

# The Gospel Witness

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

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE GOD WHO IS NEVER TOO LATE

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

Preached in Massey Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, November 27th, 1938

(Stenographically reported)

I shall announce my text this evening in instalments for the benefit of any who have not their Bibles with them. I wish each of you would always bring your Bible with you.

I have announced a simple subject this evening, to the effect that God is always punctual in fulfilling His covenant-engagements; that He can be depended upon never to be behind time.

Various contractual forms remind us that time is invariably an element in all contracts. The fact is, time is an important element in all human affairs. We are erecting a new building. We have not said to the contractors, "We should like you to complete it at your earliest convenience": we have told them that we want it completed by a particular date, and in signing the contract they have undertaken so to do.

That is not at all unusual. Men of great wealth may perhaps afford to be prodigal in the expenditure of their money, but people of limited means must count their pennies, and be careful how they spend. So if we had unlimited years to live, if we were not shut up to temporal boundaries, we should not need to be careful of the expenditure of our time. But we have no time to waste. Time is exceedingly precious. We are admonished to "redeem the time". We shall wisely pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

It is reported of Napoleon that on one occasion when he had given an order to one of his officers, he said, "Now, sir, use despatch! Ask me for anything but time, and I will give it to you; but time is beyond even my control." It is said that the same great general at Waterloo, as he saw the sun declining, apostrophizing the sun, said, "What would I not give for the power of Joshua, to retard thy march for but two short hours!" What a contrast between the limitation of human life and the sphere in which God dwells and works! He is infinite in all the qualities of His being. "From everlasting to everlasting" He is God. He works in the leisure, in the amplitude of eternity; and is never under the necessity of counting the hours. Yet He recognizes that He has set His human creatures amid temporal

boundaries, for God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." Because our life is limited, He gave us a clock by which to measure our days; and since that clock of the universe was set in operation, it has known no variation; has needed neither repair nor regulation.

Yet this Infinite One has condescended to our low estate: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." Though time is nothing to Him, He knows that it is everything to us. Therefore the Eternal condescends to the exigencies of Time, and meets us where and when we need Him. He is never late, and never fails in the fulfilment of His promises.

Nature itself is a parable: the coming of the seasons, the vicissitudes of day and night, mark the passage of time: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." These things do not, and will not, fail. The modern view of the world—and the modern view of God too—deny the supernatural; and because of that, the comforting biblical doctrine of divine providence has fallen into desuetude. We scarcely ever hear of it. We behave as though we were fatalists, as though we had never been taught to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven", as though we had never been taught that God hears the cry of His people, and at the proper hour stoops and intervenes for their relief.

The Scripture abounds with illustrations of the principle of divine interposition, and I have selected a few of them to show you how God comes into the life of His people, of individuals and of nations, just at the proper time, and never disappoints those who trust in Him.

### I.

My first illustration is found in the story of Abraham's offering of Isaac, in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. You remember the story, how God came to him and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah;

and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him." They went three days' journey. The boy—he was more than a boy; he was a young man—said, "My father; behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering", and Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

But there was none in sight. Even Abraham must have wondered how far God would require him to go, just where and at what point He would intervene. But he was ready to go all the way with God, however far it might be. He came to the mount, and bound his son upon the altar which he had erected. I think it must have been, with Isaac's consent, for he was not a child: he was probably stronger than his father. Still God did not intervene. Then the moment came when Abraham stretched forth his arm, the knife in his hand, and raised, to slay his son.

We cannot understand that without reading the New Testament. The New Testament intimates that Abraham was willing to go all the way, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." In effect, Abraham said, "It is my responsibility to obey at all costs"—and provides one of the most conspicuous examples of the real obedience of faith. But even as his hand was lifted, and the knife was poised to strike—just then, a Voice said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." God said, "You have gone far enough, Abraham." He was not too late: He was just on time.

Let us not ask that God shall meet us at the beginning of the third day. He may conceal His presence from us; He may be silent in the midst of our trial; but at the proper time and place, God will make Himself known. It is of the very essence of faith that we should believe that, and that we should proceed upon it; that we should act on the basis of that assumption. The responsibility, wherever God has commanded, is His. Let Him appear when He will.

That is literal history, but it is also a prophetic parable; for even as Abraham heard the Voice, he "lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." How dark was the world! How true it was that men dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death! It seemed as though God would never fulfil His promise, as though Messiah would never come! So slowly did God seem to move to fulfil His word. Yet when the skies were darker than usual, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king." The New Testament further tells us that "when the fulness of time was come"—when God's hour struck—"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

If you follow the story of the day of His flesh, up to the closing hour, you will find that this God-Man had numbered His days, and applied His heart unto wisdom;

that He arrived at each station in His career at the exact moment of time ordained from the beginning, until at last He said to His disciples, "Go and prepare us the passover." He Who was our paschal Lamb, Who was sacrificed for us, fulfilled all the prophetic and symbolic scriptures which promised that great atonement; and at the very moment of time necessary to the fulfilment of His word, the universe was shaken with His triumphant cry, "It is finished"; and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. The work was done—and was done at the time that God intended it should be done. In that we have a revelation of God's invariable rule.

## II.

Let me give you another illustration. This too relates to the life of Abraham. Hagar, poor Hagar, was driven away from home, and with her her child who also was Abraham's child, Ishmael. The sending away of Hagar must have been as hard a trial for Abraham as going to the mount of offering. When the bottle was filled with water, and she was provisioned for the journey, she went away with the child into the wilderness. Their resources were soon exhausted, and when the water was spent in the bottle, and there appeared no help anywhere, the child lay down under a tree, Hagar removed some distance from him, saying, "Let me not see the death of the child." No help! No hope!—until a strange Voice called, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad." Someone knew her trouble; Someone had answered her cry.

And will you mark it, Hagar was without the pale, Ishmael was a child of the flesh, not the child of promise. And yet the Voice that called Hagar by name said, "God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is." You must not shut God up to your definitions. God has a larger love than yours.

I wonder if I should be justified in asking you to look at Ishmael and Isaac struggling for the mastery in Palestine to-day? Do not forget that He Who chose Israel also said of Ishmael, "I will make of him a great nation." Do not forget that He Who heard the prayer of Israel, heard too the prayer of Ishmael.

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink." Just in time! God's arm was made bare for the deliverance of two needy souls.

## III.

I find another example of the same principle in the Book of Exodus. After the plagues were ended, and the death-angel had passed over the land, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for "there was not a house where there was not one dead", Moses was sent for, and commanded to hasten with his people out of the land. You know how they went, how they came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued after them. And even while they were in hot pursuit, the spirit of the Munich pact manifested itself. The people said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt." Then you remember how the sea was parted, and how Israel went down into the trough of the sea. What strange blindness came upon the Egyptians, to lead them to pursue them all? But they did. Hard after them they descended,

with a well of water on either side. Israel emerged—not yet free from Egypt. And oh, with what concern they must have watched the great host following after them—until something happened. Pharaoh's chariot wheels came off, and his men began to struggle to gain the farther side. I think most of them—all of them were in the valley—were almost on the other side. But listen! The people wondered, saying, "Will God not intervene? See, He allows them to follow us. What shall we do?" But Moses was perfectly calm, and at the right moment he stretched his hand over the sea; and the record says, "The sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." He accomplished the deliverance of a nation—as we are accustomed to say, "in the nick of time". Not too early: not too late. God showed that even the forces of nature were subject to His control, and that when He needed to utilize them to further His purposes they were instantly responsive to His command.

We worship the same God, my dear friends; and who knows what God will do in the exigencies of this hour? He may arise, that His enemies may be scattered. Certainly I think in times like these, for our comfort and the stabilization of our faith, and of our moods, we need a re-study of the doctrine of divine providence, and a deepening conviction, as we read this evening, that the Lord reigneth; for only as we are sure that the Lord reigneth can the earth rejoice, and the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

#### IV.

Let me give you another illustration from the Word, to show how God appears for the reinforcement of a man who is ready to do his duty—just at the time he needs it. Joshua was commanded to lead the people into the land of promise. He had arrived outside Jericho. He had been commanded to encompass the city until the walls should fall. I think he must have been deeply perturbed. "How shall I do it? With what profit may I thus go round and round?" Then suddenly Someone appeared to him, a great Warrior with drawn sword. Joshua must have wondered who He was, and on which side He would fight; for he concluded that to whatever side this great Champion threw His weight, to that side victory would be given. Tremblingly he asked, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The Stranger answered, "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Joshua was no longer alone. With a song of victory in his heart, he marched about the walled city, knowing well what the result would be when at last the ram's horns should be sounded, and the men should shout.

Do not ask for grace in advance of the hour when it will be required. Go ye up to the walls of Jericho. You can do that. Go as far as you can. Use the utmost of your wisdom, of the knowledge and strength He has given you; and at the appointed time the Captain of the Lord's hosts will appear, and will take command—and the moment He does so, victory will be ensured. His promise that He will do so, to the believer, ensures the victory in advance.

#### V.

I give you another illustration. Two or three weeks ago I spoke to you of that most interesting and inspiring story of the Book of Esther, so that the outline of the

history is clear in your minds, of how the Jews were consigned to death, and Mordecai was clothed in sack-cloth and ashes. There was mourning everywhere because of the king's decree. The city had been already advised of the intended pogrom: "The king and Haman sat down to drink: but the city Shushan was perplexed." Then the inspired record says, "On that night could not the king sleep." He was in good health, but sleep was taken from him, he could not sleep.

Have you ever had wakeful hours? Have you ever spent night after night without closing your eyes, until you felt as though you would never sleep again? Alas, I have. It is a most harrowing feeling. But, "He giveth his beloved sleep"—

"Yea, men may wonder while they scan  
A living, thinking, feeling man,  
Confirmed, in such a watch to keep;  
But angels say—and through the word  
I think their happy smile is heard—  
'He giveth His beloved, sleep'."

But sometimes it pleases Him to take away one's sleep. "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles." I do not know whether he expected that the reading would put him to sleep or not. Years ago I knew a certain doctor whose wife was a member of the church, but he seldom came. Again and again I tried to induce him to come to church, but without success. One day I went to see him, to give him another invitation. I said, "Doctor, have you ever had patients troubled with insomnia?" "Very often", he replied. "Do you ever find difficulty in getting them to sleep?" "Very often", he repeated. "Well", I said, "next time you have a patient like that, come to church and see how I do it!"

I do not know whether the king thought the reading of the chronicles would induce sleep, but whether or no it actually wakened him up. He heard about what Mordecai had done, and for which he had received no reward. He summoned Haman and said, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" You know the sequel, the story of Mordecai's exaltation and the Jews' deliverance. "On that night"! What does that tell us? Here is a man who does not know God, before whose eyes there is no fear of God; yet God wrought supernaturally, directly, upon that man's mind, and kept him awake.

We may learn something of the resources of our God. If you try to confine God to your programme, or survey the whole field of possible instrumentalities and ask, "How can God do this? How can He accomplish it by any of these means", you are likely to omit in your estimation, the determining factor. God may merely keep someone awake, and change the whole course of history. You do not know what He will do. The lesson is, God was there; and He was there on time, as the sequel of the story tells.

#### VI.

I give you another illustration. Here were men who were on trial for their faith. They were required by royal decree, whenever they heard certain instruments of music, to fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. There were three men who refused to bow. I think there is nothing this world needs in our day more than men of the quality of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, men who will say,

"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." I dare say there were many who prayed for those three men, and I have little doubt they prayed for themselves. The furnace was heated "one seven times more than it was wont to be heated." Everything was in readiness. As they were marched toward the furnace, their loved ones and friends must have asked, "Will God do nothing to extinguish the flames? Why does He not bow the heavens and come down?" But He did not! They came right to the furnace door, but Someone Whom others did not see, was waiting there, and said to them, I think, "I am waiting for you; I am going into the furnace with you."

He walked with them into the furnace of fire, until by and by Nebuchadnezzar came and called his officers and said, "See! See! Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O King." Then he said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He was there, and the fire had no power to hurt them. He did not appear until they actually got into the place where they needed Him.

We should all like to be heroes. It would be a thrilling experience to go through a shipwreck if you could be sure you would come out safely. We should like to be of such heroic mould as to be able boldly to go into the furnace—if we could only be sure that the story would be repeated in our experience, and we should emerge without hurt. These men were like Abraham. Abraham was willing to lay his son in death if need be, because he believed that God could raise him from the dead if necessary. He was ready to welcome the will of God. So said these men, "Our God is able to deliver us. We do not know whether it will please Him so to do; but if not, it makes no difference to us. We will not worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar hath set up."

God has need of men and women like them—I say it reverently. There is a sense, of course, in which God needs no one. He is sovereignly independent of us all. But it has pleased Him in His grace so to order things that He can use us; and in that sense God needs men and women of this quality, who will dare the flames, who will go anywhere, right to the extremity of the duty commanded, in the confidence that God will appear in His own way and time, and deliver them.

#### VII.

I must give you a New Testament example. I select one from many. As I thought of it this afternoon, I was embarrassed with the number of incidents that came quickly to my mind, illustrating my principle, in the life of the Lord Jesus Who was "God manifest in the flesh". I select one typical of all the others.

You remember the story of Lazarus, in the eleventh chapter of John. Lazarus was "sick unto death", and his sisters sent a message to the God-Man saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." There follows a verse that few of us understand: "When he (the Lord) heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." He gave Lazarus

time to die. He did not immediately answer their prayer; and when at last He came, the sisters complained that He was too late. There was in their complaint, in principle, that saddest of all reflections, What might have been. Mary said it, and Martha said it. They repeated in His presence what they had said while they waited, I doubt not: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." They thought He was too late.

I grant you that sometimes God seems to arrive too late. Sometimes He tarries beyond the limit of our expectation; and when death itself, or some apparently irremedial disaster has ensued, we say, "It is no use now. It makes little difference what happens: it is too late. Had He come yesterday, it would have been all right." That is how we pray, shutting God up to our schedules, and to our particular locality, to the instrumentalities of our selection; and insist that God do certain things in our way, or assume they cannot be done.

You remember the sequel of the story? "Where have ye laid him?" And they took Him to the sepulchre. Lazarus was raised from the dead. You remember how Tennyson celebrates the event, speaking of Mary's wonder as she gazed at the Master; the woman who had said, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"!—

"Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
Nor other thought her mind admits  
But, he was dead, and there he sits,  
And He that brought him back is there."

O my brethren and sisters, in a far larger sense than we have dreamed as yet, we "are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Do not say He is too late. If you came this evening despairing of deliverance, remember our God has His own way of appearing for our relief.

#### VIII.

Peter was in prison. His was a hopeless case. Herod had slain James the brother of John with the sword, and his action was exceedingly popular; and "because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also". So Peter was shut up in prison, and delivered to four quarterions of soldiers to keep him: Door after door was locked upon him—and there was nothing that could be done; "but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

Then you notice how the inspired record says: "Herod, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people." To-morrow is the day! To-morrow! This will be Peter's last night on earth. He will go the way of James to-morrow. "But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him", and the record says, "The same night—the same night!—Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison." Some of us find it hard enough to get a good sleep even with a comfortable bed to lie on, but to be chained hand and foot, shut up in jail with expectation of execution to-morrow! One can almost imagine Peter's saying to his guards, "Good night; I am going to sleep."

"The same night." That was God's night! That was God's time! Through the shut door, the angel came. The door opened, and Peter came to the iron gate that led to the city, and it "opened of its own accord". When at last he had come into the street of the city, and had

come to himself, he said, "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

## IX.

One other. "Behold, I come quickly." When will He come? I do not know. Define that word, "quickly". Measure it in terms of days, or years, or generations. I cannot. But He Who is the Infinite, says, "Behold, I come. By my estimation, the time is short. Behold, I come quickly." Oh that He would come! I heard of a man who had suffered a loss in business, and was greatly distressed. Someone spoke of the coming of the Lord; he smiled, for he was a Christian, and said, "He cannot come too soon for me." There are greater losses than the loss of property or money, but I remind you that the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation is a divinely-inspired, infallible record of divine interposition. It is written for the purpose of showing that God can come down from heaven to earth, and do for His human creatures what no one else can do.

I give you His promise, "Behold, I come quickly." You ask me when, and I say, I do not know except this: it will be in His time, and it will be exactly at the right time. When the earth is ripe for judgment, will He come, "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." At the same time will He come "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

I wish you would say in your hearts this evening that Jesus Christ is coming again, certainly coming again in His own time. And His time is always the best time; His way is always the best way. Let us all answer, even some who came into this house this evening without Christ, but have now received Him, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." Will you not welcome Him into your heart and life? That must be an act of divine intervention. God must stoop and quicken you into newness of life, or you can never be saved. Will you come? Will you say, first in your own heart, "Even so come, Lord Jesus"? Then, washed in His blood, saved by His grace, you will be able to be numbered among that great host who love His appearing, and long for His coming. Then, in that larger and ultimate sense of His coming down the skies, you will be able to join in the prayer of all His redeemed people, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

## Bible School Lesson Outline

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

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### PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME

Lesson Text: Acts 28.

Golden Text: "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."—Romans 1:15.

#### 1. The Journey to Rome—verses 1-15.

The shipwrecked passengers, prisoners and crew were all saved according to the Divine promise. They landed on unknown territory (Acts 27:39), which they later discovered was the Island of Melita (modern Malta). Malta was at that time a dependency of Sicily, and its inhabitants were of Phoenician origin. These natives, ignorant and uncultured as

they were, showed kindness to the cold and weary travellers, and ministered to their comfort (2 Tim. 1:16; Heb. 13:2).

The great Apostle did not consider himself above the menial task of gathering sticks for a fire, but showed an example of humble, industrious service on behalf of others (Rom. 12:3; 2 Thess. 3:8-11; Phil. 2:3, 4). He himself followed in the footsteps of his Master (Matt. 20:28).

The superstitious inhabitants of the island assumed that the attack of the viper signified that Paul must be a great sinner. The modern illusion that illness or misfortune need necessarily be interpreted as a judgment from God for sin, is also erroneous and unscriptural (Luke 13:2, 3; John 9:2, 3). The Christian is not exempt from trial, and the presence of sorrow or suffering, far from indicating that he is out of the will of God, may mean that he is obeying the will of God (Acts 14:22; Jas. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:12).

Paul claimed the promise of the Lord for the apostles (Luke 10:19; Mark 16:18). Such promises were provisional and temporary in their application; nevertheless, God can and does protect His own servants in a sovereign manner to-day, when it is His will so to do. We must be ready, however, to endure hardship for His sake (2 Tim. 2:3; Heb. 11:33, 34).

The supernatural manifestation of power caused the natives to believe that the Apostle was not a murderer, after all, but a god! So vacillating and uncertain are the sympathies of the mob (Acts 8:10; 14:11).

The chief ruler of the island, Publius by name, was quickly rewarded for his generous hospitality. The Apostle Paul, in view of the part he had played in the shipwreck, was evidently regarded as a man to be honoured (1 Sam. 2:30). The grateful natives added their share of honour also in return for healing mercies (Acts 19:11, 12; 1 Cor. 12:9, 28).

After a sojourn of three months in Melita the company set out at last for Rome. What a long trial of patience! Yet Paul had learned to leave everything quietly to God, to commit his way unto the Lord, and wait patiently for Him (Psa. 37:5-7).

The Apostle was not a little cheered and comforted in the midst of his hardships, loneliness and care by the fellowship with Christians who had come forty miles to greet him and to welcome him (2 Cor. 7:5; 11:28; 2 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1:16).

#### II. The Gospel in Rome—verses 16-31.

There were many Jewish inhabitants in Rome at this time. After the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 B.C. many had been taken there as captives, but later freed. They enjoyed liberty of worship in the Imperial City, and many pagans became proselytes or adherents of the synagogue, being attracted by two of the distinctive doctrines of Judaism, Monotheism and the Messianic Kingdom. The idea of one, righteous and holy God appealed to the more earnest of the Romans who had believed in many gods, as evil as themselves, and the hopes for the future entertained by the Jews, offered consolation to those whose native religion concerned the present life only.

Paul presumed that hostile Jews would have preceded him to Rome, as they had to other cities, stirring up opposition (Acts 14:19). He therefore wisely resolved to gather the leading Jews together and explain the whole situation to them. He desired, if possible, to clear away the difficulties which might hinder their reception of the Gospel, so that he might preach freely to them first, as was his custom, and afterward address himself to the wider circle of Gentile unbelievers.

Paul's defence was brief and tactful. He maintained that he was in reality innocent of the charges of sedition and heresy (Acts 23:1; 25:8), and that the Roman civil authorities had pronounced him guiltless. But some of the Jews had refused to agree to his acquittal, and therefore he had been compelled to appeal to the Emperor. Nevertheless, the Apostle did not hold a grudge against his brethren, but mercifully forgave them (Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34; Eph. 4:32; 1 Tim. 1:13).

The Roman Jews had heard nothing against Paul, but they had heard much against Christianity. For a whole day he carefully explained to them the way of life, showing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was indeed the One fulfilling the hope of Israel (Acts 17:2, 3; 19:8; 26:22, 23).

The Word of God is a discernor (Greek "Critic") of the thoughts and intents of the hearts of men (Heb. 4:12, 13);

it reveals their attitude to God as being either one of obedience, or of rebellion. Some of the Romans believed the truth when presented to them, others rejected it. It is ever so (Isa. 6:9, 10; Ezek. 3:11; Matt. 13:14; Luke 8:10; 2 Cor. 2:16).

Although the Apostle Paul was under restraint and not allowed to go forth to preach the Gospel in Rome, there was nothing to prevent him from giving his testimony in his own hired house as he sat there day after day, probably chained to a Roman soldier. Let us also be faithful in proclaiming the message of salvation, no matter what our circumstances may be.

The Book of Acts closes with the account of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, probably because the book was completed at that time. From certain passages in the Epistles and from references to him in the writings of the Church Fathers, we conjecture that he was later freed, and that he visited some of the Churches. He was later arrested on the charge of disturbing the worship of the old gods of the Romans, and in this way encouraging treason to the Emperor. After the burning of Rome in 64 A.D. for which the Christians were blamed, it was considered a crime to be a Christian. This time Paul was not allowed to dwell in his own house, but was confined to the Mamertine Prison in the Imperial City. Tradition states that he was beheaded by order of Emperor Nero on the Ostian Road, outside of the city, in the year 68 A.D.

## THE GOSPEL IN BELGIUM

### War on Superstition and Ignorance

W. J. R. HORSBURGH,

*From the Christian Herald and Signs of the Times*

(The following interesting and informing article is an excerpt from an article on evangelical mission work in Belgium. Brussels, the capital of Belgium, is one of the fields of the French Bible Mission to which the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec has undertaken to contribute as its Foreign Mission enterprise. Ed. G.W.)

What of Europe—what of her near future? Is she rapidly and irresistibly plunging toward the maelstrom of ruin and of a war of extermination?

The answer to this question is given by the late beloved Keswick leader, Dr. Charles Inwood, when he said: "The Church ought to turn her batteries loose upon Europe for the next few years: it is the most crucial missionary field of the world to-day." Our concern is not with the anxieties of the hour but the agencies which are seeking to "redeem the time" and to "work while it is yet day".

Situated in a strategic position, Belgium has a missionary significance and suggests a missionary vocation. For nearly twenty years an active Gospel work has been maintained in this nearby field. At the present time, over 80 centres are occupied for evangelistic work.

There are some who suppose that this "religious" country does not need the Gospel. Others may think that in twenty years the task of evangelising has been accomplished. Many would claim that the "regions beyond", because of a more distant horizon, merit all our concern.

We submit that Belgium is a needy Mission-Field. The spiritual destitution, appalling ignorance, blind superstition and fanatical opposition to the Gospel which confront us in so many places in Belgium, must be a sufficient answer to any doubts of the value of this work. The majority of the people are completely ignorant of the Word of God and there is indifference to spiritual things where agnosticism does not actually rule.

There is in the Ardennes an old wayside crucifix which has been used by peasants as a sort of fetish. It has been the custom, when one has a headache or a toothache to drive a nail into certain trees in the hope that the pain might somehow be imprisoned in the wood.

A Belgian magazine which was describing these "quaint customs" compared this habit with those of the Chinese and Congolese, who often make a small puppet and stick pins in the ailing part "to let out the pain".

It is always a shock to discover that superstition never seems to die out completely among highly civilized peoples. When there is no living contact with God and His Word, the human heart reverts to its primitive fears.

How it hurts the heart of a colporteur to discover that the Gospel of John which was received with such grateful eagerness is only wanted to read over a sick cow! or to ward off lightning. The Belgian people are ignorant of the Scriptures as a whole, but they think that the Gospels have a sort of magical power. What would you say to a man who asked for the four Gospels, so that he might have one on each of the four posts of his bed? Or to the woman who was careful to keep a copy of John's Gospel next to her heart, but who never read it! Such people wish to have a Gospel near for superstitious beliefs, as some English people might carry a four-leaf clover or a rabbit's foot.

Holy things have been profaned into meaningless words. There is a town in Flanders called "Oude God" (Old God), there is a café of the "Holy Spirit" at Namur and a public house of "The Kingdom of Heaven" at St. Nicholas. To compliment a baby they call him "a little Jesus". Even their saints are not always respected, and when prayers remain unanswered too long, their household images are turned face to the wall in disgrace or even lowered into a dark well for a season.

How hard it is for us to admit that without vital contact with God, formal Christianity is quickly undermined by the old forces of paganism which Paul described in Romans I. Just to that extent is Europe pagan to-day and in need of missionary endeavour.

Belgium is such a near neighbor to our own country that we surely have a special responsibility in taking the Gospel message there. Just across the narrow waters there lies this thickly populated land where the Gospel is literally unknown. We are conscious of the need of far off lands, but, perchance, we have almost forgotten the needs of a people that lie almost at our doors.

## GOSPEL WITNESS SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON OUTLINE

### God Revealing Himself to Men

JANUARY 1st, to DECEMBER 31st, 1939

Edited by Dr. Olive L. Clark

LESSON I.—January 1st—GOD THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS.

Text: Gen. 1. Golden Text: Gen. 1:1. For reading: Gen. 2.

LESSON II.—January 8th—THE BEGINNING OF SIN AND REDEMPTION.

Text: Gen. 3. Golden Text: Rom. 5:20. For reading: Gen. 4, 5.

LESSON III.—January 15th—NOAH SAVED IN THE ARK.

Text: Gen. 8. Golden Text: Gen. 6:8. For reading: Gen. 6, 7, 9, 10.

LESSON IV.—January 22nd—GOD CALLS ABRAHAM.

Text: Gen. 11:31-12:10. Golden Text: Gen. 12:2. For reading: Gen. 11:1-30.

LESSON V.—January 29th—ABRAHAM SEPARATES FROM LOT.

Text: Gen. 13. Golden Text: Rom. 12:18. For reading: Gen. 14.

LESSON VI.—February 5th—GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM.

Text: Gen. 15. Golden Text: Gen. 15:6. For reading: Gen. 16, 17.

LESSON VII.—February 12th—ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION.

Text: Gen. 18. Golden Text: Jas. 5:16. For reading: Gen. 19:1-3, 12-29.

LESSON VIII.—February 19th—THE OFFERING OF ISAAC.

Text: Gen. 22. Golden Text: Gen. 22:8. For reading: Gen. 21.

LESSON IX.—February 26th—SEEKING A BRIDE FOR ISAAC.

Text: Gen. 24. Golden Text: Gen. 24:40. For reading: Gen. 23.

LESSON X.—March 5th—ISAAC THE PEACEMAKER.

Text: Gen. 26:12-35. Golden Text: Matt. 5:9. For reading: Gen. 25, 26:1-5.

- LESSON XI.—MARCH 12th—THE STOLEN BLESSING.**  
Text: Gen. 27:1-40. Golden Text: Gen. 27:34. For reading: Gen. 27:41-46.
- LESSON XII.—MARCH 19th—JACOB'S VISION AT BETHEL.**  
Text: Gen. 28. Golden Text: Gen. 28:16. For reading: Gen. 29, 31.
- LESSON XIII.—MARCH 26th—ISRAEL A PRINCE WITH GOD.**  
Text: Gen. 32. Golden Text: Gen. 32:28. For reading: Gen. 33, 35, 36.
- LESSON XIV.—APRIL 2nd—JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.**  
Text: Gen. 37. Golden Text: Acts 7:9. For reading: Gen. 39:1-6.
- LESSON XV.—APRIL 9th—THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.**  
Text: Luke 24. Golden Text: 1 Cor. 15:20. For reading: 1 Cor. 15.
- LESSON XVI.—APRIL 16th—JOSEPH IN PRISON.**  
Text: Gen. 39:20-23; 40:1-23. Golden Text: Gen. 39:21. For reading: Psa. 105.
- LESSON XVII.—APRIL 23rd—JOSEPH EXALTED.**  
Text: Gen. 41:1-45. Golden Text: 1 Sa. 2:30. For reading: Gen. 41:46-57.
- LESSON XVIII.—APRIL 30th—JOSEPH PRESERVES HIS BRETHREN.**  
Text: Gen. 42. Golden Text: Prov. 17:17. For reading: Gen. 43, 44.
- LESSON XIX.—MAY 7th—JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BRETHREN.**  
Text: Gen. 45. Golden Text: Gen. 45:8. For reading: Gen. 46, 47.
- LESSON XX.—MAY 14th—THE DEATH OF JOSEPH.**  
Text: Gen. 50. Golden Text: Gen. 50:20. For reading: Gen. 48, 49.
- LESSON XXI.—MAY 21st—PHARAOH OPPRESSES ISRAEL.**  
Text: Exod. 1. Golden Text: Psa. 72:4. For reading: Psa. 102.
- LESSON XXII.—MAY 28th—THE PREPARATION OF MOSES THE DELIVERER.**  
Text: Exod. 2. Golden Text: Acts 7:22. For reading: Acts 7:17-29; Heb. 11:23-27.
- LESSON XXIII.—JUNE 4th—THE CALL OF MOSES.**  
Text: Exod. 3. Golden Text: Exod. 3:12. For reading: Exod. 4, 5, 6.
- LESSON XXIV.—JUNE 11th—THE CONTEST WITH PHARAOH.**  
Text: Exod. 7. Golden Text: Exod. 7:17. For reading: Exod. 8, 9, 10.
- LESSON XXV.—JUNE 18th—THE PASSOVER.**  
Text: Exod. 12:1-36. Golden Text: 1 Cor. 5:7. For reading: Exod. 11, 12:37-51; 13.
- LESSON XXVI.—JUNE 25th—THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.**  
Text: Exod. 14. Golden Text: Exod. 15:2. For reading: Exod. 15.
- LESSON XXVII.—JULY 2nd—THE MANNA FROM HEAVEN.**  
Text: Exod. 16. Golden Text: John 6:35. For reading: John 6.
- LESSON XXVIII.—JULY 9th—THE SMITTEN ROCK.**  
Text: Exodus 17. Golden Text: John 7:37. For reading: Exod. 18.
- LESSON XXIX.—JULY 16th—THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.**  
Text: Exod. 20. Golden Text: Luke 10:27. For reading: Exod. 19, 21, 22.
- LESSON XXX.—JULY 23rd—MOSES ON MT. SINAI.**  
Text: Exod. 24. Golden Text: Exod. 24:7. For reading: Exod. 23.
- LESSON XXXI.—JULY 30th—THE TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS.**  
Text: Exod. 25. Golden Text: Exod. 25:22. For reading: Exod. 26-31.
- LESSON XXXII.—AUGUST 6th—THE GOLDEN CALF.**  
Text: Exod. 32. Golden Text: Exod. 20:3. For reading: Psa. 106.
- LESSON XXXIII.—AUGUST 13th—MOSES BEHOLDS THE GLORY OF GOD.**  
Text: Exod. 33. Golden Text: Exod. 33:11. For reading: Isa. 6.
- LESSON XXXIV.—AUGUST 20th—THE LORD'S COVENANT RENEWED.**  
Text: Exod. 34. Golden Text: Exod. 34:11. For reading: Exod. 35, 36.
- LESSON XXXV.—AUGUST 27th—THE TABERNACLE COMPLETED.**  
Text: Exod. 40. Golden Text: Exod. 40:34. For reading: Exod. 37-39.
- LESSON XXXVI.—SEPTEMBER 3rd—THE SIN OFFERING.**  
Text: Lev. 4. Golden Text: Heb. 9:22. For reading: Lev. 1-3.
- LESSON XXXVII.—SEPTEMBER 10th—THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.**  
Text: Lev. 8. Golden Text: Rom. 12:1. For reading: Lev. 5, 6, 7, 9.
- LESSON XXXVIII.—SEPTEMBER 17th—THE HOLINESS OF GOD.**  
Text: Lev. 10. Golden Text: Lev. 10:3. For reading: Lev. 11-14.
- LESSON XXXIX.—SEPTEMBER 24th—THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.**  
Text: Lev. 16. Golden Text: Lev. 17:11. For reading: Lev. 17, 19, 21, 22.
- LESSON XL.—OCTOBER 1st—THE FEASTS OF JEHOVAH.**  
Text: Lev. 23. Golden Text: Lev. 23:37. For reading: Lev. 24-27.
- LESSON XLI.—OCTOBER 8th—THE NAZARITE VOW.**  
Text: Numb. 6. Golden Text: 2 Cor. 6:17. For reading: Numb. 1-4.
- LESSON XLII.—OCTOBER 15th—THE MURMURING OF THE PEOPLE.**  
Text: Numb. 11. Golden Text: Psa. 106:15. For reading: Numb. 7-10.
- LESSON XLIII.—OCTOBER 22nd—THE COMPLAINT AGAINST MOSES.**  
Text: Numb. 12. Golden Text: Numb. 12:7. For reading: Psa. 78.
- LESSON XLIV.—OCTOBER 29th—THE REPORT OF THE SPIES.**  
Text: Numb. 14. Golden Text: Numb. 14:21. For reading: Numb. 13; Deut. 1.
- LESSON XLV.—NOVEMBER 5th—THE SIN OF MOSES.**  
Text: Numb. 20. Golden Text: Numb. 20:12. For reading: Numb. 15-19.
- LESSON XLVI.—NOVEMBER 12th—THE SERPENT OF BRASS.**  
Text: Numb. 21. Golden Text: John 3:14, 15. For reading: John 3.
- LESSON XLVII.—NOVEMBER 19th—BALAAM THE PROPHET.**  
Text: Numb. 22. Golden Text: Numb. 24:17. For reading: Numb. 23, 24.
- LESSON XLVIII.—NOVEMBER 26th—THE APPOINTMENT OF JOSHUA.**  
Text: Numb. 27. Golden Text: Joshua 1:5. For reading: Numb. 25, 26, 28, 29.
- LESSON XLIX.—DECEMBER 3rd—THE CITIES OF REFUGE.**  
Text: Numb. 35. Golden Text: Matt. 5:7. For reading: Numb. 30-34.
- LESSON L.—DECEMBER 10th—MOSES CHARGES THE PEOPLE.**  
Text: Deut. 8. Golden Text: Deut. 8:2. For reading: Deut. 11.
- LESSON LI.—DECEMBER 17th—THE DEATH OF MOSES.**  
Text: Deut. 34. Golden Text: Deut. 34:10. For reading: Deut. 3.
- LESSON LII.—DECEMBER 24th—THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR.**  
Text: Luke 2:1-20. Golden Text: Matt. 1:21. For reading: John 1:1-18.
- LESSON LIII.—DECEMBER 31st—REVIEW THE HEROES OF FAITH.**  
Text: Heb. 11:1-29. Golden Text: Heb. 11:6. For reading: Heb. 11:30-40.

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