thing (Rom. 7:18). It is only as the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ has been allowed to operate that the guilty sinner becomes the saint of God (Heb. 9:14), and even then his life is imperfect, though in Christ he is perfect (Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:28). Being thus perfected, he need fear the accusation of no one (Rom. 8:33). Another request follows, indicative of the longing desire for fellowship with the loved one (v. 7).

The reply of the bridegroom follows (1:8-11), indicating his love and high regard for his betrothed; after which the latter again speaks (12-17), and describes her great affection for the beloved of her heart. Her love is sincere and deep, and the most tender language is used to describe it. Her lover answers in loving tones (2: 1, 2), reminding us of the beauty and fragrance of our Lord. Another statement of the bride follows, in which she describes the joy of being in the presence of her lover (vs. 2:3-6). Note the application to fellowship with Christ. The delight of His presence, and the gifts of His bounty, are beyond description. After charging the daughters of Jerusalem concerning her beloved (2:7), she continues to speak of him (2:8 to 3:11). She sees him coming to her, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills; and hears him requesting her to rise up, and go away with him. Christ desires His own to be with Him (John 17:24), and in the spiritual sense we are with Him now in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). Note the testimony of close relationship which may be uttered by every child of God (2:16). Longing for the beloved one is then described in language of love (3:1-4). Suggestive of the devout soul longing for Christ, and not content until He is found (Ps. 63:1; Phil. 3:7-12). With another word to the daughters of Jerusalem (3:5), the lover is again described (3:6-11), and his words respecting the bride are stated (4 to 5:1). In these words, note the spiritual application to the church cleansed from sin, and made pure in God's sight (Eph. 5:25-27). Our Lord's love for His own is a fact (John 15:9). Observe the description of the person of the bride, and the reference to her purity (4:1-7).

A statement of the bride follows, descriptive of the visit of the beloved one to her abode; but before she opens the door of the house he has departed. She goes forth to look for him, but finds him not, and receives insults in the course of her search (5:2-7). Sometimes we miss the blessedness of the nearness of our Lord through our drowsiness. Absorption with the cares of this world lulls us to sleep, and we lose touch with God thereby. The daughters of Jerusalem are charged with a message (5:8), answer with a question (5:9), and receive a tender description of the lover's appearance (5:10-16). She cannot speak too highly of him. To her, he was the "altogether lovely" one. Thus does the saint describe his Saviour (Ps. 45:2). In answer to another question (6:1) the bride replies in loving tones (6:2, 3); after which, the bridegroom speaks of his bride and describes her beauty (6:4 to 7:9). Observe, in relation to the church, her unity (6:9; Eph. 2:15), her name, peace (6:13; Rom. 5:1), and her graces (Gal. 5:22, 23). The bride then speaks, confessing her relationship to her beloved, his desire for her, and her yearning for his company (7:10 to 8:3). She was not ashamed to acknowledge her relationship to the beloved of her heart; and the child of God who really loves his Saviour is equally ready to confess his love for Him. After a charge to the daughters of Jerusalem (8:4), and a reply from these, the bride again speaks, and makes certain observations upon love, jealousy, the little sister, and Solomon's vineyard, and closes with an appeal to her beloved to make haste, and come to her (8:5-14); reminding us of the longing of the loving soul for the return of the Lord (Rev. 22:20). Note throughout the song, the loving relationship existing between bride and bridegroom. They truly loved each other with a pure, concentrated, unselfish, love. This is what the Lord desires respecting His own. Observe also the great longing of the loving heart for the presence and fellowship of the loved one; together with the bold, confident, testimony concerning their close relationship. How may we increase our love for Christ; and give more effective testimony to Him?

"What Shall I Give For Christmas?"

The practice of making gifts to friends at Christmas time has become almost universal, and the practice very often involves a problem. We have no doubt that, at this Christmas season, literally millions of money will be spent throughout the world in the purchase of practically useless gifts.

The department stores have offices where people can exchange their Christmas presents. It is no reflection either on the giver or the recipient. It is difficult to know another's possessions, and still more difficult to judge of another's taste.

But a book, providing it is a worthy book, is always in good taste. One can send a book to anyone without embarrassment. But a Christian would like, surely, to make a gift which would be beneficial to the recipient in a spiritual sense. What better, therefore, could you do than present your friends with a copy of "Other Little Ships"? We have heard already of conversions resulting from the perusal of the messages in this book. It is, indeed, doubtful if there is one message in it that has not been used of God to lead great numbers to Christ, and to build up the saints in their most holy faith.

A story book, however good, when read once, is usually laid aside. But such a book as this is likely to be read many times; and may continue to be a source of spiritual blessing in the household for years to come.

NOW PUBLISHED IN ENGLAND

"Other Little Ships" has recently been issued by Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, England; and we have just received to-day a copy of *The Christian* of November 21st, in which "Other Little Ships" is reviewed. The article has also been sent us by friends, with the request that it be published; and we venture to reproduce that review here for the benefit of our readers.

"A CANADIAN PREACHER"

"It is always a risky thing to compare one man with another, particularly when both are preachers. We have heard Dr. Shields spoken of as 'the Canadian Spurgeon'. There are some among us even yet who could find no higher compliment than that for any minister of the Word. Consequently, we are a little jealous about its use. With this volume before us, however, we are inclined to confirm and to echo the judgment of those who, seeking to acknowledge the inspired genius of Dr. Shields, accord him such high honour as to class him with 'the prince of preachers'.

"Other Little Ships" is a selection of sermons preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, the pastorate of which has been Dr. Shields' responsibility for a full quarter-century. Twenty-five years in one pulpit is sufficient time to test any man's ability. On the other hand, that church is indeed fortunate which can retain over so long a period the ministry of a man whose preaching is of such a standard.

"Dr. Shields has a reputation in England as well as in Canada. He is held in high esteem as a fearless leader in the controversy between scriptural supernaturalism and the destructive criticism of materialistic unbelief. He is known as a man with a sword—and that a highly-tempered blade that can be wielded with devastating effect. But this David can sing psalms as well as slay Goliaths. There are some men who cannot engage in defensive witness to God's unchanging truth without sacrificing all gentler qualities of the soul to an unattractive aggressiveness. These pulpit utterances of Dr. Shields plainly show that he is not of their number. The gospel is presented to the sinner in terms of loving appeal, and to the saint with a tender sympathy and understanding which breathe the very winsomeness of heaven.

"The preface of this most welcome volume informs us that the sermons selected have been 'specially used of God'. We cannot doubt it. And we are confident that, as these messages reach a new and larger circle than they have even yet influenced, they will continue to prove as honey-drops of gospel cheer and consolation."

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