

# The Gospel Witness

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AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"FAR OFF—MADE NIGH"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, August 15th, 1937

(Stenographically Reported)

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Eph. 2:13.

The Bible is full of what, with our limited perspective, seem to us to be paradoxes. How, for example, is it possible for one to be "far off" from an omnipresent God? If God is everywhere present, how is it possible for any of us to be "far off" from Him? There have been those who have been so overwhelmed by a sense of the divine Presence that they have noted the difficulty of eluding Him. The Psalmist expressed his awareness of the divine Presence when he said, "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

There is a sense, of course, in which—and for that believers will ever praise His name—it is impossible for the children of God to elude the divine Presence. But you will remember how our Lord in that matchless parable of the prodigal, described the younger son, on receiving his father's bounty, as taking his journey into "a far country".

Now where is that "far country"? From what, and from whom is it "far" away? Is it possible to find its location on a map, to identify it by a particular name? Can the distance thereto be measured in miles, or in kilometers? What does the Bible mean when it says that "ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh"? That is the question we shall ask this evening in very simple terms.

I.

First of all, WHAT IS IT THAT SEPARATES BETWEEN THE SOUL AND GOD? What is that element, or substance, or quality, or principle, which intervenes and establishes a distance between man and his Maker? How can anyone be "far off" from God?

We may look at it for a moment negatively, and remark very simply that *it is not a physical distance*. One can measure the distance over the surface of the earth; but man is not separated from God by any material substance. We used to think of the realm of the material as being made up of things that were impenetrable. We cannot yet understand how certain rays can penetrate wood, or metal, or other material; or how they can reveal the skeleton of a man while he is yet in life. What, then, is this thing which separates the soul from God?

People may be separated from each other by geographical distances. I remember the first time I went to British Columbia. I had been many times at sea before, but for some strange reason the sea did not seem to separate me from those I loved. Morning by morning, as I looked out upon the trackless waste of water, I could not see that I had made any progress. I seemed to be no farther away to-day than I was yesterday. But when those hundreds of miles of prairie land had rolled out behind me, and then by and by we had threaded our way between the towering mountains, when we descended the Pacific slope, it really seemed to me that I had reached the other side of the world, and that I was "far off" from my dwelling place. Is it thus that men remove themselves from the immediate presence of God? No: not at all.

You passed, perhaps, in your car, a man still laboriously measuring the distance by foot, and in but a moment or two you looked through your mirror and saw his form fade away into the distance, and soon there was a great

space between you. Why? Because you had facilities for more rapid movement than he: he was separated from you by his physical inability to keep up with you. You ran away from him. Is it thus God runs away from us? Are we "far off" because we are unable to keep up with God? Sometimes such infirmities, or disabilities, separate men from men. The strong are able to achieve that which is beyond the ability of the weak, and to possess themselves of substance which lifts them to a higher plane of social life. It may be that some of you here this evening can think of the names of some men who have greatly prospered, either because of superior fortune, as, perhaps, some would call it; or greater ability. Now you say, "I remember when he was on my level, but he has got beyond me, and we do not see anything of each other now. He is 'far off' from me." Not thus are men separated from God. A man's poverty can not stand between him and his Maker. Nor will his wealth bring him "nigh". What is this divisive, separating something that cannot be measured by ordinary standards?

We may go further and say it is *not an intellectual distance*. We are not separated from God because of our inability to understand Him. He has not conditioned salvation upon our having our minds enlarged to the measure of the Infinite. I grant you there are intellectual differences, and people are sometimes separated from each other by mental inequalities. People may dwell together in the same house, and yet have tastes that are utterly at variance with each other. They may be so constituted, mentally, as to be unable to understand each other, and to feel that though the same roof covers them, they really dwell an immeasurable distance apart. I dare say you can think of people with whom you have had to do for years, of whom you say, "I am no nearer to them to-day than I was the first time I met them. I have no more thorough understanding of them, nor they of me, than at the beginning of our acquaintance." I have sometimes had occasion to observe two people trying to live together, who were, temperamentally, utterly unsuited to each other; and though they sat at the same table, and answered to the same name, they were separated by a distance that could not be measured. But that is, largely, after all, an external and superficial division. There is something deeper than that even in human life.

I fear sometimes people imagine that a man cannot be at one with God unless he has a thoroughly cultivated mind. I heard a professor on one occasion deliver a commencement address to a graduating class. I suppose some would have called it able, but I thought it was one of the most absurd deliverances I ever heard. I said to a friend, "One might suppose that it would be impossible for anyone to enter heaven unless they had graduated from that particular university." God pity us if that were made a condition of salvation! No, no! There is, of course, a distance, a difference, between the finite and the Infinite. It is written, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." When the Psalmist considered certain qualities of the Deity, particularly His intimate knowledge of him, his "downsitting" and his

"uprising", understanding his ways, and acquainted with his thought, even "afar off", he said, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." Oh, yes! there is much in God that is beyond our understanding; notwithstanding it is not by any mental disability that we are separated from God. Said the Lord Jesus, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Do not rest in the assumption that ultimately the soul may find some excuse, and even some justification for not being at one with God, on the ground that he was without mental capacity to understand the things of God. Not thus are men separated from Him.

By what means, then, are men positioned "far off" from God? *The distance is a moral one*: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God."

I suppose we must still wonder where heaven is. Solomon spoke of heaven as God's dwelling place: "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive." Little children have thought of heaven as being above us. A professor friend of mine told me years ago that one evening his wife was hearing the prayers of the children. She had been telling them Bible stories, and then she had gathered them about her for their evening prayer. Her little boy said to her: "Mamma, is heaven hard or soft?" The mother did not quite know what to say, but she thought she would risk saying it was soft, and so she said: "I do not think it can be hard, dear: it must be soft." "Well, then," said the little fellow, "Why don't their legs stick through?" He had thought of heaven as being somewhere above the stars, and of people as walking about up there; and if it were soft he did not understand why their legs did not stick through. A childish conception? But I do not know that we get very much farther when we try to localize God, to find out where He dwells, and in what sense He is "far off" from us.

To-day men challenge the upper spaces. How high they will ascend by and by I do not know. But the heavens, wherever they are, are even beyond the stars: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." It were a hopeless endeavour to try to climb up to God by any physical means, surely? You remember how the Babel builders said in the long ago: "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name." Professor Picard is not the first one to try to explore the stratosphere. They aspired to that at Babel in the long ago, only to discover that there was something more than mere physical distance between the souls of rebellious men and a holy God.

Yes, and I suppose we have all stood amazed at human achievement in the intellectual realm. We do not discount that. A young man, who is attached to one of the research departments of the University of Toronto, said to me only to-day, when someone had remarked on the weather being warm: "Do you know that they now have learned to use the sun to make ice?" He continued: "They can use the sun to run a refrigerator plant. It has actually been done." I do not know what we may do by and by. We are staggered by the astronomer's distances, are we not, when he looks through his great telescope? I saw a picture last night of an as-

tronomer taking a photograph by light that had been travelling, according to their estimates, thousands of years before it touched the sensitized film. It is a big universe. The spaces are all but infinite yet men are continually reaching out after the immeasurable.

But, my dear friends, by such endeavours the chasm can never be bridged. It is by sin men are separated from God. We may see that dimly illustrated even among imperfect men. I said just now that men may be separated by material matters, material circumstances, possessions; and by intellectual inequalities, too. But these separations are but superficial. The deeply divisive factors in life are always moral. That is what separates people. The rich can find pleasure in the company of the poor. The poor can hold the sweetest fellowship, often, with those who are rich, and their different stations may not interfere with the unity of their spirits. And so, too, the learned may condescend, without knowing it to be a condescension, to the lower mental levels of those who are ignorant and uninstructed. That is often the case. But where there is a moral difference, a real barrier is erected. You can think of people of whom you have heard, at least. They may be rich, or they may be wise, but you say, "I prefer to live far off from them." You would not invite them into your house. You would not choose to have any association with them at all because of that moral incompatibility, because of that unbridgeable gulf. "That man does not belong to the same world in which I live", you say. And yet, you, yourself, will admit that you are far from perfection. You acknowledge that it is easily conceivable that a man may be as far removed from you on the other side as you feel yourself to be removed from such a man. But how infinitely removed are we all, by our sin, from the absolutely holy God! I say it again, without any thought of superiority, I have sometimes been forced into contact with people whose presence seemed to pollute the atmosphere, and I have felt like exclaiming, "Give me another world, that I may breathe freely. I do not want to breathe the same air as that man."

But oh, how we have forsaken the divine standards! How low we have fallen! How far we have travelled! The "far country"! I suppose the people to whom Jesus spoke that parable were comparatively limited in their geographical knowledge. I do not suppose they had any idea of the dimensions of this world. Palestine was a small country, and they may have wondered where the prodigal was, when He described him as leaving his father's house, and going into a "far country". But there he spent all and ultimately descended to the level of feeding swine. Those to whom our Lord spoke could conceive of no lower level of life than that. We must needs apologize to the beasts, if we call some people beastly; for men have a capacity for moral descent unknown to the beast creation, who are without moral capacity at all. Nowadays we hear the modern preacher complimenting human nature, and telling us what wonderful people we are! Sometimes one almost feels as though the preacher were intending to say, "If God is not satisfied with a man like me, I do not know what would satisfy Him."

We used to have some discussions in this country not so very long ago, about theological matters, with a certain denominational university. There was one man who always amused me in these discussions. He was a

graduate of that university, and one could always be sure that before the debate closed he would have something to say. He was a harmless egotist who unconsciously played the part of an academic clown. I can see him now as he walked up the aisle to the platform. Striking an appropriate attitude he would say, "I am a graduate of such a university". His argument always was to the same effect; though varied in expression: "That university produced me! What more do you want." I told him more than once that if he fairly represented it, he was a poor advertisement of its quality.

So do men strut about before God. They make to themselves high-heeled boots, or stilts, and stand up as though impiously to say: "I will shake hands with God". But all such remain "far off" from God.

Here is one of the shortest words in the language "far"—albeit it is immeasurable. "A far country!" "Ye who sometimes were far off." How far! So far that with all his ingenuity man can never invent an instrument that can measure that distance, nor build a bridge that can span it; nor a machine that can fly it—"far off" from God. Sometimes we have felt it, have we not? Oh, yes! There have been times when God seemed a long, long way off. We could not make Him hear. There was something that had intruded itself between the soul and God, and you could not get over it, nor under it, nor could you burrow through it. How shall we define this distance which defies all human measurements? "Far off" from God!

Is there anyone here this evening who feels himself to be "far off"? Is there anyone here who says: "I wish I could fly to the place where He is! I wish that somehow that distance could be annihilated, and that I could get near to Him." Is there one who can use Job's language, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." If there is one such I am commissioned to tell you good news. God has provided a way whereby those who "sometimes were far off are made nigh". Hear it—"Now—now—now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

## II.

What an extraordinary statement!—"MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST". But it is true. Let us look at it for a moment. I cannot explain it; I cannot plumb the depths of its philosophy. It belongs to the infinite, and therefore is beyond our complete understanding; but we can understand enough to be made "nigh". And being "made nigh" we can be forever nigh, and go on understanding it better in all the days to come. This truth is not a toy of which we shall become weary, a subject that will soon be exhausted. This is not a theme to which any music can permanently be set: this is a subject that will occupy our thought forever. How did it come to pass that we "who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood"?

I suppose there are many here who have crossed the ocean, perhaps many times, sometime in a slow ship, and sometime in a fast one. And when you have gone in a slow ship, perhaps after eight or ten days, you have arrived on the other side in England, and you said: "Two weeks ago to-day I was in Toronto. Not so bad! All that distance in two weeks. Now I am in Lon-

don." But we move more rapidly now, and in a little over four days you can travel from New York to London. And there is yet another way. I read an interesting story the other day of the American Clipper, I think it was, one of two ships crossing in mid-ocean, and how they soared away there from Newfoundland away above the clouds, and never saw anything but clouds until their instruments showed them where they were, and they dropped down through a hole in the clouds, and said, "There it is, there is Foynes, Ireland." One way they covered the distance in a little over twelve hours, and the other direction in a little over seventeen hours. After a while I suppose we shall have breakfast in Toronto and dinner in London; or if the hours should require some other arrangement of meals, a seven-course dinner above the clouds. We are annihilating physical distances, but not this distance. Only God can do that. Therefore "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

How are we made nigh by blood? It is a truth unpalatable to the natural mind. It is really never difficult to ascertain a person's soundness in respect to the teaching of the Bible. Whether a man's theology be in accord with the word of God, can always safely be judged by his attitude toward the blood. Personally, I can forgive a man almost anything and have fellowship with him, though we differ on a thousand things, if I find that he stands upon this platform: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." That is the infallible touchstone, that is the truth indispensable: "made nigh by the blood".

Now, my friends, the blood of Christ—mark it—*removes all difficulties in the way of your reception by God Himself*. That is to say, the blood does something for God. Here is a man who has been some sort of transgressor. He has shown himself to be below the ordinary standards of morality. For example, he is a thief. He stole something. He is not honest. And he comes to you—it may not have been your property he stole, and there may be no grounds for antagonism toward him in that respect. You may have nothing against him so far as you, yourself, are concerned. But when he comes to you quite suavely, and tries to be friendly with you, you hold aloof, and perhaps tell him why. He replies, "Oh, yes, yes! That is true. I was very sorry for that, but that is all in the past." "But have you done anything about it? Have you made restitution? Have you made amends? Has there been any healing of that moral scar; any filling up of that moral deficiency?" And because he treats the matter lightly, you feel there is a real distance between you. I said to a man once, "The distance between us is determined, not by the fact that you did wrong, but by the fact that you have no sorrow for it, and recognize no necessity for making any effort to put it right." There was something within me that made me feel I could not receive that man into fellowship until some atonement was made for that moral offence. If such things separate men, how must sin separate us from God! You cannot come to terms of intimacy with God until the fact of sin has been recognized, acknowledged, and dealt with. The very nature of God—I had almost said—rebels; but that would not be a good word—the very nature of God flames against it: "Our God is a consuming fire."

But the blood of Christ is the blood of One Who took

our place, Who died in our room and stead; One Who recognized and acknowledged the full measure of our guilt, and took it upon His sinless soul, and was "made sin" for us, suffering the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The blood of Christ, if I may dare to say so, satisfies the outraged nature of Deity, until even a holy God can ask no more of any sinner than that Christ Jesus should have died for him.

I speak for a moment to you who are Christians. I want you to see clearly that the atonement effected by our Lord Jesus in our behalf, is vastly more than merely recognizing and honouring the divine government. What theologians call *the governmental theory*, while it is true as far as it goes, falls far short of the whole truth. We must get back of all law to the great Lawgiver, and we must remember that all His laws are but a transcript of His own nature; that when the law of God is broken, the depth of His holiness—dare I say it—has been violated. Hence the cross, as I have often said to you, is a revelation of what sin does to God—it drives a spear to His heart, drives nails through His hands, puts a crown of thorns upon the brow of Deity, and repudiates God. If it were possible that that should stand, the universe would crumble. But, thank God, even God Himself, as a personal God, the Holy One, has nothing against a man for whom Jesus died. He is "made nigh by the blood!"

Of course, there is *a legal aspect to the atonement*. There stands the law. We live in a world of law. We are part of a universe of law.

Let me give you a simple illustration: Even the secular press, editorially, assumes that the function of law is to restrain, and that the end of punishment is to reform. By all means let us reform those who are reformable. But let me assume again the case of a man who is, perhaps, guilty of some foul murder here in Ontario, guilty of a crime for which the law prescribes capital punishment. What if influence were brought to bear upon governmental authorities, so that that man were leniently dealt with! The jury said "Guilty!" All the evidence substantiated the verdict, and the judge pronounced sentence of death according to law. But let us suppose the man is allowed to live and to go free. What would follow in this country? Rich and poor alike, everybody would say, "We cannot endure that." But do you not want to reform him? You would not hang a man to reform him, would you? Should he be hanged merely to prevent his repeating the crime? No; for innately our moral sense demands the principle of expiation, that sin must be expiated, and that punishment must be suited to the crime; and the offence having been committed punishment must be inflicted. No nation can long endure where that principle is not regnant; for that principle is written into the very constitution of things, not only objectively upon the tables of stone, but into the very constitution of the universe: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". You cannot abrogate that law. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption"; there is no power of science, or religion, or governmental authority anywhere that can nullify that inexorable law. Properly understood, the hell of science, and the hell of theology are one. It cannot be otherwise. It must be so in the nature of the case.

But Jesus Christ steps into the breach, and magnifies the law, and makes it honourable: "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Did you ever visit anybody in jail? I have, many times. I do not like it. I am a free man. But when I knock, a man with his big key opens the door, and lets me in. When I get inside he puts that key into the lock again and turns it. I know I am not under legal restraint, but I do not like to hear that bolt shot. Perhaps I had to go through another door, and that too was locked behind me. The man I went to see was under the law. I could talk to him, but I could not take him out. The jailors and the locked doors forbade his liberation. Ah, but the Lord Jesus was made "to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". He satisfied the law, died a thousand deaths for us. What is that hymn we sing?

"He hell in hell laid low,  
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew,  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,  
And death by dying slew."

He proclaimed liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Thus we are "made nigh".

But we are "made nigh" by a change of nature also on the ground of the efficacy of the blood. We are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. That is a thrilling story of the demoniac of Gadara, is it not? I wish I could preach like Christmas Evans. I wish I had the power graphically to portray that scene as he does in his great sermon on the demoniac of Gadara. He pictures him as having a wife and family; but because he is possessed of a legion of devils he dwells, no longer at home, but without, in the tombs. It may not have been very far away, geographically, but you see there is your distance, "far off". And his family are all afraid of him, and they try to bind him, even with chains. But "no man could bind him, not even with chains". Christmas Evans, as I recall, though it is years since I read the sermon, describes the children's seeing the father coming home. And they are full of terror, and run shrieking to their mother, telling her that father is coming. Quickly the door is closed, and the windows too; and all are barricaded with every piece of furniture they can get rolled against the doors and windows. They put every possible barrier between themselves and this man possessed of the legion of devils. But presently he reaches the house and knocks, and he says, "Wife—wife, I want to come in." He speaks with another voice, but they are still afraid, something like Rhoda when Peter knocked at the door, and she thought he was a ghost. But Peter continued knocking. And so the man of Gadara continued knocking. "Oh", he said, "wife, I won't hurt you. I am not the man you have been afraid of." And by and by, persuaded, they tremblingly remove the barricade, and, though still full of fear, they open the door, and he walks in with his old smile, and he says, "Wife, I am a new man. The devil is gone." The children look at him, and they wonder. And presently the man, in tender affection, wraps his arms about his wife, and covers her face with

kisses. The children cannot understand. What has happened? He has been "made nigh", because he has been made new. He is a different man; he has a new nature.

If the blood of Christ merely removed the objective differences, the obstacles in the way, if the blood of Christ met only the requirement of the moral law, it would not make us nigh. We should still be unclean in the sight of Him Who charges His angels with folly, and to Whose sight even the heavens are unclean. But, blessed be God, He comes and makes us new creatures; He takes the devil out of us! He really does! And He puts the Holy Ghost within us, so that even God Himself can receive us, because He becomes one with us, or rather, He makes us one with Himself. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." He was "made nigh".

Oh, I wish I had more time! How nigh are we? The prodigal thought he could not come very near, for he said: "Make me as one of thy hired servants". But the father said: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." No longer a servant, but a son! "Made nigh"!

Once we were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise"—outside. But now we are "fellowcitizens with the saints", "made nigh"; not only naturalized, but born again.

Nor is that all: "And of the household of God". That is how "nigh" we are.

I am glad that our king is such a lover of home. There is a picture of the royal family you have all seen. I am very fond of it. The two little princesses are playing with their dogs, and the King is leaning lovingly over them, while Queen Elizabeth is looking out of the window, apparently happy in the consciousness that this is her family. It is a lovely picture! Thank God for that at the heart of the Empire! Something like that, only infinitely transcending it, is what is in the thought of the apostle here, that instead of being outlaws, and aliens, we are brought under the divine rule, and not only made "fellowcitizens with the saints"; but brought into the divine household, and the Spirit put into our hearts teaching us to cry, "Abba, Father". "When ye pray say, Our Father, Who art in heaven"!

Are you not glad? Do you not rejoice in a salvation like that? Have you a share in it? Are you "far off", or are you "made nigh"? May God make us all nigh! How? Only believe. God will forgive you everything but just one thing. There is only one thing God will not forgive, and that is for any man to take up an attitude toward His Son different from His own. In effect He tells us that if we will accept His estimate of His Son controversy will be forever at an end. And what is His estimate of His Son? It is shown in the fact that He Who died on the cross is now seated at His right hand. He died for you. He is in heaven as He was upon the cross as your Representative; and you cannot insult the Majesty of heaven more than by doubting that. Believe it! Let your soul's case rest there, and forever you shall find yourself "made nigh by the blood".

### BORROWING FROM OTHERS

We have known some periodicals that are made up, for the most part, of clippings from other papers. Such papers are edited by "scissors and paste". Indeed, we heard once upon a time of someone's going into an editorial sanctum and greeting the Editor with the undignified salutation: "Hello, Paste Pot! How are you today?"

THE GOSPEL WITNESS cannot fairly be charged with pursuing such indolent practices. This week, however, we print the testimony of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, and also a story from *The Christian Herald*. We print them, not because we are wanting in material, for it happens on this glorious Wednesday we are just bursting with articles, and feel as though we could edit three or four papers. We are publishing these, however, because we were so blessed in reading them that we want to share them with our readers.

### GENERALISSIMO CHIANG KAI-SHEK

In view of the present Sino-Japanese conflict our readers will be interested in the testimony of China's Generalissimo to his personal experience of Christ. We reprint below the contents of a booklet entitled, *My Testimony—A Personal Testimony by China's Generalissimo—by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. Authorized Edition, March 27, 1937.* At the end of the booklet there is an "Announcement" as follows:

"This little Booklet, 'My Testimony', is a personal testimony given by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek before the East Asia Methodist Conference in session in Nanking. It is sent out as a companion booklet to 'My Religion' by Madame Chiang Kai-Shek."

#### MY TESTIMONY

Without religious faith there can be no real understanding of life. Faith in the cause of a revolution is not unlike religious faith. Without faith, human affairs, both great and small, are difficult of achievement. Often when face to face with opposition and possible danger, we mortals are prone to retreat and to abandon our work halfway. Such lack of confidence in ourselves is often due to the absence of a strong religious faith.

I have now been a Christian for nearly ten years and during that time I have been a constant reader of the Bible. Never before has this sacred book been so interesting to me as during my two weeks' captivity in Sian. This unfortunate affair took place all of a sudden and I found myself placed under detention without having a single earthly belonging. From my captors I asked for but one thing, a copy of the Bible. In my solitude I had ample opportunity for reading and meditation. The greatness and love of Christ burst upon me with a new inspiration, increasing my strength to struggle against evil, to overcome temptation, and to uphold righteousness.

I am, indeed, grateful to all my fellow Christians who continually offered prayers on my behalf. I was deeply conscious of a strong spiritual support for which I extend my hearty thanks to all Christians, and to which, before you all, to-day, I testify that the name of God may be glorified.

The many virtues of Christ I cannot possibly enumerate. To-day, being Good Friday, I merely wish to explain some of the lessons I have derived from the trials of Christ. His utterances from the Cross are our spiritual inheritance. Entreating forgiveness for his enemies, He cried: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." Truly great is the love of Christ. In all my meditations I found these thoughts recurring and providing me with rich spiritual sustenance.

To illustrate, I am going to recount some of my experiences at Sian. Before I went to Shensi on my second trip I was already conscious of the perverted thoughts and unusual

activities in the army there. I had previously received reports of the intrigues and revolutionary rumblings that were threatening to undermine the unity of the state. My immediate associates tried to persuade me to abandon the journey, but I replied: "Now that our country is unified and the foundation of the state established, the commander-in-chief of the armies has the responsibilities for the direction and enlightenment from which he dare not withdraw. Furthermore, I have dedicated my soul and body to the service of the state, and there can never be any consideration of my personal safety."

According to the record of the New Testament, when Christ entered Jerusalem for the last time, He plainly knew the danger ahead but triumphantly, on an ass, He rode into the city without anguish, without fears. What greatness! What courage! In comparison, how unimportant my life must be. So why should I hesitate?

My fondness for my troops has always been as great as the love between brothers and this love drew me into the heart of the rebellion. Such disregard of danger in the face of duty caused deep concern to the government, worried the people and, for this, numerous prayers were offered by Christian friends. In the midst of it all my understanding increased and my love multiplied.

Following my detention my captors presented me with terms and demands, with tempting words of kindnesses, with threats of violence and torture and with a public trial by the "People's Front." On every hand I was beset by danger, but I had no thought of yielding to pressure. My faith in Christ increased. In this strange predicament I distinctly recalled the forty days and nights Christ passed in the wilderness withstanding temptation, His prayers in the garden of Gethsemane and the indignities heaped upon Him at His trial. The prayers He offered for His enemies upon the Cross were ever in my thoughts.

I naturally remembered the prayers offered by Dr. Sun Yat-sen during his imprisonment in London. These scenes passed vividly before me again and again like so many pictures. My strength was redoubled to resist the recalcitrants and with the spirit of Christ on the Cross I was preparing to make the final sacrifice at the trial of the so-called "People's Front." Having determined upon this course of action, I was comforted and at rest.

Following the settlement of the Sian affair, the rebels knowing their unwise and treasonable actions, were naturally afraid. Remembering that Christ enjoined us to forgive those who sin against us until seventy times seven and upon their repentance, I felt that they should be allowed to start life anew! At the same time I was greatly humbled that my own faith hadn't been of such quality as to influence my followers and to restrain them.

Ever since training the cadets and launching the expedition I have repeated to my followers these two principles: (1) On detecting the slightest selfishness on my part or discovering plans contrary to the interest of my country and the people, any one may accuse me of guilt and put me to death; (2) Should my words and actions betray lack of truth and good faith, or indicate departure from the revolutionary cause and principles, and any of my subordinates may take me for an enemy and put me to death. I honestly believe that these two sayings were prompted by sincerity and grew out of my religious faith. They are in line with the spirit of the love of Christ, and the forbearance and magnanimity of Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

The life of Christ reveals a long record of affliction and constant persecution. His spirit of forbearance, His love and His benevolence shine through it all. No more valuable lesson has yet come to me out of my Christian experiences.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen was a Christian, and the greatest thing he received from Christ was love—love for the emancipation of the weaker races, and for the welfare of the oppressed people. This spirit remains with us and reaches to the skies. I am an ardent follower of the revolution, and although my faith in Dr. Sun at the outset did not appear to have any religious significance, it was similar to a religious faith. For this reason I have become a follower of Dr. Sun and his revolution based on San Min Chu I.

To-day I find that I have taken a further step and have become a follower of Jesus Christ. This makes me realize more fully that the success of revolution depends upon men

of faith and that men of character, because of their faith, cannot sacrifice their principles for personal safety under circumstances of difficulty and crisis. In other words, a man's life may be sacrificed, his person held in bondage, but his faith and spirit can never be restrained. This is due to confidence brought about by faith. On this Good Friday these reflections are ours. For such is the importance of faith in the revolution, and faith in religion.

What I have just said represents my spiritual conception of Good Friday, interspersed with a few facts out of my own experience. I offer them as a testimony and not in any sense to exalt my own worthiness and achievements. I take this opportunity to extend greetings to the Central Conference of Eastern Asia of the Methodist Episcopal Church and to express my thanks to Christians everywhere for their earnest and continued prayers on my behalf.

## KNOCKING AT THE HOPELESS DOOR

By Rev. H. J. Garland

(The story printed below is from *The Christian Herald*, London, of August 12, 1937. Some of our readers will have read it in that paper, but the great majority will read it here for the first time. We reproduce it here because of its intrinsic worth. We believe it suggests the secret of success in the Lord's work in our day. Multitudes of people have lost all confidence in Christianity as represented by the formal, soulless, modernistic church. Many assume that the church's only interest in them is to use them to build up and support an institution. They conceive of the Church as an institution that exists to be ministered unto, not to minister. Nor are they far wrong in their appraisal of the average church. Here and there are churches which are faithfully trying to represent Christ by preaching salvation by grace alone through the blood of Christ. But the disappointed multitudes do not distinguish between such a church, and modernistic institutions which have no gospel to preach. Therefore they absent themselves from church altogether. Such people may only be reached in the way described in Mr. Garland's story. And how simple it is! It is the old-fashioned New Testament method. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."—Ed. G.W.)

"I consider it a waste of time to call at 'The Grange,'" remarked my companion, who was introducing me to the people in my new "parish." "Even if we do knock at the door, it is doubtful as to whether it will be opened. The occupier has not attended a place of worship during the present century. He is undoubtedly the worst character in the town, and his wife complains that he makes the life of the family unbearable. He loves everything that is evil and hates everything that is good. He carries on the business of a miller."

I insisted upon knocking at his door. My knock brought a response, as the miller himself opened the door, whereupon my guide introduced us. The miller thanked me for calling to see him and in response to my invitation, he promised to come to hear me preach the next time I occupied the pulpit. He said: "Although I do not attend a place of worship I much appreciate being asked to attend a service. You are the first person in thirty years to extend to me such an invitation." He kept his word, came to the service, and thanked me for my sermon.

On the following Sunday I was preaching there again, and at the end of my sermon I gave an opportunity to any hearers to publicly accept Christ as their Saviour and Lord. To the astonishment of the congregation the miller walked up to the front of the church and facing the congregation said: "Dear friends and neighbours, I am standing here to confess Christ as my Saviour. Last week, when attending the service in this church, I was deeply impressed. On my way home I saw, as it were a light upon the road, and in the sky it seemed as if I saw the Rock of Ages. Christ has spoken to me, as once He spoke to Saul of Tarsus, and by

His grace, henceforth I mean to love and serve Him all my days." Kneeling at the communion rail he offered an earnest prayer of penitence and faith, and he prayed that others might follow his example. In response to his witness and entreaty several persons left their pews and knelt by his side and gave their hearts to the Lord. It was a most impressive scene. The oldest members of the church said that in the half-century they had belonged to it they had never attended such a wonderful service.

The next day, the miller told his employees to carry on the work of the mill, saying: "I have given myself to Christ and I am going to spend this day in definite service for Him." He visited from house to house in the town, confessing Christ and inviting his neighbours to attend special services that were being conducted during that week.

The first house at which he called was the home of a farm labourer. The man was astonished to be called upon by the miller, and was deeply impressed by his bold testimony of the converting power of the Gospel. This man had not been to a place of worship for very many years, but he promised to attend that night. He did so and brought with him his family. That night "he and all his house" surrendered themselves to the Saviour, together with the miller's family. There was great rejoicing in their homes that night. Family worship was begun, and life was transformed.

A blessed revival commenced, and the miller had the joy of winning for Christ five families who had been living without God for many years. All these people became earnest workers in the church, and influenced many others to turn from darkness to light. The farm labourer became a gifted preacher of the Gospel and for three years was used of God in the salvation of many souls.

He was suddenly stricken with an incurable disease, and endured much suffering with the patience of grace. His faith was as simple as a child's and his death chamber was a Bethel to all who entered therein. He was visited by rich and poor, and pleaded with all who came to see him to meet him in heaven. He had no fear of death. It was but the gateway to the Heavenly Father's House. He rejoiced in the pardoning love of Jesus Christ and could "read his title clear" to the mansions of the blest. When the moment of death came a beautiful smile lit up his face as he whispered "My Jesus" and he at once ceased to breathe, but began to live. On the day of his funeral, the church could not hold all those who wished to attend the service.

The miller himself soon stood by the graveside. His son whom he had led to Christ died suddenly but he had the comfort of knowing that he had died in the Lord. Another son came to take this one's place in the business and he and his wife were so impressed by the Christian life and experience of their father, that they also accepted Christ and became workers in His vineyard.

The miller went from strength to strength. He started a mission band of young men and helped to win the souls of men who did not attend church. He became the leader of a flourishing Bible class and through his efforts two Sunday Schools have been established in places where no provision had been made for public worship. He is the most gifted local preacher in the district; souls are constantly being won through his proclamation of the Gospel.

He has often said that but for the knock on his own door and the invitation given personally to him, his life would have been entirely wasted in "the far country." Christ bids us to go into the highways and hedges and constrain the wanderers to come into His House.

Oh for a greater faith in the Gospel which saves to the uttermost all who will accept Christ's offer of salvation and for a greater desire to persuade men to come to the Saviour. The churchwarden of this parish said that if this miller remained faithful for six months, then henceforth he would believe in conversion. Thank God this man has stood the test of years.

A lady was so impressed that she confessed that although she had been a church member for 29 years she was unconverted. I had the joy of leading her into the experience of the new birth. Through this she has been the means of the building of a new Methodist Church which was opened free of debt and forty souls were converted during the first year that it was opened, and the good work there still continues to grow.

## Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 1 3rd Quarter Lesson 35 August 29, 1937

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

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

Lesson Text: Luke 9.

Golden Text: "And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."—Luke 9:35.

#### I. Sending Forth The Disciples—verses 1-10.

Compare Matt. 10:1-42; Mark 6:7-13.

Christ had ordained the twelve apostles, that they might be with Him, and have power to heal the sick and cast out demons. He now bestows that power, and gives them authority over disease and the evil spirits. He sent them forth to prepare the way for His own message; they were to preach the necessity of repentance from sin, and of turning unto the King who was at hand.

The disciples were responsible for faithfully delivering the message, but not for results. Their testimony, if received, would bring blessing, but if rejected, meant judgment.

Herod had many opportunities for learning the truth, for he had the testimony of John the Baptist (Luke 3:19; Mark 6:20), the witness of Chuza, the wife of his steward (Luke 8:3), and a knowledge of the miracles of Christ. He was perplexed, then curious, but never genuinely interested. When Christ was brought before him for trial, he was still desirous of seeing the Saviour, that he might see a miracle performed (Luke 23:8). All these factors would be a testimony against him; he missed his chance.

#### II. Feeding the Multitudes—verses 11-17.

Compare Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; John 6:1-14.

The feeding of the five thousand who had followed Christ, to hear Him speak and to be healed, is recorded by all four evangelists. Our Saviour cares for the suffering multitudes, whether they be hungry and distressed through their own carelessness and lack of foresight, or through the violence and thoughtlessness of others. He saw these people as sheep without a shepherd. Without regard for His own weariness and desire for quiet rest, He told the disciples that the crowd need not depart.

It is His will that everything connected with His service should be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40), a principle which is exemplified in the arrangements made to serve the people. Multiplying by a miracle the boy's slender provision of food dedicated to Him (1 Kings 17:13, 14), He supplied the needs of all. Each one of that vast multitude was satisfied; there is always "bread enough and to spare" in the Father's house (Luke 15:17).

#### III. Confessing Christ—verses 18-26.

Compare Matt. 16:13-27; Mark 8:27-38.

Christ regards the relationship of each individual to Himself as most important. The people may think of Him merely as a Prophet, but the disciples were questioned closely: "But ye, whom say ye that I am?" Peter, quick, impulsive, warm-hearted, as spokesman for the others acknowledges that Jesus is the Christ of God, that He is Jehovah's Messiah. Teachers should make application of the Saviour's question to the pupils: It is the attitude to Christ which determines the destiny of every one (John 3:36).

A mere declaration of faith in Christ will not suffice; we must confess Him, not merely with our lips, but also in our lives. Peter had in mind the identity of Jesus with the Messiah who would rule the nations as King with power and majesty. The Lord's Messiah would also be numbered with the transgressors, and give His life a ransom for many. The one who would be identified with Him must partake of the suffering as well as the glory (Rom. 8:17).

#### IV. The Transfiguration—verses 27-36.

Compare Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8.

The Divine purpose in the transfiguration of Christ is hinted in verses 26 and 27. Our Lord promised that some of His disciples standing with Him would see the Kingdom of God. They were to have a foregleam of the power and glory of the Son of man (2 Peter 1:16-18), which would be fully revealed at His Second Coming. Peter, James and

John, the three members of the intimate circle (Luke 8:51; Mark 14:33), were selected to be eyewitnesses of His majesty.

For a brief space of time, Christ allowed His glory, which had been veiled in human flesh, to shine forth, and this glory the wondering disciples beheld (John 1:14). They knew not what they said when they suggested building three tabernacles, for the Lamb of God is all the glory of Immanuel's land (Rev. 5:11-14).

The cloud which overshadowed the holy mount, enveloping the group, portrayed the fact that Christ would come in the glory of His Father (verse 26). The pillar of cloud, the Shekinah glory, symbolizes the presence of God (Exod. 13:21, 22; Numbers 9:15; Lev. 16:2; 1 Kings 8:10, 11; Acts 1:9). God signified His approval of His Son as at the baptism: "This is my beloved Son: hear him". So shall the Son receive honour and glory from His Father on the great day of His appearing.

Redeemed men, themselves transformed and glorified, will share in that Kingdom. Moses represents those who will have entered heaven through the gates of death; Elijah, those living and remaining unto His coming, those who shall not sleep, but who shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51).

The theme of conversation when Christ talked with Moses and Elijah was His "decease", His "exodus" (Greek), or: departure. As the children of Israel were redeemed out of Egypt by the power of God, saved through the blood, so would man be redeemed from sin by the power of God, saved through the death of Christ. The song of Moses and of the Lamb will be the theme of the hymn of praise in the heavenly land (Rev. 15:3).

Incidentally, the importance of watching and praying is emphasized (Matt. 26:40, 41).

#### V. The Tests of Discipleship—verses 37-62.

##### 1. Faith—verses 37-45.

Compare Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29.

The followers of Christ must be prepared for moments of exaltation with Him on the mountain, and for hours of lowly service in the valley where need abounds.

Christ had given His disciples power over the evil spirits and over disease, but they proved themselves powerless to heal the sick boy because they were "faithless and perverse" and prayerless (Mark 9:29). Not yet were they ready to trust the simple word of their Lord, and their hearts were turned away from Him so easily.

##### 2. Humility—verses 46-50.

Compare Matt. 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-41.

If they had realized the sacrifice Christ was to make in giving His life a ransom for many, they would not have spent the time debating which of them should be the greatest in His Kingdom. The one who takes the lowest place will be the greatest; God's way up is down (Phil. 2:5-11; Jas. 4:6, 10; Luke 14:11; 18:14; 1 Pet. 5:5, 6). The text for the sermon on humility was a little child, with its lack of self-conceit.

An exaggerated idea of one's importance leads one to discount the faith and service of others (verses 48, 49).

##### 3. Gentleness—verses 51-56.

The way of Christ led from Bethlehem to Calvary; He was born to die. At this time He left Galilee where He had been received, for the most part, with acclaim, and set His face to go to Jerusalem, where He would be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The disciples wished to destroy the Samaritans in judgment, whereas Christ was setting out on a journey to save them in mercy. The spirit of revenge which actuated them contrasted strangely with the spirit of loving-kindness and gentleness which made their Master great (Psa. 18:35; 2 Cor. 10:1).

##### 4. Whole-hearted consecration—verses 57-62.

Compare Matt. 8:19-22.

Our Lord probed the consciences of those would-be disciples who made protestations of loyalty. Good resolutions were not sufficient. To follow Him would mean travelling the way He went, denying self and taking up the cross, being obedient even unto death. They must be willing to give up personal comfort.

Christ must be first, family obligations second (verses 59, 60). The Nazarite vow, typical of consecration, forbade any contact with a dead body (Num. 6:6, 7; 19:14).

Social obligations have their place, but they must be subordinated to the claims of Christ (verse 61). The good ploughman keeps his eye on the furrow he is making, while the poor ploughman may look at some object of interest.