

The Gospel Witness

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

DAMASCUS IN THE BIBLE AND IN THE NEWS

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, June 15th, 1941

(Stenographically Reported)

"And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.
"Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went."—II, Samuel 8:5, 6.

War invariably provides a great stimulus to the study of geography, and, of history, too. I suppose millions of the younger generation now have clearer views of the maps of Europe, Asia, and Africa—indeed, of the whole world—than they had when the war began. The war has now extended to Bible lands. Indeed, it has for some months touched lands mentioned in the Bible. We read of Libya, and Egypt, and Ethiopia, there. But now it has extended to Syria; and, I believe study of the present situation will help to confirm our faith in the Word of God.

I have a conviction that the Bible is never mistaken. The Bible was not written primarily to teach history; but its historical records will ever be found true to established historical facts. The Bible was not written to teach science. In all probability, one would never become a zoologist, or a botanist, or a geologist, by a study of the Bible; but, studying these sciences, you will always find the Bible abreast of the latest discovery—not, indeed, merely abreast, but considerably in advance of it. It is always kindly, and for the confirmation of our faith, whispering to our hearts, "I told you so." The same is true of geography and topography. You will find the Bible always true. Since the war extends to Bible lands, we shall do well to study the text of Scripture with the best available maps.

Damascus has just now become the centre of the world's interest. It is one of the most ancient of existing cities. "Old" London, as we are accustomed to call it, in comparison, is a very new and modern city. Damascus is first mentioned in the Book of Genesis, chapter

fourteen, where Hobah is described as "on the left hand of Damascus." Our version records Abraham as saying, "The steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus." There is some doubt, however, as to whether the city of Damascus was there intended; but at all events when the Book of Genesis was written, Damascus was in existence.

Damascus has had its fluctuations, its ups and downs. It has been the scene of many conflicts, between many peoples. Sometimes, but not always, it has been, as it is to-day, the chief city of Syria. Its origin is shrouded in the mists of antiquity. It is not certainly known when it was established, but it has a traceable and continuous history of about thirty-five hundred years.

This evening I shall deal very simply with the subject announced, by speaking to you of some of the historic events which have occurred in Damascus or thereabout, of which the Bible tells us. God almighty is not limited by geographical boundaries. Time and space are as nothing to Him. Notwithstanding, it is interesting and instructive to observe how He has been pleased to choose certain places as the theatre of His operations, and as the background for the manifestations of His grace.

You remember how our Lord addressed Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum—not individuals, but places; cities, districts, made up of many individuals—as having been privileged to observe His "mighty acts"; and, by that fact, to have incurred tremendous responsibilities.

Damascus is, as I have said, mentioned in Genesis. It is mentioned also in the first and second books of Kings; in the first and second books of Chronicles; in the Song of Solomon; in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Zec-

hariah. It is one of the historical centres of the world. It is mentioned too, as you heard this evening, in the New Testament. It was when he was on his way to Damascus, that Saul of Tarsus was "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Damascus is mentioned in two of the other epistles of the New Testament; so that Damascus is a city of biblical renown. And I think, as we look at some of the events recorded as having taken place either in Damascus or in the territory adjacent thereto, and geographically or politically related to it, we may see something of how God has wrought, and how we may expect to see Him work again.

I.

After the mention of Damascus in Genesis, it is first mentioned, singularly enough, as THE SCENE OF THE DISASTROUS RESULT OF AN ALLIANCE FORMED BETWEEN ENEMIES OF ISRAEL FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEFEATING THE LORD'S ANOINTED. David as king of Israel, had defeated Rehob, king of Zobah. He had been badly beaten, even as Mussolini was badly beaten in Albania, in Ethiopia and Libya. Then someone came to his help. The Syrians of Damascus came in an endeavour to help Rehob out of his difficulty, but they were overwhelmed by David. No less than twenty-two thousand men were slain, and David captured a thousand chariots—a thousand tanks, in our language; seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen. It was a complete and overwhelming victory which the Lord wrought by the hand of David against the Syrians in Damascus. Then David occupied the city militarily: "David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went."

A somewhat similar situation obtains to-day. We had no quarrel with the Syrians as such. There was no real reason why we should be at war with Syria. Nor should we have been if Syria had been left to herself, but because the men of Vichy seek to "collaborate" with Germany, and lend what aid they can to their former enemies, even though it involves their fighting against their former allies, they have allowed Germany to make use of Syrian airports, and Syrian terrain, in an endeavour to make it a highway to the oil fields of what was once called Mesopotamia, which we now know as Iraq; and what was once called Persia, which we now know as Iran. Thus it has become necessary for us, like David, to go against these modern warriors of Damascus, in order to protect the interests of civilization throughout the world.

And just as surely as that battle in Syria in that ancient day was a battle between the forces of evil, and the forces of righteousness as represented by the man upon whom the anointing oil had been poured, so to-day in Syria, as in other parts of the world, the battle is again joined between light and darkness, between righteousness and unrighteousness.

It is encouraging to note that in this first historical record of such a conflict occurring roundabout Damascus, the victory was on the side of the people of God—and I have no doubt that we shall see victory again in the same quarter. "David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus." Instead of being driven out of it, he became the master and possessor of it. Surely we cannot read of conflicts raging in the neighbourhood of

the Holy Land, of those portions of the earth concerning which the Word of God has much to say prophetically; we cannot witness the spread of this conflagration, of the meeting of these opposing forces, without asking ourselves where the hand of God is, and why He is permitting it.

I have no doubt that before long the British flag and the flag of the Free French will fly together over this ancient city of Damascus. And what that may mean for the future development and settlement of that part of the world, no one can possibly tell.

One thing is certain: *the Syrians became the servants of David.* How often we have seen it in British history!

The heroic and valiant Premier of South Africa, General Smuts—how I wish he were Premier of Canada!—was once our enemy. He once fought against us, as did his late comrade and colleague of later years, the great General Botha; but they both became loyal subjects of His Majesty, and among the most zealous British patriots to be found anywhere in the world. There is a scripture which says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Which does not mean that the man who seeks to please the Lord, and by His grace succeeds in doing so, will have no enemies; but rather that his enemies will ultimately become his friends. God will make friends for him from among his enemies.

I think that is true of nations, and I think very largely that principle accounts for the development and establishment of that great commonwealth of nations which we describe as the British Empire. Since the war began I read the story of a certain colonel whose name I cannot recall for the moment, a Dutch name. He had been an officer in the Boer armies. When the Boers were defeated, he did not accept the defeat. He helped with others in the guerilla warfare, and even when that was ended, was still among Britain's implacable foes. He exiled himself from South Africa for some years, and then returned. When the war broke out, relating the experience of his observations on returning to his native land, he offered his sword to the South African government, and to His Majesty the King, saying, in effect, "I am ready to pay the debt of gratitude I owe with the last drop of my blood to that system of government which has done so much for the country I love." And I have no doubt that he is now fighting with the South African forces.

The point I make is this, that God in His direction of the affairs of nations, very often leads men, governments, and nations now, as He did David and his men then, to accept the gauge of battle rather than submit to dishonour; and that that which first seems to be a disadvantage and a sorrow, turns out at last to be all for the best. May it be so once again in Syria! We may hope to see history repeat itself even in the capture, if not of a thousand chariots, at least of many tanks.

Some of the German tourists, according to latest reports, who were making their way into Syria, believing that so far as they were concerned, discretion was the better part of valour, crossed the boundary into Turkey—but left some of the things they took to Syria behind them.

II.

There is another instance in the first book of Kings, where Damascus became A PLACE WHERE GOD SUCCESSIVELY GAVE VICTORY TO NUMERICALLY INFERIOR FORCES.

It was the king of Syria, Benhadad, who addressed the king of Israel in terms not unlike the terms in which Hitler addressed the countries which he has overrun. Benhadad claimed the right to send his servants to the houses of the Israelites, to take their wives and their children, their silver and their gold—whatever might be pleasant in their eyes. The first time, the king of Israel sought to appease Benhadad, and said, "My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have." Having made that gain, Benhadad sent further messengers and said, "Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away." Like Goebbels and Goering! Doubtless Paris will be just a shell when they get through with it.

But the king of Israel said, "That is too much." Similarly we have tried to appease Vichy—but we have got to the end of it, and now we have to fight. It was Benhadad who spoke in the language of Hitler. Hitler is only a poor parrot: he has not originated much, but he has enlarged upon much. It was Benhadad who said, "The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me—you have not a chance; you are hopelessly outnumbered." They were like grasshoppers for multitude. But it was then the king of Israel uttered the words that have become proverbial. Even people who know little about the Bible know that answer: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." The battle was joined, and it was fought as our battles are being fought, "by the young men of the princes of the provinces"—and the enemy was routed.

A year afterward Syria renewed the struggle, just as Germany, having been beaten once, renewed the struggle. The Syrians said to their king, "Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they." It was then that *God accepted the challenge of unbelief* and said, "Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

If I may without irreverence say so, the Commander-in-Chief of our armies in Syria, unseen like the Commander-in-Chief of the armies which encircled the city of Jericho, is fighting on familiar ground! Our gracious God has fought many a battle, won many a victory, and derived from that territory a great revenue of glory for Himself in the ages that are past. And I believe in the present-day conflict, we shall see God accepting the challenge of the unbelief of Naziism. It is a war against God, fought by powers that depend upon numbers whose weapons are force, and the fear of force; and as the victory was on the side of righteousness then, I believe it will be now.

I was glad to hear again the British Prime Minister, in his speech at the gathering of the representatives of fourteen allied governments—most of them exiled from their country, but now fighting with us—say that "with the help of God, of Whose presence we must all be daily

conscious, we shall win." I believe we shall. We fight in Syria to-day: where we may fight to-morrow, we cannot say.

III.

There is another interesting Biblical story related to Damascus. IT WAS A PLACE WHERE GOD WAS PLEASED TO CONVERT A SYRIAN GENERAL TO HIS OWN SIDE.

"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper." It was in Damascus that the little girl who had been carried captive said one day to Naaman's wife to whom she had become a servant-maid—bearing no malice against her captors, touched with sympathy because of her master's ailment—"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." Her saying was reported to the king of Syria, and he sent a letter to the king of Israel, who, when he received the letter, rent his garments, saying, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" But when Elisha heard it he said, "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

Naaman went to Elisha, and when he was bidden to dip in Jordan seven times, he was very wroth. Jordan! Said he, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?"

Abana, now called *Barada*, still flows through the ancient city of Damascus, and Pharpar, now called *Awaj*, also still flows. Naaman was healed at last, and pledged himself never again to offer worship to any other god than Israel's God.

It is not such a very bitter fight as yet in Syria. And there are a great many Naamans there, men who would just as soon be on our side—and a little rather than with the Nazis. One general came over and brought four thousand men with him. Many of the French forces in Syria have joined with General de Gaulle. It is a very simple story, just a reference to history; but I remind you that the God Who healed Naaman, and who made for Himself and His cause, a friend of that mighty man of valour, can still dispose, not only the military situation, but the psychological forces at work, and can make friends of foes still.

IV.

There is still another interesting story about Damascus: it was A PLACE WHERE A PROPHET OF THE LORD PROVED MIGHTIER THAN ISRAEL'S HORSES AND CHARIOTS OF WAR. The king of Syria found that his military secrets, his plan of campaign, were becoming known to Israel's king. He made one plan after another, only to discover that his strategy was anticipated by the king of Israel, and he was defeated. At last the king of Syria began to look for some Quisling! He called his officers together and said, "Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?" One of his servants answered, "None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber—he has special revelations from God, and your plans are known before they are made. God is on his side."

We have no prophets to receive direct revelations as Elisha did, but we have the Book of the law and the

prophets; and I make bold to say that if and when our policies, political, and military and naval, are in accord with the principles of this holy Book, there is no power on earth that can defeat them. That source of help is open to us still.

Your remember the story of Jonathan and his armour-bearer, in the fourteenth chapter of II. Samuel, how when fighting against the Philistines they made their way up a certain escarpment between two rocks, Bozez and Seneh, a narrow passage, and fell upon the enemy in the rear, and won a great victory. I have read that the Bible was a textbook on military strategy with some officers in Lord Allenby's Palestinian campaign, and one of his notable victories was won by following to the letter that which was written of that ancient terrain in the book. By the same passage as Jonathan took did they make their way to victory. I cannot quote chapter and verse for this statement, but I believe the report I read to have been true.

"That being so", said the king of Syria, "the best thing we can do is to take Elisha captive." He paid the preacher the compliment of sending his whole army to arrest him! They surrounded the city where Elisha was—another familiar story, but not in Damascus. The king of Syria came from Damascus, but Elisha was in Dothan. When his servant arose in the morning, he saw the city encompassed: there was no way out. He wrung his hands and said, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" The prophet was calm. He prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see"; and when his eyes were opened, he saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

I know that the anti-supernaturalists of our day, to whom God is little more than an idea, a psychological abstraction, who deny that God does ever directly, by supernatural means, interpose and exercise His power in human affairs—I know that, like a certain professor who used to be in McMaster University years ago who would put his blue pencil around all these Elijah and Elisha "legends", cut them out of the Bible, the unbelievers of our day would scoff at any idea of God's having a hand in the present struggle; but we know the battle is His. I am for the Victory Loan—I wish I had a million or two to subscribe for it; and for the army, for tanks and airplanes and ships. But call me a fanatic or what you will: I am positive of this, that in the last analysis, victory will be won by the same horses and chariots of fire that were roundabout Elisha. They are roundabout us.

I am not an Anglo-Israelite: I am just a common Britisher. And I recognize—and no one is more conscious of them than I—the faults of the British Empire, including Canada. I think we have more than all the rest put together. And yet, there is something supernatural in the history of this worldwide Empire. They speak of Bismarck as the maker of modern Germany, fashioning it into an empire. They speak of George Washington as the father of his country. Can you tell me who made the British Empire? It is like Topsy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; it just "grewed"! It is rather a ramshackle affair, pretty flexible in the joints, almost without design; and yet I believe it will prove to be in the future as it has been in the past, because it is God's instrument for righteousness, invulnerable and invincible.

So Elisha talked to the Lord about that big army, and the Lord smote the Syrians with blindness. You and I cannot write the history of this war, but some day historians will ask why, when we had been stripped of all our equipment, when there was scarcely a gun in all England, and Hitler had the European coastline absolutely under his command, with only twenty-six miles of water between him and that which he desired above everything else—why he did not move. Who knows but we shall discover it was some such victory as this? A combination of the horses and chariots of fire which were first invisible to the young man, and then the succeeding blindness of the enemy.

The enemy followed Elisha, and he led them right into the capital city of Samaria. Who knows but Hitler will wake up and find himself in London one of these days? Like Hess! I understand that Hess intended to return to Germany, but his return ticket was invalid. At all events, there the Syrians were at the mercy of their enemy. But Israel did not slay them: they merely said, "Go home and behave yourselves." What a miracle it was, after all! What a blessing it would be if we could treat our French enemies—most of whom fight us reluctantly, if we were to find ourselves able to treat them with a like generosity!

The Bible is a book of miracles. If you do not believe in miracles, you must throw your Bible in the waste basket. It is supernatural all the way through. I love to remind myself—and I should like to remind you—how the Bible begins. "In the beginning GOD." Once postulate God, and nothing is impossible. You may expect to read a record of wonders in the Book whose opening sentence reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The Creator of heaven and earth is our Helper.

I think we ought to pray that blindness may strike the enemy. We compiled the small hymn-book we are now using before the war, and the national anthem contains all three verses—most books have only two, and some only one. Most churches have become too polite to sing the second verse:

"O Lord our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies,
And make them fall:
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
On Thee our hopes we fix,
God save us all."

"Sing that in a Christian church?" Elisha prayed, "Lord, smite them with blindness"—and He did. And knaves ought always to be frustrated. Let us therefore pray, like Elisha, that the miracle of Damascus may be experienced again.

V.

I am sorry to have to say this, but there is a chapter which tells us that DAMASCUS WAS THE SCENE OF THE BASEST TREACHERY. When Benhadad was king he became ill, and he sent a message to the prophet asking if he would recover from his illness. The prophet answered by a very strange saying, "Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that (thou) shalt surely die." It was almost like the report one reads sometimes, "The operation was successful—but the patient died."

What did it mean? The Syrian commander-in-chief was named Hazael, and the prophet said to him, "Hazael, you are a murderer. You are going to kill your master." Hazael remonstrated, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" He went back to Damascus, dipped a thick towel in water, put it on the face of his master—and smothered him; then reigned in his stead.

When thieves and gangsters fall out, there may be a chance for honest men. There has been much speculation as to why Hess came to Britain. I agree with the Secretary for Home Defense, Mr. Morrison, when, speaking on the subject, he said he did not know whether he is Rat Number One, or a giant panda: all he is concerned about is, we have him caged whatever sort of animal he is, and there he will remain. Whatever may be the explanation of the Hess affair, it is only symptomatic of what will take place; and we shall find our allies in enemy territory.

Some of you may remember that a year ago I spoke of the treachery of Pétain and his régime. I do not believe France is against us. The vast majority of Frenchmen, I believe, are with us, and desire a British victory. Can you tell me why this old man of eighty-four or thereabout, a Frenchman, a veteran of the last war, the hero of Verdun, should sell his own country to the enemy? Has he ceased to be a Frenchman? I am positive he has yielded to what he conceives to be a higher loyalty, and under the direction of the dictator in Rome—not Mussolini, but the Pope, he would sell out the French Empire. We are fighting roundabout Damascus to-day because of the treachery of Pétain.

Let me here say something that I hope will be reported. I should like to ask the Government at Ottawa, now that Vichy has shown itself to be as implacable a foe as Berlin—Washington recognizes it, the whole world recognizes it, and we are under the necessity of actually going to war with some Frenchmen who a little more than a year ago were our allies—I ask why the representative of that treacherous government is still in Ottawa? Why does the Canadian Government maintain diplomatic relations with the enemy? We were told in the beginning: as a sop to the Roman Catholics of Quebec. There is your Fifth Column. Treachery in Canada? The whole Ottawa Government ought to be indicted. If we try to recruit men for the army, we are not to say anything about the Empire: we are to tell them they are fighting for Canada. Speakers are told they will gain recruits by quoting the speeches of Prime Minister King and Mr. Ralston! That would not gain a recruit in a thousand years! These men, through the whole period of the war, have piled up obstacles in the face of our men, broken the hearts of thousands of men who wanted to fight, until their spirits have almost left them; and now, after pouring water upon their patriotic zeal, we have to dry it out, and rekindle the flame in men who, had they had their way, would be in Britain to-day. We must not, however, allow ourselves to be daunted by the shameful conduct of the Ottawa Government. We must help recruit the men necessary.

And the Prime Minister whines, "What has Churchill done that I have not done?" Think of it! I should like to tell him! And by the way, Mr. King made a speech in the House recently, and he actually said this very new thing: "We must not be unduly depressed by defeats, nor unduly elated by victories." Think of spend-

ing money to print that in Hansard! There was treachery in Damascus, and we are facing the same sort of treachery to-day in France—and in the shameful weakness and vacillation in Ottawa. Notwithstanding, as Allenby won the battle of Damascus on October first, 1918, so we shall win to-day.

VI.

Just a word, and I will send you away. The best part of my story remains. DAMASCUS WAS A PLACE WHERE SOVEREIGN GRACE TURNED THREATENINGS AND SLAUGHTER TO PAEANS OF PRAISE. Oh the symbolism of the Damascus road! A beast of prey, breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord! And yet he was converted on the road and became the chief of the Apostles. That Damascus road was the scene of one of the greatest miracles of all time.

Mr. Brown read about the street called Straight. The street called Straight still exists, and bears the same name, and was brightly illuminated to welcome Allenby's army in 1918. I suppose, though I am not sure, that it is the oldest named street in the world.

What followed? From that miracle of the Damascus road, blessings have flowed to the enrichment of the whole world. There a man was converted who became the apostle to the Gentiles, and because of that he brought the gospel our way. Humanly speaking, if Saul of Tarsus had not been converted on the Damascus road—I know God could have found some other instrumentality—there might have been no British Empire, no United States of America. It was the miracle of the Damascus road that taught the world freedom, and made these two great democracies, the bulwarks of human freedom, and God's chief instrument for the prosecution of the gospel through all the ages.

I would encourage my own soul and yours by remarking that that miracle may be repeated; and that things may be happening now in Syria which we, in our shortsightedness, might be disposed to deplore. Yet it may be God's way of bringing freedom to the world again, and delivering us from the curse of Hitlerism. That was a great phrase in Mr. Churchill's last speech when he spoke so confidently, and said that the last stain—speaking of Hitler—of his infecting and corroding fingers shall be sponged and purged, and if necessary blasted from the face of the earth. Nothing less than that will do.

There may be some here this evening who say, "That may be interesting as a matter of history, but what has it to do with us?" You may be among those who are outside the kingdom of God, those who have never heard the Voice from heaven, to whom Jesus Christ has not been introduced. But just as Saul of Tarsus was converted in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so may anyone here this evening who is not a Christian, hear the voice of the Spirit of God, receive Jesus Christ, and become yourself the subject of that miracle, and so be saved.

I have spoken in this simple fashion because I want you to think of God, not as of some character of ancient history; nor be content to say, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." We are disposed to write our miracles in the past tense, but spiritually and physically—and politically if you like, and militarily—they are being performed to-day. God is on our side. Nay, rather, I hope we may humbly say that

we are on God's side; and because of that, there are other chapters in the Damascus story yet to be written, which will be as glorifying to God as that which is already a part of the inspired record. May we all trust Him for everything now and forever.

Let us pray:

We thank Thee, Lord, that Thou art always the same—yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Thou art the same; and Thy years do not fail. Therefore do we commend to Thee the interests of righteousness, too wide, too varied, too vast for our intelligent comprehension. We commend them to Thee, for clouds and darkness are roundabout Thee, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne. Therefore Thou God of righteousness, have regard to all the interests of righteousness on the sea, on the land, in the air, in the councils of state—everywhere. Let Thy will be done. Hasten the day when right shall prevail, for Thou art first of all King of righteousness, and after that, King of peace.

We do not ask for peace: we ask for the triumph of righteousness everywhere; and above all, do Thou teach us everyone the wisdom of being so related to Thee through Jesus Christ personally that our sins shall all be washed away, that we shall be born again, and our names written in the Lamb's book of life; so that we may be sure we can never be among those who will receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads and in their hands. So may we be secured forever by registration in the Lamb's book of life. Make us to know that we are such; and may this night be a night of grace and blessing to everyone for Thy name's sake, Amen.

Summer Slackness

We are on the threshold of the season when many churches seem to feel they are fully justified in slacking off in the Lord's work during the pleasant weather. In some instances churches dispense with their Sunday evening services; in other cases, several churches unite, with the result in not a few such union services the combined congregations make but a handful of people.

Why should this be? We must all recognize that people need holidays, and some recreation. Industrial and commercial affairs make provision to give their employees some time, but they do not stop the whole organization, nor even appreciably slow down their operations. Why is it that so many people called Christians seem to have no conscience whatever in the matter of holidays? They turn their back upon the Lord's work for a whole summer. They make the week-end a time of pleasure to the utter neglect of all religious duty.

And yet, surely, there is no better time of the year for the Lord's work than these glorious summer days. We read in last evening's paper that General Wavell had deliberately chosen the hot season for his present attack, in order to give the enemy "a hot time". Why should we not show equal wisdom and courage, and an equal readiness to sacrifice in the work of the Lord? It is surely quite possible for people to arrange for a reasonable rest and recreation in the summertime without abandoning their religious duties. Let us try to put conscience into our holidays as well as into our labour, so that whatsoever we do, we may do it as unto the Lord.

Why I Am Not a Roman Catholic

A sermon by Dr. Shields, translated into French, entitled, "Pourquoi je ne suis pas Catholique Romain". Copies of this French edition may be obtained at THE GOSPEL WITNESS Office, 130 Gerrard St. East, or the office of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches, 337 Jarvis Street. Help to circulate this gospel message among the French-speaking people of these provinces.

"The Orange Sentinel" on the Freedom of the Press

We had planned a large issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS for this week, for the further discussion of the Roman Catholic menace, but later decided to hold it until next week. Be on the lookout for next week's issue as it will be a most interesting number.

In the meantime, however, we publish an editorial from *The Orange Sentinel*, of Toronto, the official organ of the Orange Association. The letter from the Assistant Press Censor in Ottawa would be very amusing if it were not serious. A report of our address in St. Thomas on May 28th was carried by the Canadian press, and published in the daily papers from Halifax to Vancouver. The report so stirred some of the Quebec friends that we feel our readers would like to have an opportunity of reading translations from the French press.

Some months ago we preached from the Jarvis Street pulpit a sermon entitled, "Why I am not a Roman Catholic." This sermon was translated into French, and thousands of them have been put in circulation. This has greatly stirred our Roman Catholic friends. One Roman Catholic Member of Parliament, M. Liguori Lacombe, demanded our internment on the ground of the preaching of this sermon. We shall put all these complaints together so as to give a true picture of the Roman Catholic idea of liberty. They never meet an argument, but always appeal to force—demanding that their critics be stopped, or interned, or jailed.

Following is the editorial from *The Orange Sentinel*:

Warning to the Press Against Dr. Shields Threatens Freedom

With the Empire in a death struggle in Europe and the Middle East to preserve the freedom of the world, the people of Canada must see that what we are fighting for abroad is not lost at home. Freedom of speech, so long as it is not treasonable, must be preserved, and along with freedom of speech there must be the freedom of the press.

It is well known that Rev. Dr. T. T. Shields, of Jarvis St. Baptist Church, Toronto, has been warned by the Press censorship regarding the publication of his sermons in his church's paper, THE GOSPEL WITNESS, criticizing the Roman church's part in the war. Dr. Shields is expressing views that are shared by many people. He feels, like we do, that our own security is all the sounder and less vulnerable when the forces which threaten the foundation of the Empire are exposed. The attitude of official Romanism toward the war is, to say the least, open to question. Evidence, as a matter of fact, is in abundance to show that the Roman church as a whole is pronouncedly against democracy and on the side of totalitarianism. That being so, it is the plain duty of free men to expose this Roman attitude as a menace to the British and democratic cause.

Would Suppress Criticism

For doing this, Ottawa has decreed that Dr. Shields must be silenced. The Government, on the assumption that in criticizing official Romanism he is endangering "national unity," has been on his trail. And in keeping track of him, the Government is evidently determined to see to it that the press of the Dominion follows its wishes in silencing him. The censorship powers under the Defence of Canada Regulations provide the weapon, evidently, to wheel the press into line and we have the evidence that newspapers are beginning to feel the pressure from Ottawa.

Dr. Shields addressed an open meeting on Wednesday night last in St. Thomas, Ont., in connection with the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West. His subject was "The Roman Hierarchy and the War," the theme of many of his sermons recently. But before the meeting the local paper, "The

Times-Journal" received the following letter from the assistant Press censor in Ottawa:

Letter of Warning

"The Editor,
"The Times-Journal,
"St. Thomas, Ont.

"Dear Sir,

"It has been brought to our attention that Rev. Dr. T. T. Shields, of Jarvis St. Baptist Church, Toronto, is to address a public meeting in St. Thomas under Orange auspices on May 28, during the session there of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West.

"As you are probably aware, Dr. Shields has been conducting through sermons in his church and through his publication, the 'Gospel Witness,' a withering attack on Roman Catholic institutions in Canada, and particularly against what he calls its 'fifth column' activities in French Quebec.

"His attacks are, of course, not conducive to unity in Canada in these times of stress when a united war effort is so necessary. Dr. Shields has been warned, but it may happen that he will seize upon this occasion to make a more sensational attack than before, and we would advise you, in the event that you are covering his address and publishing it in detail, to keep in mind the Defence of Canada regulations.

"Thanking you for your co-operation in the past.
"We are," etc.

Behind all this departmental phraseology there is an unmistakable demand to ignore Dr. Shields' address or take the consequences, and the effect upon a newspaper in a comparatively small city can well be imagined. The Times-Journal was very generous in covering the Grand Lodge proceedings, and to its increasing credit be it said that it gave a good account of the Toronto minister's forceful address, despite the warning of the Censorship Board. His criticisms of Roman Catholic officialdom's anti-democratic attitude were published the next day.

Freedom of the Press at Stake

The sinister aspect of the whole affair is that, not content with attempting to suppress free speech when not to the government's liking, Ottawa seemingly is trying to throttle the freedom of the press so as to protect its friends, the Roman Catholic church and Quebec. If speaking and printing fearlessly the truth regarding the inadequacy of Canada's war effort or the danger of the totalitarian tendencies of official Romanism, can only be done at the expense of "disunity," then we say, let us have disunity. However, we say rather that the present willingness of the Federal Government to concede in every step of national and war policy to the wishes of Quebec and the Roman Church is more conducive to disunity in the country than would be a bold, determined policy to throw all the resources of Canada into the war irrespective of party, racial or religious considerations.

Let it be clearly understood that the British people of Canada are in no mind to tolerate any attempt to curtail them from expressing justified criticism of issues affecting the war effort either on the public platform or in the press.

From *The Orange Sentinel*, June 5, 1941.

NEWS OF CHURCHES

Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec
337 Jarvis Street, Toronto, 2, Canada.

Rev. W. S. WHITCOMBE, *Secretary*.

Ordination and Recognition Services in Montreal

"Last Wednesday was a great day in the lives of both our Churches down here. The Emmanuel Church in Verdun ordained their pastor, and we received formal recognition as a New Testament Church in fellowship with the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec. At the afternoon session a very splendid representation of the churches in the Ottawa Valley was present. A council was formed with Rev. R. E. Jones as Moderator, and Mr. W. Morrison of Brownsburg as Clerk. By unanimous vote of

the Emmanuel Church the Council was accepted, and we proceeded to listen to and examine Pastor Carson as touching his conversion, call to the ministry and doctrinal statement. In reference to the first two points he mentioned the names of many, chief among whom were his father, mother, pastor, Sunday School teachers and Superintendent, who had played a part in his early experiences. A strong emphasis was placed upon the way in which clear teaching from the Word of God had solved many problems. His doctrinal statement was thoroughly Scriptural and no one felt that there were many questions to be asked. The council unanimously voted to accept our brother's full statement.

"The council was then dissolved and reconstituted. By the unanimous vote of the members of the Snowdon Regular Baptist Church the council was accepted to consider the statement of the Snowdon Church as touching its doctrinal position, organization, finances and prospects for expansion. The pastor, Rev. J. R. Armstrong, presented the statement showing how the work had been born in the heart and mind of Mr. J. A. Paterson of Westmount. Tribute was paid to the labours of Pastor J. E. Paterson, Sgt. C. H. Wilkins, Pastor W. C. Tompkins and the others who had assisted in the work from time to time. The present membership of the church is fourteen. The community in which the church is working was described, and it was emphasized that the prospects of the work lie in the nature of the community, the enthusiasm of the people, and the fact that we have a gospel which men need. Plans are proceeding for a building programme and everyone felt conscious that the blessing of the Lord has evidently rested upon this missionary effort of the Union. After a little discussion and a few questions, it was unanimously agreed to fellowship the Snowdon Regular Baptist Church.

"The ladies of the two churches provided a splendid meal and a time of happy fellowship was enjoyed at the rather late supper hour.

"At the evening meeting, Rev. R. E. Jones, the Moderator, presided, and the church was filled almost to capacity. The Scriptures were read and prayer was offered by Pastor Harold Charlton of Lachute. The ordination sermon on a 'Spirit filled Life' was delivered by Rev. Robt. Brackstone of Westboro. The charges to the churches and to Mr. Carson were delivered by Rev. Frank Wellington of Calvary, Ottawa, and the right hand of fellowship was extended to Mr. Carson and the Snowdon Church through Mr. Armstrong by Rev. Chas. Hardie of Dalesville. At the evening service extracts from messages of greeting from numerous churches and individuals were read reminding all that we are not alone in our stand for the great verities of the faith. A mixed quartette from the Emmanuel Church brought a message in song, and Rev. T. D. M. Carson pronounced the benediction."—J. R. A.

Lindsay

"The work has been going along very well here," writes Rev. J. Fullard, Pastor of the William Street Baptist Church, Lindsay. "Ten were baptized on a recent Sunday. One more has taken a definite stand since then and there are others who are just on the verge of making a decision."

Emmanuel, Verdun

On June 12th the members and friends of the Emmanuel Church gathered for a time of fellowship, which was the occasion of a presentation to the pastor, Rev. T. D. M. Carson, who was recently ordained. The presentation to the pastor was made by Mr. Welby. Mrs. Logan, on behalf of the ladies, presented Mrs. Carson with a beautiful leather handbag. Mr. J. A. Paterson of the Snowdon Baptist Church, and Mr. Brown, Superintendent of the Emmanuel Sunday School, spoke briefly of the blessing experienced under the faithful ministry of Mr. and Mrs. Carson. A short musical programme was much enjoyed.

Briscoe St., London

Rev. Robert D. Guthrie began his tenth year as pastor of Briscoe Street Baptist Church, South London, last Sunday. On Saturday there was a fine write-up on his work in the *London Free Press* under the title "Young Man with a Call". The indebtedness on the church has been reduced to less than \$800. Mr. Guthrie has done a good deal of special evangelistic work in other churches, the latest being with Long Branch Baptist Church.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 5 Second Quarter Lesson 26 June 29, 1941

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

THE WITNESS OF GOD

Lesson Text: 1 John 5.

Golden Text: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"—1 John 5:12.

I. The Witness of God Recorded—verses 1 to 12.

The relationship of a Christian to God is an internal, spiritual relationship resulting from an experience of vital faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (John 1:12). The Christian is bound by strong ties to other Christians because they, too, are children of the same heavenly Father.

Love to God, as well as love to one's fellow-Christians, is no arbitrary virtue, but it is the outward expression of the new life within. Love to God will be openly attested by our obedience to His commandments (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24). The demands made by those we love are not grievous, even when they might be considered heavy in themselves (Matt. 11:30).

Since God will be victorious in the struggle against the evil forces of the world-system, those who are united to Him by a living faith in Christ will share that victory which He has already attained for them potentially on the cross (Rev. 11:15-18). We have every reason to be courageous and steadfast in the battle which falls to our lot, since the Lord our God will cause us to triumph in His Son (Josh. 1:9; Psa. 31:24; 55:18; Isa. 35:3, 4; Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 2:14). Hence, faith is the principle of victory for us.

We trust in a Saviour Whom we have not seen with the natural eye, but evidence as to the reality of His historical appearance and of the efficacy of His redeeming work is abundant.

When Christ submitted to baptism in water at the hands of John the Baptist, He gave public testimony to the fact that He was indeed the Messiah Who was to fulfil all righteousness (Matt. 3:11-17; John 1:29-34). His baptism was also a picture of His death, burial and resurrection, by which He proved His claims to be the Son of God and the Saviour of men (Rom. 1:3, 4; 6:4). Also, water flowed from His riven side along with the blood, which is the more usual token of His atoning work (John 19:34, 35; Heb. 9:22). The Holy Spirit bore witness concerning these facts to the disciples (John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13; Heb. 2:3, 4; 10:15), and also inspired them to write the record (1 Cor. 2:7-13; 2 Pet. 1:21). These three constitute the earthly witness to Christ: the Holy Spirit, the water and the blood.

By the mouth of two or three witnesses a matter is established (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). As there are three earthly witnesses, so are there three heavenly witnesses: the Father, Who planned redemption (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9); Christ the Word of God, Who secured redemption (Heb. 9:12; 10:12); the Holy Spirit, the Executive of the Trinity, Who applies the work of Christ to the heart of the individual believer (Gal. 5:25; Eph. 1:13; Heb. 9:14). Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in essence, and their testimony is one (John 10:30; 17:11, 21; 1 Cor. 2:11).

The witness of reliable men is usually accepted. The witness of God, which is based upon indisputable evidence and which is of supreme importance, should be most readily received (John 5:34, 36; 8:17, 18; Heb. 6:16-20; 10:28-31). To hesitate to accept the word of a friend would be to question his veracity, yet, when God the Father sets forth His testimony concerning His Son, some people dare to reject it. In so doing they are guilty of impugning the character of Almighty God (John 5:23; 1 John 2:22, 23; 2 John 9). What a solemn statement of the guilt of unbelievers!

The essence of God's record concerning His Son is here so simply stated. God, Who has life in Himself, has given the Son life in Himself, and all who believe on Christ become partakers of that eternal life which is in Him (John 5:24-26;

6:40, 47; 17:3). Those who reject Christ, reject everlasting life in Him, and they remain dead in their trespasses and sins (John 3:36).

II. The Witness of God Received—verses 13 to 21.

John's Epistle was written chiefly to give assurance of salvation to those who believe upon Christ. Their confidence in Him rests on His faithfulness. He will keep His word to those who have reposed their trust in Him (John 10:27-29; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 6:18, 19).

Christians may go confidently to God in prayer because of the certain knowledge that they belong to Him. Through the Holy Spirit God brings to their hearts a knowledge of His will, and they are then enabled to ask according to His will (Rom. 8:26, 27; 1 John 3:21, 22).

Evidently there are certain people for whom Christians are not commanded to pray. "Sin unto death" may be a state of sin for which the punishment of physical death is decreed (Num. 18:22; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 13; 11:30), or it may be an offence judged to be of this class. Such sins of nations or of individuals must be left to God (Jer. 7:16; 14:10-12).

Just as the believer rests in Christ and derives his life and energy from the Lord (Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29; Heb. 13:20), so are unbelievers said to be in the Evil One. They are nursed in his lap, as it were, receiving from him their inspiration and strength (Eph. 2:2). This is a terrible, but true, picture.

Since our position in Christ is so precious and so secure, we are exhorted to keep ourselves from idols. The command was to be taken literally, and also figuratively (Exod. 20:3; 1 Cor. 10:7, 14). We must be on guard to prevent anyone or anything from usurping the place in our affections, thought and interest which is to be reserved for the One Who died that we might live (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Among Ourselves

Devoted to Activities and Interests of Former Students of TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY

In a private letter from Capt. the Rev. Bernard Jeffery, First Infantry Holding Unit, Canadian Army Overseas, our Regular Baptist Padre remarks that

"the army is a funny thing and the chaplain has the funniest part of it, I think; however, I am having a great time with it all, and have no kick coming about the experience in general; in fact, I think I am very fortunate on the whole."

In another place he speaks of meeting some of the Jarvis Street men overseas, and of one of our Seminary family from whom we have not heard for a long time:

"On a recent Sunday evening I had a very enjoyable visit at our camp with George Parfitt and Bob Shaker from Jarvis Street; they came to our evening volunteer service and gave their testimony. Last Saturday I went to — and had tea with Lloyd Britton and a mutual friend in his unit. So birds of a feather are able to flock together sometimes even in the army. I saw Tom McClure again last month, just in between blitzes, in Belfast. A time bomb had forced him to vacate his home for a few days, but he is back now as far as I know. He is working in the war department now in Belfast, and talks of coming to Canada after the war.

"We are in a beautiful spot in — and the charm of old England grows on me from day to day. The Bosche go over nightly, but do not stop except when the night fighters compel them to. Two crashed near here recently. It seems as if we are going through a terrible fever or nightmare, from which we shall recover only after the disease or dream has run its course. But it does make one feel that the old Book is true when it speaks of the exceeding sinfulness of sin."

* * * *

Pastor D. S. Dinrick, of whom we wrote last week, has accepted a call to Scarboro Baptist Church, his ministry there to begin July 1st.