

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"OH THAT THOU Wouldest REND THE HEAVENS!"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 9th, 1938.

(Stenographically Reported)

"Oh that thou wouldest render 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."—Isaiah 64:1-2.

God's plans and purposes do not change. He is Himself the same, and His years do no fail. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. The gospel was "preached before unto Abraham". Indeed, Eve, the mother of us all, was promised a Seed which should undo the mischief which sin had wrought. God's attitude toward human life, His purposes in respect to the disaster wrought by sin, His attitude toward the sin of the world, have undergone no change.

It sometimes seems to those of us who have but short memories and little acquaintance with the history of the past, that we have fallen upon strange days, that we are passing through experiences new to humankind. Properly viewed, that is really not true. The course of the river may wind about, and sometimes it may even seem to be flowing in an opposite direction, and there may be some eddies in the stream: notwithstanding, "all the rivers run into the sea"; and however indirect and circuitous their route, they find their way to the great deep at last. It often seems as though the course of human history were reversing itself, as though forces of reaction had set in. It seems as though midnight had dropped down at noon. And yet I venture the affirmation that the river of human history still flows in the bed of the divine purpose, and that nothing comes by hap or chance in the sphere of human life any more than in the realm of nature where everything is subject to inexorable law. In the end, the purpose of God will be achieved, and His will will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven.

Sometimes it appears as though the people of God

were passing through times of special difficulty, but actually no new thing has come to us. Nor should we count it strange that we fall into divers temptations. It is ever true that daylight succeeds the night, and harvest follows upon the seedtime; cold and heat, winter and summer, do not cease. We must expect, individually and collectively as the people of God, to pass through all these vicissitudes. The church of Christ has had its ups and downs, its days of light and glory, and its days of gloom and apparent disaster. Always the lean kine follow upon the heels of those which are "fatfleshed and well favoured", and feed "in a meadow"; and, ever and anon, after the seven plenteous years, the days of dearth begin to come.

Such a dearth has come to the professing church in our day. Such an era indeed has come to the whole world. And such a drought had come to Israel of old. Her history is reviewed in the preceding chapter which I read to you, and in many other chapters. Deborah found the inspiration of her song in the record of divine faithfulness, and borrowed courage from the past. Again and again in the Psalms we find the record of God's dealings with His people reviewed, and the events recorded in the sacred volume gathered together for the inspiration of faith.

It was upon such an occasion of darkness the prophet looked, a period in which God seemed almost to have forsaken His people. It was that situation which led him to utter this exclamatory prayer, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down". That is the cry: that God would make bare His arm, and show Himself strong in behalf of those who feared Him.

Let us see what this prayer, which I suggested to the church on New Year's morning might appropriately and profitably be our motto and the inspiration of our intercession during this year, may teach us as the people of God.

## I.

It is A PRAYER WHICH RECOGNIZES THAT CONDITIONS MAY OBTAIN IN HUMAN LIFE WHICH ARE ALTOGETHER BEYOND ALL POSSIBILITY OF HUMAN AMELIORATION. All human aid has failed; it has become evident that if conditions are to be bettered, God Himself must do something, for there is no other hope than in God.

I say, *such a condition obtains in the church*, the professing church of Christ. I dare say that as I seek to expound this part of my thesis this evening, there may be some who will be disposed to question the accuracy of some of my statements. There is a religious optimism that might well be called ostrichism. It consists in shutting one's eyes to the plain and indisputable facts of life.

There are people who live by the fallacious philosophy of Christian Science who have never subscribed to the tenets of that strange sect. They try to persuade themselves that evil may be overcome by ignoring it, and that difficulties may be removed by denying their existence. The fact is, the Christian church—and by that I mean the great body of people of all denominations who profess and call themselves Christians—has fallen upon days of dearth, of darkness, of great impoverishment. No one conversant with current religious history can successfully refute that statement. There was a day when religious life of some sort seemed to be at the flood, but it is not now. The tide of religious interest has ebbed, it has flowed out. In many cases, where once there was a proud river upon whose bosom religiously there sailed great ships, we have now nothing but the muddy banks, with a small and impotent stream marking the place where mighty argosies of faith once bore great cargoes of grace for the world's enrichment.

Take a view of the professing Christian church to-day. Very largely, *it is without an authoritative message*. In many cases it assumes that the heavens are shut up; there is no open vision; the priest and the prophet fail; and the pulpits of the majority of churches have been engaged for many a day in mere human speculation, in the dissemination of doubt rather than in the sowing of the word of God by the hearing of which alone, faith can be generated. I know that here and there a few oases in the desert—or what at least appear as such, may be seen. Here and there amid the barren lands there may be a pool that seems to be of fresh water; for God has left not Himself without witness. He never has done so. He gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. There always are to be found, though they are not always in evidence, the seven thousand who have not bowed their knees to Baal. But speaking generally, the professing church does not recognize the authority of the Bible. There is scarcely a religious educational institution to be found, an institution of higher learning, a theological college, where the Bible is not discounted, and its authority repudiated. It is so in Toronto; it is so in Canada; it is true of the United States, of England. Germany has no monopoly of paganism. Paganism abounds in this country, even in religious circles.

The church of Christ, as a whole, *no longer professes to have a remedy for the world's ills*. The Cross and

the precious blood may find a place in formal prayer, and in the ancient hymns of the church, but very little place in its preaching. Men have substituted human reason for divine revelation, and the speculations of men for the oracles of God. There are comparatively few places where conversions are either expected or believed to be possible. In its many councils, its annual meetings, its publications, the church generally is like one who has lost his way in a fog, without compass and without a chart.

We shall see within the next few weeks the account of various annual meetings of churches reported in the press; and in the majority of instances, the greater part of the report will consist in a financial statement, and perhaps the names of the people who have been appointed to office to carry on, if not the merry-go-round, the ecclesiastical roundabout; to go through another year of hymn-singing and prayer-saying, and at the end of the year have not one single convert or transformation of life and character to record.

Who is sufficient for these things? Where shall we find a power to combat it? Quite generally a social gospel is substituted for the gospel of salvation. There was a time when John R. Mott, typical of hundreds of others, was a sound evangelical; he has now become an experimenting economist. One might suppose Heaven to be dumb, and the arm of the Lord to have lost its power to save. The Bible is set aside; and a vital, present, authoritative Saviour is no longer preached as the church's message, to a sinful, bankrupt world. Understand, I say there are exceptions. But in order to overcome the difficulty, the Anglican Communion must flirt with the Roman Catholic Church—and both of them must make overtures to the Eastern, or Greek Catholic Church. The so-called Free Churches of England must consider the problem, as some call it, of "reunion". And thus by might, and by an army, by human wisdom and human organization—by human effort of some sort—men are trying as they long have tried, to improve this old world.

If you look into *the realm of moral reform* and see what is called the church at work in another way, what has been accomplished? The gospel of social readjustment has been substituted for the gospel of individual salvation. We have heard about it for a long time. I must commend at least the courage and perseverance of the social gospellers, for I cannot see that they have accomplished anything. In that respect, conditions are no better, but rather worse. If we forget all about Heaven—and the new emphasis is upon the visible and temporal—and view the efforts of men to make this old world a better place, is anyone prepared to offer his congratulations to those who have so valiantly essayed the task? Society everywhere is in a ferment. There is no more agreement between Labour and Capital, employer and employee, than there ever was. Though we talk forever and a day about these things, what better are we?

Are we any better off *politically*? Sometimes I imagine the war must have killed off all those who had any political sense, and left us—well, with what we have in Ontario, in Quebec, and elsewhere! Nor does it appear that the nations, to look at human life in the large, are any better. Formulate your political theories as you will, and consider Russian Communism as the approximation of the Christian ideal, as some optimistic

religious proponents are bold enough to do—well, you are welcome to it. The liquidation of all opponents in Russia seems to me to be as far from Christian as Hell is from Heaven. Be that as it may, as each new political system is propounded, it is immediately attacked by other political principles and a new conflict is precipitated, and the new political isms are set in battle array as germs that fight against each other. Thus we have a world at war in every realm of life.

I do not know how it is to be improved. I cannot see any human saviour on the horizon. I can see no help in legislation, education, or godless education. Nor can I see any help in modern religion either; for it is a powerless thing, devoid of dynamic, spinning its theories, setting forth its ideologies, telling men to hitch their wagon to a star. "Pretty talk", as they say down South. I have seen many people who professed to have hitched their wagon to a star—but the towline must have broken, for I have seen none of them moving starward.

That was the condition faced by this prophet. When convinced of human impotence, he turned his thought heavenward and said, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down".

## II.

It is A PRAYER THAT RECOGNIZES AT LEAST THE POSSIBILITY OF DIVINE VISITATION, AND IS OPPOSED TO ALL MODERN RELIGIOUS TEACHING. I know what some men will say of my argument. Sometimes I am half disposed to boast when I hear the pratings of some religious midgets, mere pygmies. How helpless they would leave us in the face of such conditions!

Can God come down? Modern religion says, No. In this place now these many years we have contended against these currents of religious thought. We have been called a fool for so doing; we have been called cranks and fanatics. I get letters sometimes containing not a single correct sentence, with perhaps a couple of dozen mis-spelled words—from people charging me with ignorance!

"Oh no"! they say, "God does not come down"! People are blinded by the great delusion that we are just a part of the cosmic order, and are being evolved into something, I know not what. If there be anything in evolution, I am profoundly thankful I did not arrive on the scene earlier. Men are near enough to the animal creation now, I do not know what they were before they began to evolve. But you see how that strange philosophy of life has permeated human thought everywhere until it has elbowed God out of His world in the popular view. I do not wonder that many churches in this city have no prayer meeting—why should they pray? I do not wonder that many ministers cannot pray without its being written for them. I would not pray if I were an evolutionist. Why should I? That would logically drive me to a conception of—well, if there be any God at all, an excluded God, a God apart.

That, my dear friends, is where the controversy has raged these many years. It has raged about the Bible, and chiefly about what the Bible teaches. Men have ceased to believe that God can rend the heavens and come down. They may reluctantly admit His Landlordism, but if so, He is an absentee Landlord Who is not very particular about collecting His rents. They have dismissed Him, and gone on without Him. Ah,

but He *has* rent the heavens and come down more than once! And the God Whom we worship, and Whom we proclaim, can rend the heavens and come down. Often I have told you, and I shall keep on telling you to the end of the chapter, that the whole Bible is a record of God's coming down. That is why it was written, to tell us that notwithstanding the world's sin, Heaven is not divorced from us. He does rend the heavens and come down.

Specifically, reference is here made to *His coming down upon Sinai*, when Sinai was altogether in a smoke, and when He appeared as a consuming fire. All that were roundabout were forbidden even to touch the mountain that flowed at His presence. Let me remind you that on that occasion, when God did rend the heavens and come down, when He gave His law to His people, and made man to know that He is not only the Creator, but the Ruler of this world, and that He will not be ignored, and that His standard of righteousness and His requirements in human life must in the end be recognized and obeyed, the mountains smoked at His presence. There are special instances in Scripture when He came down in judgment, when He came down upon the wicked cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace until they were utterly consumed.

"A bit of legend", someone says. I know! That is what I have been telling you. "Historically untrue", says another. That is what I have been telling you. "Easily explained, if there be any historical element in it, on natural grounds". One explanation is as good as another. Any speculation will do to explain away the fact that God came down. Men do not want to believe that God can rend the heavens; but He has many times done so. What I want to make clear is that those of us whose prayers find their inspiration in this Word of revelation have abundant ground for offering this petition. He has come down.

The prophet looked back upon the past and saw *how God came down upon His people in Egypt and delivered them, and led them through the sea*. The whole course of human history, if we were not blind to it, would disclose the fact that it is a record of divine visitation repeated.

He comes in many ways. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was an act, a divine act, of moral sanitation. When, earlier, He came, not in fire, but in flood, He came because the hearts of the sons of men were fully set in them to do evil. He purged the earth of its iniquity, and began again. And surely, surely, this sinful earth is due for another fire of some sort; but I content myself with reminding you that that is exactly what the Bible teaches us, that God can and does rend the heavens and come down. Therefore, we may pray this prayer. It is up to date, prepared for us by the Holy Spirit. We may earnestly petition the King of kings and Lord of lords that He would rend the heavens and come down.

## III.

HIS COMING HERE IS SET FORTH UNDER THE FIGURE OF FIRE. "Our God is a consuming fire." It is proverbial that it is not safe for children to play with fire. This sinful world is a world of children who now for a long time have been playing with Fire; but do not forget that from everlasting to everlasting He is God. It

is just as appropriate to preach in this day as it was in the days of Jonathan Edwards, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God". God, in this modern day, has not only been misrepresented: he has been caricatured. He is largely an unknown quantity, the Unknown spelled with a capital, a Force—with a capital F; He is Energy—with a capital E; He is Law—with a capital L. He is anything in the thought of men, but what He really is, and "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient". Men have changed the image of the uncorruptible God, but it still remains that our God, in His very nature, is like unto fire.

Fire purifies; fire can consume; fire can give light; fire can produce energy. Call God Force, Energy, Law, Light—call Him what you will, He is all that, but vastly more. He is Fire, and this petitioner prayed that He might come down as fire.

*He has come as fire.* He came to Sodom and Gomorrah. He came on Carmel—broke in upon the idolatry of Israel, and the prophets of Baal were slain. He came as a little Babe; He rent the heavens and came down. "Ah", someone says, "now you are getting near the gospel. God came as a little Babe". Yes, He did; and He came as a Man, as an High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities; (and) was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". He came during that parenthesis of His eternal existence outshining in truth and grace—"full of grace and truth".

Then He went back to heaven, and He sent Someone to represent Him. When that Someone came, He came as a *Tongue of Fire*. The church was baptized with the Holy Ghost and with Fire. And even in that day people thought they could presume, and a certain man who had been but a humble fisherman said to another, "Tell me, did ye sell the land for so much"? "Yes". Then said Peter, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price"? Ananias played with Fire—and in New Testament times "Ananias, hearing these words," fell dead in the presence of our God Who is "a consuming Fire". Then came his wife, to whom Peter said, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much"? And she said, "Yea, for so much". Then Peter said unto her, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out". Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost. Men cannot play with God. He does, He will again, rend the heavens and come down. Many times in the subsequent history of the church has He come, and He will again rend the heavens and come down.

I suggest that those of us who have come to know God in Christ Jesus will do well to remember that we must serve Him with reverence and godly fear. "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places". Oh that we could take our religion more seriously! Oh that we could recognize that when we turn the pages of this Book, and on the basis of its promises bow our knees and take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, we are praying to One Who is Fire. There is an expression commonly used about one's relation to dangerous things and dangerous situations, "it is dynamite; do not touch it". I know He speaks in a still small voice; I know

He comes to cover us with His feathers, and that Almighty touches us with infinite tenderness. I know that He has revealed Himself in grace. But hear me: Our God is dynamite! He can and will come down in His own appointed time.

#### IV.

It was A PRAYER WITH A PURPOSE. This man did not pray that God would come down for spectacular reasons. May I without irreverence say that there are people who seem to think that God is interested in putting on a kind of divine show, as though He were the master of a theatre. Do you know what *hypocrite* means? Do you know its origin? A hypocrite was one who played a part. Can we conceive of God as playing a part? Oh no! When He comes down, He will come down for a purpose. What will it be? "To make thy name known to thine adversaries". You ask, "Has God any adversaries"? This world is peopled with the enemies of God. You Christians know that. You know that down in the office, in the shop, and elsewhere. Wherever you try to bear testimony to Jesus Christ, some merely oppose, while others almost gnash their teeth at you. Not if you are a mere church member, but if you witness for Christ in the New Testament fashion, you will find immediately the adversaries of the Most High will be upon your track.

I wonder could I use it as an illustration? I do not know that it troubles me now: it would have done so once upon a time before I came to understand it. I came to this church nearly twenty-eight years ago, when it was supposed to be a church of wealth and social position. It was then supposed to be the richest church in the Denomination. I did not preach any differently from what I do now: I have not changed my gospel. They stood it for eleven years, and then rebelled. But the Lord gave us the victory. I have not stolen anything, I have not played burglar, I do not know that I have hurt anyone; yet I receive word almost every day of my life from somewhere of people who simply gnash their teeth at the very mention of my name. In the majority of instances, I do not know the people. Why do they hate us? "You go to that place, to Jarvis Street Church"? It is as much as one's reputation is worth, in some cases, "Adversaries"? Preach Christ, stand for the Bible, and you will become identified with your Lord. As they hated Him, they will hate you. You need not expect an easy life.

"Adversaries"? Yes! Luther, in his day, was thought by some to be full of the devil. I do not know how many devils he had! We live in an anti-religious age. This prophet prayed that God would come down and deal with His adversaries, because he could not. A man came to me one day and said, "I have just been talking to a man who lives not far from this church. When I mentioned your name, he was furious, but I am sure if you would only call on him, you would change his attitude in five minutes. He would like you". I said, "Thank you; but I never did call on anyone for such a purpose, and I am not going. I cannot help what he thinks of me". The enemies of Christ's gospel are too much for me: I shall leave them alone save as I mention them to Him Who can rend the heavens and come down and deal with them Himself.

"To make thy name known to thine adversaries". There was once a proud king, and there was a man who

was the representative of a race of slaves, who came to that proud king and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me". And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord; neither will I let Israel go". You know the story—a great king who did not know God, and whom nobody could introduce to God; and God said, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand will he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land". Plague after plague was sent until at last an unseen Hand was laid upon the firstborn of the royal house, and upon the firstborn of all Egypt. There was not an house in which there was not one dead. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go and serve the Lord as ye have said". But later he repented and pursued them.

I have sometimes tried to imagine the operations of Pharaoh's mind. At the head of his army, representative of the greatest power upon earth, he followed this nation of slaves as they went through the divided waters. Pharaoh gave the order to go after them. He descended into the valley of waters, as the Israelites emerged safely on the other side. I imagine that when Moses stretched forth his rod, and the waters returned in their strength, and those mighty billows were breaking over Pharaoh and his army, he may have had a fraction of a minute to say, "This is Jehovah. I did not know Him, but I know Him now!" Yes, he knew Him; for "the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them". Thus did the Lord rend the heavens and come down and make His name known to His adversaries.

In the New Testament, a scholar, a philosopher, a religious leader, is described as "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord". What a suggestive word! Like a beast of the jungle, frothing at the mouth, eager for its prey. Suddenly God rent the heavens and came down, and a light that never was on sea or land shone upon Saul and all who were with him, and blinded them so that they fell to the ground. He could see nothing; just one flash of that Fire, and all the glory of the earth departed. Then he "heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me"? And he said, "Who are thou, Lord"? And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what will thou have me to do"? "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence"—what for?—"to make thy name known to thine, adversaries".

A time is coming when the Sauls of our day, and the scholars and religious leaders of our day, will learn that this Book they have opposed, and this Jesus against Whom they have gnashed their teeth, are really the Lord of heaven and His word; and they will "know his name".

Is it not wonderful that He is able to do it? I have seen Sauls converted into Pauls, the adversaries of Jesus Christ converted into advocates of His cause, ambassadors of the King of kings. Blessed be God, that is the power we need. Nothing else will do.

Thus I have shown you that our God does come down and make His name known unto His adversaries. He may come in judgment as upon Pharaoh, or in boundless grace as to Saul: but either in judgment or in mercy sooner or later He must again come down.

"That the nations may tremble at thy presence". You say, "That would be impossible. I can hear the march of Hitler's millions, the tramp of Mussolini's armies, the millions of Russia, and the mechanized forces of Japan. Put the gospel against that?" No, not apart from the God of the gospel. In Luther's day, God came down, and the nations literally trembled at His presence. He shook thrones; He overturned governments. It is not impossible. There is no other hope for the world than that He should rend the heavens and come down.

Continue the study of this chapter, and you will find a verse which the Apostle Paul carries into his first letter to the Corinthians: "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". "There is no God like thee", said the prophet, "that worketh"—for whom?—"for them who wait for thee". Those who depend upon Him, He never fails.

We have seen something of His mighty power in this place. Many a time have we seen His outstretched arm. I live in the confident hope that we shall see it in full measure, and by special divine visitation again.

## V.

But I cannot send you away without this word. We know He will rend the heavens and come down for His own. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ". But what else? "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe". What a glorious Saviour He is! What a mighty King! How some of us love Him even now! We are constrained to say that He is the fairest among ten thousands; He is the altogether lovely One. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem". But some day He will be manifested, and we also shall be manifested with Him in glory. He is really coming—Jesus is coming again! May He come to us in all the fullness of His saving grace, bringing multitudes to His feet. Then in the time appointed He will come in glory, to take unto Himself His great power and reign.

So, Jarvis Street, I give you this motto, this model prayer. Fail not to address it to the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Pray unceasingly that He will rend the heavens that He will come down and make His name known unto his adversaries. Amen.

## DO YOU SHARPEN YOUR KNIVES?

However well made, however fine the material in a knife, it will require to be kept sharp if it is to be useful. Toronto Baptist Seminary does not profess to make preachers. They only can preach whom God sends, and in whom He has put the stuff of which real preachers are made. But the Seminary does attempt to sharpen such swords as have been fashioned in the divine armoury. We can establish sound, sane, evangelical churches only as we produce missionaries

(Continued on page 6)

## Bible School Lesson Outline

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

Vol. 2 First Quarter Lesson 4 January 23rd, 1938

### CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

Lesson Text: John 4.

Golden Text: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst"—John 4:14.

#### I. The Woman of Samaria—verses 1-42.

Our Lord did not desire that there should be rivalry and controversy over Him among the disciples of John, hence He departed from Judaea for the northern province of Galilee, which was distant about three days' journey. The usual route from Jerusalem to Galilee lay through the district of Samaria, though sometimes travellers journeyed along the eastern shore of the Jordan through Peraea. Older scholars will be interested in following these routes on the map. The geographical reasons for passing through Samaria were not the chief considerations. Christ followed the Father's plan for His life, and that plan included the salvation of the woman of Samaria and many of her compatriots. May we, too, walk in the paths marked out for us by the Master (Psa. 119:133).

Reaching Jacob's well outside the town of Sychar (Gen. 33:19; 48:22), Christ sat down beside it. Weariness is no excuse for slackness in service. Touched with the feeling of our human infirmities (Heb. 4:15), Christ experienced weariness, yet He took advantage of the brief respite from His journeying to bring help to a needy soul. He was ever "instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2).

The disciples had gone into the city or they probably would have supplied Christ with utensils for drawing water, but as He had none, He used this circumstance as the ground of His request for a drink. He gave the Samaritan the opportunity of showing a courtesy (Gen. 24:14; Matt. 10:42), which might arouse her interest and kindly feeling.

That a Jew should ask her a favour was surprising, for ordinarily there would not be social intercourse between members of the two races. Moreover, she was probably a social outcast, and poor, since women of high standing and good reputation went to public fountains only in the evening, whereas this incident took place at noon, if we are to understand that John described the time in terms of Roman reckoning, as is most likely. There is no respect of persons with our God (Rom. 2:11); the barriers of sex, class, creed and nation would not hinder the Son of God.

She hesitated to confer the favour, but had she known about God's gift to the world (John 3:16), and had she recognized God's Messiah (Luke 19:42), their positions would have been reversed, and in humility she would have been praying to Him to bestow upon her the boon of eternal life. Dimly she sensed that this One talking with her must be greater than He seemed, even greater than the patriarch Jacob.

The water of the well of Samaria was an appropriate starting-point for the message of eternal life. Our Lord tactfully used the natural circumstances to bring the conversation to the vital topic (compare Acts 8:30-35). Water is refreshing, purifying, and necessary to human life, but it cannot permanently slake thirst. Eternal life through Christ is also refreshing, quickening, and purifying, but it satisfies the longing of the soul for God (6:35, 51). The powerful, life-giving flow never ceases, but becomes a perennial spring (Rev. 7:16). The very life of God is planted in the hearts of those who love Him. His Spirit takes up abode with our spirits (1 Cor. 6:19), and as we yield to Him, indwells and fills us (7:37-39). Water is frequently spoken of in Scripture as a symbol of life (Ezek. 47:1, 9; Zech. 14:8; Rev. 22:1, 2).

The woman of Samaria expressed a desire for eternal life, and her prayer was the first step in her salvation. She realized her deep need. God will satisfy those who long for Him (Isa. 55:1; Matt. 5:6; Rev. 21:6; Rev. 22:17).

There must be personal conviction, as well as personal petition. Sin must be forsaken. Christ pointed to the sin which this woman was trying to hide (Prov. 28:13). But all things are open before Him (Heb. 4:13).

The Samaritan perceived that this stranger must at least be a prophet, but the conversation was becoming too painful, and it would seem that she endeavoured to take the Lord's

attention from herself by commencing a discussion of the question of the rival claims of Mt. Gerizim (Deut. 27:12), which was situated near them, and Jerusalem. The prophet would settle this matter for her. In Christian work we shall encounter the same situation; the unsaved will be apt to introduce theological discussions to distract attention from the main issue—their personal relationship to Christ. If we are wise, we shall follow our Master's example, and keep to spiritual matters, remembering that most difficulties are not of the mind, but of the heart and will.

Christ explained that the method of worship was more important than the place of worship. God had revealed Himself in a special manner to the Jews through His servants and prophets. True worship was that of the Spirit, irrespective of whether the worshipper was on Mt. Gerizim or on Mt. Zion. Notice that the sublime teaching about acceptable worship was given in the first instance to one individual. Time and effort are not wasted, when concentrated on one person. In teaching the one's and two's we may be accomplishing more than when addressing multitudes.

The Samaritan woman's thought turned to the Messiah, and Christ then revealed His identity. The word "he", being in italics, is not in the original Greek, which reads, "I that speak unto thee am" or "I am speaketh unto thee". Christ is the great "I am" (Exod. 3:14); He is Jehovah, the eternal, self-existing God. Similar references to Christ as God occur in 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5.

So absorbed was she in Christ, and in the message of life, that she forgot her errand at the well, and hastened to tell others of her joy. Her confession of the Messiah was such that many Samaritans went in person to Christ.

True satisfaction of spirit can be found only in doing the will of God (verses 31-34). The wants of the body can be satisfied with food and drink, but the Christian labours not for the meat which perishes, but for the meat which endures unto everlasting life (6:27).

The injunction to look upon the fields white already to harvest was spoken as the Samaritans were making their way across the fields from Sychar. It was time to gather in the grain (2 Cor. 6:2; Matt. 9:37; Isa. 49:18). The reapers will be rewarded, as well as the sowers (1 Cor. 3:5-8). The disciples preached to those whose hearts had been prepared by the teaching of others, especially the prophets. The principles of verses 36:38 are true of Bible School teachers.

The testimony of others may help us, but each must believe on Christ for himself; we cannot be saved by proxy.

#### II. The Nobleman of Capernaum—verses 43-54.

This nobleman was a courtier, and was probably an officer in the service of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, known as "the king" (Matt. 14:9). Though a man of high station, he would not send a servant to Christ, but took the journey from Capernaum to Cana to beseech the Lord in person.

At first it would seem that there was doubt in his mind as to Christ being the Messiah. He prescribed the method of healing; Christ was to go to his house and heal the son. If he might see the miracle performed, he would believe.

Christ tested the faith of the nobleman, saying nothing about going to Capernaum, but merely pronouncing the message of life and health. Our God is sovereign; He will heal in His own way. Sometimes the unsaved have an idea that they will be saved in a certain way, place and time. They may even refuse to go to churches where the Gospel is preached, saying, "I will not be saved in that church."

Faith, though small, increases when it is exercised. The nobleman had merely the word of Christ to trust, but he believed it absolutely and went his way. Signs are given in answer to faith, but not to satisfy curiosity.

### DO YOU SHARPEN YOUR KNIVES?

(Continued from page 5)

and pastors of like quality. This, the Seminary aims to do.

Hundreds of friends of the Seminary who will read this note need no argument to convince them of the value of the institution, but only a reminder of its financial needs. The Seminary year will close March 31st. We are going to make a desperate effort to close the year with balanced books. Will you help us, and help us now? Send us a substantial contribution to the Seminary Fund.

**"INSIDE HISTORY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,  
FORT WORTH, AND TEMPLE BAPTIST  
CHURCH, DETROIT—LIFE STORY  
OF DR. J. FRANK NORRIS."**

This is the title of a new book of three hundred and thirty pages, by Dr. Norris, generously illustrated with cuts of his great buildings in Fort Worth and Detroit. On the title cover are these words:

"During the three years of the joint pastorate of Fort Worth and Detroit there were received the total number of new members, 6,193. There was raised in cash for all purposes, \$421,333.62. There were printed 6,376,500 copies of the *Fundamentalist*. The present combined membership is over 15,000. There were over 18,000 in attendance in special Bible School. The Pastor travelled 119,000 miles."

If subscribed for at once, the amazing price of this book is only 50c, and everyone who gets it will receive, as book value, at least \$5.00 worth for one tenth that amount. Its value as an epitomized biography of a great preacher, and the condensed record of the unprecedented achievement of the same great preacher in the leadership of two great churches fifteen hundred miles apart, cannot possibly be estimated. We remember to have read a statement by Dr. A. T. Pearson, about Spurgeon, to the effect, that after the Lord had made C. H. Spurgeon, He broke the mould. There is only one J. Frank Norris. So far as we have been able to observe, in many respects he is unlike any other man we have ever known.

Some years ago a southern friend remarked to us that when the Lord made Norris, He found that He had run out of the element of fear, so He made him without fear. It reminded us of a certain man who used to attend Jarvis St. prayer meetings, a very precise man, who was biblically well-informed. For a good while he attended the meetings, and delivered himself of fifteen or twenty minute prayers, until we could endure it no longer. But his prayers were very thoroughly prepared in advance, and were extraordinary essays, evidently prepared to exhibit the prayer-essayist's ability. He was very fond of recounting the wonders of nature, and we recall a sentence from one of his prayers to this effect: "We thank Thee, O Lord, for the percolating power of a sun-beam." On another occasion he had evidently been delving into Job, and his prayer was largely a dissertation on leviathan; and we recall that he reminded the Lord that leviathan was "the only creature whom Thou hast made without fear". It may have been quite fortunate for us that that particular gentleman was unacquainted with Dr. J. Frank Norris, for he would have had to make an exception in his case, and include him with leviathan—and then the usual twenty-minute prayer must have been extended for an hour or so.

Dr. Norris is a fearless man in more ways than one. We have known men who seemed to have any amount of moral courage, who were physical cowards; and we have known men abundantly endowed with physical courage, who were moral cowards. But Dr. Norris is afraid of nothing, either in the physical or moral realms. Who but Dr. Norris would have dared even to attempt what, by the blessing of God, he has achieved in Detroit? Even the most daring of other men would have been afraid to try.

It was this Editor's privilege and honour years ago to enjoy the warm personal friendship of the late Russell H. Conwell, in many respects, in his day, the world's

greatest lecturer. We never heard Dr. Conwell lecture without feeling at the end that nothing was impossible. We have the same feeling when we read this record of the achievements of Dr. Norris. It gives us a feeling that there is no enemy physical or moral that may not be defeated and utterly routed; nor any task in our Lord's service which may not be accomplished.

Dr. Norris has been subject to trials that were no easier to endure than those of Job, but he has triumphed over them all. In Fort Worth, twice his great church was reduced to ashes—each time to rise from the ashes greater than ever. Some people in this northern part of the Continent would be inclined to say, "Yes, of course; but that was in Fort Worth. And Dr. Norris is a Baptist, and Baptists grow in the Southern states almost without cultivation. Notwithstanding their orthodoxy, they seem to be rather indigenous to the soil." It is a fact that Baptists are perhaps the largest body of Christians in the South, and we think it is probably true that Baptist churches do multiply more rapidly in the South than in the North—that is, of course, under the ministry of ordinary men. But that explanation of the First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, will no longer hold.

For what about Detroit? Can anyone find a more difficult city on the American Continent in which to do Christian work than Detroit? It may not be more difficult than Chicago or New York, but certainly the difficulties are at least as great. And yet in the short space of three years the Temple Baptist Church of Detroit has outgrown all its buildings, and like Abraham, has dwelt "in tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." The story of these marvellous achievements must prove an inspiration and tonic to the faith of every true believer; and what is equally important, it will provide a spur to the Christian effort of all who read it.

Could we afford it, we would place a copy of this book in the hands of every minister of every denomination on this Continent. It should prove equally valuable to deacons and elders, and church officers of every name and rank in all churches; and *we question whether any book outside the Bible was ever published so full of inspiration and suggestion and explicit direction to Sunday School workers as this latest book by Dr. Norris.*

**To Jarvis St. Members Particularly**

We are particularly anxious that it should have a large circulation in Jarvis Street Church. It costs only 50c—three hundred and thirty pages. We should like to see a copy of this book in every family in the entire church, and particularly we desire to see a copy in the hands of every one of our Sunday School teachers and officers. We suggest that all Jarvis Street members and friends in Toronto, who are interested, send in their order at once to the Jarvis St. Church Office, and we will order these books in bulk, and they can later be obtained at the Office. We attach herewith an order form, which you need only fill in and put in an envelope with 50c, and either hand in at the Office or put on the plate on Sunday. Friends outside of Toronto will please order direct from Temple Baptist Church, 14th and Marquette Sts., Detroit, Mich.

The book, we understand, will later be priced at 75c or \$1.00—and it ought to be; but to introduce it, the

price is set at 50c. And at this price, we must have the money with the order. So please fill out the order form below with your name and address, put it with the money in an envelope, seal it so that the silver cannot escape, and bring to the Church Office, or put it on the collection plate.

In closing this article we should like to give this testimony. This Pastor has had many helpers during the course of his ministry, but the visit of Dr. Norris to Jarvis Street in 1924—ten months after the establishment of our morning School—gave us larger and more abiding spiritual results than we have ever had from the visit of any minister.

Send in your order for Dr. Norris' book—at once; that is, next Sunday.

**ORDER FORM FOR DR. NORRIS' BOOK**

The Jarvis St. Church Office:

Please find enclosed 50c for which order for me a copy of Dr. Norris' book, "The Inside History of First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and Temple Baptist Church, Detroit." I will call at the Church Office as soon as I learn the books have been received.

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**"THE PLOT THAT FAILED"**

If this book is not a "best seller", it is at least a good seller. It was issued and the first copies mailed a little while before Christmas. Copies have been mailed some days at the rate of a hundred a day. Now the orders are beginning to come in from England. In addition to many orders for single copies, one order was received last week for five copies, three separate orders for three copies each, and others for two.

**"OTHER LITTLE SHIPS"**

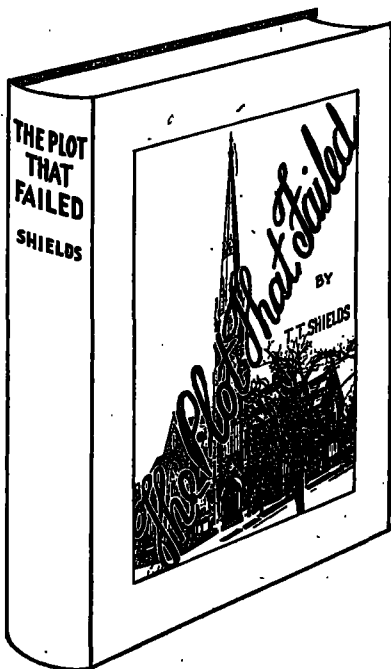
This book also is proving very popular at the reduced price. These volumes are selling at \$1.00 each. We are counting on making no profit, but merely paying expenses. But we believe both books are exceptional value for that price. Many a minister might be steadied in some crisis in his ministry, others would find direction in similar experiences, and perhaps some would be inspired with a new courage, by reading "The Plot That Failed". "Other Little Ships" takes its title from the first sermon in the book, and it is a book of addresses on many subjects, and a book that will suit you in all moods. We are offering either volume for \$1.00; THE GOSPEL WITNESS and either volume for \$2.75; or THE GOSPEL WITNESS and both volumes for \$3.50.

**A HEWER OF WOOD AND DRAWER OF WATER**

It is possible for one to warm himself by a glowing wood-fire which burns upon the hearth, or to find refreshment in a goblet of sparkling water from a deep well, without so much as giving a thought to the one who went into the bush and hewed the wood, or to the one who trod the path to the well and drew the sparkling draught.

THE GOSPEL WITNESS is a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. It is like One of Whom we read in the New Testament, "a succourer of many." Last Sunday evening a travelling man whom the preacher was unable to meet told someone in Jarvis Street Church that he had read THE GOSPEL WITNESS in Ceylon, and had promised himself to come to Jarvis Street Church if ever he was in Toronto. From nearly all corners of the earth we receive news of blessing through THE GOSPEL WITNESS pages.

Again we remind our readers that we carry no advertisements, and that the subscription price does not cover the cost of publication. We have not yet sent our annual letter to all our subscribers, but it is not too early for them to send in a contribution to THE GOSPEL WITNESS FUND. How it would lift the burden and relieve us of all anxiety if we were in funds by the end of February sufficient to balance our books, without having to worry through March! Send us your help at once.



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