

# 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 SPIRIT'S FUNCTION

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, August 18th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

"Of sin, because they believe not on me;

"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."—John 16: 8-11.

#### Prayer before the Sermon

Once more, O Lord, we lift our hearts to Thee in thanksgiving and praise for all Thou art, and for all Thou hast done, for what Thou hast shown us of Thy lovingkindness in the gospel of Thy Son. We thank Thee that Thou hast made it possible for poor sinners to be cleansed from every guilt and stain, to be washed, and in thy sight, made whiter than snow. We thank Thee for the salvation which Thou hast provided by Thy boundless grace. We bless Thee, O Lord, for what we know of it: we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Thou hast brought us into Thy banqueting-house; we have been made to sit down beneath Thy shadow, and have found Thy fruits sweet to our taste.

We thank Thee that many of us in Thy presence have had long experience of Thy faithfulness. Yesterday and to-day Thou hast fulfilled to us Thy promises; and we are assured that, as Thou hast done, so wilt Thou do in the future; for Thou art the same, and Thy years do not fail. Therefore we can say, We love the Lord, because He hath heard our voice and our supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto us, therefore will we call upon Him as long as we live. We bless Thee for special grace which Thou hast given in special circumstances, for the shoes of iron and brass which Thou hast provided for steep and stony roads, and for the strength which Thou hast supplied according to our day. Hitherto the Lord hath blessed us, and we are able to sing,

"Here I raise my Ebenezer,  
Hither by Thy help I'm come,  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home."

But Thou hast brought us to another day, and to another evening hour, with the prospect of another week of labour before us. We have no surplus grace. We still need that which Thou only canst supply. We bless Thee that the Fountain is always flowing, that the storehouses of our Joseph are always full, that the table in the Father's house is always bountifully provided, and even the least of Thy people, the servants, have bread enough and to spare. For all these things we give Thee thanks.

We pray that Thou wilt minister to us the needs of life this evening. We thank Thee that Thou hast not left us to discover truth for ourselves, but that it has pleased Thee

to make the light of Thy truth to shine. We thank Thee again for Thy holy Word, the Scripture written by men who were moved by the Holy Ghost, that is able to make us wise unto salvation, to instruct us in the ways of the Lord. We thank Thee that we are enabled to hear Thy Word. We bless Thee that Thou hast sent to us the divine Author, for the Inspirer of Scripture must ever be our Teacher, the Illuminator of our understanding. We pray that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit may be experienced by all within these walls this evening, to instruct us, that we may know Thy truth. Make our hearts, we pray Thee, receptive to the truth, that it may be mixed with faith in all who shall hear: So graciously use this service to the furtherance of Thy truth among men. Instruct us who are Thy people, and bring any who know not God to the Saviour's feet, into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

Command Thine evening benediction upon all the assemblies of the saints, upon all who witness for Thee the world around. Be gracious to those who are deprived of the privileges of the sanctuary, those in a journey, those who must needs labour, those who are sick. Lord, be gracious to all such. Meet them, and make their place of tarrying a Bethel, where the angels of God shall come. For Christ's sake we ask all these mercies, Amen.

When any phrase in our language becomes proverbial, and passes into current speech, we may safely assume that the sentiment it expresses represents a common mold of thought, an idiom. It passes currency in the popular mind because it represents what is looked upon as an obvious truth, so obvious that it is regarded as axiomatic. We say of certain things, "That is proverbial"; by which we mean that everybody accepts it, there is no need of argument, it is looked upon as an established fact of human observation and experience.

We have a proverbial phrase to the effect that "there is no accounting for tastes". I suppose that means it is a matter of general observation that no two people are constitutionally alike. Everybody will readily admit that. I met a man once, rather an unusual character, who made

a wry face, as though the very mention of a certain commodity awakened a repulsion within him. He told me he did not like mustard. I believe he was not born in England! He said he was just as averse to celery; the mention of it filled him with horror.

There are differing tastes in matters other than that of the palate. Men and women differ in their choice of friends. We say, "Birds of a feather flock together." Sometimes we do not like the feather! There are differences of taste in the matter of dress. Most people please themselves—and others have to endure the result. The same is true of our tastes in books, and pictures, and music. I occasionally turn on the radio, and get a snatch of something—do they call it crooning? I immediately turn it off again, saying to myself, Are there to be found people who really enjoy that sort of thing? I wonder what sort of people they are who can endure it pleasantly for a moment?

A somewhat renowned art critic very severely criticized a certain picture. The would-be artist replied to the criticism, saying, "I can but paint things as I see them." To which the critic replied, "When you see things like that, you ought not to paint at all." Tastes differ in matters of that sort.

Carry the principle forward into the spiritual world, and what a variety of standards men are disposed to set up! How strange are the tendencies observable in human judgment in respect to moral and spiritual things! Who will tell us what is right? Who will tell us, for example, what righteousness is? Is it merely an expression of the collective will, that which the majority of people in a certain community think to be right? Because, for instance, the majority of people elect certain men to positions of authority, and they, in turn, enact certain statutes, and make them the law of the land—are they necessarily right? Is it a good law merely because, for the time being, the majority approve it?

There is a theory to the effect that there is no such thing as absolute morality, that questions of right and wrong are to be determined by the collective will; and if the majority of a group of people approve a certain course, and say it is right, that makes it right. There is no norm, no standard, for character and conduct by which men may be measured.

Suppose, for example, it were possible to weigh the soul, with all its spiritual qualities, to judge of its moral weight, who would provide the balances, and who would prescribe the weights? If a man's fitness for the presence of God is to be appraised, who shall be the judge of his character, and whether he is fit to be where God is?

From time to time you find differing standards obtaining in the public life of a country. When the public conscience becomes dulled, and standards of conduct are lowered, men come to positions of prominence and authority who, at other times, would not have a chance of being elected. I need not mention his name, when I remind you that one of the most brilliant of Britain's statesmen—a man who was recognized intellectually as the peer of his contemporaries, and whose opinion on governmental matters carried great weight—had a stain upon his character, and the "good Queen Victoria"—for he lived during her reign—said, "I will not receive him into my presence." He could have been Prime Minister of England as far as his brilliance was concerned, but

the Queen said, "A man of that character shall not represent me." But standards change. Where shall we find the norm?

When a ship leaves a given port for an ocean voyage, as the land drops below the horizon the navigator usually takes the ship's position from some conspicuous figure. When that has disappeared, he takes his position from the heavens. But when the sky is overcast, and neither sun nor star appears, he steers his course by what is called "dead reckoning". That is, by compass, and chronometer, and log. But "dead reckoning" is rather a hazardous method of steering a vessel, no matter how delicate the instrument used. A navigator told me once of having crossed the Atlantic when, during the entire voyage, they steered by dead reckoning. They could see neither sun nor star. It was cloudy all the way. As they approached the coast of Ireland, when the captain supposed he had plenty of room and was perfectly safe, he discovered just in time that he was near the rocks. Fifteen minutes later, said my friend, the discovery would have been too late.

There are many people who would fain steer their course to heaven by "dead reckoning". But it is dangerous. There are rocks ahead. The only safe way of steering a ship is to steer it from the skies. Any navigator will tell you that when he is out on the trackless deep he never ignores the testimony of the heavens. There is only one way to make our journey from earth to heaven, and that is by listening to the Voice that comes to us from the sky, a Voice, a Standard, an Authority, outside of ourselves. That is our only safety.

That is the distinctive feature of the Christian religion: it never asks any man to steer his own course to heaven. On the contrary, it gives him a revelation from above. Jesus Christ said, "There are a great many things I did not tell you at the beginning, because I was yet with you. There were some things that were beyond your capacity to understand at the time. But I am going away, and I am going to send Someone to you, even the Spirit of truth; and when He comes, He will tell you many things. He will tell you what sin is; He will tell you what righteousness is; He will tell you what judgment is, and where it will fall. Listen to Him." That is my subject this evening.

#### I.

No one but the Spirit of God can possibly tell us what sin is. Left to himself, man would condone many things which, intrinsically, are wrong. Left to themselves, men would condone things that have hell itself at the heart of them, would play with microbes, with some deadly bacilli that have in them the potentiality of eternal death. I say, how foolish it would be for a man to set up his own opinion on this matter! In other concerns we welcome the service of experts. Why should we not in the matter of the soul's eternal welfare? The Holy Spirit is come to tell us what sin is, in its very nature.

What is sin? You could prepare a long list of moral evils, things that are patently, notoriously, wrong. And when you had completed the list, according to your judgment, you would say, "That is sin." For the most part, I suppose, you would enumerate sins of the flesh, of the carnal mind: untruthfulness, insobriety, immorality, theft. Those things are sinful, but they are only a rash. They are only symptoms of the disease. What would you

think of a physician who, when called to treat a patient, should discern certain outward manifestations of an inward malady, and for the rash upon the skin should prescribe an ointment, a poultice, a plaster—some external treatment? You say, "There are plenty of women who have brought up families who know better than that." You do not use an ointment for measles: the trouble is too deep for such treatment.

Yet our modern teachers who would prescribe remedies for the world's ills are specialists in the ointment and plaster treatment. It is a wonder to me they do not prescribe a linseed poultice! If they applied that sort of thing to physical ailments, we would be disposed to say, "You idiot! Do you not know the nature of the disease?" But that is how men are dealing with the evils of our time.

What is sin? "It is falling short," says someone. Falling short of what? "Falling short of the glory of God." What is the glory of God? And how far short have we come? What sort of stilts must we make in order to lift ourselves up to that level? Who knows anything about the glory of God? Who knows anything about the standards of the other life? What folly it is for us to set up our own judgment of what ought to obtain in the life that is to come! We all know that we are here for but a little while, and then we must go hence. But whither? To what conditions of life? What standards will there obtain? Surely it is self-evident that none but the Spirit of God can instruct us, and tell us really what sin is!

The teaching of the Word of God is that sin is deeper than the hand, or the eye, or the ear, or the tongue. These bodies give manifestations in some measure of the spiritual distemper within, but who shall tell us of the nature of that sin itself, the sin that is the mother of all sin? Our Lord did not say, "When the Spirit of truth is come He will convict men of sin because they are untruthful, because they get drunk, because they generally break the ten commandments." He said the Holy Spirit will convince the world of the all-comprehensive sin, the sin that is the sin of all sins, the mother-sin, the fundamental sin, the principle that lies at the root-base of all moral evil. What is it? "Of sin, because *they believe not on me.*"

You do not know—no one of us would know naturally—that it is a sin not to believe. It is generally assumed that that is rather a mark of superiority than otherwise, something for which we are to be commended. We have entirely outgrown the old standards. We do not believe what our fathers believed. We have more intelligence than they had. We are more highly educated. How some people prate about "education"! Give me five minutes, and I will show you how little some of the professors know! Advanced beyond our forebears indeed! The sin of all sins is the rejection of Jesus Christ. The teaching of the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit, is that we are not condemned for what is commonly regarded sin: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." No matter how great a sinner a man may be, his sin is not beyond cure. The Spirit of God being witness, the sin of all sins is refusal to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Just to refuse to subscribe to some statement about Him? The Lord Jesus said that He came

from heaven. The Word of God tells us that He was begotten of the Holy Ghost, that He "was God manifest in the flesh"; and that His judgment upon all matters on which He speaks is absolutely final, that His appraisal of sin is to be accepted. He went to the cross, and there He died as an example, an illustration of what sin is. That is what sin does. Someone asked me once about that strange story which is the sequel to our morning meditation, when the Angel of the covenant said to Abraham, respecting Sodom and Gomorrah, that the cry of it had come up to heaven. And God said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me." That is one of the most terrible stories in Holy Scripture, so terrible that we cannot even repeat it; but you know that He found they had done "altogether according to the cry of it."

Here is a case where a man is found murdered. The police examine the body, with all the attendant circumstances, gather everything that would supply them with a scrap of evidence, look for finger-prints, and all the rest of it. Then, by a process of elimination, they strike off one after another until by and by they come down to one or two suspects, and say, "It must be one of these." At last they come down to one, and they charge him with murder. When a man is charged with some lesser crime, and his victim still lives, it is customary nowadays, as for example, in the case of kidnapping, for the officers of the law to bring before the victim a number of prisoners among whom is the suspect, and endeavour to secure his identification of the man. He examines them, and says of one, "I think that is the man." But in the case of murder, the victim cannot speak, and very often officers of the law say, "If he could only tell us what happened." But suppose he could tell us; suppose, having been slain, he should live again; suppose he were to confront his murderer and say, "You are the man; you did it", what then?

When God's judgment is set, He will not depend upon circumstantial evidence. When the brethren of Joseph came into his presence at last, and he had commanded that everybody else be removed from him, he said to them, "I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt. Do not deny it. Do not make any excuses. I was there. I was your victim. You sold me. I heard you talk among yourselves. You dipped my coat in blood, and said you would take it home to my father. I heard it all. I saw it all. I am the witness." Do you wonder that it is written, "They could not answer him"?

Do you know the significance of that scripture which says, "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest?" Or, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God"? It will not be a question as to whether a man got drunk, or stole a few thousand dollars. But the Judge of all the earth will say, "There is the evidence of your guilt. You did it. You drove the nails, you drove the spear: I was your victim." "*Of sin, because they believe not on me.*" That is the big sin, the all-comprehensive sin: the utter rejection and repudiation of the judgment of God, man's final act of treachery against the Sovereign of the universe, saying, "If He would be our King, let

us kill Him." Never to reverse the verdict of Pilate, never to dissent from the judgment, that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross, is to become guilty of His blood, and to have no excuse against the judgment-day. Only the Spirit of God can show us that. But that is what sin is. That is the root of the whole matter, the rejection of Jesus Christ.

## II.

No one but the Spirit of God can tell us what righteousness is. Nobody knows. The best man who ever lived was an imperfect man. I heard a story once—I think it was my good friend Scotch John MacNeill who told it. He said, "One day I was tired, and was lying on the couch in my study when my little boy came to me. He looked down at me and said, 'Daddy, I am as big as you are.' I shook myself, got up from my recumbent position, stood up, and looked down at him and said, 'Sonny, where are you now?' 'I am not as big as you are when you stand up'."

With whom will you measure yourself? You say that you are going to heaven, you are going to another country, you are going to be ready, so that when you get there you will be all furnished for it, and know something of the conditions of life which obtain. Many years ago there was a Convention in this city, in the days when the Young People's Movement in the churches attracted great numbers of people. It was held in Massey Hall, and there were thousands of people from out-of-town, from all parts of the Continent. Among them, a great number came from the southern States. These people were supposed to be fairly well informed, and they came up to the land of eternal snow, in July! They said, "We have no clothes to wear up there; we shall need heavy overcoats, and plenty of furnishings." This is literally true: they came to Toronto loaded with trunks full of heavy garments, as though it were somewhere beyond the Arctic Circle in Winter. And Old Sol gave them a good reception! During that Convention the sun never dropped below ninety-seven degrees in the shade!

Do you know how to dress for the heavenly court? Do you know what raiment to provide? Will you know how to behave yourself when you get to heaven? You know you are going there. You say, "I have made up my mind about that." But upon what terms? You had better examine your passport. Passports are wretched things. Sometimes you experience a great deal of difficulty getting into another country. Have you your passport to heaven? Nobody can get into that country whose passport is not fully viséd. It will be no use to tell an untruth when you get to Heaven's passport department, as is sometimes done at the Border. If you get to the American Border without a proper passport, you will be told, "It is not viséd for the United States; it does not bear the stamp of the American Consul." There is only one Person Who can visé your passport. You must have His signature, and if that is not on it you cannot get through. Have you your passport ready?

Then, have you your clothes ready? Are you fit to live where the King is, to be in His presence? I fancy if any one of us were commanded to appear at Buckingham Palace, we should be anxious as to whether we knew how to behave ourselves. That would be important enough—but to appear before God! Said Jesus,

"When I am gone, nobody will know what righteousness is, for I am the only standard men have known. He will convict the world . . . of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." The foot-rule is lost, there are no scales in which anybody can be measured, nobody knows what it is to fall short of the glory of God, until the Spirit of God shows us the Lord Jesus.

How good must one be to get to heaven? Sometimes you see a sign at a low bridge, "Headway twelve feet". And the truck-driver knows that if his load is more than twelve feet tall he cannot get through the archway. I can tell you exactly how good you will have to be to get to heaven. You ask, "A righteousness as good as that of the scribes and Pharisees?" Better than that! "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." "As good as David?" Better than he! "As good as Moses?" Better than he! The law was given by Moses, but "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "As good as the Apostle Paul?" You must be a better man than Paul ever was to get to heaven. "Surely not better than Stephen, the first Christian martyr?" You must be a better man than even Stephen. "How good? How righteous?" As good as the Lord Jesus Christ, as righteous as He. God will not allow anyone to come into His presence who falls short of the absolutely perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

You say, "There is no chance, then, for any of us." Not a bit, not one chance in a billion for anyone—the preacher included, certainly—of getting into heaven on our own righteousness. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." What is the glory of God? "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He is the express image of the Father's person. How then can we be saved? We cannot be saved unless He imputes to us His righteousness.

I have often said it, but let me say it again. They cast lots upon His vesture at the cross, and His seamless robe fell to the lot of one of the soldiers because they would not rend it. I can imagine that when the deadly work was done, when the Victim had bowed His head and given up the ghost, when the crowd had dispersed, and the few who loved Him still lingered about the place—I can imagine the soldiers saying, "Our work is done; let us go home." This man who had the seamless robe said, "I wonder if this will fit me"—and he put it on. "How does it look?" "Very well." He is coming down the mountain, and somebody who has heard the news that Jesus is dead, meets this man, and I can imagine his being staggered for a moment, saying, "I thought He was dead?" "Yes," said someone, "but He has left His robe, and one of the soldiers got it by casting lots." Who knows but it was he who drove the spear into His side? This I know, as we often sing,

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My glory are, my beauteous dress;  
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

## III.

For the believer the judgment is past. But there is someone here who says, "Sir, I am afraid of the future; I

am afraid of that day when the dead will rise, and we shall have to face the whole record of the past." You have reason to be afraid, my friend. That will be a terrible day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel". Let me quote our text again: "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (not of 'judgment to come', as many people quote it); of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." What are we to be convinced of? The fact that all sin is laid upon Christ. You remember how He said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." And at the cross He, "having spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it". At the cross the devil and all his works were judged. At the cross the devil received his death-sentence. Our Lord bruised the head of the serpent. He is doing a great deal of wriggling still, but God shall put even satan under our feet.

My friends, the Spirit of God tells us that your sin and mine has gone before to the judgment of the cross, and that question is for ever settled. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! The only controversy God has with any of us is that we refuse to accept that sentence. If some man here to-night were the worst sinner out of the pit, no matter what his sin, I would dare to tell him, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." There is only one sin that is never forgiven, and that is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. In the ultimate analysis, only one sin will keep us out of His presence, the rejection of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Jesus Christ, that He is God's last word to a sinful world. If we accept that as the ultimatum, believe there is nothing beyond that, we shall be saved; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Note: This sermon by the Editor is, of necessity, printed without his revision.

### ON KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD

The first essential in knowing the will of God for my life is submission unto Him. I must put myself under orders, as the Psalmist said: "Order my steps in thy word." The one trained to obey is the one qualified to lead. The centurion said: "I am a man *under authority*, having soldiers *under me*". It does not say, "I am a man *in authority*", as we might expect. That is true, of course, as the passage shows; but his position of leadership followed as a result of his perfect obedience to his superior officers.

Our Lord gives a knowledge of His plans and purposes only to those whose attitude to Him is one of loyal, trustful obedience: the one who "will do (willeth to do) his will, shall know of the doctrine". Our Master asks not for the dumb resignation as that of a slave to an Oriental potentate, but the free, joyful, willing, whole-hearted obedience of a beloved child. We know that "he ever liveth to make intercession" and the Greek word translated "to make intercession" is a wide term, designating not merely prayer, but the sum total of the work

of Christ on our behalf. It has been quaintly translated thus: "He ever liveth to manage our concerns for us."

What a wise, loving General Manager! Let us put our affairs in His hands. It is His responsibility to plan: ours to obey. "I beseech you therefore, brethren; by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

"Why do I drift on a storm-tossed sea  
With neither compass, nor star, nor chart,  
When as I drift, God's plan for me  
Waits at the door of my slow-trusting heart?"

"Down from the heavens it drops like a scroll,  
Each day a bit will the Master unroll,  
Each day a mite of the veil will He lift,  
Why do I falter, why wander and drift?"

"Drifting, while God's at the helm to steer;  
Groping, when God lays the course, so clear;  
Swerving, though straight into port I might sail;  
Wrecking, when heaven lies just within hail!"

"Help me, O God, in the plan to believe,  
Help me my fragment each day to receive.  
Oh that my will may with Thine have no strife!  
God-yielded wills find the God-planned life."

The second essential in learning God's purpose for us is patience: "Order my *steps* in thy word." A step is perhaps a short distance, but the longest journey may be completed by taking just one step at a time. Life itself is made up of a succession of tiny seconds.

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

"The *steps* of a good man are ordered by the Lord", and Moody used to add, "And his stops, too".

We need patience to wait upon the Lord, to trust Him as to the time and manner in which He will reveal His will. Quiet, trustful, waiting upon Him seems much more difficult at times than action. Mr. Pace drew a suggestive cartoon based upon Psalm 32: 8, 9: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule". He pictures a horse, head lifted, muscles tense, chafing to go. The horse bears the label, "The spirited impetuosity of the flesh." Beside him is a mule, balking, refusing to move, and labelled, "The stubborn inertia of the flesh." When patient waiting is needful, frequently we desire to forge ahead; but when decision is necessary, hold back, hesitating to take the step of faith. When asked to perform some service, George Müller searched to find an answer to the following three questions: Is it God's work? Is it my work? Is it God's time?

As each step is taken, the next one will be revealed. Performing faithfully each day's task, doing the duty which is nearest to us, is the best preparation for learning God's plan for our life-work. Gideon was threshing wheat, and David was tending his father's sheep, when God's call came.

The manner of God's revelation to us is under His sovereign control. "Order my *steps* in thy word."

"I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,  
No sudden rending of the veil of flesh,  
No angel visitant, no opening skies,  
But take the dimness of my soul away."

God speaks to us: through His Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer, through His written Word without, and through circumstances around us. We must beware of depending upon subjective impressions; these must be tested by the Word. God confirms His will for us in His providential dealings, sometimes opening the door, sometimes closing it. As the steamer nears a certain point in the narrows of Georgian Bay, the captain watches for a tall white mark on a rock on one of the islands, and for another similar one farther away. He manoeuvres his ship till the prow and the two white signs are in a straight line, then confidently gives the order, "Full steam ahead", knowing that he is steering the ship in the right direction. Similarly, when the voice of the Spirit, the evidence of the Word, and the dispensations of God's providential dealings, give a united testimony, we may rest assured that we are in the path of His appointment.

"Ready to go, ready to wait,  
Ready a gap to fill.  
Ready for service small or great;  
Ready to do His will.  
Ready to suffer grief and pain,  
Ready to stand the test;  
Ready to stay at home and send  
Others if that seem best.  
Ready to do, ready to bear,  
Ready to watch and pray;  
Ready to stand aside and give,  
Till He shall clear the way.  
Ready to speak, ready to think,  
Ready o'er souls to yearn;  
Ready for life, ready for death,  
Ready for His return."

—O.L.C. (Chapel Talk given at Toronto Baptist Seminary).

### PREACHING

Preaching is needed—never more than to-day. Stanley Baldwin is quoted as saying: "I confess that I am not sure, if a Wesley or a St. Francis arose to-day, that to found a body of preaching friars would not be the best thing for the world." Nothing can take the place of preaching. The printed page in our day has untold power. Think of the influence of a single dispatch printed in each of the twenty-five hundred or more dailies of the United States. Jarvis Street multiplies its ministry manifold by publishing THE GOSPEL WITNESS. But there is nothing like the living voice of one who is charged with a message:

"The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer;  
The grass of yesteryear  
Is dead; the birds depart, the groves decay;  
Empire dissolve, and peoples disappear:  
Song passes not away.  
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust  
And Kings a dubious legend of their reign;  
The swords of Caesar they are less than rust;  
The Poet doth remain."

Change "song" to "sermon", and "poet" to "preacher", and it is truer still. Of preaching it has been said: "Printing will not displace it, civilization will not outgrow it, the world will always need it and always use it, and never in vain."

But preaching is difficult. Occasionally there arises in the preaching classes here in the Seminary, one who thinks he can preach. Then we always make a real effort to take that out of him, for no man is worth his salt who thinks he has attained! A real artist was asked what was his greatest work. "My next", he replied!

But preaching is a great thing. To be the herald of salvation, and to offer beggars a Kingdom, are very great things. Real preaching reminds one of Tennyson's description of college debate, with students taking part:

"And last the master-bowman, he,  
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear  
We lent him. Who, but hung to hear  
The rapt oration flowing free

"From point to point, with power and grace  
And music in the bounds of law,  
To those conclusions when we say  
The God within him light his face,

"And seem to lift the form, and glow  
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;  
And over those ethereal eyes  
The bar of Michael Angelo."

To debate that way is a triumph, to preach so is a glory.

But what is preaching? Broadus' words are simple—and his book on the subject has been employed more than all other such books put together; he says: "Preaching—words spoken whether to the individual, or to the assembly." Phillips Brooks had it that "preaching is the bringing of truth through personality". A more recent writer enlarges upon that, and says it is "divine truth through human personality for eternal life".

In this, all Christians may be preachers. Knowing Christ, they have the truth. As man to man they may speak it. The blessing of the Lord upon a word of testimony leads to eternal life. Let us who have the glad tidings tell them out.—B.

### PROPHECY

That great scholar, Dr. Hort, is quoted as saying, "Whatever helps our understanding helps also in the long run our praying and our working." If "God is light", then "in him is no darkness at all", and so the more light the better, no matter what kind of light it may be, provided only that it really is light.

Now light on the words of Scripture may lead to the heart of the Eternal. Here are "words which the Holy Spirit teacheth".

One word which is much misunderstood is the term "prophet". What is a "prophet"?

To begin with, the root of the Old Testament word for "prophet" means to "speak for" someone. We are first introduced to the word in Genesis 20:7, where the Lord said of Abraham to heathen Abimelech: "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live". Abraham is here "on speaking terms" with God. The next use of the word makes the case even clearer. When the over-modest Moses disclaimed ability to speak, "the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:1, 2). Aaron was to be Moses' "prophet" since he would "speak for" him. Much later Ezekiel, in the vision of the valley of dry bones, was told to command the wind: "Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath" (37:9). In the New Testament even a heathen poet is called "prophet" (Titus 1:12), for he had a message for his people.

What, then, is a "prophet"? The standard Hebrew lexicon translates the Old Testament term as "spokesman". When a prophet came to the people, he gave them



"an oracle of the Lord". He was God's spokesman. One scholar puts it this way: A prophet is "an interpreter of Jehovah's purpose in the great events of his time". Dr. J. A. Broadus, the great New Testament scholar of the Southern Baptists in the last generation, said: "It was by no means the main business of the prophets to predict the future; . . . they spoke of the past and the present, often much more than of the future." So we see that the usual meaning of the term "prophecy" is not prediction but message. When the Authorized Version was translated in 1611, "prophet" meant "speaker". Jeremy Taylor, a half century later, wrote on *Prophets and their Prophesying*, meaning preachers and their sermons.

A proper definition of this term does much to illuminate the Book. Our Lord we think of as Prophet, Priest and King. He was God's Prophet on the Mount of Beatitudes and in the Upper Room, just as much as when on the Mount of Olives He foretold the course of this age. He promised the Jews "prophets, and wise men, and scribes" (Matthew 23:34). In the church at Antioch of Syria, where believers were first named—nicknamed—Christians, were prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1); but when from the great Jerusalem Conference came Judas and Silas, "being prophets also themselves, (they) exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them" (Acts 15:32). Apostolic Christians were to "covet to prophesy" (I. Corinthians 14:39), for "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (14:3), so "all may learn, and all may be comforted" (14:31).—B.

### CONVOCATION

Graduation exercises of Toronto Baptist Seminary will be held on Thursday, May the 6th at 8 o'clock. This is always a happy occasion in Jarvis Street Church, and, of course, in the life of the School. We shall this year miss the genial inspiration of the President, Dr. T. T. Shields, but his prayers are with us, as ours are with him. Diplomas and certificates will be presented to those who have completed the various courses. The Valedictory will be delivered by the student who has throughout his course maintained the highest record. A scholarship for the highest record in English and other prizes will also be presented.

The address of the evening will be given by Rev. William Thomas, M.A. Mr. Thomas was well established in business in the north of Ireland when he heard God's call to the ministry. He left business to begin the task of ten years' study. About two years ago he was called to the historic Cooke's Presbyterian Church, Toronto, and is there exercising a strong ministry of Biblical preaching, which is being owned of God. Two weeks ago he addressed Chapel one morning, and we are happy to announce him as our special speaker on this occasion. We are expecting a large attendance of friends of the School.

### THE SEMINARIAN

*The Seminarian*, published by the students of Toronto Baptist Seminary, for April 19, is a double number, and its eight pages are crammed with intelligence, interest, and inspiration. We wish every WITNESS reader were a *Seminarian* subscriber. Sixty cents covers a

year's numbers. A copy of this issue, or as many copies as can be used, will be sent to all who apply. We suggest that the usual five cents per copy will help the expense of the three thousand of this issue printed. The following table of its contents will give some idea of the work Editor Frank S. Cook has been doing: An Ideal, *Editorial*; The Soul Workman, by W. W. Fleischer; Missionary Musings, by F. S. Cook; A Student Pastorate, by J. Scott; Possibilities! by W. R. Slade; Northern Messengers, by W. S. Whitcombe; New York to Victoria, by W. G. Brown; *Parlez-vous Francais?* by W. S. Whitcombe; "Now Concerning . . ." by A. C. Whitcombe.

### THE EDITOR

The doctor continues to give good reports respecting the Editor. Each day shows real progress in his condition. Dr. Shields sends warm greetings to all WITNESS readers, together with hearty thanks for their many expressions of affectionate interest.

## NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

**BOBCAYGEON**—Rev. M. B. Gillion—The Bobcaygeon Baptist Church, including the work in the rural districts, has been experiencing real spiritual blessing. A Good Friday Conference, followed by special meetings, resulted in the salvation of a number of precious souls. Rev. C. J. Loney of Hamilton, was with us for two weeks, and during that time several souls confessed Christ at Bobcaygeon, Kinmount, and Nogies Creek. One of the evidences of a real revival was the turning back to God of a number of Christians who had wandered from the Lord. One cannot describe in words what this meant to our church. It was wonderful to see such a breaking down, and repentant sinners coming to the Lord. We believe that much has been accomplished which will result in the salvation of many more souls.

**CALVIN, TORONTO**—Rev. F. Roblin—The eighth anniversary of Calvin Baptist Church, Toronto, was held on Sunday last, April 18th. It was also the occasion of the Pastor's eighth anniversary in the work of the ministry. There was a very large attendance at the evening service, the auditorium being filled to its utmost capacity with the exception of but two or three seats in the front. The combined senior and junior choirs contributed greatly to the interesting service, conveying the gospel in song to those present in most appropriate and inspiring selections. The congregation was especially impressed when the children's choir sang, "There's a Friend for little children."

Mr. Roblin reviewed the past history of the church from its beginnings on Jones Avenue, where he had started with no capital, up to the present time. He said that his first audience consisted of but nine people; he spoke of the present building, and the cause of its erection, and of his rejoicing for the way in which the Lord was caring for their financial obligations. This brief word was followed by an inspiring sermon by Rev. John Byers of Orillia.

Two weeks of special meetings were recently held with Pastor J. Scott of Belleville as special speaker. For the past week Rev. John Byers of Orillia has been conducting evangelistic meetings at Calvin, and the Lord has blessed these efforts.

**SPECIAL CONVENTION** of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec to be held in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, April 27th and 28th, to consider the Foreign Mission work of the Union. Let us be much in prayer for God's guidance at these meetings, that His will may be done.

24th of MAY RALLY is being held at Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church, Brantford. Rev. H. C. Slade will be the speaker at afternoon and evening sessions, and Miss Mary Jeffery will play the violin. Plan to attend this Rally.

## Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 1      2nd Quarter      Lesson 18      May 2nd, 1937

DR. OLIVE L. CLARK

### THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS

Lesson Text: I. Corinthians, chapter 8; Romans 14:12-23.

Golden Text: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."—I. Cor. 8:13.

#### Introduction.

Christian boys and girls, young men and women, and older ones, too, are confronted with this matter of amusements constantly. Worldly amusements are widely indulged in, and the one who refuses to follow the crowd must frequently stand alone with God. Some school teachers urge boys and girls of tender years to attend the theatres. It is of supreme importance that Bible School teachers, Christian parents and workers, instil into the minds of those committed to their care the principles laid down in Scripture.

Worldly pleasures and companions keep many from turning to the Lord. Bear this in mind as you teach this lesson. Lift up the Saviour. If He be crowned as Master and Lord, as well as Saviour, and given at all times His rightful place in the life, this problem will be easily settled. Christ asks us to give up nothing but sin. In return for harmful pleasures which leave a sting, He gives us joy unspeakable and full of glory (Prov. 10:22).

#### The Lesson Setting.

It would be wise to assist scholars in understanding the setting of the lesson by introducing the subject in story form such as this. Once upon a time, in far-off Africa, lived a boy, John, whose father was a missionary. John's chum was a little black boy, Sammy, who had formerly worshipped idols, but hearing of Christ, had believed on Him, given up his idols and become a Christian. One day, some natives brought the carcass of a sheep to the missionary, and Sammy stayed for supper that evening to partake of some of the mutton. As the meat was brought to the table, the native servant told them that this was one of many sheep which had been offered in sacrifice to the heathen gods the day before. Sammy shivered. If he ate that meat, it would seem to him as though he were again in the power of those gods, and bowing down to the images. He looked at John to see what his friend would do. John knew that there was only one God, and he would have been able to eat it without any such distressed feeling about it as was manifest in Sammy's face, but he knew how terrible it would be if Sammy should be tempted to worship idols again, so he said, "Mother, I do not want to eat this meat, for Sammy's sake. Will you please let us have some of that cold beef which is in the cupboard?"

If some such illustration is used, you may go back to it from time to time, enforcing the abstract principles with the concrete example.

#### I. The Christian's Attitude as Determined by Love (I. Cor. 8:1-3).

Love, not mere knowledge, is to be the standard of judgment in many matters of conduct. A person who has knowledge above his fellows, but who has not love toward them, becomes proud and vain (I. Cor. 13:2), but the one who obeys the command of Christ (1 John. 3:23), and is willing to think of the good of others, will use his knowledge to edify others. "Knowledge operating alone becomes an engine of destruction." Cicero, a Roman writer, once said: "No man should act as to make gain out of the ignorance of another."

No one has reason to be proud of what he knows. At best, it is very little, and whatever he knows has been given to him (I. Cor. 4:6, 7), as a gift to be ministered to others.

#### II. The Christian's Attitude as Determined by Another's Conscience (verses 4-13).

Anything which we might do without hurt to ourselves, but which would hinder another's progress, cause him to stumble, or entrap him, must be avoided. We are to be blamed if we throw obstacles in the path of those who have not full,

strong faith, who have strength "neither to overcome their scruples, nor to disregard an example contrary to their conscience". Christian influence and example must be carefully guarded. Note the results when we lead another wrongly:

(1) The brother dares to do what he feels to be wrong (v. 10).

(2) The weaker brother is being destroyed, instead of saved (v. 11), and he is one for whom Christ died.

(3) "Ye sin against the brethren." See also Matt. 18:7, 8; Deut. 27:18.

(4) You strike a blow which may shock and upset his conscience.

(5) "Ye sin against Christ." (Isa. 63:9, Matt. 25:40, 45). Union with Christ and our loyalty to Him forbid sin against another for whom He died (v. 13). We are our brother's keeper.

A passage of parallel import is found in I. Cor. 11:23-33.

#### III. The Christian as Accountable to God (Rom. 14:12).

Every word in this verse is emphatic; not exposition, but application, is necessary. If all actions were contemplated in the light of the solemn truth of a day of reckoning, lives would be different.

Since we are not our own, but bought with a price, let us glorify God (I. Cor. 6: 19, 20), and live unto Him Who died for us and rose again (II. Cor. 5: 15). The test of I. Cor. 10:31 may be applied, and will easily indicate whether any pleasure or amusement or activity is legitimate. Would this bring glory to God? Would it please Him? Surely no Christian would deliberately do that which he knows to be contrary to the will of God! The core of the matter is stated in Rom. 12: 1, 2.

#### IV. The Believer as Responsible for Others (Rom. 14:13-21).

Let us not censoriously criticize others, but deal severely with ourselves (v. 13). The beams in our own eyes demand our attention (Matt. 7:1-5).

Verses 14 to 21 discuss the same principles as are found in I. Corinthians, chapter 8.

Careful though we be, some people take offence very easily, and misjudge our actions (v. 16, I. Cor. 10:30), but let it not be our fault that they stumble. Let us seek to act for the advantage and profit of others (I. Cor. 10:24, 32, 33; 9:19, 22).

The pursuit of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and eager devotion to the work of the Lord, will leave us little time or desire for things which are lawful, but not expedient, and edify not (I. Cor. 10:23; 6:12; Col. 3:1-3).

#### V. The Christian as Responsible for His Own Conduct (Rom. 14:22, 23).

We are responsible if we *lead* others into wrong, but it is equally true that we are responsible if we *follow* others into wrong (Ex. 23:2, Prov. 1:10).

To tamper with conscience leads to ruin. Happy indeed is the person who has no reason to condemn himself (I. John 3:20, 21), who has a conscience void of offence to God, to others, and to his own best interests. Worldly amusements are destructive of body, mind and spirit. They take away the relish for the things of God, and they nullify a Christian's testimony. Therefore, let every man be persuaded in his own mind (v. 5).

If there be a question in our mind about any pleasure, let us play safe, and avoid it. If we should do that about which we are uncertain, taking a chance that it may be all right, we commit positive sin, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin". Lincoln said once: "We have a right to do what we please only when we please to do that which is right."

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