

# 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 CHRISTIAN AS A CHURCH MEMBER

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 28th, 1913

(NOTE: The Pastor has been absent from his pulpit for two weeks. There are many hundreds of sermons on file which have been delivered in Jarvis Street Church, and stenographically reported during the last fifteen years. But, for a change, the Editor thought it might be interesting, and perhaps useful, to publish a few sermons from manuscripts. More than twenty years ago he preached a series of sermons in Jarvis Street under the title: "Applied Christianity", the first of which appeared in last week's issue. These sermons are not printed from a stenographic report, but from the preacher's manuscript. Other titles to follow are: The Christian as an Employer, The Christian as an Employee, The Christian as a Business Man. At least three of these will be printed in succession, and the rest, from time to time as opportunity offers.)

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

"But if I tarry long; that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."—I. Tim. 3:14, 15.

In my first sermon in this series on "Applied Christianity", I spoke of the Christian in the home. We found that the Bible had much to say of the duty of Christian husbands to their wives, of Christian wives to their husbands, of Christian parents to their children, and of children to their parents. And we observed that it was most reasonable that the Scripture should teach that it is a Christian's first duty to display the grace of salvation in his own home, and among his own friends.

This evening we are to go a step farther, and consider a Christian's duty to his fellow-Christians. But first of all, I must again set before you simple and clear definitions of the terms employed in the subject before us.

What is involved in the term Christian? I tried to define it two weeks ago, but I must define it again this evening, and every evening. A Christian is a person who has been born again, who has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, who has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus. A Christian is one who has thus had a personal experience of the saving grace of God in Christ, and whose new life is evidenced in a simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and an earnest endeavour to know, and do, His will as revealed in the Scriptures.

And what do we mean by the term church? It has many meanings in current religious speech. But what does it mean as used in the Bible? Even here it does not always mean exactly the same thing.

It is used to designate the whole body of God's elect. The church in this sense is called the body of Christ, and the bride of Christ. Of that church every true believer, of whatever name or colour, is a member. Membership in Christ gives him membership in that body. It is in this sense that the term is used in such passages as these: "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it", and "He gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all".

The other sense in which the term church is used, is to designate the local assembly of believers: as, the church in Jerusalem, the church at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Corinth, the churches of Galatia. In this sense it stands for a company of regenerated persons called out from the world, and banded together for the observance of the Christian ordinances, for mutual fellowship and edification, and for the propagation of the gospel among men.

Someone will inquire whether the word is not used in still another sense, as representing an organization inclusive of all these local bodies? As for instance, all the Baptist churches of Canada, included in one general organization, say, The Baptist Church of Canada, or the United Church of Canada, or the Presbyterian Church of Canada, or the Church of England in Canada. And if any one of these, why not one church including all of these, the Christian Church of Canada?

Intending no offence, my convictions compel me to say that that conception is entirely foreign to the New Testament. It is essentially the Roman Catholic view of the church. The New Testament knows nothing of any such great organization.

That, of course, is beside the question this evening, only in so far as it is necessary to make it clear that the church to which the believer is specially related is a local, tangible, definable, company of believers. That is the sense, I believe, in which Paul uses the word here in telling Timothy how he ought to behave himself in the house of God.

### I.

Now, my first proposition is this: **EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE A CHURCH MEMBER.** And that is to be established by reference to Scripture. In apostolic times converts were added to the local church by baptism. That is to say, it was by baptism they openly identified themselves as believers, and allied themselves with the company of Christians. When Peter preached, "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added about three thousand souls." None were baptized who did not believe; and all who believed were baptized, and "added" to the company of believers. In New Testament times infant baptism had not been invented. That is a human device following upon the corruption of New Testament simplicity. You do not need to be very learned to prove that. Only read your New Testament through, and you will find there is not a word about it. Then only believers were added to the church, and all believers were baptized.

*This was, and is, the believer's privilege therein and thereby to show his love for Christ by obeying His commandments.* Why speak of applying the principles of New Testament Christianity in the home, in the shop, in the office, if on the very threshold of the new life one refuses to obey the plain, unmistakable requirement of the Scripture that the believer should be baptized, and be added to the Christian society known as the Church?

In the ordinance of baptism one *begins to give his testimony to the world.* We are to tell what great things the Lord hath done for us. What has He done for you? The cross and the grave are the answer. What a privilege to be permitted at once to preach a sermon on the atonement, the resurrection, the new life,—a sermon already prepared!

Moreover, they who seek membership in an assembly of regenerated persons, *obey the law of their own new nature, in choosing the company of the redeemed.* How natural for believers to seek out their fellow-believers in New Testament times! If you were in a foreign country you would seek out others of your own race and language. And the Christian is in a foreign land, and chooses for his own soul's sake to consort with fellow-citizens of the New Jerusalem.

In New Testament times there was a marked difference between the church and the world. That was inevitable. There ought still to be quite as much difference. It is greatly to be regretted that the practice of accepting for membership in a church persons whose only qualification is that they were christened when infants, has put the name of Christian upon millions of unregenerate persons; and thus has made many an organization called a church, an organization of unregenerate persons. The

church should represent the same high standards of life to-day, that she represented of old. If, and when, a local church is so constituted it will be only natural for truly spiritual men and women to seek her fellowship.

There is a further reason why every believer should be a church member: *It is involved in his obligation to observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.* That ordinance was committed to the disciples as a company, not as individuals. It is to be observed by the church. There is certainly no scriptural warrant for its individual, or solitary, observance. There must be a church to carry out the divine requirement. Every believer ought therefore to find his place in a Christian community, that he may thus remember Christ.

And there are at least two other great and fundamental reasons why every Christian should be a member and a supporter of the church:

First: *because of its relation to God—it is "the house of God, the church of the living God"*. There is a sense in which God is everywhere, and sovereignly exercises His right to a place in the affairs of men. But even a king must have his private house. And the church is the house of God. How many places are there where God is welcome in Toronto? In the theatres? In the clubs? Ought not Christ to have a house in Toronto? The church is His home. The church that is made up of regenerated men and women. Ought we not to provide Him such a home? David said: "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." That spirit will make every Christian a church member.

The other reason is this: *the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth"*: it is Christ's witness to the truth before the world.

It is the pillar and ground of the truth *in the sense that it exemplifies the gospel by the lives of its members.* Nothing can take the place of a sanctified life: "Beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it". If all the Bible houses and tract societies were closed, and all book stores given up to the dissemination of infidel literature, a body of really saved men and women would outweigh the influence of them all, and would prove "the pillar and stay of truth." Therefore every Christian should identify himself with the church, and assist, by life and lip, to maintain its testimony to the truth.

Further, the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, in that *it is the divinely appointed agency for the propagation of the gospel.* The truth must be preached. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" It is a Christian duty binding upon all believers to make Christ known.

Some may say *other institutions*, and numerous other organizations, are now doing the church's work. Were that really true, it would still remain that all derive their support from the church. Not one charitable institution could survive the extinction of the church. Surely as others have maintained a light in the lighthouse for you, you ought now to keep the light burning for others.

### II.

And now a few words on **HOW MEMBERS SHOULD BEHAVE THEMSELVES IN THE HOUSE OF GOD.**

*The first of all Christian principles which should show itself in the life of the Christian in relation to his fellow Christians is love.* He should, of course, love all men, even his enemies. But, above all others, he should love those who love the Lord. This is applied Christianity: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

We should never injure a fellow Christian by unloving speech. If we had lived in Jerusalem or Damascus, how our hearts would have warmed toward those who came out from the world for Christ! So still, if such as profess and call themselves Christians should misbehave, "tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph".

We should endeavour especially to do good to the household of faith. There are those who in grace and Christian experience are as little children who need the sympathy and help of the maturer members of the household. We should feel it an obligation, by example and precept, and by loving exhortation, to help the saints along their pilgrim way.

We should be faithful in the observance of the ordinances of the church. They are designed as means of grace, of which every true believer should take full advantage.

We should participate in the church's mutual ministry of intercession. That is everywhere enjoined in the Scripture. Is not that practical? Is not that applying Christian principles? The man who takes no part in the church's collective ministry of prayer, is as guilty of the neglect of duty, as the man who neglects his duty to his family, or to his employer or employee. We must pray.

And we must support her public worship. If believers were not formed into churches, how could public worship be maintained? And if it were right for one Christian to shirk the responsibilities of church membership, why should it not be right for all? And were all to do so, what would become of the church's testimony? The Scripture admonishes us not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching".

It is equally a Christian duty to support the church with our substance. Not reluctantly nor meagerly, but generously, self-sacrificingly, and hilariously. This is at once a holy privilege, and a means of grace. As we pay for our food and for the comforts of home cheerfully, so should we be happy to provide means whereby the gospel may be preached, and the souls of men fed and clothed.

And in all these matters we should be faithful to our promises. We must be honest with God. Strange, that some people recognize no obligation in this respect! Of course, God does not expect the impossible. The penniless man should be as welcome in any true church as a millionaire. But I speak of those who have money for everything but the house of God. Let us be honest, with God and with one another. I shall presently speak about our duty to the outside world in these respects, but judgment of these matters must begin at the house of God.

I have only to add, that above all, it is our duty to walk in wisdom toward those who are without. How the whole church, and the cause of Christ, suffer if one member be dishonoured! Let us be careful to show as members of the church, that we have made Christ Lord. Here

we are to illustrate the ideal relationship of husband and wife—recognizing Christ as the Head, we must be subject to Him.

We should constantly pray for the peace of our spiritual Jerusalem. We ought to take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So ought we to labour for her continuous increase. The supreme desire of our heart should be that of our Zion it should be said, "This and that man was born in her." Then shall we ever be able to sing:

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of Thine abode,  
The Church our blest Redeemer saved  
With His own precious blood.

"I love Thy Church, O God!  
Her walls before Thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,  
And graven on Thy hand.

"For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.

"Beyond my highest joy  
I prize her heavenly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise.

"Sure as Thy truth shall last,  
To Zion shall be given  
The brightest glories earth can yield,  
And brighter bliss of heaven."

#### NEWS FROM FRENCH WEST AFRICA

Rev. Arthur Lee, B.A., is well known among our churches, both for his work as the Pastor of the Mount Albert field, and for the many missionary talks he delivered in our churches. Mr. Lee is now working in French West Africa under the auspices of the Ohio Association of Baptist Churches, a group of churches which have severed connection with those not sound in the faith, and have banded themselves together to proclaim the Gospel of grace at home and abroad. We share with Mr. Lee's many friends part of a letter received from him recently:

"It hardly seems possible that a year has gone by since our arrival on the field. It has been such a busy time with the building of a new house, and the repairing of the other mission buildings, that we have had very little time to think. It is just three weeks ago since we moved into the new house. It is so nice to be by ourselves with the children, for they like to run about a lot, and in Africa they cannot go outside as they would at home. We are so happy to have them with us for it makes it more homelike. They are enjoying good health, and seem to get along here as well as at home.

The rainy season has begun, which means a little cooler air, but sometimes there is a dry period between rains when it gets quite hot, and usually it is a time when one does not feel very well. At present the river is very low, so low in places that a person can wade across, but usually about the first of August it begins to rise, and rises very quickly. Last Sunday some native fishermen brought a river bass that was easily three or four feet long, and all that a man could carry; they had caught it in a net. Now we usually have bass every day or so if we want it, for it is the season when fish are plentiful.

"The work of the mission goes on as usual; we have a number who have been baptized, but we are having our problems with them for they want to get married and there are no Christian girls to choose from; already several have got married in spite of our exhortations, which has made us feel badly. I am more and more convinced that no matter where one is, the problem is the same, and that in the homeland as here, people will not obey the Word of the Lord. I often think of the words of Samuel to Saul when he disobeyed, 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.'"

# THE SEMINARY AT WORK

The heading of this page may seem to be somewhat out of season, for the Seminary is "closed for the summer". But when the classes cease, the work does not stop; it is merely that the scene is shifted to many different points over a wide area, where our men are preaching the Word as these pages record. Read what they are doing and give thanks to God for them and for this school, remembering that we are entirely dependent for our upkeep on the liberality of God's stewards. In respect to this work we would lay on the minds of our readers the apostolic admonition: "And to communicate forget not". (Hebrews 13:16).

## Good News From the North

The following letters contain great cause for rejoicing. The first is from Mr. W. Russell Slade, a first year student of the Seminary who, with his brother, Mr. H. C. Slade, the Pastor of the Timmins Church, has been starting work in Kapuskasing, as he explains in the following words:

"In such a time of universal, spiritual drought, the 'drops' of blessing are sufficient to make one's heart rejoice and be glad in reassurance that God is still performing the miracle of miracles, and that He is still in command. The refreshing results of our campaign in Kapuskasing more than compensated for the dark outlook at the beginning, and the many discouragements throughout its duration. Satan seemed to have closed every door excepting the one opened up for the campaign to begin. What professing Christians there were, had joined half-hearted forces with churches which, from my personal knowledge, preach not the gospel of Jesus Christ; the remaining population either attend the Roman Catholic Church or stay at home. A combined atmosphere of self-satisfaction, industry, and sport, pervades this 'model town of the North'.

"Our tent was pitched back of the newly-built Orange Hall, where we held our services, and having been granted use of its kitchen for preparation of meals, nothing was left to be desired in that line. My brother arrived from Timmins on Monday, July 27th, I having preceded him by a few days, to advertise from house to house. The first night five adults and twenty-two children heard the simple gospel given forth with no uncertain sound. Gradually interest among the adults increased as we visited, and as they gained confidence in these strangers about whom they had known nothing. One big feature, brought about by the gift of two Christian gentlemen in Southern Ontario, whose generosity made the campaign possible, was the fact that no collections were taken at any meeting—an unusual thing in their religious experience.

"The break seemed to come at an open-air service held Saturday night preceding the wind-up, when many listened intently to the speakers, and God's presence was very near. Nearly seventy turned out Sunday night, August 9th, to hear the last message from Luke 16:26—'Where are the dead?' At the beginning of the service it appeared God was going to bare His arm. At the close, about twelve requests for prayer were asked, and six people took their stand for Christ. One of these was a Catholic, the father of a family. Following the service, a number openly expressed desire for a continuation of the services; one woman, an Anglican, offered, free, a room as her share in the work. The Lord was thus opening other doors.

"The Church in Timmins immediately caught the vision and saw the need. Along with their prayers, of which we were aware throughout the campaign, they have granted financial assistance. We ask a continuation of your prayers, especially for the young converts to whom Satan will give no easy time, and that our labours for His Kingdom may be fruitful."

We are confident that the brethren who invested the sum of money referred to in Mr. Slade's letter will be far more pleased with the returns on their investment in Kapuskasing than they would have been had they allowed it to remain in the bank, or put it out in mortgages.

The second letter is from Pastor J. R. Armstrong, who for the past month has been opening up a new field at Kirkland Lake. Last week this city was the scene of a terrible disaster when the lives of three miners, who were working thousands of feet below the surface, were crushed out by thousands of tons of sliding rock. Brother Armstrong has been ministering to men who work in these dangerous places. His letter, in part, follows:

"Dear Mr. Whitcombe:

Our open air meetings have been good for the most part. I had had practically no experience in the open air before, so I found it very hard at first, but I find it much easier now and the people listen much better. We have had one each Saturday night and again on Sunday night. Last Saturday night we distributed over 250 bills at the open air meeting and each one of them contained a Gospel message. We have noticed that there are some who came back almost every night. The prayer meetings have been times of real blessing. We have been much encouraged in the way in which God has answered prayer. Our requests have been very definite and each week we have gone back over former requests to see how God has answered. This week we are having two mid-week meetings.

To my mind the future of the work looks very bright. There are a great many people up here who feel that no one cares, and they seem to be anxious for something that will give them hope. In the open air it is surprising how many folk show a real interest. My first reaction was to feel a certain sense of helplessness, but the Lord has undertaken for me in my own soul.

Now there is a statement of Mr. Slade's which you quoted to me, and that is: THIS WORK MUST GO ON. I should like to emphasize that. There are folk here who are making sacrifices for the sake of this work, and there are others whose faith would almost be destroyed if anything should happen to this effort. There will have to be a man here at once. I believe that God has started this work, so we must not even wait until we know how he will be supported. I shall do what I can about that before leaving here, and possibly something can be done in my own churches, though that would be limited.

Trusting that the Lord will lead you in connection with plans for this work, I am, Yours sincerely,

—J. R. Armstrong."

Thus far, the work in Kirkland Lake has been financed by the gift of one person. Possibly some one who reads this article has by far-sighted investment shared in the enormous returns that some of these fabulously wealthy mines have paid and are still paying. May we urge on such an one his or her responsibility to the spiritual needs of these miners, as well as point out to them that, invested in the preaching of the Gospel, their money will bring far larger and far more satisfying returns than stocks and bonds possibly could do! To all of our readers we would emphasize what both these letters make clear—the great need of earnest, continual prayer for the salvation of souls, and the Divine blessing on the preaching of the Word.

—W. S. W.

### The Seminary French Classes

Coming unexpectedly into one of the French Classes at the Seminary last year, I was very pleasantly surprised to hear one of the senior students making a speech in French. Although the speech was not read from a manuscript, it was very well done, and would have been understood anywhere in France or in Quebec. Such is the kind of work that is being accomplished in the French Department of the Seminary, and for it we give thanks to God, believing as we do, that it is His way of opening up a door to that great and needy field, French Canada.

It is not to be supposed that the student to whom I refer above is at the present time so proficient in French as to be capable of taking complete charge of a French-speaking church, but there are a number of our causes situated in communities which are partly French, and in such places men with a similar knowledge of French could do very effective personal work among the "Canadiens", and with further experience would be able to preach to them in their mother tongue. Of this sort are almost all the towns in Northern Ontario, in particular the three towns, which we have mentioned elsewhere on this page, viz., Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake, and Timmins, which latter city has a French-Canadian population numbering 6,000.

The task of learning to speak a foreign language is not an insuperable one for a young person of ordinary intelligence and average perseverance. Many of our men in public life in Canada have found a knowledge of both the official languages of this Dominion important enough to drive them, even when advanced in years, to devote themselves to a study of the second tongue. Last night I listened by radio to the premier-elect of Quebec make his first statement after the election was conceded to his party. First, he spoke in French at some length, then very briefly in English, slowly, laboriously feeling for each word before he uttered it, but in a way, nevertheless, that was quite intelligible to English ears. Business men in mixed communities find it expedient, if not necessary, to acquire a working knowledge of the second language. Dare we, who are put in trust with the most precious commodity of all, the Unsearchable Riches of Christ, do less than these men who are engaged in business and politics?

But will our French-Canadian Catholic neighbours listen to the preaching of the Gospel? Most assuredly they will. My own experience in the North convinces me of that. I think of the dozen and more Gospels of John in French that I gave away to French people in Noranda who came forward at the close of our open air meeting to receive them. I think of the French Protestant community of which these pages spoke a few weeks ago. And Mr. Buhler, our teacher of French, who is now working in Northern Ontario writes concerning his experience with the French-Canadians:

"The people whom I have already visited have been receptive enough, have listened to what I had to say, and a number of their own accord have asked me to come again. In two houses I had prayer and reading of the Scripture at the end of my visit. Evidently one never knows how far he gets with these "Canadiens" for they do not express their mind, having fear I suppose, of committing themselves. They listen patiently and say nothing; it is like talking to fish, and the conversation is reduced to a monologue, a real sermon. Others, however, in the minority, are interested enough to ask questions about the Bible and about their religion. In short, despite the discouragements, I am happy

in this work which is full of the unexpected, as well as of opportunities to sow the good seed."

This is surely a good hearing, and when one remembers that 28.14 per cent. of the total population of Canada is French (1931 census) one is almost astounded at the size of the field and the need of workers.

In respect to the teaching of this language we are indeed fortunate in having an advantage that is generally found only in Universities—the services of a teacher of French who is himself French. So far as I know there is not a High School even in Toronto, which prides itself on its high standards, which can match our French Department in this respect. Mr. Buhler has completed his third year as teacher of French, and while fulfilling the double rôle of student and professor, has won a large place in the hearts of all students as well as faculty. As a teacher he has done excellent work, and few, if any other students in the entire history of the school, have surpassed his academic record.

Since the aim of these classes is to train men to preach in French, the emphasis is placed on the spoken language. Next year we hope to have four classes, in all of which the study of the language from the point of view of grammar and of style, oral reading in class, the study of assigned portions at home, together with dictation, memorization, and translation, will be included in the programme.

Our greatest need in the French Department at the present time is adequate prizes to offer the students. Several years ago we wrote in the Calendar:

"A substantial prize will be given to the student who makes the greatest progress in the language during the year."

That promise has been filled only in part: the prizes have been given, but they have not been "substantial". Were we in a position at the beginning of this year to offer several cash prizes of from \$15 to \$25 each, it would go a long way toward solving that—

"Eternal lack of pence which troubles public men"

and which is known in its acutest forms to students for the ministry. Such a prize would be of great practical help to some needy students, and at the same time it would be a real incentive to still greater efforts in class. And in view of the fact that the students who take French do so of their own free will in addition to their regular work, since the subject is not required for graduation, such zeal, we believe, is worthy of special recognition and encouragement. We should be glad to hear from any of our readers who understand the need of the French Work and who could help to further it in this practical way.—W.S.W.

**REMEMBER TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY**

**REMEMBER IT IN YOUR PRAYERS**

**REMEMBER IT IN YOUR WILL**

**REMEMBER IT NOW.**

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

REV. WILLIAM J. JONES, EDITOR

Vol. 11 3rd Quarter Lesson 35 August 30th, 1936

### PREACHING AT THE TEMPLE GATE

Lesson Text: Jeremiah, Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Golden Text: "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation."—Jeremiah 10:10.

Bible School Reading: Jeremiah, Chapter 10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Ex. 20:18-26; Tuesday—Is. 40:18-26; Wednesday—Is. 44:9-17; Thursday—I Thess. 1:2-9; Friday—Rom. 9:1-13; Saturday—Jer. 31:31-34.

### EXPOSITION

The section of the Book we study to-day was written or uttered probably during the early years of the reign of King Jehoiakim. It is the longer discourse related to the shorter of Chapter 26. The prophecy was spoken when Jeremiah resided in Jerusalem, and was given near one of the inner gates of the temple where the Prophet commanded a larger audience, during one of the feasts, most probably.

Chapter 7:1-7 is Jehovah's appeal for reform and His gracious promise. Foolish Judah regarded the temple as a fetish or charm (4), neglecting the common duties of the moral law, some of the provisions of the merciful civil law (Ex. 22:21, 22), and the true worship of Jehovah (5, 6). For God's promise of the land (7), see note Is. 49:18.

In vs. 8-15 we see the perils of ritualistic worship. Similar moral conditions (8) prevailed in the time of Isaiah (59:1-8), but Jehovah expresses surprise at the violations of the Decalogue (9), and the audacity of the people in going to the temple to worship, as if that sort of worship delivered them, as if the temple were a protection. Jeremiah exposes their intent "that ye may do" (10), and points out that they robbed God of true worship in making the temple a sort of cave of retreat (11). But Jehovah saw their nefariousness, and shattered their confidence in the material temple. The temple, like that of Shiloh (Judges 18:31); I Sam. 1:4; 4:3) would be destroyed (12). They had not heeded Jehovah's incessant, zealous solicitude in warning them, therefore (14) the fate of the temple must follow, and (15) captivity, even as Ephraim had been captured.

Vs. 16-20 show the hopelessness of Judah. So deep were their idolatrous sins that the Prophet is restrained from praying for them (16; cf. 11:14; 14:11), he who was a man of prayer (14:19-22; 18:20). Their idolatry was public (17), and of such a social character that the whole family, all ages, and the poorest at that, served the Babylonian Ash-taroth (18)—sin in the vertical and the horizontal. Even the whole creation and nature suffered in punishment for their sins (20).

The sins of formalistic worship (21-28). Vs. 21-23 (cf. note Is. 58:1-9) does not prohibit sacrifice, else our Lord Jesus would have suffered in vain. It simply decries false sacrifice. The imperativeness of sacrifice is seen in Ex. 20:24; Deut. 12:5; Jer. 17:20; 27:19; 33:10-13; Heb. 9:22. Here is a rhetorical negative (cf. Deut. 5:3) for emphasis.

Tophet the place of some of their sins (as well as the temple (30) will be the place of punishment (29; 8:3). Desecrations of all sorts will be inflicted by the invader upon the nobility and upper classes in their graves (8:1).

In 4-7, lessons from natural life are seen. A fallen, a lost man recovers himself (4); birds in the springtime return by instinct (7), why not Israel to the Lord? God under the figure of Witness and Judge answers His own question (6).

Leaders (8-12) also are derelict. Prophets and Priests who gave instruction in the Law, made false interpretations, and even published them, going as far as to treat Jeremiah contemptuously (8).

Further pictures of judgment (13-22). Transgression of the Law meant punishment (13) even for country people who are pictured as seeking shelter in fortified cities (14). But the invader comes swiftly with his strong war horses, with his army like that of invading serpents which cannot be charmed (17). Sensitive Jeremiah is touched with his people's sorrow (18), even hearing prophetically their voice in exile as they complain that Jehovah was in Zion, in the temple,

why did they suffer? God answers that it is for their idolatry. What a dismal wail is the answer of the people (20) in the form of a proverb, that the harvest and even the time of the summer fruit are ended and they are lost.

In 9:1 is found the climax of the mourning of the prophet—as intense as that of Paul in Rom. 9:1, 2. The prophet would fain escape from the wickedness of Jerusalem in a caravan-serai or inn (2). Lying, mutual suspicion, deceit (3-6) God finds in Judah, yet for all that He desires their purification (7-a). But their evil is so great (7-b) that He must visit them with retribution (9). The details of that visitation are given in vs. 10-16. Drought (10), desolation even in Jerusalem (11), and bitterness (15) as well as exile (16) will be theirs. The wise men of the nation cannot or dare not answer Jeremiah's question (12), so God answers it repeating the charge of defection from the Law, stubbornness, and idolatry (13, 14).

A more detailed and varied description of the visitation is given in 17-22. The Oriental professional mourning women with their cunning devices intensify the impression of the extent of the ruin of the land (17). Indeed, they are called upon to accentuate this impression (2), for pestilence as death increases the horrors by cutting off children and young men from active life.

Jehovah alone is to be glorified and that by those who are truly, spiritually cleansed (circumcised). God is merciful, just, and righteous in all His attributes (23, 24).

In Chapter 10, vs. 1-5, the emptiness of idolatry is described, particularly the religious ("ways") of the heathen. What scorn, what sublime irony inheres in the Prophet's picturing of the feebleness of an idol, its dwelling like a scarecrow among cucumbers (as one ancient writing puts it).

In contrast, the greatness of God is seen in vs. 6-16. What a lofty view of the Creator we have here! To Him appertains or belongs the fear of men (7), for the instruction of idols is a stock or wooden knowledge. He is the true God. Proofs of His greatness are seen (12), His wisdom in creation (cf. Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:16). He, the Portion of Jacob, is just such a God as would care for such an one as Jacob.

The exilic theme returns (19-22) with its graphic portrayal of the suddenness of invasion. The few bundles of necessities must be snatched from the ground quickly ere the siege come (17). The Prophet speaks for the nation in vs. 19; pictures the woeful scene of a nomadic people's devastated tent homes; and places the blame of the exile upon the brutish shepherds or leaders (21).

The section closes with remarkable words of the inability of man (23), the justness of chastisement (24), and holy wrath at the heathen's exceeding the commission to punish Judah (25).

### APPLICATION

From Chapter 7, we may learn the following lessons: To go where the crowds of unsaved are, and to take care that we ourselves are spiritually in a high and elevated position by the grace of God (vs. 2). In vs. 4 we see the folly of externals in religion, and the truth that the true temple is the Spirit-filled believer (I Cor. 6:19). Punishment is proportionate to guilt, as seen from vs. 31, ff.

The Christian family is seen in counterpart in the picture of the heathen family (7:18, ff.). How family worship, united adoration of the Lord ought to characterize our homes! How true literature, not that from the false pens of unbelieving, heretical leaders (8:8) should reach our people! For God can as surely give up a people, a body of believers, an individual, as He gave up Judah (7:16). The tent of a church may be overthrown (10:20), its candlestick removed (Rev. 2:5) because of sin.

The folly of the myriad schemes to alleviate the troubles of the world to-day is exemplified in principle in the balm of Gilead (8:22). Individually, too, we must all turn to the Great Physician for healing of soul. For religion alone (9:13) is the cure for moral and social ill.

The believer must learn correction or chastening (10:23, 24) for its goal or aim is the finding of God (10:18). He must learn submission, too (10:19), as did Jeremiah when his complaint (19-a) turned to glad submission (19-b). But ever must the Christian realize that salvation is purely of grace, that the unsaved man is totally unable to walk in the way of the Lord (10:23). And ever must he know that the foes of righteousness can be and must be the object of perfect hatred (10:25). Only then can the principle of vicariousness (note its application in the work of Christ) be exemplified (8:21) as it was in Jeremiah the soul-winner.

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

REV. WILLIAM J. JONES, EDITOR

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### THE DIVINE COVENANT

Lesson Text: Jeremiah, Chapters 11, 12, 13.

**Golden Text:** "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"—Jeremiah 12:5.

Bible School Reading: Jeremiah 12.

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS:** Monday—Is. 63:1-14; Tuesday—Is. 53; Wednesday—Ps. 139:1-12; Thursday—Is. 5:1-7; Friday—Is. 66:18-24; Saturday—Ps. 67.

### EXPOSITION

The ancient covenant of God with Israel is discussed in 11:1-5. Most of the lesson to-day can be dated probably early in the reign of Jehoiakim. The agreement (2), its promises, and its conditions (4) are discussed as Jehovah speaks to Jeremiah and his disciples. In v. 3 is a direct reference to Deuteronomy (e.g. 27:26) the very book which had been found in the Temple five years after the call of Jeremiah. At least, Deuteronomy (if not the Pentateuch) was in that Book of the Law, hence the people who had lived in the comparatively quiet and peaceful and successful reign of Josiah had read the Book. However, in spite of their lapse into idolatry they applied its promises to themselves (with disastrous results, not the least of which was their neglect of the moral and spiritual aspect of the Law) only to be embittered by the exile which seemed such a contradiction of those promises. An allusion to the reaffirmation of the Covenant in the days of Josiah is found in this section, perhaps (cf. II. Kings 23:3).

That the Covenant had been given at the time of the Exodus for the purpose of making the people like Himself, a design oft-repeated in the Old Testament (Ezek. 36:28), did not deter Israel. But God's oath (Deut. 7:8) stood, so Jeremiah answered for the people, "Amen".

In vs. 6-8 is the record of a prophetic mission of Jeremiah, reminiscent of the Christian mission (Acts 1:8). Reference is made (7) to the pleadings of God of yore (Ex. 15:26), and to the words of the Covenant (Lev. 26:14-43; Deut. 28).

An idolatrous conspiracy against Jehovah is revealed (9-14). Sin is rebellion against God (9), and Judah, themselves, as well as Israel apostatized. Earlier teaching (2:28; 4:6; 6:19; 7:17) is recapitulated in vs. 11-13.

A further picture of Judah's conspiracy is found in vs. 14-17. Once more Jeremiah is forbidden to pray (cf. note 7:16), for God will not listen to their own prayers. Jehovah is surprised that His beloved, Israel with no claim to such a title because of her sins, should be in His holy temple. Their prayers were unheard, their vows and sacrifices could not remove guilt. Under the figure of a green olive tree emblematic of beauty, fruitfulness, utility, and age—all betokening the loving favour of God in His dealings with Israel, the truth of coming invasion is taught by the figure of the tree's being struck by lightning (16).

The plotting of Jeremiah's death is found recorded in vs. 18-23. Jeremiah was innocent of the whole scheming which aimed at his death, the cutting off of his life in its youth, as that of a tree is accomplished in its vigour. But the Prophet told the sovereign God his trouble, to Him who alone knows the heart and the mind of men (20). Other threats follow (21) similar to those imposed upon the apostles in Acts 4:18, so sinister that Jehovah intervened with threats of punishment (22, 23).

The unearthing of the design on the life of the Prophet so arouses him that he questions God regarding the prospering of the wicked, and receives His answer (12:1-6). Because of Jeremiah's belief in the character of God he is convinced that whatever the solution to the problem, it is and must be

reconcilable with the justice or righteousness of the Almighty. He doubts, as had others (Job 21:7; Ps. 37, 73), but he puts his doubts in classic form; occasioned by the machinations of his fellow-townsmen. Impatient at the apparent success of the wicked, Jeremiah is anxious for their punishment and that of all sinners. He would prepare, or separate, them for slaughter (3), for they (the wicked) despise his prophesyings. Really, they speak against God, not Jeremiah (Ps. 73:11).

In proverbial form, Jehovah points out that the Prophet's troubles will be greater, for if he lived in the peacefulness of his early ministry, how would he abide the tortuous thickets of Jordan? His own household would oppress him, calling after him as though he were a thief.

Vs. 7-13 is a section devoted to a pictorial description of the conspiracy against Jehovah for which Judah was to be punished by the nations. Jehovah is the speaker in v. 7, although the language may be tintured with the feelings of Jeremiah towards his home and people. God has cast off His people, literally, delivered them into the palm of her enemies, as one would hold a goblet. The enemies spoken of are those who arose in the midst of the reign of Jehoiakim (II. Kings 24:2). Not without reason did God so punish, for like a lion, they rebelled, therefore Jehovah withheld His love (8). He, under another figure, asks if Judah, a peculiar, a chosen people is not like a bird of prey in her revolting attitude towards Him, but like an oddly-coloured bird in her relation to other nations who will single out her for destruction (cf. Is. 56:9). The same idea as that of v. 9 is given in v. 10—the rulers of Israel despoiled her as shepherd would despoil the work of the vine-dresser. Yet (11) Judah to a man is indifferent to the remonstrations of the Lord, no matter how close the destroying invader is (12). Therefore their harvest will be the result of sin—thorns (13).

But the enemies of Judah will suffer exile for their sins, and will also have opportunity of embracing Judaism (14-17). The evil neighbours of v. 7 are to be exiled (14), but to have the promise of return (15), if they learn the true ways of Israel, the religion of Israel. Peculiar promises of an ancient prophecy are reiterated (cf. Gen. 9:27), but are not to be fulfilled if Jehovah's message is not heard (17).

The symbol of the linen girdle and its meaning are set forth in 13:1-11. Jeremiah was to buy a linen girdle (emblematic of the priestly character of the nation), wear it, keep it unwashed, go to the Euphrates, where in a rocky cleft he was to dig a place for its hiding. After a season he was to return and exhume the now-rotted girdle. Whether the Prophet actually took the long journey to the River Euphrates or to another place; or whether he took the trip to either place symbolically is relatively unimportant. The lesson is this: As a girdle is a thing of beauty and glory, and of necessary usefulness because close to the person of the wearer, so was Israel to Jehovah. But as this girdle was ugly and useless after being hidden for a while, so Israel was useless (11) to Jehovah. She was to be humbled, therefore (9) by exile. The symbol of the hidden girdle represented the humiliation of Judah, the occasion of which was the exile, the cause of which was the religious defection (10).

In vs. 12-14 is set forth the symbol of the wine bottles. Corporately (1-11) Judah was to suffer, but also individually (12-14). All classes of the people (13) will be dazed and befuddled as drunkards. As rolling wine-flagons would collide so by the approaching calamities Judah will be shattered (14). Insolent Judah taunted Jeremiah for the staleness of his figure (12d).

Warnings both to people and rulers (15-19) follow. Humility, giving glory to God by confession and obedience were demanded, else like mountain travelers at twilight, the night of death would fall (15, 16). And captivity for the Lord's flock, much to the sorrow of the weeping prophet, would follow. Even Jehoiakim and Nehushta, the queen-mother were to be captured, with the inhabitants of the remote southernmost parts of the land whose cities were to be blocked with ruins. Off from the crowned heads would come the beautiful coronets, in abasement.

Leaders (20-21) were to blame for the enormity of Judah's sin (22), for the habit of sin (23), therefore as stubble they will be scattered, for they forgot Jehovah (25). They will be ashamed (26) for their unabashed abominations (cf. note

2:24f.) in the open country. Yet there is a flicker of hope, "How long?" (27).

#### APPLICATION

Believers, as well as unbelievers feel the pull of ancestral sins (11:10) and of sin itself which is as treacherous as mountain climbing (13:16), and as inveterate, as inevitable as the Ethiopian's skin. The habit of sin simply depends on the tendency or innate leaning toward sin. Sinful habits build upon sinful instincts. The natural impossibility of becoming righteous, signifies the supernatural character of regenerating grace in the new birth.

Christians may have fruitless lives (13:13) by not watching and praying, but in times of distress God is near them, but not near the truster in false hopes or gods (11:11). Let us not make false professions with the lips, mouth nor with the heart [our whole being] (12:2).

No matter if persecution come from religious people like the priests who distressed Jeremiah (12:20) let us speak to the Lord. Let them intimidate, endeavour to stifle our message by threats to the physical or the material. Our duty is to proclaim the gospel, no matter what objections to the character of that message or the method or temperament of the one witnessing may be.

Times of doubt will come, against which holiness of life (12:3-a) or rectitude are deterrents. Let us face doubt, for it is not sin (Lk. 1:1-4) in itself, only when persisted in, in the face of truth. God will reason (12:1) with us, for doubt is error of the mind, the seat of sin. Jeremiah in his doubt takes the short-time view, the external judgment, the this-worldly slant on the problem of the prosperity of the wicked.

#### IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE!

The following story is a real "thriller", at least to the writer of this note, for he has seen the window in the little church in Brussels, where every day the French and Flemish Bibles are open to the view of the passers-by, and he has spoken in French (quel français!) at the open air meetings to which Pastor Gross refers. The story is translated from "Le

Lien Fraternel"; the monthly organ of the Evangelical French Baptist Churches, a splendid paper that combines sound doctrine and excellent French. We commend this little periodical to those who are interested in French, and we should be glad to send a copy of it to those who will send us a three-cent stamp to cover the cost of mailing. This should appeal especially to our young people who study French in the High Schools. Mr. Gross, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Brussels, Belgium, writes as follows:

"We have had the joy, recently, of receiving three new members by baptism. Two of them are the direct fruits of the constant appeal given by the window of our local meeting-place. Many have read the Bibles in French and in Flemish, which are open there every day; and after having read an instant, have passed on their way, indifferent. Mr. G., however, accepted the invitation there addressed to him and came in. It was at a time of trial, when his beloved wife was in a clinic, ready to undergo a very serious operation.

"We talked to him sympathetically and hastened to visit the one who was sick. She was very grateful, and attributed to the prayer that we offered at her bedside a restful night, the best which she had had. We did not deny it; rather, blessed be God for the power of prayer! Led by the Lord in a wonderful way, which would be too long to tell here, the eyes of the husband and wife were opened to the light and the joy of the Gospel. They each one bought a Bible, and its assiduous reading revealed to them the love of God in Christ and the obedience which He asks. The act which took place on Wednesday was the public avowal of their new-found faith.

"The day was truly an answer to our prayers. Up to this time we have been forced to hold our baptismal services at a church building other than our own. After years of waiting God put it into the heart of one of our members, who was baptized just last year—the fruit of our open air meetings—to offer to us the initial gift that made it possible for us to have a baptistery of our own.

"Thus it was a blessed time, that evening when we first had the use of a baptistery in our own church building. To God be all the glory, and we give thanks to all for the prayers with which we feel that we are surrounded!"

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