

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.
\$2.00 Per Year, Postpaid, to any address. .5c Per Single Copy.

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

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Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada.

Vol. 16, No. 35

TORONTO, JANUARY 6, 1938

Whole Number 816

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

DEMAS

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, January 2nd, 1938.

(Stenographically Reported)

"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." Col. 4:14.

"There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;

"Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers." Philemon 3:23, 24.

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,"—II. Tim. 4:10.

I am mindful of the fact that this is the first Sunday of a New Year. The psalmist prayed: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." It may be well for us that time has been measured and divided by the rise and set of sun, in order that we may be able to reckon our days and years. There are many people who are fond of beginning things. They begin well, but they do not keep on. I remember to have read a remark by Mr. Spurgeon once, in one of his utterances, to the effect that "some people should be good at beginnings, for" said he, "they have been at it ever since we have known them." They plant only to pluck up; they run up a hill only to run down again. There are many of us, I suppose, in our maturer life, who are still very much as we were in the old copy book days. The first page was kept immaculate, and every effort was made to reproduce the copy. But when once a page was blotted, we were disposed to say, "Well now, what is the use?" And so instead of improving, very often a steady deterioration could be observed toward the close.

I have read to you the three passages in which one name is included—the name of Demas. In Colossians he is associated with Luke, the beloved physician, the writer of the third gospel, and of The Acts of the Apostles; and with Luke and Paul, he joins in sending greetings to the Colossian Christians. In the epistle to Philemon, his name is associated with that of Marcus, or Mark, the writer of the second gospel, and with Aristarchus, who was a fellow-prisoner on one occasion with Paul, and who is here described as a fellow-labourer. So that Demas was very closely associated

with the leaders of the Christian church. And yet in Paul's second epistle to Timothy, he confesses his loneliness, and begs him to come to him as speedily as may be possible, especially mentioning the fact that Demas, who had been so closely associated with him for so long, had now "forsaken" him, "having loved this present world."

These three brief scriptures sum up the career of Demas, so far as we know it, as of a man who began well, who continued for some time, until indeed he became quite prominent and influential, but who, ere the day was done, and the victory was completely achieved, turned his back upon the foe, forsook those who were still endeavouring to press the battle to the gate, and went his way to another city, where, perhaps, he thought life might be more safe, if, indeed, not more comfortable.

It is rather a sad story, and yet I bring it to you this morning in the hope that it may warn every one of us who has professed the name of Christ, of our inherent frailties, our natural weaknesses, so that we may cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart during this year. I bring it, too, in the hope that it may reach anyone who may have allowed his ardour toward Christ to become somewhat cooled, and who may be in grave danger of wandering still farther afield, until at last he may abandon his course altogether.

I.

So I begin with this observation, that DEMAS DURING A CONSIDERABLE PART OF HIS CHRISTIAN LIFE, ENJOYED THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVANTAGE OF VERY CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH MEN WHO FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE

END, WERE STALWARTS OF THE FAITH. Think of the privilege of being intimately associated with Mark, who wrote the Gospel bearing his name! Think, too, of the great advantage of being able to walk and talk with the author of the third Gospel, and The Acts of the Apostles! And what should we say of the unique privilege of being a daily companion of the Apostle Paul, the writer of the greater part of the New Testament? There were others specially named, such as Aristarchus, evidently a brave and heroic spirit, who is described as Paul's "fellowprisoner". These were the men with whom Demas, for a considerable period, consorted, and yet he failed utterly before the end of the day. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"; "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation". Let us remember our Lord's word to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee." Well may we rejoice in the continuous intercession of our great High Priest, that we fail not along the hard road, and in the fierce conflict.

Out of these texts we may gather this, *that whatever may have been the cause of the ultimate defection of Demas, it was not due to a want of proper instruction.* Demas must have been unusually well-informed. It is impossible to think of his companionship with such men as I have named, without being driven to the conclusion that he must have been made sharer of their unusual knowledge. Two of his companions were authors of the second and third Gospels respectively, Mark and Luke. Mark, it is generally supposed, had received much of the information contained in his Gospel, at first hand from Peter. That theory does not exclude, of course, the principle of divine inspiration. But what a joy it must have been to talk these matters over with men of that sort! and with Paul, to whom such an abundance of revelation was given that it was necessary that he should be permitted to have a thorn in the flesh lest he should be exalted above measure!

What are we to learn from this? Certainly not that it is a dangerous thing to be well-informed, for we are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". It is impossible that any of us should know too much about Him. "Certainly a full knowledge of the word of God does not expose anyone to danger. On the contrary it may fortify him in the hour of temptation, and save him from many a pitfall made for the feet by the adversary of souls. But it does suggest that if we are to be established in Christ, we need something more than a full knowledge of the gospel. We are admonished that it is quite possible that one should speak with the tongue of men and of angels, that he should understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, that he should be so benevolent as to bestow all his goods to feed the poor; and have a faith that could remove mountains, and yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, by any true spiritual reckoning, to be nothing at all. Oh, how many people have we known who were able to debate on scriptural themes, who were able to quote scripture extensively, who seemed to have a kind of passion for the Bible, and yet whose spirits were manifestly far off from God, and who ultimately accomplished nothing!

I remember years ago talking with a man who had been a church-member, and, therefore, a professing

Christian, a member of a Baptist church. He was at that time an avowed secularist, an infidel. He said he did not believe in the existence of a personal God. I tried him in many directions, and I found that there was scarcely a passage of scripture that I could cite to him, that he could not quote with absolute accuracy, with its immediate context. His mind was stored with the word of God, and yet he had slipped away from Christ. Do not misunderstand: it was not because he knew so much of the Bible. There was another reason. I am merely warning you. Mere biblical knowledge is not enough to ensure our fellowship with God. Knowledge may do nothing for a man but puff him up. I recall one of the most contemptible characters I ever met. I all but ordered him out of my house. He came with a caustic tongue, and the "poison of asps" under his lips, to complain of everybody. He was not a member of my church, but of another Baptist church in the city. As his chief credential he informed me that he had been converted and brought up under the ministry of the incomparable Spurgeon. I said to him, "Yes, my friend, I have known some of the greatest saints who ever lived who were brought up under Mr. Spurgeon's ministry, and I have known some of the most contemptible characters who have said that they had belonged to the Tabernacle." Let us not forget that one called Iscariot consorted with the disciples, and even with Jesus Himself, listening to all that He had to say, but who closed his heart against the Son of God.

Demas must have been a *man of considerable gifts.* He was not an ordinary man. He would never have been mentioned as the companion of such men as I have named to you this morning had he not been a man of large capacity. He had become quite prominent in the church, for when Paul wrote to the Colossians, he had only to name him. He sends his greetings as an associate of "Luke, the beloved physician".

It is quite possible for a man to have gifts of an unusual quality, gifts that will give him prominence in the church of Christ, that will bring him to an official position, and make him a man of considerable influence, and yet he may have that in him which will cause him to fail before the day is done. Does it not make you afraid? Does it not make you feel that you need to walk humbly before God, when you read stories like this?

It would appear further that *Demas had been very active.* If you would have a tonic against indolence, if you would seek something that will make you bestir yourself in the Christian life, read again the life-story of that man who was so abundant in labours, the Apostle Paul. It is enough to make any of us ashamed when we read of what he accomplished. And yet he speaks of Demas as a "fellowlabourer". Demas was not a shirker. He was not one who ran away from a heavy task. For an extended period of his career, he was in the forefront among the most strenuous labourers in the Lord's vineyard, for only such could have been a "fellowlabourer" with one who lived as strenuously as Paul.

I have been long enough in the ministry to see even men of that sort fail, men who were never absent from the prayer-meeting; men who were diligent in any position of service to which they were appointed; teachers in the Sunday School who seemed to be eager to be about the Lord's business all the time. I have seen them run well, and yet at last before the prize was

won, before the day of victory and coronation, they have dropped out of the ranks, and, like Demas, run away.

II.

WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THIS? Let us see if we can find it. Paul said, "Demas hath forsaken ME," and Paul was not one to complain of little things. He was inured to great hardships. He had proved himself a valiant warrior, and even in the epistle where he complains of the defection of Demas, he is able to say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith". No; Paul was no supersensitive, touchy soul; and when he said, "Demas hath forsaken me," he must have written it with tears. There must have been a great grief on his heart. He must have felt grievously wounded as he remembered, that, when but a few years before writing to the Colossians, with great delight he had said, "Demas, I will include you with Luke; Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you". I can imagine his recalling that when he dictated his letter to Philemon, a man of wealth and substance, and he had mentioned Demas with Mark, and Luke, and Aristarchus.

Now he says, "Demas hath forsaken me". On that occasion others had gone for other reasons, and he said, "Only Luke is with me. Come as soon as you can, Timothy. I am terribly lonely. I feel a great hurt in my heart. Come when you can."

I remember a time in my own experience as a minister when I used to feel very badly when some people forsook me, and, analysing my feelings, sometimes I found that it was my pride that was hurt. I said to myself, "What will people say? So—and—so is gone. I know what they will say. They will say, 'O, he has found him out and left him.'" Did Demas find out Paul? Was it because of any unworthiness in Paul that Demas left him? Young men are sometimes variable, somewhat mercurial. They change from day to day like the temperature. But that is not so likely to be true of one who has attained to Paul's experience. Paul had passed that period of fluctuation. He was now a tried and steady workman: a soldier of many battles. The epistle to the Colossians, and that to Philemon were two of the "prison epistles". They were written during Paul's first imprisonment, and written from prison, perhaps about sixty-two or sixty-three A.D. The second epistle to Timothy was written possibly about sixty-seven or sixty-eight, only three or four years later at the most. Paul had not greatly changed in that time, and yet this ardent soul of three or four years ago has forsaken him. The reason was not in Paul.

The reason was not in Paul's associates: Aristarchus was a "fellowprisoner" with Paul during his first imprisonment when the Colossian epistle was written. Mark and Luke continued with Paul to the end. Demas found no justification for his defection in the conduct of his own and Paul's associates.

Backsliders and deserters of various sorts are wont to try to justify themselves by blaming others, sometimes the minister, sometimes the church. But almost invariably such self-justifying attempts are excuses rather than reason.

The reason for the defection of Demas was neither in Paul nor his associates.

Where was the weakness in this man Demas? *It was not because he was wanting in an heroic spirit.* He had kept step with Aristarchus, Paul's fellowprisoner. He had not been afraid of the foe. Demas had not only been a fellowlabourer, but in many a battle he had been a fellowsoldier with Paul, and had stood with his face to the foe, unafraid. Yet we find him a deserter at last. We have known some timid souls, who were always afraid of any battle, afraid to contend for the faith. As soon as any conflict emerged, they ran. I knew a certain man who came some years ago to admonish me. He had been Pastor of several prominent churches. He had not stayed long anywhere. He said to me, "This has been my practice: whenever I observe anyone in my congregation to whom my ministry becomes unacceptable, I never contend. Oh, No!"—I can see him now as he clasped his hands—"I never contend—I run! I think that is what we ought to do." I was too polite to tell him that if he had had keener discernment he would have been running all the time. But Demas was not of that spirit. No; he had proved a brave warrior on many a field of battle.

Why, then, did he forsake Paul? *It was not that he was afraid of the reproach of Christ.* Of that I am sure. When Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians he was in prison. When he wrote to Philemon he was in prison, and Demas had not forsaken him, nor was he ashamed of him. He was like Onesiphorus of whom Paul said, to his everlasting credit, he "was not ashamed of my chain". No; he was not afraid of the reproach of Christ.

At the Baptist Convention of nineteen hundred and twenty-one immediately following the disruption in this church, a certain man—he is Pastor of a church in Toronto just now—came to me and said, after one of the convention sessions: "Where are you going to luncheon?" I said, "I do not know; anywhere." "Well, if you do not mind, I should like to go with you." I said, "All right." Then he went on, "I just received a letter from one of my men, and he said a strange thing. He wrote me to be careful of my company at this convention, saying, 'You are going up, and Shields is going down. I do not think it would be to your profit to be seen in his company'. But I do not care, come on", and he put his arm through mine, and we walked through a crowd of delegates down the street. When in the summer of nineteen hundred and twenty-one I was holding special services here, I got a telegram from him. He said, "I shall be passing through Toronto, and could help you if you need me." I wired back, "By all means come". He preached here a couple of nights, and I can see him now as he said, "I want this congregation to know that I am with your Pastor", and then in true knightly fashion, he turned to me and said, "Sir, I offer you my sword." But I saw that man at the nineteen twenty-two Convention wilt like a wax candle in an apartment house when the temperature is about one hundred and ten. Up to a point he was valiant enough; then he faltered and ran. So was Demas valiant, but so also did Demas fail and flee at last.

There are some people who are willing to endure the reproach of Christ, who, like Moses, seem to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures

of Egypt; who are not unwilling to suffer shame for his name. They are not ashamed of the man who goes to prison for Christ: but are rather proud of their association with him.

Then what is the matter now? This, I think is the explanation: the second epistle to Timothy was written during Paul's second imprisonment, when he was in the clutch of bloody Nero, and he knew that he was near the end. He says in that epistle, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." He knew that he must die for the faith. That was not surprising to him; he had known it for a long time, and he had said, you remember, to the elders of Ephesus, when he talked about going to Jerusalem, and they wept: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Now he is imprisoned the second time, and Nero is at the height of his terrible persecution. Paul is to be one of his victims, and *Demas knew it*. Why did he leave him? Listen: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved—" Ah, that is the determining factor after all! It is not what you know: it is what you love that determines what you are. It is the quality of the affection that determines the character of the person. Did we not see that principle in last Sunday evening's study? Paul prayed that the Ephesians might be established in something "that passeth knowledge"; "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love." It is the affections which determine the direction of life.

What had Demas loved? He had loved "this present world." What does that mean? "Oh," you say, "Demas had become worldly." Not at all. Not, at least in the sense in which that term is usually understood. Demas had coveted no plaudits from the world. He had left that behind long ago. Young people sometimes confess their addiction to worldly amusements, and the difficulty of saying No, to a New Year's Party! Even Demas would have been ashamed of you. He would have said, "I left that behind ages ago. The world has not been kind to me." He was not worldly in that sense. He had not coveted the world's pleasures, or its praises, its preferments, or its emoluments. He was not, like Judas, a thief at heart. What was it he loved? "Having loved this present world." He had loved *this present world as distinct from the world that is to come*. He was a man who in spite of all his profession, and his apparently worthy career, had really been living for time instead of for eternity. Somebody reads the story of the Hebrew children in the furnace, and says, "I should not mind that myself. I should not mind going into the furnace." No, you would not, *if you could be sure you would come out*. But they were not. They said: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But IF NOT, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Many a man would like to enter into battle if he could be absolutely sure that he was going to come through victoriously. Men would be willing to bear the reproach of Christ as Moses did, could they be sure they would thereby be made heirs of immortal fame. Many are willing to endure hardness for a little while, if only they have the assurance that by and

by they are going to be brought out into a large place. I dare say Demas had said, "O well, it is pretty hard just now, but Paul is a wonderful man. He will win in the end." There was a good deal of that, you know, about some of the disciples. For you remember what the mother of Zebedee's children said: "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." Oh, yes; many are willing to follow the band, and enter the battle if they can be absolutely sure they will get home safely, and march at the head of a triumphal procession.

Luke may have told Demas what at some time he wrote in The Acts of the Apostles, when the disciples said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He may have had in his heart at least a smouldering hope that the persecution would die down, and that in due course Paul would be hailed as a hero. But now instead the clouds are gathering, and this heroic figure is in the grip of Nero. Demas had seen, or had heard of one after another suffering martyrdom, and he now sees that Paul's time is coming very soon; and as all hope of the temporal profit of Christian heroism fades, Demas said, "Some other place probably would be safer for me than Rome." I do not believe Demas even said farewell to Paul. You can imagine Paul's asking, "Have you seen Demas lately?" "No; he has gone." "Gone! Where?" "Oh, he left Rome sometime ago and went to Thessalonica." He left his one-time companion to suffer alone. Why? Because he "loved this present world," more than the world to come; he had looked at the things which are seen which are temporal, rather than at the unseen things which are eternal. By his final judgment, the things of time were preferred before the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

My dear friends, there is only one safe place for any of us as Christians, and that is the place to which Paul, by divine grace, was brought. I have known a good many preachers who have envied Peter. I have myself. I have often thought I should like to have been in his place, standing up with the eleven and preaching that great sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the mighty power of God was poured out and three thousand souls were swept into the kingdom. But there is a story of another preacher in the New Testament who was just as full of the Holy Ghost as Peter, and just as great a preacher, and he never preached a second sermon—he preached only once; and they stoned him to death. Ere the great preacher closed his eyes, he said: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", and he fell asleep, and was gone. Not very many want to follow in Stephen's steps. Give me a position such as Peter's, and a long career! It has some attraction. But I shrink from Stephen's experience."

I remember during The Great War one young man; a splendid young fellow who was assistant treasurer of this church. Men went away and enlisted by the score. We had about three hundred of them altogether from this place. This young man did not go immediately. His mother was a widow, and he was her only support. He was an earnest Christian. Many of the men who had preceded him were still in camp either in Canada or in England, when one day this young fellow came to me and held out his hand and said, "Pastor, I have come to say, Good bye." I said, "Have you enlisted?"

He said, "Yes, I could not join up earlier. I could not say anything about it, but I had to get my affairs settled, and I have done that now, and with my mother's full and free consent I have enlisted, and I am leaving to-morrow, and I thought I should like to come and say, Good bye." We prayed together, and I committed him to the Lord, and said, "Good bye". Then he went away. While the other men tarried at different camps for reasons unknown to me, this young man went right through, and within six weeks he was in the front-line trenches. And in the first battle he was shot through the heart. I got a telegram, "Killed in action". Others went all through, many of them without a scratch. Stephen went to the front, almost as soon as he enlisted, and was killed in action. Could you stand that? Is that what the service of Christ means? That is what it meant to Paul. That is what Demas began to fear it would probably mean to him, and he was driven to the point of decision: "I may be arrested to-morrow. I may be a prisoner to-morrow. Life is too sweet to me for that. I think I shall go."

Then Paul must have understood what he had heard from Luke and from Mark, how even his Master, Who sometimes was thronged by the multitudes, as He got nearer and nearer to the cross found His following becoming smaller and smaller until beneath its shadow, He said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" "Will ye also go away?" And you remember Peter's answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Notwithstanding, when the Lord reached the cross He had not one with Him—not one: "All the disciples forsook Him and fled."

Therefore, we are admonished to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest (we) be wearied and faint in (our) minds".

It is a dark hour, my dear friends. May I say it without immodesty, I know Demas; I know him well. It is a dark hour. You young preachers will some day come to the place where you will understand Paul when he wrote to this young preacher, "Oh, Timothy, come and see me, won't you? Only Luke is with me. The men I have leaned on have all gone, and I shall be going out alone soon." You remember in that same epistle Paul said, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." But at last he went the fiery way to heaven alone.

I pray some of us may be brought, by grace, to be able to say, "I am crucified with Christ. For me death is past. The world is done. I reckon it out. I am shut up to my Lord, and I will follow Him whithersoever He goeth." If we could say that, I believe the Lord would use us, if not like Peter, He might use us as he did Stephen. And it makes little difference whether we are like Peter or Stephen, if only we can be made use of by Him.

In His name I offer you no easy course during this coming year. It is not an easy thing to be a disciple of Christ in this day, and I can see no prospect of its immediately becoming easier. Only God can give us grace to go all the way and count not our lives dear unto ourselves if only we may win Christ, and be found

in Him at last. This, I humbly confess, is my ambition. Oh that we may be consumed in the service of God, that the zeal of His house may eat us up! Then we shall awake in glory.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we are unworthy to be numbered among Thy disciples. We have been such poor followers of Jesus. We have so often failed Thee. Thou hast never failed us once. Many of us knowing our own hearts this morning would here and now rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ. We would hold nothing back. Help us that we may quietly wait in Thy presence this day, and that ere the day shall end we may be assured in our own spirits that Thou hast come to us in such a way that Thou wilt enable us to follow Thee to the end.

Hear us in this. Dismiss us with Thy blessing. May the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with us all, to-day and forever, Amen.

"OH THAT THOU Wouldest REND THE HEAVENS"

At the New Year's meeting the Pastor suggested as a motto for the year Isaiah's exclamatory prayer: "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down."

Even the most casual observer of conditions everywhere prevailing in the world to-day, including what we are accustomed to call the religious world, must recognize that improvement can come only by extraordinary means. We believe that now, as always, the world's only hope is in God. For a generation or so, men have been more than ordinarily puffed up, proud of themselves, and of their achievements. Human society everywhere is not unlike a young lad who flatters himself that he needs no instruction in order to drive his father's new car. So he sits at the wheel, and starts off, only to be found but a mile or so distant seriously injured in the midst of the wreckage of the machine of which he thought he was the master.

Men have made new machines to move themselves about at great speed on land and sea, and in the air. They have found new methods of bridging distance; and of talking through the air to each other and to vast multitudes. They have formulated new theories of education, and have evolved new systems of government, and boasted that they had converted the whole world into a brand new shining car of the latest model. The main difficulty is that no means have been found of controlling the man at the wheel. Like it or not, laugh as they may, the line in Heber's hymn which describes this world as a place in which "every prospect pleases, and only man is vile", remains true. There is no hope for the world unless and until something is found which can make men better.

The gospel of the grace of God can do so. But men's hearts are closed against it. And the deadly influence of those who, for a couple of generations, while calling themselves its friends, have mocked at the gospel's efficacy, has all but destroyed public confidence in any and every sort of religion as an instrument for human betterment.

We believe the world's hope is in a special divine visitation, some extraordinary manifestation of divine power on a worldwide scale. The chapter from which our motto is taken contains a verse carried forward into the New Testament, which reads, "As it is written,

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Isaiah refers to the record of God's interpositions in times past: "When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." It was with that in mind that he exclaimed, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!"

We believe that only the Lord Himself can make His name known to His adversaries; and that only when He thus comes down will the nations tremble at His presence. Believers know that God has come down in the person of His Son, and that the miracle of the Incarnation has made any necessary divine interposition easily possible. Let this be our readers' constant prayer, that as God has made bare His arm in days gone by, as He has repeatedly "answered by fire", he may do so again until multitudes shall cry, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

THIS WEEK'S SERMON

Last Sunday evening the Editor spoke in Jarvis Street pulpit on the question, "Should the Hepburn Government be Indicted for Manslaughter?"; and answered the question in the affirmative. He intended that the address should be published in this issue, but on reflection we considered that THE GOSPEL WITNESS reaches such a great number of people remote from Ontario affairs, and interested in the paper chiefly for its distinctively biblical message, that we thought it was wise to publish the morning sermon instead.

It is enough here to say that the Hepburn Government, so far from administering a Liquor "Control" Act, is operating with the utmost vigour a liquor sales department. If the Ontario Government were the paid agents of the liquor interests, they could not be more vigorous in promoting the sale of liquor. Without request from anyone they extended the hours of sale for four evenings before Christmas, and kept the beer-rooms open on New Year's Day.

We referred last week to the shocking toll of disaster which followed upon this. Guilty as were the drunken and reckless drivers, and the conscienceless beer-sellers, the responsibility for killing and injuring must lie chiefly with the Government, and even more particularly with Premier Hepburn.

The most serious aspect of the present situation consists in the fact that the Hepburn Government, by its every act, seems to be determined to instil into the minds of Ontario people principles of lawlessness. It is perhaps the most lawless régime ever to blight any country under the British flag.

THREE MONTHS TO THE YEAR'S END

We again remind the members of Jarvis Street Church of our exhortation of last week, that the church year will end March 31st, and that the time to begin to get ready for that is now.

THE NEW YEAR'S WEEK-END

The week-end in Jarvis Street was a very heavy one, but a very happy one. The old year blew itself out in a first-class blizzard. We did not regret it, hoping that it might blow a little sense even into the heads of drunken drivers, and thus reduce Ontario's traffic toll. The Toronto press did nobly last week in denouncing the Government's liquor policy, and warning all motorists, with a view to preventing a repetition of the disastrous record over Christmas. This had the effect of keeping thousands of motorists indoors over the week-end. Many, to our certain knowledge, were literally afraid to drive. Because of this, our attendance at the Watchnight Service was smaller than usual. The fear of driving together with the blizzard, doubtless kept many at home. Still, for such a wild night, the attendance was large, and we had a glorious time waiting upon the Lord in prayer.

At ten o'clock New Year's Morning we met for our annual prayer and fellowship meeting. There was a large attendance, and it was a great service. We managed to get it closed some time before one o'clock.

The Saturday evening service was not much below the usual Saturday evening prayer meeting, and was a meeting of great blessing. The services of Sunday were largely attended. The morning sermon appears in this issue, and the evening address we have summarized in the foregoing article.

We were all sorry for one thing, that over the week-end our greatly beloved Deacon Greenway was kept at home by a severe cold. We are glad to report that he is improving; but no church service seems to be quite complete in Jarvis Street from which Brother Greenway is absent.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

NORANDA—Rev. S. Wellington. We are glad to have encouraging news from Noranda, where Pastor Stanley Wellington has been greatly used of the Lord in establishing and building up a church in this town of about fourteen thousand people in Northwestern Quebec. This good work has been done without a cent of support from the treasury of the Union. From a recent letter from the Pastor, we quote the following: "The Lord has been giving us some good encouragement recently, and I believe that the greatest blessings are soon to come. Last Sunday the Young People took the entire evening service and did so very splendidly. A fine congregation was present and many remarked that they were blessed. On Sunday, we had the joy of baptizing three candidates. Nearly a full house witnessed the ordinance."

LONG BRANCH—Rev. B. Jeffery. "We are glad to report that the attendance is increasing at nearly all the services. Five were saved during a recent week, several are to be baptized on Sunday. We were delighted with the enthusiastic testimony of one boy in our Sunday evening service. He hopes to win his mother and father for Christ soon. 'I am going to celebrate the birth of my Saviour for the first time', said a splendid Scot in a meeting just before Christmas. Another young convert said last Sunday, 'We had a different Christmas this year—a better one—praise the Lord.'

Prayer is requested for many unsaved husbands and wives, and for an atheistic communist whose wife died suddenly, leaving four small children."

STICKS, AND STONES, AND SOULS. It is said that in the early days of the Methodist revival in England, Wesley demanded that young men who went out to preach should return and report either of souls saved, or of sticks and stones thrown at them. He regarded either one or the other, or both, as a sign that the young preachers were in the true apostolic succession. We are glad to report that judged by this standard our pastors in the North are true preachers of the gospel.

The wave of opposition that recently swept over our newly established causes in the North, has subsided, and leaves them even stronger than before. Reports from all our new centres in the North unite in this testimony.

Pastor C. S. McGrath, for example, says that the work is more encouraging of late. We give the following excerpt from a recent letter from Val d'Or. "The congregations have increased in numbers and the interest seems greater. There are more unsaved people coming to the services. The last

few weeks there has been as many people at the services as could possibly get in the homes. We have been greatly encouraged to see more young people coming to the meetings. It is difficult to get more children out to Sunday School. The parents won't get up in time to get them ready at ten o'clock. We are coming in contact with new people, and hope to get some of them interested in the services."

The following brief note is the report Mr. Boyd gives of a service held in December: "We had a fair day Sunday in Sudbury in spite of bad weather. Five young folk, one a Catholic girl fifteen or sixteen years of age, made profession of faith in Christ." A more recent letter tells of this Home Mission church, little more than a year old, taking its first missionary offering which amounted to \$14.35, and Mr. Boyd adds, "I think if we could keep our people sufficiently informed of the work they would gladly support it to whatever extent they are able."

Bible School Lesson Outline

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

Vol. 2 First Quarter Lesson 3 January 16th, 1937

CHRIST AND NICODEMUS

Lesson Text: John 3.

Golden Text: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"—John 3:7.

I. Christ Teaches About the New Birth—verses 1-21.

Nicodemus, a leading man among the Jews and a teacher, evidently belonged to the Sanhedrin Council (7:50, 51). He was an educated man, earnest and religious, interested in Christ, but timid in approaching Him. He is always referred to in Scripture as the one who came to Jesus by night (7:50, 51; 19:39). It may be that he was not prepared as yet to make an open confession of His interest in Christ, or he may have chosen the night as an appropriate time for extended conversation with the Saviour, when they might be free from interruption. At any rate, he went to Christ, and in that he is to be commended. Though he went first by night, he took his place among the believers (19:39).

Nicodemus acknowledged Christ as a Rabbi, a great teacher, and a prophet from God. We can imagine that He was expecting to discuss with this teacher such religious matters as the Messianic Kingdom, and the hopes of the nation of Israel. Christ interrupted the train of his thoughts with a startling statement, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He cannot apprehend, enjoy or have a part in that kingdom. Nicodemus considered himself as a leader in Israel, and hence as an officer in that kingdom, but Christ pointed out that he was incapable of understanding the basic principles of the kingdom. The natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14). A new life, a new birth from above, is necessary. The Greek word translated "again", in verses 3 and 7 means also "from above."

To Nicodemus such a spiritual birth seemed as impossible as a second natural birth. So it is, apart from God, Who is the author of all life—physical, mental, moral and spiritual (1:4; 17:2; Acts 17:28).

After stating the fact of the new birth, our Lord emphasized the manner of that new birth. The Holy Spirit is the agent, and the Word of God is the instrument (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23). Water is a symbol of the Word of God, because of its cleansing qualities (15:3; Psa. 119:9).

The subjects of a spiritual kingdom must enter that kingdom by spiritual birth, since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50). According to the law of generation, like begets like; flesh produces flesh, and Spirit alone can produce spirit.

Emphasize the truth of the Golden Text, "Ye must be born again". The natural man is blind (2 Cor. 4:4), dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2: 1-3), with understanding darkened (Eph. 4:18, 19), full of evil thoughts (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9), and unable to please God (Rom. 8:8).

Our Lord illustrated the principles of the new birth by reference to the wind, a comparison which was peculiarly apt because the Greek word for "spirit" also means "wind". Both are sovereign in their activity (Rom. 9:15, 18), mysterious and unseen, yet powerful.

Nicodemus again asked, "How can these things be?" Being a teacher in Israel, he should have known something about the doctrine of the new birth, for it is taught in such passages as Ezek. 36:25-27. Our Lord said it would be useless to explain to him the "heavenly things" of the new birth, which might include the God-ward aspects of salvation—His predestination, election and sovereign will; the person of Christ (1 Tim. 3:16); the eternal offering of the Son of God; redemption through His cross (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

It is God's part to create and bestow life; it is man's part to receive Christ, to believe upon Him. Christ is the Mediator between God and man; He is the One Whose death made new life possible. Believing upon Him, we shall be justified, pardoned, and given a new divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). To know Him is life eternal (John 17:3).

The incident of the brazen serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21:4-9) illustrates the way of salvation. The poison affected all the people, just as sin is universal; all need to be saved (Rom. 3:23). The malady was fatal; sin brings forth death (Jas. 1:15; Rom. 6:23). God alone could provide a remedy. The brazen serpent is a symbol of the judgment which fell upon the Son of God. The uplifting of the serpent pictures the uplifting of Christ on the cross (12:32). Healing came to those who looked up to the serpent in faith, believing the word of God through Moses. Similarly, salvation is bestowed upon all who look to Christ (Isa. 45:22); their faith is counted to them for righteousness (Rom. 4:5). Those who refused to accept the way of life offered to them, died. To reject Christ is to perish (8:24).

Verse 16 has been called "The Little Gospel". As the scholars will know this verse well, and as it contains the message of the Gospel, it will be an excellent one to use in pointing them to Christ.

Christ came not to condemn, but to save. Men were already under condemnation; He came to show them their guilt and to lead them to God. People are lost because they are sinners, and also because they spurn the remedy provided in Christ (Heb. 2:3). The true Light is now shining, and those who remain in darkness are without excuse. They think they can conceal their evil deeds. The holiness of Christ exposes sin in all its ugliness, just as the sunlight reveals insects which have been hiding under cover of the rocks. The good will not fear the light of Christ.

II. John Teaches About the Way of Life—verses 22-36.

The interview with Nicodemus took place probably at Jerusalem. In the meantime, John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing near Aenon, a village not far from Sychar, the scene of the conversion of the woman of Samaria (4:5).

The disciples of John marvelled that the multitudes followed Christ, instead of their teacher. They had not yet comprehended the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, while the Baptist was merely His forerunner, whose ministry was consummated and whose joy was fulfilled, when Christ was magnified. Happy the servant who delights to see his own glory fade in the glory of the Lord; as the stars fade in the majesty of the light of day!

The message Christ came to bring was a heavenly one, understood and received only by those whose hearts were prepared (1 John 4:6). God has given to men a testimony, a record, that He will give eternal life to those who believe in Christ. Those who accept the testimony of God, attest the fact that God is true; those who refuse to accept His Word, act as though God were not true (1 John 5:9-12). Christ is God's final and complete revelation of Himself to men (Heb. 1:1, 2). The Holy Spirit was not given to Him by measure, as He was to the prophets, but in His fulness, because Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.

The destiny of every man depends upon how he treats God's revelation in Christ. Life is promised to those who believe, but only to those who believe. Upon all others, the wrath of God—His righteous judgment upon sin (Rom. 1:18)—will abide for ever.

THE PASTOR'S REVERIE

"The pastor sits in his easy-chair,
 With the Bible upon his knee.
 From gold to purple the clouds in the west
 Are changing momentarily;
 The shadows lie in the valleys below,
 And hide in the curtain's fold;
 And the page grows dim whereon he reads,
 'I remember the days of old.'

"'Not clear nor dark', as the Scripture saith,
 The pastor's memories are;
 No day that is gone was shadowless,
 No night was without its star;
 But mingled bitter and sweet hath been
 The portion of his cup:
 'The hand that in love hath smitten', he saith,
 'In love hath bound us up.'

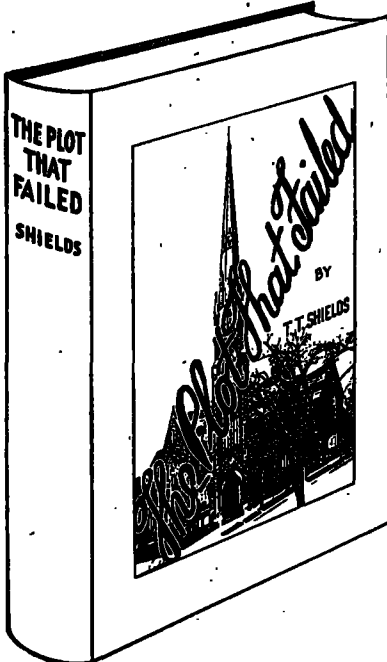
"He thinks of the day when first, with fear
 And faltering lips, he stood
 To speak in the sacred place the Word
 To the waiting multitude;
 He walks again to the house of God
 With the voice of joy and praise,
 With many whose feet long time have pressed
 Heaven's safe and blessed ways.

"By the couch of pain he kneels again;
 Again, the thin hand lies
 Cold in his palm, while the last far look
 Steals into the steadfast eyes;
 And now the burden of hearts that break
 Lies heavy upon his own—
 The widow's woe, and the orphan's cry,
 And the desolate mother's moan.

"So blithe and glad, so heavy and sad,
 Are the days that are no more,
 So mournfully sweet are the sounds that float
 With the winds from a far-off shore.
 For the pastor has learned what meaneth the word
 That is given him to keep,—
 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice,
 And weep with them that weep.'

"It is not in vain that he has trod
 This lonely and toilsome way.
 It is not in vain that he has wrought
 In the vineyard all the day;
 For the soul that gives is the soul that lives,
 And bearing another's load
 Doth lighten your own, and shorten the way
 And brighten the homeward road."

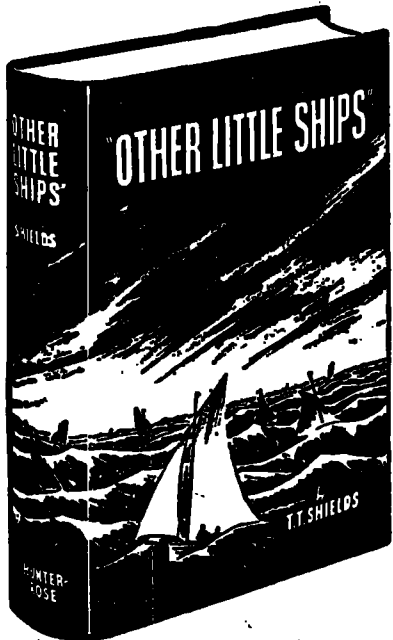
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