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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 BLOOD-TOKEN

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday morning, November 25th, 1928.

(Stenographically Reported)

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are."
—Exodus 12:13.

Prayer before the Sermon

O Lord our God, we come before Thee with humble acknowledgment of our sins, and of our complete dependence upon Thy redeeming grace. We all have turned our back upon Thee; we have rebelled against Thy rule; we have turned every one to our own way. We have nothing in our hands to bring. We acknowledge our bankruptcy, yet we rejoice that so many of us are Thy children, made so by the regenerating power of Thy Holy Spirit on the ground of what Jesus Christ accomplished in our behalf. We thank Thee this morning for the gospel of Thy grace, for the unsearchable riches of Christ, for the promise and the presence of the Holy Spirit Who is here to enlighten our understanding, to open the eyes of our heart, and to bring out of Thy word those things which He Himself moved holy men of old to write.

We come therefore with a desire to hear Thy word again. Often have we drawn water, with joy, out of the wells of salvation, often we have come to the old texts and have found refreshment there. We would learn, O Lord, that it is presumptuous to call any word of Thine familiar, for this is the word of Infinity, and there is ever some new wonder to behold in that which Thou hast spoken. We pray that out of Thy truth there may come to us the message our peculiar situation at this moment requires.

It may be that some of Thy children have been led to doubt their acceptance with Thee. Others may have been but barely saved from writing bitter things against themselves. Some cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." We pray that the word of Thy grace may minister comfort and reassurance this morning, that we may know that we are really Thine; and rejoice unspeakably in the present wonders of salvation, and in the prospect which is immediately before us. It may be that there is someone here this morning who has long delayed the decision which ought to have been made; that some heart has long been closed against Thee; that in this service this morning there is someone for whom prayer has been offered many, many years. Some of the prayers are treasured in the golden vials full of incense before the throne, and the voices that uttered them perhaps have long since been silenced yet those prayers are held in remembrance: may all such be saved to-day. May any who

have been perplexed perhaps by the very simplicity of the gospel be led into the full assurance of faith.

Let Thy benediction rest upon the boys and girls, even the very young ones here this morning. May the word of Thy grace be so clear and so simple that even the little children may be able to understand what it is to be saved, and how to be saved. Look upon any who are in trouble or distress this morning, upon any who have come to a position where they know not which way to turn. Lift upon them the light of Thy countenance, we beseech Thee; and as we wait upon Thee in the hearing of Thy word may the strength of every one be renewed, so that we may leave this place this morning mounting up with wings as eagles. Draw near to us and make us sweetly aware of the presence of the Lord. May the still small voice of the Spirit be heard in every heart. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token." When Joshua sent the two spies into the land of Canaan to spy out the land and to bring him word, they took refuge in the house of Rahab, whose house was upon the city wall. When the king of Jericho heard of their presence in the city he sent men to take them, but Rahab hid them from their enemies. Ere she sent them away, she asked them that when they should come into the land as conquerors they would deal kindly and truly with her, and show mercy to her and her household even as she had shown mercy to them. She let them down by a cord from the city wall. And the spies made promise that on their return they would give protection to her and her house on one condition; they bade her take a piece of scarlet thread—as it is called in our version—by which she had lowered them from the city wall, saying, "Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by, and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of

thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him." Thus they made a covenant with her.

That scarlet thread runs all through the Bible. The books of the Bible are bound together by the promise of the cleansing blood. From Genesis to Revelation there is not a chapter in the Book in which, if our eyes are opened, we cannot see the token of the blood. It is the very heart of the gospel, and without it there is no gospel at all. "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

You are familiar with the immediate history of the text. It is the story of the passover. The blood was to be sprinkled upon the door posts and the lintels, and the whole family were to hide beneath its shelter. Moses said, by the word of the Lord, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are." Let us look, therefore, once again at the blood atonement. We sing it often, and we sing it without wearying,

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

There is nothing else worth thinking about, nothing else worth speaking about.

"I love to tell the story:
For those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting
To hear it like the rest."

A woman once said to me years ago (not in this church), "I always enjoy Sunday morning more than Sunday evening, for Sunday morning you speak to Christians, and Sunday evening you usually preach to the unsaved." I said, "You don't enjoy hearing preaching to the unsaved?" She said, "Not very much." "Well then," I said, "there is something sadly wrong with your own spiritual life." Do you know the thing that interests a mother more than anything else in the world? It is the story of the coming of a new life somewhere. And if we are really born of God, there is nothing in the world that will thrill us like the cry of a new-born soul. ("Amen"). And whenever the time comes with any one of us that we cannot rejoice unspeakably in the old, old, story of Jesus and His love, it will be an infallible indication that we are failing in spiritual health, and have come to the place where we are blind and cannot see afar off, and have forgotten that we are purged from our old sins. Oh the wonder of it, to the Christian, that we are saved at all! That is the biggest marvel of the universe, and will be so world without end.

I.

"The blood shall be to you for a token." Look then, for a moment or two, at THE GODWARD ASPECT OF THIS TOKEN. I know very specially it was said, "The blood shall be to you for a token," but it was a token also to God. The blood had a message for heaven as well as for earth. The atonement effected by the death of Christ ministered something to outraged Deity. It did something for us, but it did something for us because it had done something for God; for He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil", and He cannot "look upon

iniquity". Of what did the blood speak in its Godward relation?

It spoke, first of all, of *the sovereignty of God*. It was His way of saving His people. They may not have understood the philosophy of it, they may not all have been able to explain why the shedding of blood was necessary; but God had said it was so, and had decreed that the blood must be sprinkled if anyone was to be saved. And when He passed through the land, if He found the house of an Israelite with no blood upon it, He must have said, "And who are these that they would lift their hand in rebellion against Me? Have I not commanded the shedding and sprinkling of blood, in order that beneath its shelter people might be saved? But here is a house in which Israelites dwell, who have dared to neglect my commandment, and to assume that there is salvation in some other way than in My way." It is not necessary that any one of us should understand all that is implied in the death of Christ: as a matter of fact, I do not suppose anyone understands it in the height and depth and length and breadth of its significance. When we come upon this sacred mystery, we touch the realm of the Infinite; and how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus Christ, we may not here and now fully know.

Blessed be God, the Book is full of teaching, full of comfort; and as we grow in grace and in His knowledge, we do come to revel in this great mystery. But even supposing a man should say here this morning, "I do not understand, sir, this doctrine of the blood," my answer is, Never mind whether you understand it or not. This is His commandment that you should believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says He died for you; His Word says there is no other way of salvation. His Word declares the blood must be spilt, the blood must be sprinkled; and whether you understand it or not, if you would obey Him and be submissive to Him, then do as He bids you. Cast yourself upon Him. I can well understand some father-priest, as he shed the blood and dipped the hyssop in it, saying to himself, "I don't understand it, it is all a mystery to me; but I am commanded to do it, and I will do it." He dipped the hyssop in the blood, and sprinkled it upon the door post and lintel, and said to his family, "Come in"—and he shut the door. He said, "We may not understand why, but God says there is safety behind the blood, and we are going to abide under its shelter to-night, and confess that He has provided salvation for us, and that we gladly accept it on His terms."

For many a day someone may have been saying to himself, "I will be a Christian when I can understand all that is involved in it." If you wait until then you never will be saved, for I venture the assertion that when we have been ten thousand years in heaven, the wonder of it, the marvel of it, will so grow upon us that we shall be saying, "Thank God, there is no end to our opportunity of studying the mystery of the precious blood." Meanwhile, my friends, obey Him, accept His way, submit to Him. Sprinkle the blood, and let Heaven know that your soul is bowed in allegiance to God Himself. "The blood shall be to you for a token"; a recognition of divine sovereignty, an announcement of complete submission to God. God's was, not yours or mine, is the way of life.

The blood was usually a *token of repentance*. Death was the penalty for the most heinous offence. You

can do nothing more than take a man's life; when a man has yielded his life, he has yielded his all. That must be a great crime which can be expiated only with blood. When the blood was shed in Egypt's land, and Israel saw in the paschal lamb their substitute, someone dying in their room and stead, when they took that blood and sprinkled it upon the door posts and lintel, they acknowledged their guilt. They said, "I am guilty, and I accept another's death in my behalf."

I do not wonder that the doctrine of the blood should be so objectionable to the natural man. The cross of Christ pays human nature no compliment. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And when you see in Jesus Christ your substitute and representative, and acknowledge Him, you acknowledge that in the person of Jesus Christ you were put to death, you take the place of the penitent thief who said to his fellow, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly." He said, in effect, "I deserve to be here, I merit it, I have earned it; I deserve to die." So do we; and the blood, when appropriated by us, is a token to God that we acknowledge our sin, we confess our guilt, we declare that we deserve to be banished for ever from His presence.

He "commandeth all men everywhere to repent". That is God's commandment, that we should repent. Have we thus seen our sins? Oh I said just now that the believer ought to rejoice to hear the gospel. There are many people who have known the Lord for a score of years who need to hear that doctrine over again, that the blood of Jesus Christ implies our utter unworthiness. Death is our just desert. Thus we indicate to heaven our repentance when we apply the blood.

And then, my friends, the blood was a *token of faith in its Godward aspect*. The blood proclaimed to heaven that the people who had sprinkled it, believed God, and were trusting Him to be saved in His way. Suppose the wise men of Israel had come together and said, "Let us take counsel together; let us pool our wisdom; let us devise houses with stone walls, mighty bars, iron doors, behind which we may find shelter when the death angel comes." And suppose the wealthy had come to the wise and said, "We have no wisdom wherewith cunningly to devise a structure that shall be death-proof, but we have wealth, and if you will supply the wisdom, we will supply the material, thus we will help each other to build a great fortress in which we can find shelter." And then suppose the strong had come and said, "We have no wisdom to invent, and no wealth to provide, but we have strength to labour; and if wisdom will devise the plan, and wealth will provide the means, we will supply the energy, and together we will build a mighty house that shall stand out against the angel, and within we will find shelter for ourselves and our families." If thus they had built the house, and were all gathered within; though they had furnished it elaborately, and provided themselves with comforts and with luxuries; they by so doing would have said, "We have produced the utmost we can for our own salvation." But when the angel of Justice came, what must he have said? Why, he must have said, "These men have no faith in God. These men do not believe in God. These men have no repentance of heart. There is no acknowledgment of sin here, but with their wisdom, and their wealth, and their might, they defy Heaven to its face. I will now

enter and bring their counsel to nought." And from the mightiest fortress that men could have built there would have arisen the cry of those who mourned the loss of the first-born, for their unbelief had been an act of rebellion against the Most High.

But, on the other hand, suppose the case of the humblest slave in Egypt, who had not a penny, but had to share with one as poor as he in order that the lamb might be slain, but having obeyed the divine command, we can imagine his saying, "I don't understand it, but there it is, the blood is on the lintel and the door posts; and though I am not worthy, though I have no wisdom, though I have no wealth—I am safe." One can imagine someone's saying, "Had you not better shut the door, father?" But he would have said, "Never mind shutting the door. You cannot shut the door against God, the door cannot keep Him out; the blood is sprinkled, and that will exclude the divine judgment and welcome the divine mercy."

Is the blood sprinkled? If it is, He will see it! Bind the scarlet thread across the door, and that will shiver the sword of justice in a million pieces. It cannot cut that, or God would cease to be God. Impotent, weak, hell-deserving, though we be, God will know that we have no other trust but in His mercy, and His boundless grace. How beautifully simple the way of the gospel is!

II.

"The blood shall be to you for a token." WHAT DID IT BETOKEN ON THE HUMAN SIDE? What did it mean to those who were hiding behind its shelter? Perhaps I can sum it up in a word. *It spoke of the grace of God, of the boundless mercy of God; that God had provided a way.* One does not need a very vivid imagination to picture some of those Israelitish homes in Egypt. One can well imagine when the blood had been sprinkled, an anxious wife and mother saying to her husband, "You have sprinkled the blood, but is there not something else we can do? The blood is there, it is nearing the midnight hour, and soon the Lord will pass through the land. Is there not something else we can do so as to ensure our safety?" And the father would say, "No, no; there is nothing else we can do. I just went out again, and I looked at the blood, and I said, 'I am looking at the thing that God will look at when He comes through the land. He will only ask for that, and that is there.' We have done all that He told us to do, and now we may be at rest."

One can imagine the first-born—the one upon whom the stroke must fall if death should enter—saying, "But father I am deeply concerned in this. Do you not think if we were to put a light in the window, and if I were to go to the door, and bare my back to the angel and show him the stripes that were laid upon me by the taskmaster, and all that I have suffered, do you not think he might be a little more likely to pass me by for these?" But the priest-father would say, "My son, He will not look for your stripes, nor would He have any respect for the light in the window. That could do no good at all. The word is, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' Now be at rest, my son; the blood is there! Come, we will go out and look at it again. There it is; there is nothing else we can do."

One can imagine the other members of the family ringing their hands, and saying, "But father, we are afraid he will not know how good you are, or how

kind you have been to us. We all think we have the best father in the camp. And we have always been so proud of our brother; he has been so good and so true. Come, we will go out to meet the angel, and tell him of your righteousness and of our brother's goodness." But the father would shake his head and say, "My children, the angel would not look for our goodness, he would not have respect to anything that was good in me—if there were anything. He will have no eyes for human merit, nor ears for such pleading: he will see one thing and only one thing, and if that is there he will pass us by. And it is there, my children. The blood is all that God demands: let us rest content with that which satisfies Him." The blood was the saving shelter, and all the goodness of all Israel could not add to the effectiveness of the blood.

The blood speaks. Oh, it is the blood; not your prayers, not your Bible-reading, not your church membership, not your observance of church ordinances, not all the works of righteousness you have done, or may do, not your almsgiving, nor all your wisdom. Gather them all together, and though you could build a tower of gold, silver, and precious stones, that would out-reach the peak of Babel's tower, and pierce the very skies, God would not see it. He has no eyes for that, no eyes for anything but the blood.

I know one poor sinner that is glad of that. Are you? ("Amen"). I know one that rests upon that. "The blood shall be to you for a token."

The blood was a covering. That is, in part, the significance of atonement in the Old Testament. The blood was to cover our sins. There is only one thing in all the universe that God cannot see through, and that is the blood. Hence David, enlightened by the Spirit of God, prayed, "Hide thy face from my sins." Covered with the blood, He sees in the believer no one but Christ; and he is complete in Him Who is the Head of all principalities and powers.

III.

THE BLOOD HAD A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD TOO. The Egyptians passed by and saw the blood. But yesterday the man who lives in that house was under the task-master's whip. He was not better than the Egyptians, not a whit; and as the Egyptians passed by they must have said, "He may be very foolish, but evidently he is not trusting in anything but in the blood, he is depending on the blood." The poor Egyptians did not understand it. Notwithstanding, the blood on the door-post and lintel was a testimony, a confession of faith to the world.

My dear friends, that is what we are required to do. That is the meaning of the ordinance of baptism, the meaning of the ordinance of the supper; and in these two symbols the whole truth of the gospel is gathered up. Taking them together in their proper and primitive order and significance, we do show the Lord's death till He come; and we say to all the world, "If I am different from you, if I am safe and secure, it is only because I am sheltering behind the blood."

How is it with you this morning? Will a man here say, "But, sir, do you mean to say that I must stultify my intellect, and must bow to that old-fashioned doctrine of the shambles?" Listen, my brother, no one stultifies his intellect when he does exactly what God tells him. To the Greeks, to the Gentile world, to the natural man, Christ crucified is foolishness, but to us who are saved He is, "the wisdom of God, and the power of God". My

testimony is this: I expect some day to stand before God. I know I have never done anything that could command His favour for a moment. I have no hope that I shall ever be able to do anything; my only confidence is that One stood in my place and bore my sins, and paid my penalty, died the Just for the unjust to bring me to God. In simple faith I take that blood, and say, "Lord, I don't understand it, but it is Thy way of saving me, and I am resting in the precious blood."

My friend, the late Dr. John Roach Straton, told me a good story. He said there was a house in Georgia where he used to visit quite frequently. They had a number of coloured servants, as many people have in the south. The cook was called Mary, a big black woman. Dr. Straton said he had been there so often that he felt like one of the family, and he always, before leaving, went into the kitchen to see Mary and have a word or two with her, to thank her for her service to him. He said, "One day my friends had a dinner party, and Mary excelled herself. She made some wonderful corn bread and it just suited me. I took so many helpings of it that I was almost ashamed of myself. I did not want anything else, it was so delicious. When the dinner was over I went out to the kitchen to see Mary. I said to her, 'Mary, you certainly gave us a great dinner to-day.' 'Well, Marse John, I sure am glad you enjoyed it, that is what I wanted you to do.' 'Well, I did, we all did. I never tasted anything like that corn bread. You know, I think the Lord will write that down to your credit, Mary'. Instantly her face changed—she took it seriously. She stood back and said, 'Marse John, I want you to know I am not trusting to any corn bread for my salvation. I am just trusting to the precious blood of the Lord'."

Mary was right. She would be a better professor in a theological seminary than some I have known. We are not trusting to our skill in bread-making. "The blood shall be to you"—and to the whole universe—"for a token upon the houses where ye are."

"Thou dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

"HE TAKETH AWAY"

In the familiar chapter of the vine and the branches, our Lord says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." There is no place in the garden of the Lord for dead branches. A good gardener keeps his garden clean and vital. Sometimes we are distressed as we observe the number of people who have made profession of faith in Christ, who turn back, many of them abandoning their profession altogether. It must be the fact that though they seemed to be grafted into the stalk of the vine, there never was a real union. They were branches that did not bear fruit, and ultimately they were taken away.

How many ways the divine Husbandman has of purging His trees! How many instruments He employs! When a wind has swept through the tall trees, we find the ground littered with dead twigs, and some larger branches, which we had not noticed because they were obscured by the leaves of branches that were alive. But the strong wind effected their separation, and their separation was only a revelation of what they were. The

(Continued on page 7)

THE ALLUREMENTS OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

"Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."

The one hundred and twenty-second Psalm is manifold in its meaning. In its strictly historical aspect it breathes the ardent religious patriotism of an Hebrew saint: it expresses the longing and delight of a pious soul in contemplation of the prospect of being in Jerusalem which was at once the centre of religious interest, and the symbol of national unity, and strength, and glory.

In its prophetic bearing this psalm looks far into the future. What it involves of promise for the spiritual Jerusalem which is from above, which is free, and is the mother of us all, even the most resourceful imagination cannot now fully conceive.

But such a passage as this, because of the true experimental element involved in its historic origin, and because of the dynamic involved in the attraction of its ultimate, inestimably glorious hope, has a present, abiding message for every devout soul.

I.

Public worship has a peculiar charm for the spiritually minded. It is well that we should train ourselves to value the house of God because it is the house of God. There is, of course, a possibility of our attaching undue importance to material houses, and, supposing God to be concerned about geography and architecture, fall into the Samaritan woman's perplexity as to the relative claims of the modern Jerusalems and Gerizims. But, conversely, the disregard, or dissolution of the material symbol of worship, may result in the loss or vagrancy of the spirit too. This is one danger to which all non-liturgical churches are exposed; and only by the maintenance of a rich spiritual life can such loss be avoided. We are afraid that many think of going to church as a going to hear a sermon or the singing. Let us rather train ourselves to think of the church as the house of God, where he is to be worshipped. Then the sermon and the singing will both fall into their proper place.

"And when we are in the right frame of mind we shall be glad of every opportunity to "go into the house of the Lord." The man or woman who can say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth", is not easily prevented from going to church. We are sure that a great many of our readers thoroughly understand the mood this psalm expresses. We delight in the house of the Lord, and why should we not? What is the house of worship to the believing soul? It is the time when lovers keep their tryst; it is the time when we go into the house of the Lord to meet the Lover of our souls; it is the day of all the week the best—the day he and she have lived and longed for. So it is with whosoever is a true believer. Now we shall see our Well Beloved—we shall hear His sweet voice, we shall feel the touch of His hand, we shall sing His praise and tell Him how much we love Him, and He will welcome us to His presence and tell us that He loved us first. What is the hour of worship? It is the time when the banquet is called in the King's palace. Now hungry souls may rejoice, for

the table will be well spread. There will be rare delicacies for delicate appetites, and abundant fare for all who hunger indeed. Oh, yes! The house of God is a place of banqueting to many who rejoice to be called thither.

To those who find pleasure in labour the hour of worship is welcomed as a time of meeting with the Master. Here the servant is given some new order, a new task is assigned him in which he takes great delight. The Christian soldier welcomes it as a call to the front, now he will find honourable employment in subduing the enemy. He will be given the King's full panoply, and he will go forth armed to the battle.

And he who thirsts for wisdom, runs eagerly to the springs of revelation. Like a student impatient of the long vacation, and eager to press his pursuit of knowledge—so the apt pupil in the school of Christ is always glad to go into the house of the Lord.

And does not the house of the Lord offer rest to the weary, and consolation to the sorrowing, and healing for the broken-hearted? What wonder, therefore, that men should be glad to be called thither?

But the psalmist's gladness was the result of contact with other gladsome souls. He went in part, because he had been invited. When people really love the house of God they seldom go alone. We shall have an increase of church attendance on the part of the unconverted, when the people of God learn afresh to love the house of God as in the olden days. There is no substitute for this glowing invitation, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." May we learn to so love the house of God that we cannot refrain from inviting others to accompany us. When does the little child run in from the garden to say, "Oh, mother, come out into the garden!" When she has found a rosebud opening on the bush, or a strawberry, luscious and ripe, peeping from under the leaves; or a bird of beautiful plumage singing on the branch of a tree. It is when she has seen or heard something which fills her with exquisite delight, that she runs to find somebody to share it with her. All that is in the verses we are considering: when we love the things of God we shall long to share them.

Such invitations are often eagerly welcomed. Many are glad to receive them. Many people attend church to-day because they are invited; they are glad to be invited. And many more would be glad—not to be told to "go", or formally asked to "come", but eagerly sought after, as Philip sought Nathanael, or the Samaritan woman the people of Samaria: "Let us go."

What preparation of heart consists in this joyous anticipation: "Our feet shall stand—or, are standing—within thy gates, O Jerusalem"! How few there are who prepare for public worship! We rush to the house of God without prayer or meditation. When we go to the well for water we take an empty pail—if it is half full of water, stale and dirty, we throw it away; when we go to the store or to the market, we take an empty basket. What do we take to church? What capacity for spiritual things? How different the man who has lived in contemplation of the Lord's day and house! He comes prayerfully and expectantly, and is not disappointed. He has been saying it over to himself all the week: "My feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." And at the prospect his heart, his imagination have been kindled; and so he passes on his enthusiasm to others until they say in concert: "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

"Oh happy souls that pray
Where God appoints to hear!
O happy men that pay
Their constant service there!
They praise Thee still;
And happy they
That love the way
To Zion's hill."

II.

Such glowing devotion as we have here is dependent upon experience for its continuance. Many of us will find ourselves on common ground with David in this respect. It was his growing experience of the profitableness of divine worship, which filled him with such rapturous expectation as he contemplated his going up to the house of the Lord.

To him Jerusalem was as a strong city. Its material compactness was symbolical of its spiritual unity and strength. Within its holy wall he felt secure. It had so often proved as a city of refuge to his hunted and haunted spirit. Though his name is not assigned to the psalm, very likely it was he who sang on another occasion: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

Have we not all found the house of the Lord as a strong tower? How many of us recall seasons of distress and weariness when we come eagerly to our Jerusalem as to a city which is compact together!—and we were not disappointed. Its hospitable walls seemed to enfold us as in welcoming arms; and the spiritual presence which pervaded the place, the power which radiated from its united members, filled us with a holy calm and a joyous assurance of victory.

But again: His beloved Jerusalem had been to him a place of varied fellowship: "Whither the tribes go up." How different they all were! David had had experiences of the various excellencies, and diversified idiosyncrasies of the tribes of Israel. They had not always understood him, nor he them; and yet he had found them all "the tribes of the Lord." He had found a fellowship and a comradeship where the tribes of the Lord were gathered in Jerusalem which he had found nowhere else. Hence he anticipates his standing in Jerusalem with the greater delight, because there he will meet with the tribes of Israel who are the tribes of the Lord.

An only child, except in the very rare cases where he or she has been trained by parental paragons, is likely to be difficult to live with. It is a good thing for a boy or girl to be trained where "the tribes go up". And the children of God who dwell in solitariness and never mingle with "the tribes of the Lord" are usually angular characters. It does us good to mix with the tribes even if we are jostled a bit. The jostling will rub the corners down. We have loved our Jerusalem for this very reason. What examples of consecration, what instances of unselfishness, of self-sacrificing devotion, we have found among the tribes! And what comradeship in arms! We have all been warriors, and our battles have been many and severe. But how we have been helped! How the relationships of life have been ennobled and sanctified as they have been touched with this deeper fellowship which they and we have found together in the house of God! How wives have felt their husbands have been given them a second time in

the Lord, and husbands their wives! How parents have rejoiced to see their children registered among the tribes of the Lord! Oh, this has been a glorious fellowship! True, some of the saints have been chiefly remarkable as affording us an opportunity to let patience have her perfect work; but as we have provided space for the exercise of that grace in others, the relationship, no doubt, has been mutually profitable!

And is it not even so with us? Whosoever is a true believer, and really delights in the things of God, we venture to say have found no fellowship anywhere comparable to that which we have found in the house of God and among the tribes of the Lord. We do not always agree with others—as even children of one family disagree—and yet it forms no small part of our pleasure that we have found in the house of God our dearest friends. We have formed our enduring friendships there, friendships which will outlast the fleeting years of time, and which will be renewed in the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem:

"The stars and the mailed moon,
Though they seem to fall and die,
Still sweep with their enchanted lives
An endless track of sky.

"And though the hills of death
May hide the bright array,
The marshalled brotherhood of souls,
Still keeps its upward way.

"Upward, for ever upward,
I see their march sublime,
And hear the glorious music
Of the conquerors of Time.

"And long let me remember
That the palest, faintest one
May to diviner vision be
A bright and blessed sun."

But this jubilant worshipper was also attracted by the promised blessing of the testimony of Israel. The ark of the covenant, which was the central object in the symbolism of the tabernacle and temple, was called the ark of the testimony. It is to this, and all it typically represented, the psalmist refers: here was the unbroken law, here the pot of manna, here the rod that budded and over all the mercy seat and the cherubim of glory. Together these symbols constituted the testimony of Israel; they symbolized the divine Presence; and we know they find their realization in Christ. Ah, He is ever the centre of attraction to the tribes of spiritual Israel. If He is not uplifted, if His grace is not proclaimed, if His presence and power be wanting from the sanctuary, then verily "Ichabod" must be written, for the ark of God is taken. The house of God must be sweet to many of us, because there we have met with Christ; there we have found the mercy-seat, and there we have had experience of His redeeming grace. We must have the gospel, we must have the testimony of Israel, even the truth as in Jesus, or we cannot be glad to go to the house of the Lord:

"Forgotten be each worldly theme
When Christians meet together thus;
We only wish to speak of Him
Who lived, and died, and reigns for us.

"We'll talk of all He did and said
And suffered for us here below;
The path He marked for us to tread,
And what He's doing for us now.

"Thus, as the moments pass away,
We'll love and wonder and adore;
And hasten on the glorious day
When we shall meet to part no more."

Another element in this gladness is the joy of thankfulness. The unthankful are always unhappy. There is no greater pleasure than that of saying, "Thank you", for a lover's gift. And that day is ill and wickedly spent that has not called forth is song of thankfulness and praise. Surely for all our experience of divine goodness we should be glad of an opportunity to say "Thank you!" What an atmosphere we should create were we always to come into His presence with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise! Yes many such occasions have called us to the house of God; and we have, from the first hymn, been thankful worshippers.

Have "the thrones of judgment" ministered to our gladness? Have we rejoiced in correction? When the word of God comes to us in admonition and even with sharp rebukes, do we really rejoice? I believe we have done so; and we have rejoiced in the divine faithfulness: we have been content that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

We have found here foretastes of heaven. This psalm—the gladness, the fear, the glory of it—will find its ultimate realization in a realm beyond this vale of shadows and of tears, for "ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

That is our happy prospect, and we shall soon be there—"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem"! And then?

"The lamb is in the fold
In perfect safety penned:
The lion once had hold,
And thought to make an end;
But One came by with wounded side
And for the sheep the Shepherd died.

"The exile is at home!
O nights and days of tears,
O longings not to roam,
O sins, and doubts, and fears,—
What matters now, when (so men say)
The King has wiped those tears away?

"O happy, happy Bride!
Thy widowed hours are past,
Thy Bridegroom at thy side,
Thou all His own at last!
The sorrows of thy former cup
In full fruition swallowed up!"

O ministering angels! We shall be glad when ye shall say unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

"HE TAKETH AWAY" (Continued from page 4)

wind did not kill the branches: it only showed that the branches were already dead.

Thus it appears sometimes in the Christian church. A storm arises, and many are offended. They yield their office, or withdraw from a particular duty. But the storm only showed that they were fruitless branches that really needed to be taken away. The divine Husbandman makes no mistakes. He never mutilates His trees: He only purges the fruit-bearing branches that they may "bring forth more fruit". It is only the fruitless ones He "taketh away". It is well that we should have faith in the skill of the Husbandman. It will save us from undue anxiety. The great Head of the church, we may depend upon it, will look after His own.

"THE OXFORD GROUP MOVEMENT ANALYZED"

This booklet is an address delivered by Dr. Shields in Jarvis Street Church Thursday evening, January 19th, 1933. It was printed in THE GOSPEL WITNESS and ten thousand copies printed in booklet form. These were rapidly sold, and a second edition of ten thousand was printed. That supply was also exhausted, and another edition of five thousand was printed a few weeks ago. We print below an appreciation of this booklet, by Mr. F. Spencer Johnson, Honorary Director of The Life and Liberty Missionary Fellowship, Croydon, England. See advertisement below.

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We have seen a great deal of literature in England that claims to expose "the Groupers". Some of it is not convincing. A few booklets are useful to help Bible Students and for these we are most grateful.

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We are most grateful to the Author for a kind gift of a free parcel of distribution among students, especially on the Continent of Europe.

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Hon. Director, "The Life and Liberty Missionary Fellowship", Croydon, Eng.

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Bible School Lesson Outline

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OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

TEACHING ON SABBATH-KEEPING AND DISCIPLESHIP

Lesson Text: Luke 6.

Golden Text: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"—Luke 6:46.

I. The Lord of the Sabbath—verses 1-5.

Read also Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28.

The action of the disciples in gathering and eating the grain (Greek word translated "corn" denotes any kind of grain) was permitted (Deut. 23:25), but the law commanded that no labour be performed on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:2, 3; Num. 15:32-36); it was a day of rest. The Lord's sanction, and his reference in verse 3 show that this was a case of necessity, for the disciples had evidently become very hungry in their journeying. Only self-righteous Pharisees would have looked upon the action of picking and crushing the ripened grain as labour.

Our Lord answered the fault-finding Pharisees by citing the example of David, whom they would not dare to criticize. The priests also profaned the Sabbath in the sense that the performance of their regular duties in the temple, and preparing the sacrifices involved toil (Matt. 12:5). In condemning the guiltless, they did not understand the Scriptures which enjoined mercy as well as sacrifice (Matt. 12:7; Hosea 6:6). Mercy is to season justice, and the principle of duty is subordinate to the principle of love. Since "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), caring for the welfare of men is to be considered a higher duty than caring for the welfare of institutions.

Christ is Lord even of the Sabbath. He had authority to interpret the law, and His word was final.

II. Doing Good on the Sabbath—verses 6-11.

Read also Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6.

The enemies of Christ followed Him even to the temple, watching for an opportunity to accuse Him of wrong-doing. He knew their thoughts, and in spite of their unjust opinion of His action, performed the miracle of healing. He would yield to no one the right to put up standards for His conduct.

The question He put to the Pharisees went to the root of the matter. To refuse to do good when the opportunity is afforded is to do evil. They had added so many injunctions to the law that they had covered up its real purpose (Matt. 15:6). The observance of ceremonial rules was never intended to preclude deeds of kindness. He was "grieved for the hardness of their hearts" and looking round upon them with righteous anger (Mark 3:5), directed the man to stand forth. They were filled with rage because they had been put to confusion before all.

III. The Disciples Called—verses 12-19.

Read also Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19.

Before choosing His co-labourers in the Gospel, our Master spent the night in prayer. If He found it necessary to hold communion with His Father in prayer before undertaking a task which was of great moment in the Kingdom enterprise, how much more essential is prayer to the one who would be used of God!

He called to Him disciples; that is, learners or pupils. From these disciples, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He chose twelve apostles, those "sent forth". The word "apostle" is used in Scripture concerning the twelve followers, also Paul, Barnabas and Matthias. The term "disciple" includes the twelve, and also others who followed Christ during His earthly ministry. The twelve were chosen that they might be with Him, that they might preach, and that they might heal (Mark 3:14).

It is difficult for human minds to fathom the mystery of our Lord's choice of Judas as an apostle, when He knew Judas was a traitor (John 6:64). God has His own purpose in permitting evil for a season, and we know that it is all for His glory. The wicked are "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22), and their very wrath shall add to His praise (Psa. 76:10), even as the hardness of heart of Pharaoh was the occasion of the display of God's power on behalf of Israel. To understand the choice of Judas, one would need to grasp the relationship existing between God's foreknowledge, His sovereignty and man's free will. The day will come when we shall know all about these great doctrines, but, in the meantime, let us believe them with our whole hearts.

IV. The Disciples Instructed—verses 20-49.

This discourse was intended primarily for the instruction of the disciples, though the multitude could evidently hear the Saviour's words. For the purpose of study the sermon may be divided into three sections:

1. The disciple in relation to His Lord—verses 20-26.

Those who suffer for the Son of man's sake now, will rejoice with Him hereafter, while those who seem to be prosperous now, apart from Him, will experience humiliation hereafter. Notice the parallelism in these verses. Blessed are they who are poor, hungry, sorrowful and despised, for His sake, for in God's time they will be rich, satisfied, joyful and honoured (Matt. 5:1-12). Woe to those who are rich, satisfied, joyful and honoured now. They have received their consolation; they have had their reward; they have the receipt in full (Greek of Matt. 6:2). They will find themselves poor, hungry, sorrowful and despised, because they have lived unto themselves, instead of unto Christ.

2. The disciple in relation to his fellows—verses 27-38.

The law of love should govern the conduct of a disciple in his dealing with others. The teaching of Christ in these matters was a "new commandment" (John 13:34), inasmuch as He demanded kindness and generosity, and laid stress upon the motives which actuate conduct (Matt. 5:38-48). Also, He supplied the power by which His own purpose for the holy conduct of His disciples might be carried out. Verse 31, known as "The Golden Rule", summarizes the teaching of this section.

3. The disciple and his own heart-life—verses 39-49.

The one who would lead others aright must watch his own sight, that his vision be clear and unimpaired. The standard of perfection which he strives to attain should be that standard set by his teacher (Greek for "Master" in verse 40). "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord" (Matt. 10:24, 25; John 15:20).

To attempt to correct the faults in another's life is useless till the stumbling blocks in one's own life be removed (Matt. 7:1-5).

Outward actions are the indications of the condition of the heart (verses 43-45), for "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). The heart must be kept with all diligence, "for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

On the other hand, the inward conviction is to be expressed not merely in words, but also in deeds (Golden Text). Obedience to Christ should follow submission to Him; faith should be accompanied by works (Matt. 25:11, 12; Luke 13:25). The One Who owns us has every right to command us (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Matt. 20:15). Many profess with their lips to know Him, but their hearts are far from Him (Mark 7:6). If we love Him, we will keep His commandments.

Discipleship involves coming to Christ, learning of Him, and obeying Him. By parable Christ teaches that those who hear His word and then obey it (John 14:21; Jas. 1:22-25; Matt. 7:24-27), have a foundation for their lives which will stand the storms, but those who hear His word, and do not heed it, will come to ruin.

"My gracious Lord, I own Thy right,
To every service I can pay;
And call it my supreme delight,
To hear Thine accents and obey."