

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

\$2.00 Per Year, Postpaid, to any address. 5c Per Single Copy.

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

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Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem; Canada.

Vol. 19, No. 34

TORONTO, DECEMBER 26, 1940

Whole Number 971

What Sort of New Year?

Within a few days countless millions of people will be wishing each other a happy new year. That the year to come will, in many senses, be new, we have no doubt. How far it can be happy for anyone, no one knows. In Europe the prospects seem to be much brighter, but although it is not midnight, no one can claim that it is high noon.

In all such conflagrations as that which now casts its lurid glow over the world, many contrary forces seem, for the time, to be working together.

In his address to the Italian people this afternoon, Mr. Churchill practically appealed to them to treat Mussolini as the crew of the ship of Tarshish treated Jonah, and throw him overboard. At the same time Mr. Churchill assumed that Mussolini was acting "against the Pope, and against all of the authority of the Vatican and of the Roman Catholic Church".

We are inclined to believe that the address was a shrewd appeal directed, not only to the people of Italy, but to the Vatican too, to throw Mussolini overboard; and to recognize indications of the coming collapse, and withdraw from the fray before it is too late. We are certain that the Vatican is co-operating with Mussolini, and in all probability much more willingly than the Italian people.

To separate the precious from the vile in this conflict, requires keen spiritual discernment which no one can possess who divorces his judgment from the principles of the Word of God. After all, the shrewdest, the wisest, the most successful, diplomacy must always be based upon truth and righteousness. The sacrifice of either can never ultimately serve any good purpose.

We rejoice in the growing evidences on the discomfiture of Mussolini's forces. We pray for a complete, an overwhelmingly complete, victory over the Italian forces in Albania and Libya. We hope that nineteen hundred and forty-one will not be very old ere Mr. Churchill's promise to "tear their African Empire to shreds and tatters" will be fulfilled.

But that will not make the next year really new in the sense of being different. There is but One Who can dare to promise, "Behold! I make all things new." Oh that we might see in this coming year multitudes of people, including all our statesmen, turning to Him! Why not? We have had out-and-out Christian statesmen, and soldiers, too. Cromwell combined both. So did General Gordon, and many others. One Canadian Prime Minister, the Honourable Alexander Mackenzie, was a member of Jarvis Street Baptist Church. If only we could see the pulpit, the press, and parliament, dominated by the principles of the gospel, then indeed we might hope for a Happy New Year.

"THE FATHER OF LIGHTS"

The proper minding of the business of life, when sifted down to that which is cardinal and essential, resolves itself into a problem of selection, a reasoned or instinctive choice between the evil and the good, or between the good and the better, or between the better and the best. Life's garden is full of flowers but some are poison-blossoms; its orchards are full of fruit, but some fruits have a worm at the core; the streets of the city are thronged with people, but some of the faces are masks; the stores are full of jewels, but some of the shining gems are paste; life's highway abounds with forked roads, and some of the roads lead to the wilderness and the precipice, and others to unfruitful fields. And the art of true living consists in knowing what flowers to pluck, what fruit to gather, what faces to believe in, what jewels to buy, what road to take to reach the city of good and perfect quality.

In James' epistle, the first chapter, and the sixteenth and seventeenth verses, we read: "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." It is a sign-board pointing the way. It warns against the evil of inferiority by pointing to the only good and perfect. When it is examined, it points to a principle to be recognized, a Person to be revered, and a predominance to be relied upon.

The art of living, then, consists in the constant recognition of this principle, that whatever is good and perfect in life is from above. We are cautioned against a common error: "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Here is a principle too generally ignored. Who believes that the true values of life are from above? That the only real wealth, the only true success, the only fame, the only worthy and enduring remembrance, are found in obedience to laws which are from above? How many a young man acts on the assumption that a business or professional career may be made to yield much that is "good and perfect" without any reference to a Will or Power from above. Let our readers heed the admonition in this respect, "Do not err."

There is a flaw in everything which is unrelated to the heights; and yet how many labour in business who have no skylights in their stores, and no upstairs in their houses! They grovel on the earth, fond of their earthly toys—as if they were "perfect"! But a man cannot do the day's work without reference to the laws which proceed from above, and have a really "good" day; neither can one seek pleasure on the lower levels of life and have a "good time". A man fancies that the character of a house depends upon the materials of which it is constructed, and says it is impossible to build a home of ethical qualities, that one must have bricks or stone and mortar. As a matter of fact, however, it is the moral element which enters into the building of a house which gives it value, which makes it durable. It is, indeed, the amount of conscience put into the building which determines whether it is to be a "good and perfect" house or not. And the principle holds in every field of human endeavour: it is that which is "from above", entering into our efforts, which determines their degree of goodness and perfection; and where that moral quality "from above" is lacking, nothing is really "good", nothing is really "perfect".

There can be no perfection of beauty without proportion and perspective. Many an otherwise good thing is marred by its straitened surroundings. Wellington's great statue in St. Paul's is almost a waste of the sculptor's art, because it is out of proportion, it has so little "above". If certain great pictures called "good and perfect" were to become yours or mine as "gifts", they would lose their perfection in our possession—we have no house large enough to hang them in. We have seen great buildings, architecturally almost perfect, but which were spoiled by their situation, they lacked spaciousness, so that everything was necessarily viewed at close range, and seemed therefore to be lacking in the perfection of proportion. David acknowledged a "good and perfect gift" when he said, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room." All life is out of proportion until we view it in relation to things above; then life becomes proportionate and symmetrical, and the temple grows into beauty under God's infinite blue.

But the Word teaches that the complement of earthly and transient things "cometh down", so that life is not without its elementary goodness and perfection. Whatever is lacking below, may be had "from above". Heaven is not without a listening ear, and an open hand. Priceless gifts have come to us, but such tears of penitence as have been free from the bitterness of despair, such material prosperity, as has been without moral taint, such spiritual wrestlings as have developed moral fibre and faith, such goblets of joy as have had in them no dregs of sorrow, such vanquishments as have been potential moral victories, such crucifixions as have necessitated resurrections, these experiences of life have been good and perfect gifts, and they all have come from above.

The source of all perfection is a Divine Personality,— "The Father of lights". Men are in danger of worshipping mere determinative force, of bowing down to an abstract something called Law. But good and perfect gifts do not grow from the fructifying overflow of an impersonal Nile: they come to us through well-defined channels; there is, as we have already pointed out, a right way of living; there is a monopoly of goodness and perfection—but it is a personal monopoly, we are enriched by "the Father of lights".

And this is the distinctively Christian, attitude. We have not vaguely to refer to the great First Cause: "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." And so those great principles which are the yellow metal in the ore of our mining, which constitute the enduring element in all that is wrought by human hands, which are the warp and woof of all that is of moral worth in human life, these proceed from one to Whom we are no more strangers; He is our Father above.

How instructive is the figure by which the Personal Source of goodness and perfection is here represented! God is likened to the Sun, "the Father of lights". The ablest astronomer could not exhaust the wealth of teaching which resides in this analogy; and we can but make use of one or two perfectly obvious lessons. All that enters into terrestrial existence is dependent upon the Sun. Let him but withhold his warming, vitalizing, rays, and the year is no longer crowned with goodness, nor do the paths drop fatness; then the pastures of the wilderness would mourn, and the little hills put on sack-cloth—the pastures would lose their garment of flocks, and the valleys their golden raiment of corn, and joy and sing-

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE ANGELS' MUSIC UNSILENCED BY THE WAR

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 22nd, 1940

(Stenographically Reported)

"They are dead which sought the young child's life."—Matthew 2:20.

This is not the first Christmas during which the static created by war has made it difficult to tune in to the music of the Skies. I recall the Christmases of nineteen hundred and fourteen—and fifteen, and sixteen, and seventeen; four very dark and difficult years. Even in nineteen-seventeen we seemed to have made little or no progress. The darkest of all days followed in the succeeding March when, for a brief time, it seemed as though all were lost. Then there was last year, the beginning of another period of strife.

But even these years were not new, for light and darkness, peace and war, life and death, have alternated from the beginning. The words which I have read as a text constitute a brief, comprehensive, pregnant, summary of all human history from the day in which sin entered into the world, and death by sin, to that great day of the future when it shall be finished and forever banished.

So close are we to our present difficulties that we are in danger of losing the faculty of farsight, to say nothing of foresight. We view things out of their true perspective and proportion, and magnify things above the dimensions of their spiritual realities. Perhaps this text may serve as a divine telescope with which to sweep the horizon of history, to see things as they appear to Him from Whom no secrets are hid.

I know that our text belongs to a particular time in the on-going of human affairs, and in the unfolding of the divine purpose; and yet there is a sense in which all that relates to the Lord Jesus is as timeless as He Himself, such things belong to the past and to the present and to the future. So it may and shall be said of every outbreak of evil, and of every successive triumph of righteousness from the beginning down to the last syllable of recorded time, "They are dead which sought the young child's life."

I.

The present condition is nothing new under the sun; **FOR FROM THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY THIS WORLD HAS EVER BEEN AT WAR WITH ITS MAKER.** It is a sad thing to say, but it is true, that man in the beginning, surrounded with ten thousand witnesses to the goodness of his Maker, became a rebel against God—and he has been so from then until now.

I remark, then, that *it was so before Christ came in the flesh.* The two principles which are brought together in juxtaposition and contrast in our text have always contended for the mastery in every period of human history. It was so as between Cain and Abel. Cain slew his brother, and yet his brother died only as to his body, for "being dead" he continued to speak, and his blood cried unto Heaven from the ground.

At a later period, within the domestic circle still, we find war between the spirits of Hagar and Sarah, be-

tween Ishmael and Isaac, between principles of darkness and light, of bondage and liberty—fighting it out even within the family circle. It found its repetition between Esau and Jacob, sons of the same parents, born together as twins; and yet as opposite as night from day. There was war. Nor was it different in the subsequent history of Jacob's own sons, for you find them conspiring for the destruction of their own brother, the father's well-beloved, a picture and prophecy of the unfolding of the great conflict which is to persist through all the ages.

We see Jacob mourning the supposed death of his son, and for long years going down, as he thought, unto his son to the grave, sorrowing. When centuries had passed, and great darkness had fallen upon the chosen people, and they had been deprived of their privileges and of all evidence of their divine election to princely honour, when the descendants of Israel the prince had become slaves in the earth, then a day-star arose, "at which time Moses was born". But even Moses, the representative of the Law, the one who was to become the world's greatest law-giver, even he must be hidden in an ark of bulrushes to survive the enmity of the world toward everything that is sent of God.

Turn the inspired pages of history, and everywhere it is the same story, page after page, chapter after chapter. Samuel is rejected, and Saul is chosen in his place; and ere long there is war again between the house of Saul and the house of David. Someone asks, How long is the war going to last? We asked that in the last war. Year by year we asked whether it would be over before Christmas. You remember it? After a while it seemed as though it never would be over. But the Bible says, "There was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David." So through all succeeding history which antedated the incarnation of Deity at Bethlehem, the war continued; and men continued to say in their hearts, in respect to the Lord's Anointed, and in respect to all who were the preintimations and foreshadowings of His coming, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

It was so too *when Jesus was born.* He came into a very dark world, for He was born when a tyrant was at the height of his power, "in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king." The world was not kind to Him even as a little child. There were those who sought the young Child's life, that they might destroy Him. They disputed His right to reign, and rebelled against the principles of His government—as all preceding generations had done.

It was still so *when His testimony had been fully given,* when He was able to say to the Father, "I have given them thy word." There was another who declared to the Ephesian Christians, "I have not shunned to declare unto

you the whole counsel of God"; but Jesus Christ in a fuller and completer sense than even the Apostle Paul—for He summarized all that the prophets before and the apostles after said—when He declared, "I have given them Thy word." And for that they said, "We have no king but Caesar. We want no such government as He would institute, no such rule as He would exercise." They took Him to the cross, and there temporarily succeeded in that which Herod had failed to accomplish. But there was still war, war against God, and against His Anointed.

And it was so *after His resurrection*. You remember how a rich man in hell is represented as saying, "If one should go to them from the dead, they will believe." But One did come to this sinful world from the dead. He spoke of Himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more." He came with a message of life and light and power—but still men rebelled against Him.

There are people who assume that the gospel can be preached in such a fashion as to be made palatable to the carnal mind, that a man may so present the message of salvation that carnal men will fall in love with it, and extend to it a generous and willing hospitality. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There never was a greater Teacher, a greater Preacher, a truer Exemplar of the gospel of grace than the Lord Jesus Christ—and they slew Him for His preaching!

On the other side of the cross they rejected His testimony, and on this side, too. *After His resurrection, in the early history of the church, it was just the same.* Men were still at war with all that was represented by the young Child Who was "born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king."

The Spirit and principle of the young Child find a place in the life of the individual who is born again— Who is not born of the flesh only, but of the Spirit; and, is thus made a spiritual kinsman of the young Child, bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. What wonder that *every such individual believer, being true to his Lord, should find Himself in a condition and state of unending war?* It is war all along the line. It has been so: it will be so wherever Christ is formed in one the hope of glory, wherever the miracle of the incarnation is repeated, and the very life of God is communicated to the spirits of men. As soon as that is true, opposition, enmity, war, are manifest from the regions of darkness, and history repeats itself in the life of every Christian. There will be a power to seek the destruction of the young Child's life.

Nor has it been different *in the post-apostolic history of the Christian church.* In the measure in which the church has determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, it has found itself engaged in unending conflict. If you know any section of the professing church of Christ anywhere in the world to-day that is not at war with the world, the flesh, and the devil, it is because its representatives have effected an ignominious Munich pact with the prince of darkness. It is because the church has compromised with evil and error. You cannot be true to Christ, and exemplify the spirit and power of the life of the young Child, without finding yourself at war—not at war once, but as it was in David's day when it was said, "There was war with the Philistines"; and yet again, "There was

war in Gaza"; and again, "There was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant."

There is always war. I pity you if, being a Christian, you are a man out of uniform or without a sword girded at your side; for there is war continuously between the forces of light and darkness, and if you are not fighting you are fleeing.

That is true *among men generally in every part of society.* I am not among those who believe that the kingdom of God is to be brought about by human, legislative, processes; but I do believe and gladly recognize that there are indirect benefits of the gospel, by-products of Christianity which have become part of the general life, and have been wrought into the fabric of our common civilization.

You can see it in a thousand ways, and if you know your Bible you will know that these things have come about because men who believe God have wrought them into the life of the people. But every principle of moral and social reform has to fight for its life. Everything that makes for the betterment of men and a recognition of God in this evil world may be sure of opposition.

There was a time in the United States when they supposed they had brought the evil of the liquor traffic to an end. They had actually put a prohibition principle into the Constitution of the country. They said, "It will be difficult to amend that, or to rescind it." I happened to be in the United States shortly after the Eighteenth Amendment had been rescinded, and it seemed in that American city as though hell itself had been let loose to celebrate the triumph of evil over good.

There was a time when little by little we dried up this Province. Little by little we reduced the curse of the liquor traffic. I remember when a license could not even be transferred from one place to another without the representatives of religious and educational institutions being notified of the application, and given an opportunity to appear before the License Commissioners and oppose the transfer of the license. Those were great days. It really looked as though we were going to have a sober nation. But the principle of our text soon applied, and now what have we? A man called in my office some time ago and showed me a map of the whole Province of Ontario, and he said, "Roundabout this corner on which your church stands I have drawn a circle. You have within two blocks of this church the worst condition to be found anywhere in the entire Province." That was Premier Hepburn's reply to our protest. They thought to flood us out—and then to burn us out; but we are still here. I am pointing out to you that every moral principle has to fight for its life, every principle of righteousness everywhere.

We supposed that we had emerged from days of slavery and bondage, from feudalism; and that *we had put barbarism centuries behind us.* They said, It can never come back again; we are moving on. But it has come back again, and now the commonest and most fundamental principles of human rights are being challenged once again the world around. Hell has been let loose to destroy, if possible, everything that has kinship with the young Child.

That is one side of it: but here is another.

II.

ALL WHO HAVE SOUGHT THE YOUNG CHILD'S LIFE HAVE EITHER DIED OR ARE GOING TO DIE. "Mussolini running, Hitler next, home soon," one of our soldier-members cabled. There is a passage of history in the Book of Genesis which *the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle Paul, tells us is an allegory*. By which He did not mean that it is not literally and historically true, but being history, it has an allegorical, spiritual significance. It is the story to which I have already alluded, the story of Ishmael and Isaac. You remember what the Apostle Paul says, contrasting the bondage of the law with the full liberty of the gospel? He quotes the one whom he describes as being representative and typical of Jerusalem that is from above, that is the mother of us all, as saying, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." The fulfilment of that passage and of that principle, of that prediction, is written upon almost every page of human history. Somewhere it has happened that the son of the bondwoman is cast out, to give place to the son of the free woman. Always Ishmael at last has to yield to Isaac. Isaac was a very meek sort of man. We never hear of his drawing a sword, but in his life he exemplified an anticipation of one of the beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Ishmael makes way for Isaac. He has always done so.

Again I quote: "At which time Moses was born." At what time? When Egypt was at the flower of its strength, when Egypt was the greatest power upon earth, and at a time when God's chosen people were absolutely subject to their authority. Yet Pharaoh goes down before Moses, and the Egyptians are drowned in the Red Sea, and Israel emerges as a nation born in a day seeing the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. That is the privilege of an Israelite. That is the privilege of the chosen of God. They die who seek the young Child's life.

The Seed of the woman always triumphs over that of the serpent. So men and principles which war against the young Child are essentially mortal. I know they are mighty, as Herod was, as Pharaoh was, as Napoleon was, as the Caesars were, as the Kaiser was, as Hitler and Mussolini have seemed to be. Every entrenched evil seems for a while to be in league with Hell, and hence to have its own way; but evil is death-stricken, it is inherently mortal: "The wages of sin is (always) death." Sooner or later they cease to be. They die by the development of the very seeds of decay that are in them; or, otherwise, like Saul on Gilboa where the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away and they die by the judgment of God. The shades of darkness fall; the night drops down only when the sun withdraws himself; but at his rising he challenges the darkness and it always flees apace and the morning heralds the glory of high noon.

Do not forget the order of the divine government is the order of creation: "The evening and the morning were the first day." You do not write history that way. I do not know of history being written like that anywhere outside the Bible. We always begin with the morning, and go on to night; but He, when the earth was without form and void and darkness covered the face of the deep, uttered His almighty creative word, "Let there be light", and there was light. And thenceforward the order of

the divine movement has ever been from evening to morning, from death to life.

That is true of *any system which enslaves the human spirit*. Slavery cannot last. You cannot bolt down the safety-valve in such a way that it will not explode. You cannot cap Vesuvius. You cannot suppress life: it will burst the bands of death. They will die who seek the young Child's life.

It was so in *the last war*. Notwithstanding all our reverses, the day of victory came at last. It will be so in this. Hitler has said that nothing on earth shall prevent him from destroying Christianity root and branch. That is his announced programme. Nothing on earth? Oh yes, Death will prevent him from doing it. He and Mussolini and all the other tyrants will join the great company that have past of whom the Spirit of God says, "They are dead which sought the young child's life." It may come suddenly, or by the long-drawn-out processes of the divine judgment—but come it will.

So blessed be God, *it will be so in our experience*. Are you having a hard time? Are you weary sometimes of the burden? Weary of always striving, always watching, always struggling, always doing battle with the "old man" within, and with the efforts of the old man without? You have no "old man"? Then I shall not put you on my calling list. "Old man"? I read the saying of a great preacher once. They have in the Old Land—or had when I was a boy, what we used to call "old man". I do not know whether it grows in this country or not; I mean whether the real weed does: there is plenty of the "old man", I know. But if you happen to get your hand on that weed, you cannot get it off; the odor is horrible. Go among the flowers, and touch the "old man"—and you are ruined!

Well, this preacher put it rather crudely, though one of the world's great preachers. He described the children coming in one day when mother was a little bit out of sorts, and with a significant gesture, just sniffing the air they say to the head of the house, "Say, father, some of the 'old man' about here somewhere"! If it is not the old man, it is the old woman,—and that is just as bad. That old nature, that evil thing, is always contending for the mastery. If you are not fighting that battle, it is because you have surrendered to it. If you are not seeking to put under the evil tendencies of your old nature, it is because you have yielded, and allowed the old man to gain the ascendancy. If you do, and the old man becomes prominent, do not wonder if Christian people do not seek your company: there will be good reason for it.

How long is it to last? Not for ever. The old man is to suffer death, and execution; and one of these days you and I will be able to say of ourselves, of all our individual experiences as Christians, when we shall be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, by the grace of God, "They are dead which sought the young Child's life." We shall be free from it all one of these days; and for that let us give God thanks.

III.

EVER MORE THE YOUNG CHILD SURVIVES. Historically, it was true in childhood. He escaped the wrath of the king; and although again and again during His earthly ministry they sought to destroy Him, "he passing through the midst, went his way." At last they crucified Him; they put Him in the grave; they sealed the

sepulchre. For my comfort, I read again and again as though it were the newest story in the world, the story of the appeal of the enemies of Christ to Pilate. They said, "We have done with him; we have killed him; he is out of our way. But that deceiver said he would rise again. We are afraid that his disciples will come and take him away by night. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure." Said Pilate with fine scorn: "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. Lock him in, bolt and double-bar the door." They went their way, making it sure, and setting a watch. You know the story, but it does us good just to think of it, how at last in His time He sovereignly rose, and burst the bands of death.

You remember how they bound Samson with new ropes, and with withs, and then said, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." He arose, and in his great strength he broke the bands by which he was bound; until they had shorn his locks. Then they said, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," and he said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." You know the tragic story of his end.

But here was a Samson Whose locks were never shorn, a Nazarite Whose vow of separation was never violated; and when they put Him in the grave and bound Him with the bands of death, and sealed the grave, still it could not hold. The Scripture says, "It was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Let us recognize in His resurrection, in the perpetuation of the church, in the preservation of a company of witnesses even in this day, and in the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ, the triumphant march of our God over those who "sought the young Child's life."

I hope you believe in the second advent of our Lord. I hope you have come to see clearly that while there is much mystery about the attending circumstances, the second personal advent of our Lord is the complement of the first, and that as surely as He came the first time, He will come the second "in power and great glory." Then in the largest and ultimate sense it will be true, "They are dead which sought the young child's life." Some day the darkness will end; some day evil will be subdued; some day—oh some good and great day—the war on earth and in the heavenlies will be over. That is the meaning of Christmas. It is bound to come.

"True, with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angels' strain has rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they sing:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!

"O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look up for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing,
Oh rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.

"For lo! the days are hastening on
By prophets, bards, foretold,
When with the ever-circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

HOW MANY REALLY BELIEVE?

If the Bible is true, and if behind all its promises, there stands the living God Who is ever faithful to His Word, there is a source of wisdom and power—or in one word, of grace—open to all. If people really believe, one would think every place of prayer would be crowded to capacity with people praying for victory.

But what of those who profess and call themselves Christians, who at such a time as this forsake the assembling of themselves together, and sin against God by ceasing to pray for the triumph of righteousness? Among our New Year's resolutions, let us all *resolve* that we will pray privately more than ever, and that we will be more faithful in our attendance at public services for prayer.

"THE FATHER OF LIGHTS"

(Continued from page 2)

ing would give place to the silence of death,—indeed, were the sun to loose his hold upon this planet, it would fall into infinite space, and by its passage, be converted into a consuming fire.

So are we dependent upon God, not only as to our physical being; but 'tis—

"His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even;
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven.
And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone."

How much the pleasures of life depend upon sunshine. Even the gardens of kings wait on his smile, and the flowers are of a sad countenance if his face be hidden from them. The undulating fields, the flowered hedge-grows, the winding highway, the wide and solitary moor, and even the majestic, heather-clad hills—the whole spacious landscape, all are clad in robes of sombre hue, when mist and cloud obscure his disc, and put on their most beautiful garments only when they meet the Sun as a bridegroom coming forth out of his chamber. But when he comes forth, behold their garments are crimson, and emerald, and silver and gold.

And thus are we, without beauty, and without perfect pleasure, until the smile of the "Father of lights" shines upon us. Well do we sing,—

"Sun of our life, Thy quickening ray
Sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, Thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.

"Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn,
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch Thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine."

But the figure suggests that we are still indebted to His beneficence when we are at least aware of it, for His ministry is not confined to sunny days He is the "Father of lights": every true light, whether it be the steady glow of the lamp of some exact science, or the flickering torch of philosophy, or the flaming beacon of some revealed religion, or the ruddy smoking flax of conscience,—every true light is a child of the Father of lights, all were kindled at that Orb of light and life.

Thus in the night-time of human experience when the Sun is hid, and even the stars are obscured, and men

kindle for themselves some tiny taper to light them to their toil, or on their journey, they do but borrow dust of gold from His treasury, a spark from His flame. A little child doth lead them, and the child is a child of the "Father of lights".

Let us consider the man who acknowledges no indebtedness to religion. He has attained to a position of eminence in his profession, and he is not without pride in his achievement; but religion was not an element in his success, therefore he never prays, nor gives thanks to God. His advancement is due to his natural intellectual strength and receptivity; he lives and labours by lamp-light, not by sunlight, for he has tapped the springs of knowledge and the oil has flowed! "Do not err, my beloved brethren." "Your light is from God Who is the "Father of lights".

Someone else owes his success to mechanical means. He says science has lighted the way to success for him. We were told by a manufacturer not long since that one girl could attend to twelve machines in his factory, that the cost of production was small, and the profits large, and he was prosperous. But he was being made rich by a light which is a child of the "Father of lights".

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou O Lord, art more than they."

Much more is wrapped up in that figure, but we leave it for our readers to unwrap its golden leaves.

We would speak of the perpetual predominance of this beneficent Monopolist, "with whom there is no variability, neither shadow of turning". Unlike the sun, "the Father of lights" has neither parallax—as the word is literally here—nor tropic of turning; God is greater than His greatest work, and more reliable than the clock of the universe. The sun appears above the horizon at a different time each morning, and sinks from view at different times in the course of the year. The sun is not always the same; he journeys southward to the solstice, then turns back again. Thus summer dies away into autumn, and autumn into winter. But not so with God, He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever". His power knows no diminution; what He has done, He can do again; His love knows no change. Are we constantly anxious lest we should lose a friend's favour? Are we often in fear lest, unwittingly, we have given offence? Are we distressed in anticipation of a twilight in another's affection—a twilight that presages night? The Word speaks of One Who will keep on sending us "good and perfect gifts"; He will not change; He will not visit us with winter; we shall never need to run from Him to seek a more congenial clime; having loved His own, He will love them even to the end,—no parallax nor tropic, but one eternal solstice is given us in Christ.

His faithfulness will not fail. So exact are the movements of the heavenly bodies that astronomers can foretell an eclipse to a minute a hundred years in advance; but the Scripture says God is less variable than the clock of the universe which never loses a second in a millennium. Surely here is a ground of hope, that He Who has a monopoly of goodness and perfection is our Father, and will be forevermore the same,—

"God of all goodness! to the skies
Our hearts in grateful anthems rise;
And to Thy service shall be given
The rest of life, the whole of heaven."

INSPIRED WORDS OF HOLY PRINCIPLE FOR THE DIRECTION OF WARTIME THOUGHT AND PRAYER

From *The Outlook*, London, Rev. John Wilmot, Editor.

"The wicked boasteth his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth. His ways are always grievous. Thy judgments are far above out of his sight. As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity. In the secret places doth he murder the innocent. He croucheth and humbleth himself that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

"Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thine hand; forget not the afflicted. Thou hast seen it; for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thine hand. Break Thou the arm of the wicked and evil man; seek out his wickedness till Thou find none. Destroy Thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against Thee.

"The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

"The wicked speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

"The wicked have drawn out the sword, to slay the upright of the way. Their sword shall enter into their own heart. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. The Lord shall laugh at him!

"Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits that they rise not up again. Let not an evil speaker, a wicked man of violence be established in the earth; let him be hunted to his overthrow."

READ THE BIBLE THROUGH!

(We do not know where Rev. Wilmot found this, or when, but we still believe it is good advice. Ed. G. W.)

In this day of Selected Readings and Favourite Passages and Wrested Texts and Promise Boxes and Shorter Bibles, here is wholesome counsel:

"I urge you to read consecutively through the entire Bible. Open your hearts to the martial strength of Joshua; the individual heroism of Judges; the sylvan beauty and domestic loveliness of Ruth; the philosophy of history, the sequence of cause and effect in the historical portions of the Old Testament; the philosophy of tears in the poetry of Job; the universality of the experimental utterances of David; the practical wisdom of Proverbs; the Preacher's appraisal of the vanity of things under the sun; the holy passion of the Canticles; the seraphic fire of Isaiah; the threnodies of Jeremiah; the supernal splendour of Ezekiel's visions of God; the foresight of Daniel; the pathos of Hosea; the periscopic and telescopic discernment of all the minor prophets, until you open the new Testament and read, 'When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king',—you will breathe the atmosphere of Genesis, and find principles reminiscent of Exodus, and feel as well as reason that the same Author speaks in every book. Read the Gospels, read the story of the crucifixion and of the resurrection, and gather with the apostles as the Holy Ghost descends. Read through the Acts. One by one the witnesses slip away, while their history recurs in part in the Epistles. Then read John's vision in the Isle of Patmos, and on through the book of Revelation, and you will hear the same Voice which has been speaking through all the Temple of Truth, saying, 'Surely I come quickly', and you will be able to respond, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' When you have finished it all, I know you will say, It is God's book. Nobody but God could speak like that."

Dr. T. T. Shields to his students concluding a series of lectures on the Pentateuch.

Bible School Lesson Outline

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

Vol. 5 First Quarter Lesson 1 January 5th, 1941

CHRIST BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

Lesson Text: Mark 1.

Golden Text: "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Mark 1:11.

I. The Voice of John: the Voice of Introduction—verses 1 to 8. Compare Matt. 3:1-12; Lk. 3:2-17.

The opening sentence of the Book of Mark describes in brief compass the substance of the whole book. The earthly life of the Lord Jesus is indeed "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 1:1, Lk. 1:1-4; John 1:1; Acts 1:1, 2). The substitutionary death of Christ on the cross is the heart of the Gospel (John 3:16), but His stainless life is its foundation (Lk. 2:10, 11). Calvary witnessed the culmination of that perfect righteousness which He wrought out for us day by day (Rom. 8:1-4).

As the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John depict the Gospel commenced, Acts deals with the Gospel extended, and the Epistles describe the Gospel expounded. This is but another evidence of the unity of the Scriptures, all the books of which centre around Christ, the Theme of the whole.

Christianity is not merely a message concerning Christ, but it is also Christ Himself. Jesus, "the Deliverer", was His human name (Matt. 1:21); Christ, "the Anointed", the Messiah, was His official name (Matt. 16:16); the Son of God was His Divine name (John 1:18, 49; Heb. 1:5, 6).

Mark, the human author of this Gospel, quoted the prophecy concerning the messenger of the covenant, and claimed that it found historical fulfilment in John the Baptist (Isa. 40:3, 4; Mal. 3:1). John prepared the way of the Lord by turning people from their sins (Isa. 57:14). This preacher of the wilderness was a rugged character with a stern mission to perform. He endeavoured to arouse the people from their lethargy and complacency, and to lay before them the hideous iniquity of their hearts (Matt. 3:7). The Holy Spirit reveals to men their need before He shows them the Saviour Who meets that need; He comes with convicting as well as converting power (John 16:8-11; Acts 2:37-39).

John thought of himself as a voice proclaiming the Messiah's coming (John 1:19-23). The message was the all-important thing; the messenger was to be forgotten. "Behold the lamb of God" is to be our cry also (John 1:29). May the Lord enable each one of us to testify of Him clearly, sincerely, truthfully, earnestly and faithfully!

II. The Voice of Jehovah: the Voice of Induction—verses 9 to 13. Compare Matt. 3:13-17; Lk. 3:21, 22.

It was not Mark's purpose to dwell upon the eternal Deity of Christ, as John did (John 1:1-14), nor to describe in detail the Saviour's perfect humanity and the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation, as Luke did (Lk. 1, 2). These facts are assumed, and Christ is pictured as the suffering servant of Jehovah, ready to commence His God-given task (Isa. 52:13-15; 53:1-12).

In the symbolic act of baptism our Lord clearly portrayed His redemptive mission. It was a figure of the way in which He would die and rise again, that He might righteously forgive the sins which the repentant followers of John were confessing. Thus, our Lord's participation in the baptism of John marked its consummation, and at the same time, He initiated Christian baptism, marking out the path for all believers (Matt. 3:15; 28:6; Acts 10:48; Rom. 6:3-10).

John the Baptist had been given a sign by which He could identify the Lord (John 1:33), and it was appropriate that the One Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit should be inducted into His holy office by that self-same Spirit (Acts 2:4). What folly for men and women to engage in Christian work

in the energy of the flesh without the enduement of the Holy Spirit!

The Saviour did not commence His ministry without credentials, for the voice of God attested the fact the lowly Jesus of Nazareth was none other than His well-beloved Son. Christ joyfully and voluntarily undertook to perform His Father's will, setting us an example in perfect obedience (John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29; 17:4; Heb. 10:7).

The temptation of Christ followed immediately after this public proclamation of His Messiahship (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). Our Lord was tested as to His obedience to the Father which His baptism portrayed, not merely during this period of forty days, but on many other occasions. Never once did He yield to Satan (John 14:30; Heb. 4:15).

III. The Voice of Jesus: the Voice of Instruction—verses 14 to 45.

The Saviour commenced His ministry in Galilee (Matt. 4:23). He declared that the great day of which the prophets had spoken was now at hand, and also the Person Whose advent they had heralded. The gist of His exhortation to men, and also of ours, is that they are to repent and believe the Gospel (Acts 17:30; 26:20), to turn from their sins to faith in the Lord (1 Thess. 1:9).

Twelve men were ordained to accompany the Saviour as He went about preaching. Of these, the first to be called were Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John (Matt. 4:18-22; Lk. 5:2-11; John 1:35-42). May we all give such instant and unquestioning obedience to the call of the Lord as did these disciples!

The teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees was characterized by conceited dogmatism, bitter wrangling and scrupulous attention to niceties of expression. They were slaves of tradition and established phraseology (Mk. 7:7, 8; 2 Tim. 3:5). On the other hand, our Lord spoke with power and an evident sincerity which impressed His hearers (Matt. 7:28, 29). We, too, shall speak with authority as we speak in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:20), and people will readily distinguish the Master's voice (John 10:3-5; 1 John 4:5, 6).

The healing ministry is inseparable from the teaching ministry (Mk. 16:20; Lk. 4:33-37). The Christian instructor teaches men, rather than doctrines. He attacks sin in the abstract, but, if he be faithful, he also battles against it as it is entrenched in the lives of men and women, and he seeks to free them from its entanglements and to bring them healing, comfort and peace. With the same authority as that seen in His teaching our Lord commanded the unclean spirits to obey Him (Mk. 9:25).

Christ met the varied needs of those who were brought to Him. Some were tossed with fever (Matt. 8:14-17; Lk. 4:38-40); some were possessed by demons (Mk. 3: 11, 12; Lk. 4:41); some were afflicted with blindness (Mk. 11:46), deafness (Mk. 8:32) or lameness (Matt. 11:5); some were consumed by leprosy (Matt. 8:2-4; Lk. 5:12-14; 17:12). Christ had compassion upon all, and as many as touched Him were made whole (Mk. 6:56). His grace is sufficient for every human need (2 Cor. 12:9).

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