

# 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 ATTITUDE THAT CALLS THE DEATH OF CHRIST A BLUNDER

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening August 30th, 1936

(Stenographically Reported)

"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—Galatians 2:21.

### Prayer before the Sermon

O Lord, we thank Thee that Thou dost come near to us in the Person of Thy Son. Because men could not ascend into heaven, Thou didst come down to earth, and walk among men, coming within the reach of their understanding, and touching them with Thy life-giving power. We thank Thee that Thou art still the same; for though Thou hast ascended into heaven, though Thou dost sit upon the right hand of God, making intercession for us, Thou hast sent to us the Holy Spirit Who comes in all the fulness of divine power, ready still to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sin, to heal all our moral ills.

We thank Thee, O Lord, that Jesus Christ has come, and that many of us know He has come; that He has not passed us by, for we have touched Him, and, touching Him, we have been healed. We pray that in this congregation this evening there may be a sense of Thy presence. We have no power to reach the hearts of men, no skill to deal with wounded spirits; nor have we the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary. We are impotent in the presence of human need, and without Thee we can do nothing. But Thou hast promised that where Thy people are assembled, as we are assembled to-night in the name of the Lord Jesus, that Thou wouldst be in our midst. We have proved in this place on countless occasions the efficacy of Thy gospel, the adequacy of the gospel message to meet every possible human requirement. May we be made aware in this service that the Spirit of God has come to us, to open our understandings to Thy truth, and to open the gospel to our understanding.

Many a time hast Thou met with us here in a peculiar way. Thou hast discovered men who were hiding even from themselves, as well as from Thee. Thou hast made them to understand themselves, and to know their need of Thee; and hast brought them in humble penitence to the cross. We thank Thee for the number now in Thy presence who have met Thee in this place, who within these walls, by Thine abounding grace, have found salvation. O Lord, let this night also be to every one of us one of grace! May those who are Thy people be more firmly established in the truth of Christ. How much we need this establishment in days like these, when men are carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, by cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Help us to know Christ

in such a way that we may be immune to these attacks; that we may be so rooted and built up in Him, and established in Him as we have been taught, that none of these winds of doctrine can even shake us. We thank Thee for many whom Thou art making to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we all, O Lord, be planted in the courts of the Lord, and flourish in the house of our God.

Find out the stranger who may be with us this evening, who has dropped into this service perhaps without thought of meeting Thee. Thou hast met many such here. Whatever else may be accomplished in this service, may everyone within these walls be made aware of the divine presence. Lord, save us every one. Bless us with the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow thereto.

Nor do we pray for ourselves alone. We think of this troubled world with all its perplexities. Often when we try to pray we do not know how to pray, nor what to request of Thee. The problems of our day are beyond human skill. We see on every hand the bankruptcy of human wisdom—in business, in church, in state, men are at their wit's end. Help us to turn our thoughts to Thee, and to seek the wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable.

To this end we pray Thee to bless the country in which we live, and the Empire to which we belong. Sometimes we are greatly troubled; but as Thou hast blessed us hitherto, bless us still. Let Thy hand be upon His Majesty the King, and all his counsellors both in the United Kingdom, and in the Commonwealths of the Empire. Lord, give judgment and discretion and courage in the hour of danger, and let us be Thine instruments to serve the peace of the world. We pray Thee to restrain those who would do evil; scatter Thou the people who delight in war. We pray for all the nations of the earth, standing at arms, in fear of each other. We lift up our eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help; our help cometh from the Lord Who made heaven and earth. Regard this earth, we beseech Thee, the work of Thy hand, and Thy people, the sheep of Thy pasture; and let the blessing of the Lord our God rest upon this world to-day.

Lord, direct us now in our thought. May this service contribute something to the glory of Thy name, by furthering the interests of the souls of men. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The error with which the Apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, deals in this epistle is neither exclusively ancient nor modern, but both. It is an error that is common to humankind. Men have always endeavoured, from the days of Cain until now, to make a religion of their own, devised out of their own heart. Man is ever unwilling to acknowledge his impotence, his spiritual bankruptcy; and persists in endeavouring to save himself. It was to that folly the Apostle Paul objected, and against that in this epistle he argues. He insists that nothing can be added to the value of the work of Christ, that salvation is wholly an act of sovereign grace in which there is not an infinitesimal element of human merit. It is of grace, of pure grace, of grace alone.

I suppose there is no heresy more prevalent than that which teaches salvation is of works. When men openly deny the gospel, it is not difficult to deal with them as the opponents of the Christian revelation. But when men profess to accept it, and then dilute it by an admixture of that which is human, the error is of such a subtle character that even men of the calibre of Barnabas, the son of consolation, may sometimes be carried away by the plausibilities of a proposed mixture of grace and works. I believe we can never find a sure foundation for faith—faith that is fixed and unwavering—until we are enabled clearly to apprehend that cardinal principle of the whole Christian revelation, that God does it all, and we do nothing but acquiesce in the divine programme, and receive salvation as the free gift of His boundless grace.

If you would know the meaning of logic, if you would know how to argue a case, study the Word of God. Truth never contradicts itself. Truth is never injured by discussion. It always ultimately prevails. And I know nothing comparable to the epistles of Paul to the Romans and to the Galatians for sheer—how shall I put it, irrefutable reason. There is absolutely no escape from the conclusions of this inspired logic. The argument marches like an invincible army to its goal, and is utterly resistless.

Here is a striking and challenging statement. Paul says to these Judaizers of Galatia, "If it were possible for righteousness to come by the law, if it had been possible for a man by his own effort to attain to the divine standard of righteousness, and so fit himself for the presence of God, then Christ is dead in vain." The Incarnation, with all its implications, the long ages of prophetic preparation culminating in Bethlehem, in the cross, and the empty grave, the entrance of the great High Priest into heaven itself, not with blood of others, but with His own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us, was all a colossal blunder; it was unnecessary. Men could have saved themselves if righteousness could come by the law and therefore it was entirely unnecessary that Christ should have died. So that what seems to be a very simple matter becomes a problem of serious import in the light of this inspired reasoner: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

#### I.

Let me begin by saying that THE DEATH OF CHRIST, the fact that the Son of God died by divine appointment, that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures", RINGS THE DEATH KNELL OF ALL HOPE OF SALVATION BY HUMAN EFFORT. That cross on the hill proclaims for ever the impossibility of a man's saving himself. If he could have done so, it had never been there.

The death of Christ argues an obligation utterly beyond human power to discharge, an obligation to the law of God. And never forget that the law of God is but a transcript of His own nature. The law of God is not, in any sense, a system of arbitrary enactments which may be repealed or amended with the passing of time. The laws of God are but the radiations of His own nature. Whether you observe them in operation in nature, or in the moral realm, they are part of God; and are as unchangeable, inflexible, inexorable, as is the nature of God Himself.

We have all fallen under the condemnation of that law. We have done violence to it. We have outraged, not only the constitution of things, but the very nature of God Himself; and it has made us subject to an obligation which is so great that it is not within human power to meet it. We are all like a man who owes millions, countless millions, and has no power to earn even a dollar to offer on account. That is the charge of the gospel, that righteousness cannot come by the law in respect to the transgressions that are past, the sins of our yesterdays, the multiplied obligations of the years. Our transgressions have piled up such a bill against us in the divine ledger, that we are impotent to liquidate the debt. We have no resources upon which to draw. Our righteousness is of no value in this matter. If it had been, God would not have provided some other way, but would have left us to pay our own debts, to meet by our own efforts the obligations we had incurred.

The cross of Christ proclaims the impossibility of any one of us attaining to the divine standard of righteousness. We may measure ourselves with each other and pass muster. We may easily find people who are shorter in moral stature than ourselves. It is not difficult to find comfort in that direction. I suppose we have all fallen into that error at some time, of thinking, while I am not as good as some, I am not as bad as others. You must be a very bad man if you cannot find someone worse; and very low down in the scale if you cannot find someone lower. But no matter where you look, you cannot find in this world a righteous man. The best man now living, or who ever did live, did never attain to God's standard, to the divine requirement, to the divine ideal, to that which was resident in the mind of the Eternal when He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He had not such an one as you in mind then. He had not such a fragment of manhood as any one of us in His mind or thought when He said, "Let us make man." His conception was, and is, far beyond the reach of our utmost stature. Nor can we, morally, by taking thought, add one cubit to our stature. If we could, Christ had not come: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Do you not see that the cross of Christ declares it to be impossible for men to achieve the moral objective which is indispensable to salvation? There is no hitchhiking to heaven. You cannot walk part of the way, and ride the rest. You cannot half save yourself by human effort, and have your poor efforts supplemented by divine grace. There is no entrance to heaven that way. Had it been possible for any one of us to pay the debt of the past, to lift ourselves in the present to the standard of the Divine, and then to continue on that level, and by our own efforts at last to press through the gates of pearl, to stand without fault before the throne of God—if that had been humanly possible, Jesus Christ would never have come down from above. That is the argu-

ment of our text: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

## II.

Let us go farther, and say that THE DEATH OF CHRIST IMPLIES A MOST SEVERE INDICTMENT OF THAT HUMAN PRESUMPTION WHICH ATTEMPTS, BY THE POWER OF THE HUMAN WILL, TO DO THAT WHICH ONLY GOD CAN DO—the man who says he can save himself is arrogating to himself a divine prerogative, and presumes to set himself up as one who has no need of God, of His mercy, or His grace. "Let me alone", he says, "I will make myself worthy." We do not need to be outrageous, flagrant sinners to offer insult to Deity. We do so when we reject God's way of salvation. I say, the death of Christ is an indictment of human presumption in attempting to do what only God can do.

That effort to save yourself *challenges the accuracy of the divine account*. It is like going to pay a bill of some vast amount with the smallest of coins—and that, a counterfeit. It is about as useless as putting a button on the collection plate! We get them sometimes—but the bank will not take them. There are some people who put buttons in the collection plate, morally, thinking they are making a contribution to the divine exchequer—their tears and their efforts—and think God should be complimented by it. What if you try it on the merchant when he renders you his account? He will push it back across the counter and say, "My account is correct. My books are accurately kept; you owe me so much."

Do you know how much you owe? Such a bill as only an Incarnate God can pay. So much that it taxes the resources of Deity to blot out your transgressions. How dare you say that by your poor efforts you could accomplish it yourself? Such efforts at self-saving impugn the righteousness of God, as though He had over-estimated your obligation. It impugns His faithfulness, as though He had charged you with something you did not owe. It repudiates His holiness—that is the big word. The *holiness* of God is another word for the *wholeness* of God. You virtually say "When He said, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die', that did not apply to me! I can save myself!" By such a presumptuous attitude do men challenge the divine economy everywhere.

"But we live in a day when the gospel needs some modification", someone says. President Roosevelt is not the only one who has sought to profit himself, according to reports, by a so-called "brain trust". The church has been cursed by a "brain trust". Our professors have discovered that the gospel is somewhat antiquated, that it needs some amendments and deletions, some adjustment to modern requirements and modern thought. Modern thought! What is that? Very often it is not thought at all. Some people think they think who do not think! But at the best, what is our thought compared with God's? *Thus a man, by his own efforts, substitutes his temporal reflection and his own poor appraisals of moral values, for the eternal thought of God!*

Jesus Christ died at a place called Calvary, at a particular point of time: "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But that was only the culmination of an eternal plan. The death of Christ was the climax of God's long

thought. What is science doing to-day? Trying to find a key with which to read in nature the thought of God. Nature has not changed. No man of science says it has. He has his theories, and would project us through countless millions of years into the past. We cannot argue with him, because we were not there. We can neither prove nor disprove, but merely smile at his credulity and hold fast our faith. But at best, that is all that man can do. I have never heard of a man so vain, so daring, so presumptuous, as to propose to reconstitute the physical universe. We have new means of developing what God has put there, and we are constantly making new discoveries of things that were hidden there from the foundation of the world; but the sun and the moon and the stars go on their way, and this physical universe, held together by ten thousand interacting laws, continues on its way—and there is no human power that can change it. The best we can do is to learn how to accommodate ourselves to the forces which operate in nature, which we call natural law, as laws of electricity, light, heat, and so on.

The revelation of the gospel is that God's way of saving men antedates the material universe. God thought it out first, and has never changed His mind. The death of Christ was, I say, the culmination of God's long thought of redemption.

"Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares;  
While His eternal thought moves on  
His undisturbed affairs."

So the infinitely Wise and Good and Great thought out a way of salvation of which the death of Christ was the very centre, and climax.

But some little student who has attended college three or four years thinks he is competent to amend the gospel! Is it not really absurd? The religious modernist is at best a poor actor in a religious burlesque. Men like Fosdick, Glover, and, locally, Salem Bland, and hosts of others who presume to revise and amend God's eternal plan must appear to the view of angels as religious clowns. No wonder it is written in respect to such human folly, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh". Had salvation by human power been possible, Christ would not have come: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

How shall I put it? The man who tries to save himself substitutes for the value of the death of Christ, his own effort; and *puts an estimate upon the moral value of his effort which would make it equal—dare I say it?—with the eternal righteousness liquid in the blood of Christ*. If there had been any other way of balancing the books, any other way by which God could have been just and yet the Justifier of men who were sinners than by sending His only begotten Son into the world, surely He would not have devised such other means that His banished should not be expelled from Him.

I have never been able to understand the significance of the prayer of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, though I have thought of it much. You remember when the shadows gathered about Him, and the weight of the world's iniquity bowed Him down, and He was moving into that outer darkness which lies behind the back of God, where by and by He would utter the cry of a forsaken soul, even as that darkness was impending, and he was approaching the hour of his agony, He said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:

nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Did He utter that prayer partly for our advantage? At the grave of Lazarus He said He prayed specifically for those who heard Him: "I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Did He pray not only to the Father, but, praying to Him, and knowing there could be but one answer, did He say, "Father, if it be possible in the wisdom, in the omniscience, of God, that there be some other way by which the world can be saved than for Me to take the cup of damnation and drink it dry, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."

"Death and the curse were in our cup;  
O Christ, 'twas full for Thee!  
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop;  
'Tis empty now for me:  
That bitter cup—love drank it up;  
Now blessing's draught for me!"

I must point this out further: *If it were possible for righteousness to come by the law, if it were possible for a man to save himself, he would, by so doing, challenge the divine supremacy.* He would do what only God could do, and there would be, not one God, but many gods. It was God Who made man in His own image and likeness. It was sin that marred that image. And if it were possible for a man to remake himself into the image of God, he would, by so doing, proclaim himself to be equal with God. He would do what only God could do. You see therefore that our unbelief, our presumptuous elaborations of new schemes of religion, new methods of salvation, are an attack upon the divine supremacy. They impugn the sovereignty and self-sufficiency of God. God will be God, and therefore salvation must be of grace. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

### III.

This final word. SURELY THE DEATH OF CHRIST PROCLAIMS THE ADEQUACY OF THE MEANS OF SALVATION DIVINELY PROVIDED. Let us never forget that *the death of Christ was no accident.* Peter said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God": "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He Himself said to the disciples on the Emmaus road, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Jesus Christ was born to die. He came to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." It was God's plan. And if it was God's plan, it was not in vain. God never did anything in vain. God never failed in anything: If once we postulate that, that the Incarnation, with all its issues, the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, that parenthesis in the eternal existence of God Himself when He stooped to man, and died the Just for the unjust—we shall know that He derives His supreme, His chief revenue of glory from the work of Christ:

"God, in the Person of His Son  
Hath all His mightiest works outdone."

May I reverently say that the divine investment in saving a bankrupt world will pay dividends of glory to God forevermore.

There is one way of salvation, then, and that is by the way of the blood. What is faith? Sometimes we try to analyze it. Some people endeavour to put their faith under a microscope, and to resolve it into its elements. What is faith? You cannot take out your sight. You know you have sight only by the realization of objective truth. You apprehend things outside of yourself. That is the way the man of old knew he had sight, when first he saw men as trees walking, and by and by saw all men clearly. What is faith? It is a recognition of God as God. Faith is that exercise of an enlightened soul which differentiates God from everything and everybody else, which recognizes God in Jesus Christ. He is God! Very well, He is God—the same God Who set the sun in the heavens; the same God that made the moon to rule by night; the same God who made the stars also. Said the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." That is the kind of God we need, the One Who made heaven and earth. Therefore He can save everybody in earth to heaven if He wills: but no one else can help us.

What is faith? The soul's acquiescence in the divine plan. Did you ever receive a bill you were half inclined to dispute? You did not think it was as much as that, but the merchant said, "That is a transcription of my book". If you are a good citizen you will say, "I agree to accept it as rendered." What is faith? An acceptance of God's account, agreement with the divine judgment that you are a hopeless bankrupt, that you owe so much you cannot possibly pay.

What else? You must look to Jesus Christ as the Chancellor of Heaven's exchequer, as the Heir of all things, Who counted down the ruby drops and paid the debt you cannot pay. The soul's acquiescence in that transaction must issue in a great hallelujah. Faith says, Amen, to God's plan. The debt is paid, and the man is free. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee for this one and only road to heaven. We thank Thee that it is so clearly marked that no one who desires to make the journey need mistake any other road for the King's highway to Heaven. We thank Thee for the number who are already on the way. If there are any who have been trying to work out a way for themselves, call them back, we pray Thee, from that impossible endeavour, and lead them to simple faith in Him Who died for us all. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

### IN THE SHADOWS

O Thou of purer eyes than to behold  
Uncleanness! Sift my soul, removing all  
Strange thoughts, imaginings fantastical,  
Iniquitous allurements manifold.  
Make it a spiritual ark: abode  
Severely sacred, perfumed, sanctified,  
Wherein the Prince of Purities may abide,—  
The holy and eternal Spirit of God.  
The gross adhesive loathsomeness of sin  
Give me to see. Yet, oh, far more, far more,  
That beautiful purity which the saints adore  
In a consummate paradise within  
The veil,—O Lord, upon my soul bestow  
An earnest of that purity here below.

—David Gray.

## SOUND BIBLICAL PREACHING IN ENGLAND

Were we to judge all the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain by such representatives as have visited Canada, we should assume they were hopelessly modernistic. Such men as Dr. T. Reavely Glover and Rev. L. H. Marshall, seem never to regard the Bible as the word of God. Indeed, in Canada the enemies of Evangelical Christianity have been greatly reinforced and encouraged by members of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. We have always known, however, that large numbers of Baptist ministers in England, and of Baptist churches too, still stand substantially where C. H. Spurgeon stood, in respect to the authority of Scripture, and the doctrines of grace.

From some anonymous friend we have received through the mail a copy of the *Rye Lane Baptist Magazine*, for July, published in the interests of the Rye Lane Baptist Church, London, England. The minister is Rev. Theo. M. Bamber. The magazine contains a sermon by the Pastor, which we judge is rather a summary of a sermon, for it is very short. Nothing could be sounder than this sermon, and so without consulting the author we are venturing to reproduce it immediately following this brief article. We do this especially that our readers may rejoice in the soundness of the message issuing from an old and influential Baptist church in London. But in addition to this, we reproduce an editorial entitled, "The Second Coming", which will speak for itself. We rejoice in such a sentence as this: "We would like to point out to Mr. Spurr that whether the question be an idle one or not, those concerned are seeking to find an answer within the terms of Holy Scripture."

The article referred to is as follows:

"The Rev. F. C. Spurr has been contributing a series of articles to *The Baptist Times* on 'Questions of Life and Religion'. In the issue of 18th June he answers a correspondent who enquires concerning the Second Coming of the Lord. He writes: 'But what am I to say when the subject of discussion is: "When the Lord returns to take away His people in the air, will He take only those who are watching, or all who are saved?" And these good friends have debated that!' Mr. Spurr apparently regards it as an idle question and concluded: 'Why cannot people leave these speculations alone? No answer can possibly be given to these idle questions.'

"We would like to point out to Mr. Spurr that whether the question be an idle one or not those concerned are seeking to find an answer within the terms of Holy Scripture. Mr. Spurr has himself speculated very strongly on 'Spiritism' and of the two subjects we would rather probe the question confronting the Second Adventists than seek to probe a subject which is absolutely condemned in the Word of God.

"But Mr. Spurr proceeds: 'On the general question of the Second Coming, I feel I can say very little. It is clear to me that the predictions in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 are 'apocalyptic' in form, and that they were fulfilled in 'that generation' in the destruction of Jerusalem when the Son of Man *did* come 'in power and great glory.' We should very much like to know why Mr. Spurr, who feels he can say so very little about the Second Coming, can say so much and declare He did come in A.D. 70. The teaching of the New Testament is clear that the resurrection of believers takes place at the Coming of the Lord Jesus. Does Mr. Spurr suggest that the resurrection is past and gone? We are to observe the Lord's Supper 'Until He come.' Does Mr. Spurr suggest that we are wrong therefore in observing the ordinance? Our Lord declared to those of Jerusalem: 'Ye shall not see Me until ye shall say Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.' When the Lord comes, Israel is to be reconciled to its Messiah. Has that taken place? Did it take place at the fall of Jerusalem?"

"Very pathetically Mr. Spurr, after condemning the fixing of dates (as we do incidentally), declares: 'So I leave the

future with God, Who alone knows, and go on with my work.' But Mr. Spurr forgets that our Lord declared of the Holy Spirit: 'He shall shew you things to come.' The Spirit has been given, amongst other ministries, for the express purpose of opening up the word of revelation of the future so that God's people may not be merged in world purposes and enterprises, all of which are destined to perish in time. The tragedy of following Mr. Spurr's example is the pathetic muddle and mess of modern Christendom whose whole effort to-day seems centred on solving problems between man and man, when the true ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ is to plead with men: 'Be ye reconciled to God.'

"With statesmen declaring that the next war will mean the end of our civilization and with every sign that we have not seen the end of war, is it not time that Christians were aroused to see that nothing but the blood of Christ putting men right with God can meet the urgent situation? Mr. Spurr fails to see that without a true view of what God's purpose is in His Son he cannot get on with the work that will serve that purpose. He is like a man attempting to build something without consulting the plans of the architect. What a builder he would be who should say: 'So I leave the plans with the architect who alone knows and get on with my work'."

## "THE FATHER'S PLEASURE"

Sermon preached in Rye Lane Chapel, on Sunday Morning, June 7th, 1936

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."—Colossians 1:19.

Let me remind you very briefly of the object of this epistle written by St. Paul to the Church at Colossae. Amongst the little community an error was rife declaring that God was too great a Being to be identified with our common humanity, so that He created one a little lower than Himself who in turn created an inferior being until at last far down in the scale some inferior being created man. Paul now answers that error, full of subtle pitfalls for the unwary, with a marvellous declaration concerning the Lord Jesus: "By Him were all things created . . . all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together." Here then is a revelation that intimately relates the whole creation to God's Beloved Son. There has been no secondary creative work, but all creation springs out of Him Whose life has been one with the Father from all eternity in the highest expression of Filial bliss.

The Apostle then proceeds to declare other relationships of exceptional importance: "And He is the Head of the body, the church," whereby he insists upon an organic life relationship between Himself and His redeemed people. This relationship of life springs out of death, for into the Headship of the Church our Lord enters by His being "the Firstborn from the dead". Hence as the Uncreated One of all eternity passing through death into resurrection He has the pre-eminence. Let none suppose these declarations to be emptied of reality. On the contrary, in these remarkable statements we are brought by faith into the very heart of the transcendent and eternal.

In all this the Father's pleasure is revealed. Not by any outward constraint, but by the innermost demands of His own Paternal Being it has pleased the Father that in His Beloved Son should all fulness dwell. Scholars have found in that word "fulness" truth in its unfathomable depths. The very choice of the word is an outstanding example of the Divine inspiration behind the Apostle's writings. Into the labyrinths of the technical and the abstract we will

not this morning proceed, highly interesting and no less instructive as they are. Probably at the end we should find that its meaning can best be understood by a reference to the following chapter, verse nine, where Paul writes: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There can be no true understanding of that verse unless we see clearly that primarily and essentially it refers to Jesus as He now is in heaven. At this moment, for the verb is in the present tense, in bodily fashion the fulness of the Godhead permanently abides. The fulness is therefore the fulness of the Godhead. There are many ways in which the word "fulness" can be understood. It may indicate completion, or it may indicate perfection; and doubtless we are not to understand it in this verse in any restricted meaning. The Apostle is bringing home to us the deep truth that in the Lord of Glory there is Deity complete. Deity is not in any way impaired or impoverished by its manifestation in the bodily glory of the Lord. But it may be also, and we need not hesitate to accept it as true, that in that Body of the Glory Deity finds its fulness, its perfection of manifestation as it could be in no other way. It pleased the Father that the Hidden unseen, dare we say unseeable fulness of the Deity should come to its perfect, unrestricted manifestation in the Lord in the Body of the Glory.

Here then is the underlying truth: the fulness of Deity manifested through the excellence of humanity. In Him, the Glorified Man, dwelleth all, the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form. In that bodily form the Deity manifests itself in absolute perfection. We dare not say that Deity without the Glorified Humanity is incomplete, but we can say that in the Glorified Humanity of our Lord Deity finds its eternal complement. Centred in that transcendent fact we find the Father's pleasure.

With this revelation as our guiding principle, we may look again at this passage of Scripture. There we shall see that in three different relationships we have the fulness of Deity invested with the manifestation of humanity. In each case we find most certainly and clearly that our Blessed Lord was fulfilling the Father's pleasure.

#### I.

**IN THE BODY ACCURSED ON THE CROSS.** This is the body of His flesh. It is preëminently God in the likeness of man. In this body the Deity abides in all its fulness for "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." He was God manifested in the flesh but it was Deity to be realized only to faith. Great was the blessing for those who saw through the veil of the earthly humanity into the unspeakable Deity within and could say: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One." We cannot understand the mystery but we may reverently bow before it in faith. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin." Hence the fulness of Deity is manifested in the body capable of shedding blood and for this He set aside His eternal claims to heaven, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Paul makes it quite clear, it is unmistakable: "having made peace through the blood of His Cross." It is in very truth "life for a look" when we see the fulness of the Deity in the Accursed One on the cross and exclaim: For me, He died, for me." Faith must penetrate the smitten body marred with the lashes

of Pilate's soldiers, hammered to the cross with the nails of Rome, pierced in the side by the weapon of unbelief, faith must penetrate that marred visage, the bleeding side, the flowing wounds and see in that slain body the Son of God, perfect in His Deity, perfect in His humanity, accursed on the Cross for the sin of the world.

From the moment that faith is thus enabled by grace to see the fulness of Deity in the body of the Smitten Son all life is changed. How graphically Isaiah describes it in chapter fifty-three! The consternation of the people when they see the Messiah in such a pitiable condition "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." In their consternation they hid as it were their faces from Him. They confessed: "He was despised and we esteemed Him not." But how glorious the reaction when they realized as we may realize: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." Then indeed faith sees the fulness of the Deity in the accursed body on the Cross. To see it is to believe and to believe is to embrace the most marvellous fact of the universe that God in the Person of His Son came down to this sinful earth to die for sinners such as you and me. Such was the Father's pleasure for "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief."

#### II.

**IN THE BODY RAISED OUT OF THE GRAVE.** By this body He became the Firstborn out of the dead. Its implications are many and probably the most marvellous are hidden from our eyes but this much is clear. Without victory over death there could be no effectual redemption. It is idle to speak of heaven as being free from the curse of earth. Our redemption will be complete when the Church is gathered to its Lord in the air and Satan is cast down from the regions above to the earth. But that great consummation has its secret in resurrection. When our Blessed Lord passed through Hades and was raised the Firstborn out of the dead then in actual fact the power of death was broken. God raised Him from the dead, sealing His mediatorial death and giving Him life beyond the reach of death. As such He became the Head of the body of the redeemed. He in His resurrection became the life of His people. This body raised out of the dead is the body invested with the power of imparting that fulness of the Deity to all who believe in Him. Hence Paul can declare "and ye are complete in Him." What Satan intended should be the end of the world's Redeemer became the genesis of a new life uncurled by the power of sin. Our common human life cannot escape the knell of cause and effect. Its source is polluted in sin, its end must inevitably be death. But the life He took out of the grave, His uncreated life springs out of the fulness of the Deity, untainted by sin and therefore free from the curse of death. It is His glorious work as Head of the Church to cause that life in resurrection to course through the being of the humblest believer. Its security is vested in the indwelling Spirit Who is Himself the secret of that fulness of Deity within our common humanity. This is in very truth the Father's pleasure as it is the joy that was set before Him for which He endured the Cross. It is no less the highest privilege of grace to which we may aspire in the body of our flesh.

(Continued on page 8)

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

REV. WILLIAM J. JONES, EDITOR

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### PREDICTION OF JUDAH'S CAPTIVITY

Lesson Text: Jeremiah, Chapter 16, 17.

Golden Text: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"—Jeremiah 17:9.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—I. Cor. 7:25-40; Tuesday—Rom. 12:9-21; Wednesday—Psalm 1; Thursday—Psalm 51; Friday—Is. 58:9-14; Saturday—Is. 66:15-21.

### EXPOSITION

The revelation of the lesson to-day, was given to Jeremiah some time during the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. Chapter 16, vs. 1-9 pictures the prophet's abstinence from earthly duties. By divine command (2) he denies himself in those abnormal times of the pleasures of a home and home-life to which he might have turned in distress. Possibly the injunction was only temporary, and for the Land itself. But it shows his belief in the calamities to come, especially as they would affect materially home and marital ties. His abstinence was prophetically symbolical of the desolation soon to sweep the land into captivity. All kinds of painful deaths awaited marriages in those days, deaths issuing in the woes of unburied corpses in times of famine (like modern famines in China), and war (4). The restrictions on the prophet extended even to consoling with mourners, thus showing the symbolism of his acts, and the abnormality of the times, for such acts were not condemned in themselves. Mourning (5), or screaming, reminds one of the wailing wall, proverbial in Jewish history, and the similar rites in heathen practices which were condemned (Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1) by the Law (5). The fellowship meal (7) customary among the Jews (cf. II. Sam. 3:35) was also forbidden, as was also the house of feasting (8). The same reasons for abstinence as urged previously, applied to feasting with the added reason that his message of doom would have been nullified had he rejoiced with those rejoicing. How sad the picture of v. 9 (cf. 7:34), putting the blight on the normal activity of marriage!

The people's question and Jehovah's answer are found in vs. 10-13. It is the hardened or deadened conscience, not the hypocrisy of earlier chapters (cf. 5:19; 13:22) which prompts the people to speak. The fact that God answers (11) shows this. But for their sin (12) God will punish. Ironically He says they will have the opportunity to test their worship of false gods in a strange God—for He will not have mercy upon them. Day and night they may serve gods, without fear that His voice will molest them (13).

Hope of deliverance greater than that of the Exodus is given in vs. 14 and 15. How much greater will be the redemption? In the pardoning love of God, in the greater fulfillment of prophecy than that of the Exodus (Gen. 15:13).

In vs. 16-18, the oncoming Chaldeans are pictured as searching for Judah like fishermen and hunters. Punishment precedes deliverance (18), utter and thorough retribution for the pollution of the Land with idols (carcasses) and idolatry.

The idolatrous nations will yet go to Jehovah (19-21), turned as they will be by the punishment and restoration of Judah. Jeremiah is interested in the heathen (cf. 12:15 f.). Judah, contrasted to the nations, deserts Jehovah (20), therefore He will cause them to acknowledge His power and His Name (21).

In 17:1-4, is seen the depth of Judah's sin and its punishment. The first verse is really an answer to 16:10. Ingrained sin is writ with the point of a diamond, as it were, in the inward nature (table of the heart) where righteousness alone should be (Prov. 3:3; 7:3). The children inheriting sin, turned to heathen altars, or perhaps had aversion aroused at the sight of human sacrifice altars where other children had been sacrificed. The Asherim were rough hewn posts representing sacred trees, placed alongside altars, but were forbidden to the Israelite (Ex. 34:13). Mount Zion (3), the substance and treasures of the people, and the high places of sin were to be delivered to the enemy, so that Judah (4) would lose hold on the country. The figure is representative of Jehovah's cancelling the blessed promise, as if by the dropping of His hand (Deut. 15:3).

The folly of trusting the flesh (5-8) is shown on the background of an alliance made with Egypt by Jehoiakim, or perhaps by Zedekiah. Man (5) as a hero, a strong one must not trust in man, but God; not in his own strength, but in God's, lest his heart forsake God. Note the contrast of the trusting man (8) who is like a tree of beauty, strength, and fruitful growth, who has no fear, but trusts with a perpetual spiritual fruitfulness, immune to drought with the fleshly man (6) who is like a dwarfed tree (probably a juniper) who yields no good results though good influences touch him, who is in a barren, parched place, in a fruitless waste ("salt land").

In vs. 9-11 the deceitfulness of the heart of man is shown. So deceitful or proud (literally rugged or uneven), is it that it is incurably wicked. A popular belief is referred to in v. 11. Vs. 12, 13 is a parenthetical bit of praise to God under the figure of the Temple (12) which is emblematic of His sovereign presence and Name, since Jehovah (13) is the centre of worship, not the temple buildings as such (cf. 7:4). They who forsake Him shall not endure.

The Prayer of the Prophet is in vs. 14-18. V. 14 is suggested particularly by v. 9—Jeremiah turns to Jehovah for healing of the heart, knowing the surety of such healing. The taunts of his people (15) may have aroused doubts so that he pleads his fidelity as a prophet, his reluctance to leave his former occupation, a shepherd. God knows his history, that he has desired good, not the "judgment day of man" (16; mg.). The Prophet asks to be spared shame (17), and that Israel be punished utterly (18).

Teachings on the Sabbath (19-27) are similar to those in Is. 56:6-8. The kings and their households were violators (19) in the excessive desecration of the day, particularly Zedekiah (20) who was dominated by his court. Though their fathers sinned, yet if they listened to God (24) they will be blessed with national security or continuity (25), solidarity, success, and spirituality (26). The true ideal of worship is the offering of spiritual sacrifices (Heb. 13:15). Failure to observe the spirit of the Sabbath will mean punishment (27).

### APPLICATION

Sin is ineradicable, only a new heart will do (17:1). New writing like that of a palimpsest is necessary, for sin reaches to religious life (altars) and to children in heredity. The extent of sin is unknown to man. The idolatry of Judah was held in check in the Land, but was unfettered in exile where its enslaving nature like that of sin was sin. It, like sin, which is compulsory by nature, soon would and did become a matter of free choice. Men are free only to sin (16:13). Only the Spirit of God like the true religion of Judah could check or restrain (17:9). So is the influence of the gospel among the nations.

It is God, then who knows the heart, because He the Creator, He alone has the right to probe it and search it (17:10). Every man is examined, fairly, justly (II. Cor. 5:10). And in His trying the heart (which means here and nearly always in the Old Testament, the mind and emotions and will) His omniscience in conscience finds out sin (16:16-21).

The dire results of forsaking God—shame and destruction; include imperishability in sin (17:1), but also perishability in the world to come (17:13). The exile was symbolic of eternal punishment (16:10-13) in a strange, distant place. As Israel and Judah wondered at *their* punishment, so the sinner wonders, forgetting the righteousness, holiness, and justice of God. As the Land had to be cleansed of sin, so Heaven is to be free of sinners and everything unclean (Rev. 21:27).

But how marvellous that the greater the sin, the greater the mercy (Rom. 5:20). True also is it that the greater the sin, the greater the punishment (16:14, 15) and that great acts of grace like the Exodus typify greater acts (cf. note Is. 51:9-11). How we ought to realize that God is a terror to evil works (17:17) and that godly fear of Him is a spur to service (II. Cor. 5:11). Let us remember that He should be the centre and circumference of our worship (17:13), who like the temple counseled the church in eternity and though by nature a high and lofty One, is also the near one in the person of His Spirit.

Let us not refuse the truth because of its source (17:15), but let us test the prophets (see application end Chapter 14). Though Jeremiah's message was impugned, the people showed great lack of faith in demanding a speedy fulfillment of his message as a proof of its truth. Such an attitude today in matters of prophecy is unspiritual.

**"THE FATHER'S PLEASURE"***(Continued from page 6)*

## III.

IN THE BODY GLORIFIED IN THE THRONE OF THE FATHER. God hath raised Him out of the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. In all things he has the preëminence, and now in heaven it pleases the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell. In His Glorious Body in heaven the fulness of Deity comes to its complete manifestation. He has a Body that does not now limit or hide His Deity but indeed blazons it forth as we may believe could not otherwise be. There in the Person of the Beloved Son, God shews forth the essential congruity between the Divine and the Human purged of its sin. There in His Glorious Body reconciliation between God and Man is set forth in all the wonder of a redeemed creation. Man reconciled to God is seen to be the key to the mystery of the ages, the answer to a troubled and sin burdened universe, the explanation to beings on the earth and in the heavens.

This reconciliation is a profound fact. It finds its end in an absolute conformation on the part of every believer into the identical image of the glorious body of His Lord. It is the Father's pleasure to bring many sons to the glory. It does not mean merely to bring them to heaven, it means essentially that they should be brought into conformity to the Image of the One Who has redeemed them. Hence the Apostle assures the Corinthians: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Men talk of reversion to type, but grace speaks of approximation to glory. To see the Ideal Man of the Glory, centre of the Universe, the revelation of the Father's pleasure is to see the Humanity that rejoices God. To know by faith the Accursed body on the Cross as the means of our redemption, the resurrection body as the secret of our life and the Body of the Glory as the type of what we shall be is to enter into the Father's pleasure for us. By the ministry of that same Spirit as we fasten our eyes on the Lord of the Glory we shall be transfigured into that same image. This is indeed the fulness of the Father's pleasure.

**EIGHT DAYS IN PHILADELPHIA**

It was the Editor's privilege to minister the gospel in Philadelphia and roundabout for eight days, from August 9th to 16th. The services were under the direction of Rev. George Palmer, who exercises a unique daily radio ministry. Mr. Palmer is Pastor of Haddon Heights Baptist Church, New

Jersey. For a number of years he has conducted a "Morning Cheer" hour from seven to eight over WIP, Philadelphia. These morning services are broadcast from Mr. Palmer's house, and the gospel message, sent forth in this way, has raised up a "Morning Cheer" family of many thousands of people.

Growing out of that, a book store has been established at 1109 Walnut Street, in a large store building, where only sound evangelical literature is sold. Behind the store is a fine auditorium in which services are held every day from 12.15 to 1.00 except Saturday and Sunday, the message delivered being broadcast from 12.30 to 1.00.

During the summer Mr. Palmer conducts services every evening in a large tent in Haddon Heights. It was our privilege to preach in Haddon Heights Baptist Church each Sunday morning, and in the tent each Sunday afternoon and evening; at the noonday service every day, and then every week-evening in the tent, with an extra service at Atlantic City Friday afternoon. The one exception was Monday night, when the service was in Grace Chapel, Oakmount, Pa. These services were all largely attended, a number of ministers being present on several occasions.

It is refreshing to visit a man in his own workshop, and to see what a mighty power for good one faithful preacher of the gospel may become. Mr. Palmer's radio ministry is tremendously influential, and although, with his "hookup" with other stations during the Fall, Winter, and Spring season, it involved an expense of \$700.00 per week, all requirements were met by the voluntary contributions of radio hearers.

Mr. Palmer is an able preacher, has a magnificent physique, and an attractive personality, who, we predict, is only at the beginning of a great ministry. We are confident he will be still more widely known in the immediate future.

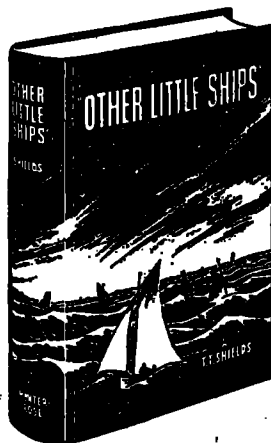
We tell this simple story that many of our readers may have something more to pray for. Doubtless there are many other ministries being used of God. It is well that God's people should pray for His faithful servants everywhere, that the blessing of the Lord may rest upon their testimony.

**THE WEEK-END IN JARVIS STREET**

The Pastor returned from a brief vacation in time to take his regular services on Sunday. There were fine congregations morning and evening. The evening sermon appears in this issue. As is usual at this season of the year, many ministers were in the congregation. The holiday season is not quite over, but there was a good School, and we are expecting a Fall and Winter season of great blessing.

**MORE BLESSING IN THE NORTH**

Word comes from Kapuskasing that in addition to those who took their stand for the Lord at the special services conducted there recently, one young man accepted the Lord as Saviour as he went home from the last meeting of the Evangelistic Services. At Timmins also salvation has come. Two young married women took their stand for Christ last Sunday evening. The missionary activity of the pastor, and the desire of the people for the evangelization of the North, have resulted in this church increasing its missionary offerings by one-third in the last two Sundays.

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