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Should Preachers Cater to "Itching Ears"?

By The Editor

I have recently attended two ordination services, and must attend another this week. This has led me to think much of the work of the ministry, and of the necessity of instructing young ministers before they contract habits of thought and practice which may not be conducive to an effective ministry of the New Testament.

Having this in mind, I have turned to an address which I gave in Toronto, in Jarvis Street, September 30th, 1916, and as it covers the ground which I feel it is important young ministers should consider, I venture here to publish it.

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."—2 Tim. 4:1-5.

Perhaps there is no single aspect of New Testament teaching concerning which otherwise well-instructed Christians are so ill-informed as that which defines the character, the function, and the scope of the Christian ministry. This is perhaps due to the natural reluctance of the minister to discuss matters which so directly relate to himself and his office. But if the minister refrain from teaching with respect to this subject, he will invite embarrassment for himself, and will, by withholding an important element in New Testament teaching, work injury to others.

I therefore venture to ask you to examine with me this apostolic injunction laid upon a young minister.

I

I begin by enquiring *By Whom The Minister Is Commissioned*. None of us can sympathize with the sacerdotal conception of the ministry as involving any element of priestly function or authority. Nor is it likely that anyone here could accept the ancient but exploded figment of tactual apostolic succession. There is an apostolic

succession, but it does not consist in, nor depend upon, a tactual chain, that is, a chain of episcopal touches reaching back to one of the apostles of the Lord.

Yet every true minister is divinely commissioned. I do not say that a minister is more than his brethren. He has all the frailties and limitations of other men. I make all allowance for his varying moods, his liability to error, his oneness with all his kind. But when all this is admitted, it remains true that if he be really a New Testament preacher and pastor at all, he holds his commission from God. He is "called" in the old fashioned special sense. Not as men are called to secular employments. Paul the tent-maker and preacher was called specially to be an apostle; he engaged in tent-making as a means of livelihood. But the Scripture says, "How shall they preach except they be sent?" That does not mean "How shall they preach except they be sent by a Missionary Committee?" but How shall they preach except they be sent of God? "There was a man sent of God, whose name was John." This principle is implied in Paul's charge here made to Timothy. Let us take care how we treat God's prophets.

Paul addresses Timothy as standing before God. The minister, to be effective, must abide in the presence of his Master. Nothing else can give his message authority. He must be able to say, like Elijah, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth before Whom I stand." This is his only valid credential, and the only one the true prophet needs. Therefore ought people to pray for their minister always that he may stand before God, and be clothed with divine power.

The minister's commission has to do with the judgment. The minister has to do with men who must stand in the judgment, and he is commissioned, as I understand it, to prepare men for judgment.

Furthermore, he is reminded that his own reward will be realized at the appearing of Christ. We may speak contemptuously of the old-time "Otherworldliness" of the saints, but we must admit that they were nearer the New Testament pattern than their modern worldly successors.

II.

Then we must consider briefly *The Minister's Commission*. He is to "preach the word." Here is the finality of the Gospel. Others have preached it before. He is not to seek some new message. He is to expound the great principles of the Gospel. He is to assume that this is what God wants men to hear. He is a despatch rider, a postman, an ambassador. He is left no discretionary powers. As he is given to understand it, he must preach the Word.

It follows that *spiritual people should prayerfully support him in his ministry*. I beseech you to demand this of me. There is no man living who values more highly than I the appreciation of his brethren. But as a minister I covet no man's appreciation on any other ground than as a preacher of the Word. I do not know that it much matters where a man preaches, so long as he is where God puts him. But this I must say, and the days are upon us when I feel I must say it, I am resolved to preach the Word as I understand it with all my might. A minister may fail in being interesting or entertaining, but there are only two really valid criticisms of the preacher—one is that he does not preach the word of God, and the other is that, in preaching it, he does not preach it in the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is your solemn duty to pray that neither of these may ever fairly be laid against this pulpit.

The minister is to be *always at it*. A man of one book, of one purpose, he must never be off duty. He must be instant in season and out of season. You have a right to demand of your minister that he shall never be found anywhere, or doing anything that is inconsistent with the function of an ambassador of Christ. Could the British ambassador, for instance, consort with an enemy power while his Government and the Government of the Power concerned were at war? Could he have any fellowship at all with a representative of the Government with which his Government was at war? Say what you will of ministers "mixing." A minister must mix with men only that in season and out of season he may preach the Word. I have observed that ministers who join all sorts of lodges and societies, and belong to numerous clubs, and are found at baseball and football stadiums, mixing with men of the world indiscriminately, I say I have observed that these men do not attract the men with whom they "mix" to the hearing of the Word as they preach it. We must remember that we are "separated" unto the Gospel of Christ, and we must have no associations which will in any way conflict with that high calling.

Look then at the *character of a minister's preaching*. Nowadays there are many who demand a ministry of comfort and consolation. And that indeed is a blessed ministry when it may legitimately be exercised. But morphine is a poor substitute for an operation, when an operation is needed; and our sinful human natures do not admit of an unceasing invariable ministry of comfort.

There must be *reproof*. The New Testament assumes that the old man in us needs constant reproof. The Scriptures are profitable for this. Any faithful minister will exercise a reproving ministry.

Then too, the minister must sometimes speak *words of rebuke*. It is a poor ministry which does not make the best of men at times uncomfortable. Like Nathan, the true prophet must be very direct, and must not hesitate to say, "Thou art the man."

Then the minister must also give himself to *exhortation*. He must call men to God. He must persuade men to a holy life. He must not be content with just arguing the point, but he must most diligently endeavour to persuade men to live blamelessly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

The minister also must be *longsuffering*. In everything he must be patient; he must be content to preach here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept; and all with good cheer. He must be faithful to all these duties; he must encourage men in the pursuit of holiness.

Then, *his instrument through all must be doctrinal*, which is another word for teaching. He must, by opening the doctrines of the Gospel, instruct men in the great matters of Divine revelation. It will not do for him to be always giving people merely "the sincere milk of the word". That is good for babes, but he must learn how to serve good solid meals of strong meat for such as are of riper experience.

III.

Then in the verses I read to you **THE MINISTER IS FOREWARNED OF HIS DIFFICULTY**: He is told that a certain time will come when men will not be easily persuaded of the things of God. It may be that this will be peculiarly true of some particular time, and it may be that that time is now. But this I know, it has always been true of some that they would not endure sound doctrine, but today it is especially true of a very large number.

Notwithstanding he must preach the *doctrines of the New Testament*. To avoid comparisons with other times we may remark that the doctrines of the New Testament are always very unpopular to the natural man, but the preacher must not hesitate to deal with these matters. He must preach the doctrine of sin, of the atonement, the new birth, of future punishment and reward, all of which are all but generally held in contempt in our day. German rationalism, now so generally called Modernism, has poisoned the springs of the religious life of the world, and long before the First War, by the exchange of University Professors, and her accursed propagation of Germanism through the world, Germany did for religion what her espionage did politically. Her inoculation of prisoners with the deadly bacilli of consumption is only a revealing parable. And you will bear me witness that I had no more admiration for German rationalism; and German religious thought generally before the war than I have now that we are at war with Germany. I believe it to be of the devil. But men who repudiate German leadership in other things, still glory in her religious principles, and Modernism is as rampant today as ever.

I would remind you also that *this is a day of "itching ears"*. The majority do not want instruction from the pulpit. They do not want, and will not attend a teaching ministry. They demand that the minister shall be an entertainer. He must be as interesting and as entertaining as a moving picture. He must not serve full-course dinners; but be content to stand behind the counter of some kind of a religious "snack bar". He must scratch people's ears, not inform them; he must give them sensation rather than sense. In the United States, and it is rapidly becoming true of Canada, many of the churches are all but empty, and that is especially so of the services of Sunday evening.

Then it is to be observed that *teachers are multiplied who meet the peoples' desires*. How can ministers with-

stand the pressure? How can they do otherwise? Only as they are sustained by Divine power can they continue faithfully to preach the word. But such preachers as cater to "itching ears" are produced by the popular demand. So it is said, "They shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." We admit that the ministry is often very faulty, but all the blame does not rest upon the pulpit. Men who are not strong have bowed to the popular demand, and the pulpit supplies what the pew requests.

Now this inevitably follows upon such a ministry—*They shall turn away from truth to fables.* The voice of Revelation shall be rejected for the word of human imagination. And thus men spin their fancies about spiritual and eternal things, and their hearers cease to ask for a "thus saith the Lord." So it comes to pass that fables are more popular than fact, and fancies more to be desired than faith.

IV.

We may now observe THE MINISTER'S DUTY IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. How many have said to me, "*You must recognize that times have changed, that men are thinking differently, and we must meet them on their own ground.*" Thus we are invited to try our wits against the wits of the Devil. What is the apostolic answer to this? Are true ministers of Christ to cater to itching ears? Are they to stoop to the tactics and the standards of Hollywood in order to get people to hear the word of God? What is it that Paul here says? His answer is this: "Watch thou in all things." Preachers must always be *watchful*. They must be careful observers of all the signs of the times. They must know how to meet the tides of thought that are current. How it confirms my faith in this Book when I find things coming to pass exactly as the Bible predicts! No, we are not to shut our eyes, nor are we to close our ears to these matters, but we are to watch, and in the watching we shall find confirmation of our faith.

But we are not to hesitate to *pay the full price which fidelity to the Word of God requires.* We are to "endure afflictions," and I am sure that those who will be faithful to their trust will find that there are many afflictions to endure. I ask of my brother ministers, "Will you do it? Will you stand by the Gospel? Will you stand by all who preach it?" and I appeal to those who are in the pew. "Are you also willing to endure afflictions for the Gospel's sake? Are you willing to suffer obloquy which falls upon those who still maintain their walk with God, and contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." In other words, I ask of all my lay friends, "Will you stand by the Gospel and all who dare to preach it?"

Furthermore, the preacher is exhorted to "*do the work of an evangelist.*" We are to put the Gospel to the proof. I believe nothing will confirm the faith of faltering believers like seeing the Gospel in action by observing that it is still "the power of God unto salvation to all who believe." Nothing promotes revival like stories of revivals. I fall back on the memory of what I have seen of the mighty power of God, and I have resolved that I will to the end of the chapter endeavour to care more for "broken and contrite hearts" than for "itching ears."

Thus we are to *exercise our ministry to the full*, no matter what others do. The pulpit must not follow the fashions of the day. The pulpit must be independent

of all the tides that flow, and must be answerable to God alone. If you have been redeemed by the precious blood, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; if you love the word of God and are not ashamed of the Gospel, but glory in the Cross of Christ, and look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus, I beseech you to give me your unceasing prayers and hearty support in all things; as I pledge the same to you, that together we may give Christ in all things the pre-eminence.

AUSTRALIAN PARTY IN JARVIS STREET SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JULY 15 AND 16

AMONG Christian leaders with whom the Editor and Dr. Carl McIntire had fellowship while on their Australian tour are a party who are now visiting this continent en route to the International Christian Council in Geneva. These friends will be in Jarvis Street for two days: Saturday July 15, at eight o'clock, and for the two services on the day following, Sunday at eleven and seven o'clock.

Dr. Schwarz holds degrees in Arts, Science and Medicine from Australian Universities and is a prominent physician in the great city of Sydney. He is also an outstanding preacher who is not tied to notes and gives an enthusiastic straight-from-the-shoulder message. His enthusiasm is contagious, and to sit under his ministry



DR. F. C. SCHWARZ

and listen to his brilliant speaking carried along by his obvious sincerity coupled with a keen sense of humour is an experience that few would care to miss.

The Australian party is made up of Dr. Schwarz, his wife Mrs. F. C. Schwarz, and Mrs. Clarice Inglis, Sydney's outstanding gospel singer. Mrs. Inglis has a wide popularity in Australia as a gospel singer. Her radio and recording work is well known.

Dr. Schwarz is an outstanding Baptist layman. He is the Vice-Chairman of the Department of Evangelism of the Baptist Union and a recognized Australian authority on communism. He has lectured on the subject of communism at Universities Queensland, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and at More Theological College.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"Him That Cometh To Me, I Will In No Wise Cast Out"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, July 2nd, 1950

(Electrically Recorded)

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."—John 6:37.

THIS text is part of a discourse of our Lord, delivered at a time when He was perhaps at the zenith of His popularity. Wherever He went He was followed by great multitudes of people, and even when He sought retirement they followed Him, but when He saw the vast company He was moved with compassion, because he knew they were hungry.

And then followed the miracle of the feeding of the thousands with five loaves and two fishes. At the conclusion of that episode the disciples entered into a ship and crossed the sea of Galilee toward Capernaum, and their departure was observed by not a few of the great company there gathered: but Jesus "departed again into a mountain Himself alone." During the night a great storm arose, and Jesus came to His disciples walking on the water, and said to them, "It is I, be not afraid." They received Him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. But the multitudes had gone around the lake, and they were awaiting Him, and many of them could not understand by what means He had come, for they had observed that when the disciples left in their boat or ship Jesus did not depart with them, but now when they arrived He was with them. They knew nothing of this second miracle of His walking on the sea, coming to them in the midst of the storm. But they were there seeking Him.

The reason He withdrew from the multitude was that He perceived that they would come and take Him by force and make Him a King. They wanted obviously to have upon the throne one who could multiply loaves and fishes and feed the multitude miraculously. But when He saw them on the other side He said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

Now you heard in the portion of this chapter that was read this evening, that Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed in Him, and also who should betray Him. If you read this chapter, the sixth of John, you will find that it contains one of His profoundest discourses, when He admonished the multitudes to "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" and then proceeded to expound to them the spiritual character of His mission, and went so far as to say, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Jesus knew that that message would not be received; He knew that it would offend not a few, and that the multitude would leave Him. Still He did not change the tenor of His message in order to please the

people. This word uttered in the midst of it was of course for the multitude, and I think, perhaps, for the encouragement of His own spirit. Even before they began to move He saw them departing, offended by His spiritual message, and so He said "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I want to turn over those words with you this evening for a little while, and as I do so I pray, and I hope you will pray, that the Spirit of truth by Whom such words are inspired will open our understanding, that we may understand and appreciate even some of the deep things of God.

We begin with this—THAT OUR LORD DID NOT COME TO EARTH WITH A TENTATIVE PROGRAM. He knew from the beginning what was before Him, and what His achievements must be in order that prophecy should be fulfilled. There was nothing haphazard about the path of His progress; everything was divinely planned, and He knew what He would do. How the Modernists labour a few passages, as for example when Jesus asked certain questions, as though He asked for His own information. He asked questions as any good teacher will ask questions of his pupils, just to see how much they knew, but it is said that Jesus knew from the beginning what He would do; He did not need instruction from men, and He needed no one to tell Him what He should do. He came with Divine certitude, knowing His program, and assured from all eternity of its complete success.

The first part of my text says that He came for the sake of saving and possessing those whom the Father had given Him. He was not as a commander of an army of an inadequate force, insufficient to accomplish the objective toward which His prowess was directed; He knew that where conquest was necessary He would be the Conqueror; He had fully counted the cost, and He knew that failure was impossible. He came to this rebellious planet in arms against the King of Kings; He came, knowing that men were in rebellion, but He came to subdue it to His will, and to conquer it for God, for this planet will not be allowed to go forever astray; God will not be elbowed out of His universe; His plans and programs are not to be dictated by the caprice of men; He doeth as He will among the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, "What doest Thou?" He came that He might redeem those whom the Father had given Him. To a rebellious world, I have said, He came;

He came to find the diamonds deeply embedded in the mire of unrighteousness; He came, even as He said in one of His parables, having with His omnivident gaze, perceived the pearl of great price, He sold all that He had that He might buy the field where the pearl was. Our Lord Jesus invested (if I may so say) His whole capital, that He might come into possession of those jewels which were the Father's gift to His Son. "All that the Father giveth . . ."

I think there is great encouragement in this truth to the believer. I do not understand it, and therefore I have little hope of making you understand it, but I do know that, for reasons of His own, God set His heart upon me. I do not know why He should have done so, but He did, I am sure of that, and He gave me, long before I knew it, as a gift to His Son. And if you are a Christian it is because God had set His heart on you, differentiated between you and others, distinguished you from others, and by His Sovereign wisdom He had given you to His Son. Again I say, long before you knew it. That is a great word spoken to the apostle Paul in Corinth. By the way, I was in Corinth not so very long ago, and I didn't want to stay there. I wanted to get out as soon as I possibly could. But it was of Corinth the Lord said to Paul, ". . . no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." The people did not know they belonged to God; the apostle did not know who they were, but he preached the Gospel. Our Lord, on the contrary, did know who they were; He knew who they were who should believe. He said, in the tenth chapter of John, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." He knows them by number, and if one shall stray He knows that one is lacking. I remember staying at a farm house many years ago, a beautiful spot in the country, and I got up very early in the morning. I was downstairs before the farmer, so you may know it was early, and I went out on the verandah, and there was a fine old collie dog who had "slept in". When the farmer came out he said, "What, Rover, you here yet?" and seemingly, apologetically, Rover made for the woods. I heard him barking in the distance, and after a while I saw the cows emerge into an open space. Rover went round about them, and seemed actually to count them. Anyway, he noted that one was missing, so back into the woods he went, and I listened to his barking, and by and by the lost one of the heard came out from the forest and joined with the others to go to the yard for the milking. Ah, our God has a good many shepherd dogs that he uses to bring in His sheep, like the sainted man, Father Boone, who years ago was a missionary to the sailors of the Welland Canal. One day when he boarded one of the ships as it was passing through the Canal a rough sailor said to him, "Get away, you old dog! We want nothing to do with you." "Thank you sir," said Father Boone, "for the compliment. That is exactly what I am. I am one of the Good Shepherd's old dogs and I am out after His lost sheep, and you are one of them." Well, He has many dogs; I am one of them myself, and we are sent out after the lost sheep, but the shepherd knows all about it in advance, and I am glad He does; He knows how many constitute His flock and He will not lose one of them, He has sovereignly determined upon that, so these sheep that are the Father's gift to Him, He will, in His own time and way, bring home safely to the fold. I say it is encouraging to those of us who are Christians to reflect that we are Christians because of this great truth, that

God was in the beginning, not in the provision of salvation only, but in the application of it. The Good Shepherd knoweth them that are His, even before they have acknowledged Him.

Now the gifts which the Father has given are of all sorts and sizes and come from all countries. When, in the tenth chapter of John, He was obviously speaking to the Jews, He said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Those other sheep were ourselves; we were included. His thought went out to the Gentile world, to whom, in due time, God granted repentance unto life.

I am very fond of that old theological phrase, "The plan of salvation." I know that in nature everywhere there are evidences of design. In the material world, where we mark the handiwork of God, there is nothing haphazard; all is wrought out after a skilfully devised plan, and the plan is perfect in all that God does. And it would be strange if, in the realm of grace, He were not to anticipate all the requirements of the case, and make ample provision for the execution of His designs. This, dear friends, He has done, and if today, we are something like the Master was when He knew He was facing a congregation who would very soon leave Him, and it would be reduced in a matter of hours from a vast multitude to a dozen, and one of the dozen even being a devil; we must still stand our ground and be faithful to our trust. He knew all about it, but He was not discouraged; He knew that, in the end of the day, victory would crown His banner; He would achieve that which He had come to effect, and no one could bar the execution of His plan.

As for you who are not Christians, what shall I say to you of a text like this? "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Do you say that you rather resent the idea? You look about you and you say, "I am not a Christian, but I see no reason why I should be omitted, and others be included. If I am no better than some I see, certainly I think I can say without immodesty, I am no worse. I do not see why an invitation shouldn't be extended to me. Why didn't the Father choose me; why didn't He give me to the Son?" Is that the kind of question you are asking? Are you already feeling some interest in this matter? Do you wish that you might have been included in the provisions of grace, and that you might have been numbered among those who were given to the Son? But who ever said that you were not given to the Son? Who told you that you are not one of the Father's gifts to the Son? Perhaps you will reply, "Dare I hope that I am?" I think you may have strong hope that you are, if indeed you are already interested in such matters; if you find forming in your heart a desire that you might be among the elect company; if you feel that you would like to have a part by and by in the song of the redeemed, and join in that Hallelujah Chorus sung by the multitude that no man can number. "But," you say, "I do not know why God should choose me at all, but I have been wondering as you were speaking, however, why I was left out, because, though I am not very good, I am no worse than somebody else." Quite so, but my dear friends, no one of us was ever chosen for what we are, but for what grace could make of us. You know the sculptor sees the finished image in the block of marble; the lapidary sees the flashing diamond in the rough stone which he puts upon his wheel; the builder, in the mass of material gathered

about the lot, sees the finished structure already prepared in his blueprints, and he looks ahead, and he says, "It will come to pass. We shall build the house; we shall polish the diamond, we shall carve the image." And so, my dear friends, our Lord Jesus looks upon you, poor sinner as you are, as we all are by nature, and He sees that in you, (if indeed there is an interest in your heart, it is there because He has put it there), already the goings of God upon your spirit has implanted within you some desire toward God.

"Oh," but you say, "that would be good news. Sir, I know I cannot save myself; I have tried it a good many times; but if what you say is true, that I may be one of the Father's gifts to the Son, then He must be interested in me." Oh, yes, He is, as I shall try to tell you. But that is the main thing—that if, at any time you become a Christian, it will not be because you have sought God, but because He has sought you. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." It was for that He came into the world, to find the gifts of His Father's love to Him, and by Sovereign Grace to constrain them to come to Him, so they should become His prized possession for all eternity.

I have a few things which have changed a little since I first possessed them, by the touch of time, but I wouldn't part with them for anything, because they were gifts to me. I have some books on my shelves which are well worn now. Some of them I have had to have rebound. But you couldn't get them from me, no matter how much money you offered me, because they were my father's gift when I first went out to preach. I value them above anything that I have ever been able to possess since. But if, in addition, to the value that inheres in a certain possession because of your esteem for the giver, there is in the gift an intrinsic, inherent value that does not diminish or deteriorate in any way by the passage of time, you value it for the giver's sake and for the value of the gift.

Now, my dear friends, the Lord Jesus values every one of us because the Father thought enough of us to give us to Him, and because of the potentialities which reside in human nature, fallen and corrupt as it is, potentialities which could never be realized apart from the Sovereign operation of Divine grace; because of that, I say, we become, not only relatively, by reason of our relation to the Father, but inherently valuable, intrinsically so; we are His jewels; He has said, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." I believe strongly that that great truth is really the foundation of faith. I could not trust a God who was subject to any limitation whatsoever; I could not trust absolutely anything but Infinity, could I? Because just at the point where I might require succor that limitation of ability might disclose itself, and my faith would be in vain. But to trust a God whose power knows no limitation; who has no enemy which He cannot subdue; Whose throne is established in the Heavens; and Whose kingdom ruleth over all, to trust Him is to be sure for time and for eternity, not because of your faith being so strong, but because the Object of your faith inspires within you a faith that cannot waver, the more intimately you know Him, and the more surely you are persuaded of the infinitude of His Sovereign grace.

"All that the Father giveth me . . ." There ought to be in the heart of every believer a Hallelujah. We ought to be able to say, "Well, if that is the explanation of my

salvation; if that is why I felt myself to be a sinner and repented; if that is why at last I came tremblingly to the feet of Christ and put my trust in Him, I have a salvation that is better than I knew, and surer than I dreamed, because it is as steadfast and immovable as the throne of the Eternal." "All that the Father giveth me . . ." I pray that some may discover this evening that they are the Father's gift to the Son.

II.

"All that the Father giveth me," our Lord says, "shall come to me." HE ANNOUNCES HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSE TO POSSESS THAT WHICH IS ALREADY POTENTIALLY HIS OWN. "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The Lord has a vast estate, purchased with His own blood, and He will enter upon His inheritance. "For the Lord's portion is his people," and He will claim every one of His Father's gifts, and none of them shall fall of the grip of His saving hand, or by any means whatsoever, in the end of the day, be lost. "They shall come to me." I spoke to you a few weeks ago, poorly I know, but still I called your attention to a great text: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." "He poured out His soul unto death . . ." and because of that, the Lord will give Him, and see that He possesses completely that and those for whom He died.

Now how does He do it? The Gospel is the means which He employs. The Word of God, in a word, and that is what Jesus preached. He gave them the word of God, and He summarized His ministry in that last High-Priestly prayer by saying, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." He left them no money; He did not make them rich in the things of this world; but He did give them God's word. And so he was "The Word . . . made flesh, and dwelt among us," that men might "(behold) His glory", speaks in my text the very word of God, for He is God, and beside Him there is none else. And that is the word, that is the means which He is pleased sovereignly to employ, to achieve His purpose. For ourselves, we propose to abide by the ordained means of salvation. We believe that salvation is provided in Christ. We are sure of that. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." But as surely as His people are His own elect, He fore-ordained the means by which they should be brought into vital, into living relationship to Himself, and that is through the word of God.

Anyone is very foolish to set aside the instrument which God has ordained to use. I cannot find where He uses anything else. Even in combat, even in fierce battle, even the atomic bomb is not equal to the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. In the hand of the Spirit the word of God wielded by God the Almighty—there is no power in earth or in hell that can stand against it. "They shall come to me." "I will see to it." There is a Divine eloquence which is irresistible. I heard the great Dr. Russell Conwell once differentiate between elocution and oratory. He said, "If you call a dog and he comes, that is oratory; if he goes, that is elocution." Now our Lord has a way of calling His sheep—"He calleth (them) by name . . ." and when He calls they come. They will not come at my call. I could call forever, and they would make no response. You cannot explain that, and I cannot explain it, but you can understand it. There

isn't a Christian here who does not know that the voice of God came directly to his awakened spirit at some time, and you said, "That is not the voice of man; that is another Voice."

When the company of mourners came to the rocky sepulchre in which the body of the dead Lazarus was interred, including the weeping sisters, Martha and Mary, these curious spectators said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" They had a feeling that Jesus could have forbidden the progress of the disease had He come in time, and could have forbidden the entrance of death into that home in Bethany, but that was as far as their imagination, for it wasn't faith, could reach. He might have prevented death, but now that death has ensued, of what value? And you remember the sisters must have been there often, for when Mary responded to the Saviour's call, those who didn't know that she was called of Him said "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." I suppose because she had been there in these intervening days so many times before, and now she was going again. She and Martha went with their tears, and He said "Where have ye laid Him?" They showed Him the sepulchre, and He said, "Take ye away the stone." The sister said, "No, no, Lord, it is too late, too late." He had been dead four days already. In India I saw them cremating dead bodies. In the Parsee cemetery they put them into a huge pit for the vultures to pick their bones clean. There was a cloud of them hovering about that great grave. The bodies were brought in, and very soon there was nothing but clean bones remaining. They carried them out in another place to the funeral pyre to burn them. In that hot country they are allowed, I believe, two hours in which to dispose of the body after death. So these sisters were filled with apprehensive horror at the very thought of opening the grave upon their dead brother. I hesitate to quote the words—the stench of death was there. Notwithstanding, it was opened. Oh, how I have revelled in the prayer that was offered at the mouth of that sepulchre. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven — it is never said in the record that Jesus smiled. It is said on this occasion that He wept. But I think when He offered that prayer the tears were dry, and I fancy that as He lifted up His eyes to Heaven something of the glory of that upper world must have touched His countenance, when He said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." And I suppose they said, "What will He do next?" They said it in their hearts never dreaming what He would do. He did nothing, but He said something. With a loud voice He cried, "Lazarus, come forth." Mary would have said that if she could; Martha would have said that if she could; neighbours would gladly have said it had it been of any use but there was only one Voice: "Come forth!" and he that was dead heard that voice, and he came forth shuffling, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. Jesus said, "Loose him and let him go." That is the Gospel. "The word of God is quick and powerful . . ." living — it is life, it imparts life. When God the Spirit says to the dead sinner "Come forth," come forth he must. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth . . . Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker."

Many years ago, when I went to a certain church, a

woman came to me and said, "Pastor, I wish you would join me in praying for my husband." I said, "I will gladly do so." She said, "For years he kept one of the hotels in the village; he is retired now, but I tell you that to let you know what sort of a man he is; a good man in many ways — he goes to church, and he calls himself a Presbyterian, and he goes to the Presbyterian church, and I have definitely promised the Lord that if He would save him I would go with him to his church."

I said, "Why don't you go with him anyway?"

"Well," she said, "I am a Baptist, and I have convictions in respect to baptism."

"But," I said, "if the Lord should reward you by answering your prayer and saving your husband and giving you the greatest gift that He possibly could, you would forthwith show your gratitude by surrendering your principles and going to that in which you do not believe."

She said, "I never thought of that, but he would never come into a Baptist Church." I said, "How do you know? It isn't half such a miracle to make a Baptist of him as to make a Christian of him. You had better not strike a bargain with the Lord, you had better just ask Him to save him, and I will join you as you request."

It was one of those cases I couldn't forget, and as often as I bowed my knee I prayed for that man, again and again and again. At that time I had never even seen him; I did not know him at all. This woman came to church in the morning, and went with her husband in the evening. After some good while she came in, with a man with her, whom I assumed was her husband, and so it was. Then he came occasionally, and after a while quite regularly. I had a Bible class every Friday evening, and I learned that in the summer time he listened at the door, but didn't come inside. Often the door was slightly ajar to let in the cooler air, and he would sit out on the steps and listen to the exposition, but he didn't want anybody to know that he was turning toward his wife's "religion" as he called it. So after a while he came Sunday mornings, and at length he became one of my regular adherents; he was always there, Sunday morning and Sunday evening. I spoke to you about not trying to pluck the fruit before it was ripe this morning. I felt he wasn't ripe. I said, "Good morning, Mr. So-and-so, Good evening, Mr. So-and-so," and shook hands with him. But that was all. Then one day when his wife was away, he walked into Prayer Meeting. I was thrilled when I saw him. I had never invited him. I just handed that difficult customer over to the Lord. I said, "This may be a sheep, but he is a sheep with horns. The Good Shepherd will have to deal with him directly." He was noted as one of the most profane men in town. But he walked into Prayer Meeting. I made it my business to be at the door as he went out, and I offered him my hand and said, "Why, Mr. So-and-so, we are happy to see you here tonight." He said, "The wife is away and the house had to be represented," and away he went, half apologetically.

Later on I was away from home somewhere, and I preached on the text: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." In the course of that sermon I remember saying that Philip thought he had found Jesus, and he thought he had found Nathaniel, but as a matter of fact the Lord had found him, and he was only the shepherd's crook; the Lord had him in hand and he just hooked Nathaniel, and said,

"Come along." He knew all about it. In the course of that sermon I said, "That is the way the Lord saves. I preach to you a Saviour of unlimited, absolute Sovereign power."

After the service the pastor said, "Do you think it wise to preach like that?" I said, "Well, I believe it is true." "Yes," he said, "I do too, but don't you think it may teach people to presume?" I said, "I do not think so. I think the Lord knows how to look after His own word, so I preach it and leave the consequences to Him."

The next Sunday I was at home and I preached the same sermon that I had preached the Sunday before. Not knowing what had happened I simply described this man's case. I learned afterwards that when I had said "You come here again and again, and you vow you will never come again, but here you are. Repeatedly you have said 'I will never go to hear that man again,' but," I said, "you cannot help it, and here you are. I learned that he would go home (his wife's name was Jenny) from a service, walk up and down and say, "That man hit me all over; now Jenny don't you ever ask me to go again. I won't go any more. I'm not going to listen to him."

But next Sunday he was there just the same. This particular night when I spoke so strongly he said nothing when he went home. He had a barn across the street where he kept some horses. He sat silently for a little while, and then he told his wife he was going over to the barn. He went over, and up to the hay loft, and there he and the Wrestler of Jabbok's brook had it out together, for just as He took the wrestling out of Jacob He took the wrestling out of that wicked man. The next Sunday night in an after meeting he got up and gave his experience. He was an unlettered man, and I tell you just what he said. He came up near the front, and turned around in the seat, and addressed those who were there. He said, "Boys, I want to tell you that I'm a Christian. For thirty or forty (I forget the number of years) I wrestled with God." (That is the way he put it.) "But," he said, "on the first Sunday of this year (it was just after New Year) He was one too many for me, and He just downed me. And I want to tell you that when He gets after you you may as well surrender first as last, because He will get you in the end." I had told him that night "If you don't come without Him He will send His dogs after you." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." The Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." I am going to abide by it.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

And I say to you who are unconverted, if you are here tonight, He has His own way of bringing you. I remember right in this church a man who had a little boy, a very little fellow, three or four years of age. He was in the Sunday School, but the father did not come. The little child died, and they asked me to conduct the funeral, which I did. The father was converted, and he said, "I have been to church lots of times, but when He came and took my little one away I said, I will have to follow him." They say that in the East that is just what the shepherds do. When they would lead the flock from some exhausted pasture to another pasture where the grass is lush and green, the flock, accustomed to graze in a given place, are unwilling to move. So the shepherd will go and take a lamb to his arms and walk away. Very soon you hear

the cry of the mother sheep, and she follows, then others follow, then they all follow. That is how the Good Shepherd does sometimes. He takes a lamb out of the flock, and the older sheep follow. But in some way or another, always in His own way, He fulfils this Scripture, that these who are His Father's gifts "shall come to me".

Every one of us must say,

"Why was I made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make the wretched choice
And rather starve than come.

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced me in,
Else I had still refused to taste
And perished in my sin."

III.

And then He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." How profound the first part of the text, so high and deep we can only just look at it, and say "It is true, but I cannot get to the bottom of it at all." How profound, yet how simple the other, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." That is the way of salvation — come to Jesus. Not to the church — oh yes, to the church as an instrument, as a means of grace perhaps, but no church can save you. Not at all. Not to ordinances — you may be baptized — we do not summon you to the doing of good works; you may do all the good works possible and still remain unsaved. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." And so you must come to Jesus. To Jesus Himself. This multitude sought Jesus because they saw the miracle, but after all they didn't know Him for what He was, and they left Him. You are to come to Jesus. That is the way. I will dare to say that it doesn't so much matter what motive leads you to come.

Very often have I known people to be saved by a verse of Scripture. Come to Him! Well, how are you to get to Him? He is here this evening; He is in His word; He is with His word. The Spirit of God is here, and if you want to come to Jesus you may come.

There is a mystery about it all, but if you really want Him He will come to you, and you may come to Him, and if you come He will in no wise cast you out. You don't know very much, that will make no difference. There is no matriculation standard for this school; anybody may come. You may go from the kindergarten to the university, only come. That is all. He will admit you; He will in no wise cast you out. "But," you may say, "I am very bad, sir. I am respectable enough to my fellows, but I know before God I am not what I ought to be, and it wouldn't be any use for me to come." But come as you are. No matter who you are, no matter what your life, what your name, what nationality, what your circumstances, what your record, come, come!

Spurgeon was once preaching in a valley in Wales on that great verse in the end of Revelation, "And let him that heareth say, Come . . ." Come! Come! Come! And he had noticed as he preached, there was a vast assemblage there, that there was an echo in the distant hills, and then at one point of his sermon he paused and he said, "All nature is vocal with the invitation." Then he lifted up that marvellous voice of his and cried, "Come! Come! Come!" From the distant hills the echo came back, "Come! Come! Come!" It is true that nature is vocal with the invitation, and "him that cometh . . . (he) will in no wise cast out." It may be you are past

middle life; it may be you are nearing the end of it. It doesn't make any difference what age you are. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

And so if you come, what then? If the Angels ask you why tell them the King ordered it. You're here, not merely by His invitation, but by His command. If you were invited to dine with His Majesty the King it would be an invitation, but to you, as a British subject, it would be a command, which must be obeyed. Every invitation in this Book is a command. . . . He "commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

And so I dare, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, in the name of my Sovereign Lord, if you are not a Christian, I command you to come, and dare you to disobey the King of Kings!

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that the heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."

Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, the door is open and Thou art ready to receive us. May someone come tonight. Oh, may God, the Holy Ghost, constrain someone to come tonight, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

NORTH BAY CONFERENCE

AS REPRESENTATIVES from most Churches in the North and from many other Churches throughout our Union constituency met in Conference at North Bay last week, this City with its population of about 19,000 people was given a deeper consciousness of an active evangelical body of Baptists working in its midst.

Probably the two most important features of the Conference were, the Recognition of the recently organized North Bay group and the Ordination of Mr. Yvon Hurtubise pastor of Malartic Baptist Church to the Gospel ministry. The Council of both services was composed of 32 delegates from 18 Churches, viz., Ironbridge, Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Malartic, Val d'Or, Churchill, Sudbury, Mitchell Square, North Bay, Jarvis St. Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Dalesville, Brownsburg, Harriston, Lavigne, Minnow Lake, Lanark, Ottawa.

Mr. George Stephens, the pastor, along with the doctrinal and financial statement, gave a brief history of the work at North Bay. He told us something of their vision to establish an evangelical testimony in that City, which is known as "The Gateway of the North" and how all attempts made in previous years to start a work had failed. The most recent endeavour, however, first under the leadership of Bert Oatley-Willis, then later by Mr. Stephens has given such encouragement that a few weeks ago they felt it advisable to organize themselves into a Regular Baptist Church. Judging by the high quality of the members, this work gives every promise of becoming permanent. With very keen interest the Council and friends who assembled listened to the handicaps which had to be endured and the trials faced before they were able to secure a satisfactory place in which to meet. Since procuring the newly renovated Orange Hall a little more than a year ago, which is not only on the ground floor but centrally located, great advancements, especially in the Sunday School, have been made.

Acting on behalf of the Malartic Church, the Council to consider the matter of setting apart Mr. Hurtubise to the Gospel ministry was called by the Berean Baptist Church, Sudbury. After hearing the three-fold state-

ment of the candidate, everyone was convinced, beyond all question, that this man was a definite product of God's divine grace. We have heard many testimonies in our time but very few ever stirred our hearts so deeply as the one we heard from Mr. Hurtubise last Thursday afternoon. As he related the story of his deliverance from the gross darkness of Romanism into the Gospel of light and from the power of Satan unto God, we doubt whether there was an unmoistened eye in the building. If Mr. Hurtubise were to do no more than go among French Canadian Roman Catholics telling the story of his personal experience with Christ, the results, we believe, would be tremendous.

During the Conference, three sessions were held each day. Reports from the various Churches and Home Mission fields characterized the morning meetings. It seemed to us that each one who spoke had news of spiritual blessing to relate. One French Canadian lady from Malartic, Quebec, who lately accepted Christ as Saviour, attended the Conference with Mr. and Mrs. Hurtubise. Her new joy in Jesus Christ was most manifest to all who met her and heard her testimony. According to information we received, arrangements were made for both her and her husband to be baptized last Sunday, July 2nd. Recently two others professed faith in Christ on that field. These are but samples of what the Lord is doing through His faithful servants in the North country. With Dr. Shields as the special speaker of the Conference, we were fortunate to procure the spacious High School Auditorium for the afternoon and evening services.

Considering the fact that the Church at North Bay is yet in its infancy, the meetings on the whole were very well attended. Some people travelled great distances in order to attend. In order to avail themselves of the ministry of Dr. Shields, the Brethren of the local Assembly cancelled their mid-week prayer meeting.

The Lord's presence was most manifest throughout and it was evident that everyone who spoke ministered the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. Conferences of such a character cannot but be beneficial. They not only give stimulus to the Lord's people but inspire them to do exploits for God.—H.C.S.

THANKS FOR A PRACTICAL GIFT TO THE SEMINARY

Some friends left a large parcel at the office recently marked "For the Seminary." On investigation it turned out to be a fine assortment of towels, dish cloths, and other kitchen necessities of that sort. In the name of the students who will ply these things next school year in the Seminary kitchen, we take pleasure in thanking these good friends for their very useful gift.

HEAR

The Australian Party in Jarvis Street

DR. F. C. SCHWARZ, B.A., B.Sc., M.B., B.S.

Well-known Physician and Preacher

MRS. CLARICE INGLIS

Gospel Singer

JARVIS STREET CHURCH

Saturday, July 15, at 8 p.m.

Sunday, July 16, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

THE BLESSING OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
on a Sunday Evening
(Stenographically Reported)

"And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah out of prison;

"And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon;

"And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life.

"And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."—II Kings 25:27-30.

WHEN the sins of God's people, Judah, had been multiplied and the cup of their iniquity was full, God sent Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, against them to chastise them, to discipline them, to bring them to their senses. The prophets of Judah, by divine inspiration, warned the people of God that it would be useless for them to resist the onslaughts of the king of Babylon. They were warned that he was the divine instrument, and that there was nothing for them to do but to submit to the discipline which the Lord God proposed. So Jehoiachin and his people were carried away captives into Babylon, and the king was cast into prison. For thirty-six years—half a lifetime—he wore prison clothes, lived on prison fare, and was subject to all the limitations of a prison experience.

In the thirty-seventh year of his captivity Evil-merodach came to the throne of Babylon. He celebrated the beginning of his reign by granting pardon to certain political prisoners. He lifted up the head of Jehoiachin; he set him free from the prison; he gave him recognition as a king, setting his throne above the thrones of other kings. He took away his prison garments, and gave him new raiment appropriate to his new station. He granted him a continual allowance from the king's table, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

Not very much is known about this Babylonian king who bore the name of his fathers' god, but his gracious treatment of Jehoiachin is distinctly to his credit. I propose to take this passage from his life's story out of its context altogether, and merely use it as an illustration of what divine grace does for those who believe, delivering them from the prison, reclothing them in the garments of salvation, setting them free, and providing for their sustenance all the days of their lives.

I.

Let me begin with this simple observation, that THE ENTHRONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST ALWAYS ISSUES IN THE LIBERATION OF THE CAPTIVE. When this Babylonian king ascended the throne he immediately issued orders to open the prison doors. So the enthronement of Christ always brings liberty to those who have been in chains.

I begin by saying that *it was true historically*, for it is written, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." There are veiled suggestions in the Word of God that some great change was effected in the lives of the spirits of the departed when Jesus Christ bowed His head and gave up the ghost. The saying of the Lord to the thief who prayed for forgiveness at His side, saying: "Lord, remember me when thou

comest into thy kingdom"—the response of the Lord to that petition, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise", is profoundly significant. I believe there is scriptural warrant for our believing that the Lord led at that time a multitude of captives captive, that their situation in the world of spirits was affected by His advent to it, so that now believers who die in faith are not merely "gathered to their fathers": they depart "to be with Christ which is far better." They enter immediately into paradise. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

You will recall also that when our Lord began His public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, there was handed to Him the roll of the Prophet Isaiah. He opened the book, and "found the place where it was written"—remember that, you Christian people. He did not treat the Word of God like a conjuror's box, opening it at random; or like drawing lots, taking a text out of an aggregation of texts. He knew the Book, and He deliberately "found the place where it was written", and He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight, to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And ere He departed He said to His disciples, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." His sovereign authority is exercise in grace, in liberating the captive.

I may go farther and say that *this principle has been experienced, in some measure, by all who truly believe*. Is it not true that we have discovered that our Lord Jesus has the key to the prison-house? that there is power in the gospel to deliver men from the bondage of sin? to set them free in Christ Jesus? Is it not true that believing on Christ enables a man to open his heart to the reception of a power that is more than human, delivering him from the bondage from which before he found no power to deliver him? Cannot many of us say from our own experience that it is true that—

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the vilest clean,
His blood avails for me"?

And yet how many of the Lord's own people, those who have truly believed, and have been made partakers of the grace of life, men and women who are of the blood royal, belonging by legitimate birth to the household of faith—*how many of them are like Jehoiachin, spending much of their time in the prison-house!* How many of the Lord's own people, princes who ought to live as princes, children of God who ought to have power in their lives to live as the children of God, are enticed back into the prison-house, and, as Paul has it, are "entangled again with the yoke of bondage"! How few, comparatively, of those who are professing Christians, have really experienced the fulfilment of the promise, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." How many of the Lord's people are held in chains!

Who of us does not know something of that unnecessary bondage? Who of us, even since we believed in the Lord Jesus, have not at times felt that there was a power

within us that was not subject to our wills? that there were temptations without which we had no strength to withstand? How many are bound by the gilded chains of worldliness! How many there are who have no power to sever them, no power to break the spell, the peculiar fascination of the world of the visible and temporal! How many of us have had to sing,—

"Look! how we grovel in the dust,
Fond of these earthly toys;
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach immortal joys."

Oh, how many need a revival, the advent of a living power in their own lives! Who of us, indeed, does not need it in larger and fuller measure than we have yet experienced it?

I say, there are many like Jehoiachin, princes of the blood, children of God, who ought to be riding upon their high places, who ought to be always saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ", who are, instead, held in various kinds of bondage which prevent them from rendering the service to which they have been divinely called.

And yet, dear friends, *the enthronement of Jesus Christ in the individual life always leads to liberty.* When Jesus Christ is upon the throne He always lifts up the head of Jehoiachin, and brings him out of the prison. I know how terribly men are deceived. I know how many are victims of a spiritual delusion, how many have yielded assent to the devil's lie that the Lord Jesus has come "to torment us before the time". It is generally assumed that to be subject to Christ, to allow His will to be sovereign in our lives, to endeavour always to walk in the Spirit, and in obedience to the principles and precepts of His Holy Word,—it is assumed that a life of that sort means leaving the wide spaces and the fields that are garnished with flowers, to be shut up in the prison-house, to live a life that is, cribbed, cabined, and confined. We are declared to be narrow and short-visioned.

How many have had experience of that when they have sought to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and to be obedient to Him in everything! They are looked upon as being "narrow-minded", as fanatics, as people who belong to an earlier century, who have had no vision of the larger liberties of these modern days. But, my brethren, Jesus Christ is come to set us every one free.

True liberty consists in obedience to His laws, in submission to His sovereign will. As the fish in the sea, as the hind in the forest, as the bird in the air, each finds its liberty in obedience to the law of its own nature, choosing to sport itself in its own natural element, so the truly regenerate soul finds its highest and fullest liberty only in obedience to the law of its new nature which is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus which sets us free from the law of sin and death.

If we would be free men, and enjoy the liberty of exploring the utmost reaches of the kingdom of God, we must make Jesus Christ King, enthrone Him in our own hearts, recognize the supreme authority of the Holy Ghost within us, and we shall taste of the fruits of that liberty in which the apostle, by divine inspiration, enjoins us, to "stand fast".

II.

THIS KING SIGNALIZED THE BEGINNING OF HIS REIGN BY THE MOST GRACIOUS COMMUNICATIONS WITH ONE

WHO HAD BEEN A PRISONER: he "spake kindly" to Jehoiachin.

That must have been a new experience. For thirty-six years he had been a prisoner, under guard, under condemnation. No doubt he had been subject to rude treatment, and to the roughest and most condemnatory speech. He was looked upon as a rebel against the king's law, as a prisoner entitled to nobody's respect. But when the king brought him out of the prison-house, from the throne he uttered words of kindness and of grace.

Thus, dear friends, does our crucified Lord relate Himself to us in grace when we are brought out of the prison-house. The Bible is the word of the King, and there is very much in it that is severe. There are many chapters that are not comfortable reading. It speaks with condemnation to men whose hearts are uncleansed, whose natures are unregenerated. To those who are in the bondage of Satan, led captive by the devil at his will, who are by nature children of wrath even as others, the Bible has no comfort. Rough speech only has it for those who go on in their iniquities. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." While a man goes on in his sin, the Bible has nothing but harsh words for him, promising him judgment, threatening him with destruction. While he loves the prison-house, and hugs his chains, and refuses to accept the invitation to walk out a free man in obedience to the call of the gospel, he is under the law, and whosoever is under the law is under the curse of the law, "because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

But how many of us here can recall that happy day that fixed our choice on Christ our Saviour and our God, that happy day when Jesus washed our sins away! When you opened your Bible, after you had made your surrender, after you had put the sceptre in His hand, and the crown upon His brow, and, like Thomas, had said, "My Lord and my God"—when you opened your Bible you discovered that it was a new Book. You heard it say, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

How graciously this Book speaks to us when we have passed from death unto life, when we have come out of the prison-house! How full of loving-kindness and tender mercy is the Word of our God! I could quote many passages to you this evening: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me"; "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." I could occupy you until morning reciting the kind words of the Word of God addressed to every one who comes to Him in penitence: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The same is true of any faithful ministry of the Word. It is no compliment to any preacher when he is popular with worldly Christians or carnally-minded men. It is the business of the preacher so to expound the word of God that it will search the heart and conscience, and bring men to repent of their sins. No preacher who thus faithfully opens the truth of God's Word, and makes

application of its precepts and principles to men who live on the lower levels of life and are carnally-minded, leading down to death—no such minister can be popular with men who are determined to go on still in their iniquity. But if we do but turn from our sins to God, repenting of our iniquity, and receiving His forgiveness, then, indeed, ought every exposition of Scripture to fill us with joy and gladness.

Have you not found it so? Not only have you come to love the Word of God itself, but you have come to delight in any message that magnifies Christ, and that glories in His divine sovereignty. The true believer cannot bear to have the crown taken from His brow, or to have the sceptre snatched from His hand. We have learned that in the measure in which He is exalted, we find our own freedom, and hear from the throne words of comfort and of peace.

Do not misunderstand. I do not mean to say that we shall ever be wholly free from sin here. Alas! Alas! "we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." The "old man" is with us still. The motions of the flesh are here. The mind of the flesh is still active. But when, by divine grace, we are enabled to take up the same attitude toward sin that God assumes, when we recognize that every departure from the teaching of the Word of God, and the direction of His Holy Spirit through the Word, is a sin against God for which we must immediately repent and sorrow with a deep sorrow—the moment we yield our heart's assent to God's attitude toward sin, even though sin be present with us, the Word of God promises us help.

As thus we yield ourselves to Him, there enters into us a power which enables us to feel the throb of the power of God in our own wills, so that whereas we were before captives we are able to say to the glory of His grace, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Do you love your Bible? Do you love to have it speak to you? Are you comforted by a biblical ministry? If you love your Bible, and you do not enjoy the sermon, if you do really love your Bible—I do not mean, if you say you love it, but if you do really love it, and yield yourself daily and hourly to its principles and precepts, if it is a passion with you to know the will of God and to do it, that you may share the freedom offered to all such—if that be your real attitude toward the will of God, and you do not enjoy the preacher, it is probably the fault of the preacher. His preaching must be out of harmony with the word and will of God. But if you enjoy your Bible, you will enjoy every true exposition of Scripture, even though it cuts you in pieces. You will be glad to be cut in pieces. You will come to church, not to be flattered and fawned upon, but because you want to know something more of the will of God, because you want to be a better Christian, a truer disciple, a more faithful witness for Christ. You will desire to go on with God, and anything that will assist in the higher education of the soul will be welcomed by you, because by divine grace you have been brought into harmony with the King, and you will find Him always speaking kindly to you.

III.

But let us look at this story a little further. "He spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon." WHEN JESUS CHRIST IS TRULY ENTHRONED HE SHARES HIS HONOUR

WITH US. "Them that honour me, I will honour." We may be persecuted—we shall be. But when Jehoiachin was brought out of prison he was looked upon by those in Babylon no longer as a prisoner, but as a king. "He . . . set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon."

That is the way by which we attain to the larger life. We stoop to conquer. We lose our lives that we may find them. We surrender to Christ that within the legitimate sphere of our own will we may become, by His grace and wisdom, ourselves sovereign, and no longer captive. We put Him upon the bridge of our ship, not that it may go on the rocks, but in order to be sure it will outride the storm. We enthrone Him that He may lift us up. We agree with the lightning that instead of blasting us by its power, it may drag our carriages and carry our messages, and turn our darkness into day.

When election time comes, certain politicians who live by their politics shrewdly endeavour to estimate which side is most likely to succeed at the polls, and they promptly become enthusiastic for that particular party, in the hope that when the election is won they will have some share in the spoils. What they do from an unworthy motive, we may do from the holiest motive of all: we may give our lives to the exaltation of Jesus Christ, with the confidence that when He mounts the throne He will take us with Him into the glory. We submit to His rule, and His own mastery of evil throbs in our own wills. We kneel at His footstool and find it a throne upon which we are established in honour: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The way to abiding honour is often the way of dishonour in this life. The way to the largest wealth is the way of poverty. The way to receive the approval of High Heaven is to be willing to become as the filth and the off-scouring of the earth. The way to tread the earth and all that is in it under our feet, and to triumph gloriously in Christ, is to be as submissive to Him as a little child.

IV.

Let me go a little farther, and point out to you that WHEN THIS KING OF BABYLON EXALTED JEHOIACHIN TO THE THRONE HE CHANGED HIS PRISON GARMENTS. Have you ever seen a gang of convicts at work—all of them in convict garb, with their stripes and their numbers? Has it not cut you to the heart to see men made in God's image reduced to such a level?—convicts in chains, with no liberty, no freedom to exercise their own wills? But when they come out of prison they leave their convict garb behind. And when Jehoiachin came out of prison the king gave orders that his garments should be changed, and that now he should be apparelled with robes befitting his exalted station. After thirty-six years wearing prison uniform! Can you imagine what Jehoiachin felt like when he exchanged them for the robes of a king?

Did you ever go into camp where you could neither shave nor change your clothes? You came back like wild men. It is a good thing to leave your looking-glass behind you, if you would be comfortable while living that kind of wild life! But a man who for a few weeks has

been deprived of some of the ordinary privileges of a civilized life says, when he comes back, "I have had a good time, but a month of that is long enough! I am glad to be civilized, and to be respectable again."

But, think of thirty-six years in prison! Half a lifetime with the brand of the convict upon you—and then to have the door opened! And to change it all for royal apparel, and to be recognized as a king! What a transformation!

Thus divine grace effects, not only an inward change, but an outward change. Thus we are to put on the garments of salvation. We are to wear the best robe of the Father's house. We are to be dressed as kings. You ought to wear your best clothes to work every morning. I do not care where you work—in a garage or in a factory. You say, "Wear my best clothes to work! Have you ever seen colliers come back from their work?" Yes, many a time. But there is something about the garments of our salvation which prevents their being soiled, which prevents their wearing out, even if we wear them every day.

It is the will of our God that we should always be dressed as heaven's gentlemen, as ladies of the court, as those who are the children of the King. So ought we to be apparelled. Our daily life, as well as our Sunday hymn-singing and our Sunday church-going, ought to speak of our relationship to Christ. Our daily life at home, in the family, in the kitchen, among the children, in the office, in the shop, on the street, when there is not another Christian present; when only men are there to hear our speech, our conversation ought always to be with grace, seasoned with salt. We ought to have the accent and bearing of those who live continually in the presence of Royalty, so that there will be a savour of Christ about us wherever we go.

What did that ordinance mean which you witnessed this evening? "We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

You remember the analogy which the Apostle Paul institutes in that marvellous and matchless fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." This corruptible body, that so soon becomes offensive when life has departed, is buried; but it will live again: "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." So that even in the realm of the physical, we shall have bodies made "like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

But this ordinance of baptism, while it looks forward to that ultimate completion of redemption's work, when soul and body shall be reunited, has also a present application. We should rise in His spiritual likeness. You plant that dry, ugly, and unattractive, bulb in the ground. You never thought of putting it on your table as an ornament. You hid it in the cellar until you planted it. There was nothing lovely about it. Later you planted it in the ground, and when the south winds came, and the sun smiled upon it, it came forth out of the corruption of death, a spotless lily.

Thus the crown of His harvest is always life out of death. The ugliness of our old nature ought to be buried in the grave of Christ. We ought to be putting off the "old man", and putting on the new, living and walking in the likeness of His resurrection. The King changes our garments.

Have you put on your new garments? The prodigal came home in rags and tatters. He could not buy anything in the far country. I suppose he had not had a change of clothing for many a day. His feet were bare. When he came to the father's house the father said, "Bring forth the best robe." Thus does grace array us in royal garments. Thus it comes to pass, as it is written, "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

V.

Then this closing word. Having changed his garments, HE PROVIDED FOR HIS DAILY SUPPLY: "He did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life." This Babylonian king did not say to Jehoiachin, "Stay out yonder in a dwelling apart", but, "You shall come to the royal table; you shall eat bread in the presence of the king."

Jesus Christ did not come to be the master of slaves. Mark what I say: He did not come to be the master of slaves. He came to be the King of kings. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father (or, "a kingdom of priests") to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." He summons us into His presence. He who has been made a partaker of divine grace is able to say, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

Do you live in the King's presence? Do you eat at His table? Do you revel in His royal luxury? Do you eat angels' food? Are they your ministers? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Is it to this, divine grace has brought us? Oh, where do you live?

I remember some years ago hearing the fire-bell when I was on vacation in Vancouver, and, like everybody else, I followed the crowd to see where the fire was. Nothing attracts people like a fire—unless it be a fight! It was a forest fire, perhaps twenty-five years ago, and it was creeping in upon the city, threatening destruction. As I was coming home on a street-car I saw two boys—they were scarcely men. One said to the other, "Where do you sleep?" And he told him. "And where do you eat?"—and he told him. He slept in one place and ate at another, just drifting from one restaurant to another, nobody caring when he came home, or whether he came at all.

May I ask you, Where do you eat? Where do you find your sustenance? At whose table do you sit daily? Why should we be found in the devil's restaurant? Why should we walk with Satan, when we are children of the King, and are entitled to eat at His table every day? Oh, that God would give us grace that our spiritual palates may acquire a keen appetite for Heaven's dainties, that we may lose our taste for the leeks and garlic of Egypt! It is no compliment—I mean it literally—if you like that sort of food: leeks and garlic, with onions thrown in! What a dish! Why should anyone desire that?

It has its spiritual counterpart. I remember some

years ago being in Old London when a friend said to me, "I want to take you to an odd restaurant." "Where is it?" I enquired. He said, "Do not ask me. The things they serve are not English." It was an European place where they prepared dishes that could not be found in any English restaurant. I went with him, and I really made an effort to appear pleased. I fear that for once politeness compelled a measure of insincerity. I said, "Thank you." My friend paid the bill, and I said, "Good day"—and then I went and had dinner!

I went to a Southern city—it was in the days when I was respectable! They got up a great dinner in my honour. It was down on the Gulf of Mexico, in Louisiana, where they prepared a dinner in Southern style, with all kinds of fish—the one thing I never eat if I can help it. I went through the form of it without any satisfaction whatever. It was a great dinner! For those who like that sort of thing I suppose it was the sort of thing they like.

When the devil would do you honour he prepares you some strange dish that is not good for your soul. You had better keep away from his eating-houses, and live at the King's palace. Eat at His table. God's word is the heavenly fare. His Book is the safe menu. It will tell you how a regenerate soul ought to live. There you may learn about the vitamins and calories which nobody understands but the Divine Caterer. He says in effect, "If you eat of this bread, and drink of this wine, that I shall give you, you will never hunger nor thirst."

"A daily rate for every day." You would like to have it all at once, I suppose? Would you like your wife to order a month's supplies all at once? Would you like to have your household stocked with a month's supply of food in advance? If you do, do not invite me to dinner when you come to the end of the month! I would rather have a fresh supply every day.

That is how the Lord fed His people in the wilderness. The manna fell every day. The prodigal said, "I should like to have my share all at once."—"Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And "not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." Very soon he had spent all, and had nothing left. When he came back he was willing to have a daily portion for every day.

"A daily rate for every day, all the days of his life." Would you not like to be sure of that? Would you not like to be sure of an income that could never be cut off? Would you not like to be sure that every day there would be bread enough for dinner; that the table would be supplied as long as you live, that thus, for the rest of your life you might be relieved of all anxiety?

That is exactly what the Lord promises the believer. Our souls shall never hunger. He did not teach His disciples to pray, "Lord, make me rich, so that I shall be independent of Heaven's supply", but He did teach them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is a happy thing to know that the King will look after us every day.

And best of all, there is a continual supply, "all the days of our life". It will never run short. There is always enough and to spare in the Father's house. You need never be afraid that those who come to His board will ever be permitted to go away hungry.

Years ago Mr. David Lloyd George described a man out at elbow, down at heel, rough and unkempt, standing outside a restaurant window, looking in at those who were seated at the table enjoying their meal. He said, "That is Europe—hungry, eager for dinner, but nothing

in his pocket with which to pay; desiring to buy all that we can produce, but having no money to pay for our products."

Ah, that is a picture of every sinner in his native state, looking in upon the divine banquet, hungry, thirsty, friendless, with nothing to pay. This table of the King is unlike any other table in that your entertainment has already been paid for, and you need not be afraid of the bill; it is paid in advance, "Without money and without price." It is the privilege of every bankrupt soul to come to God through Christ, and to be made everlastingly rich. May the Lord bless us! May those of us who are Christians determine to abide in the King's presence, and to feast at His table! If there are any on the outside I beg of you in His name to come home to the Father's house, for you can find satisfaction only there.

THE DECLINE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MORALS

HIS MAJESTY THE KING recently deplored the present decline in public and private morals. In reply to the addresses from the convocations of Canterbury and York, presented by the two archbishops, the King is reported to have said:

"I share your concern at the decline in public and private standards of conduct. Not the least of the disasters of war is the weakening of such standards which it brings in its train.

"To repair those ravages we must insist upon the importance of spiritual and moral integrity in our private lives and in all our public affairs, and establish all our dealings on the Christian interpretation of life."

There are great hosts of humble citizens throughout the world who heartily share the sentiments so well expressed by His Majesty the King. Surely we are living in dark days when iniquity abounds, when "evil men and seducers . . . wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (II Tim. 3:13.) The Apostle Paul described his own day in terms that are equally true of ours:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (II Tim. 3:1ff.)

Is this picture too sombre? Does it exceed the truth? A casual glance at the headlines of a newspaper will not only confirm the accuracy of the royal strictures on present-day morals but will also justify the application to them of the Apostolic description quoted above. A parent who is anxious to train his children in the way that they should go, trembles to see them seizing the daily paper with eager hands to read the "comics", which are almost never funny, and almost always filled with crime and violence. The news columns appear to make a specialty of retailing the sordid details of murder and robbery, illustrated with lurid and disgusting photographs. The radio fortunately has some excellent programmes but they are far less frequent than those composed chiefly of froth, which, in lieu of music emit horrid squeaks and groans that had at least their remote origin in the African bush. One would think that some programmes that emanate from great stations that cost millions of dollars to build and

operate were prepared and executed by the inmates of an insane asylum for the entertainment of their fellow patients. And what shall we say of the "comic books" that fill so large a place on the shelves of bookstores and in the reading of many children? And worse still is the influence on youthful minds of the moving picture palaces poisoned with the fetid immoral atmosphere of Hollywood and its sensual actors and actresses. Is it any wonder that so many teen-agers picture themselves as the heroes and heroines in crimes of violence, and end up in our police courts or create problems for the police with their gang activities?

A few weeks ago we discussed in these pages the menace of gambling, which, to judge by newspaper reports of the investigation in the United States, is one of the major industries of this continent as well as one of the greatest threats to decent government and public morals. As might be expected, the Roman Church panders to unregenerate nature by exploiting gambling for its own profit. One priest in Montreal remarked that he would not be able to meet the requirements of his building fund apart from the proceeds of his Bingo enterprise. Statistics inform us of the ever-increasing amount of money spent on liquor, but that is only a small item in comparison with the incalculable damage wrought by the accursed flood of poison in the bodies and souls of men and women and of the little children who are the innocent heirs of their elders' folly.

In a day when governments bend their efforts toward providing "social security" and improving the health of the people, it is disconcerting to note a growing laxity in the moral realm. Would past generations not have been unspeakably shocked by the "revelations", supposedly sensational we presume, made by a certain ex-king on his love affair with a married woman? Do these stupid lucubrations spring from a sordid desire for gain or are they the excrement of an immature mind that is venting its petty spite on relatives and institutions that rebuked his sin by refusing to countenance it? Divorce and broken homes, as reported in the press bear testimony to the looseness of public thinking on such important matters, which are always an index of the state of public morals.

As we see the world about us, or that limited part of it that falls within our view, we are constrained to confess with the Apostle John that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Writers in secular publications observe that the old-fashioned belief in the Bible, in the future life, heaven and hell, and in Christian doctrine, is losing its hold, while it is a matter of common knowledge that great hosts of people have lost almost all interest in the churches and their message. Of the men of our generation it must be said, as the Psalmist long since wrote, "God is not in all their thoughts." Filled with a sense of their own power and knowledge they have set their minds and affections on the things of time and sense, as they arrogantly say: "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Ps. 12:4).

We should be most happy if it were possible to disprove this dark and forbidding portrayal of the world to-day. No one likes to be thought a pessimist, but surely it is not pessimism to take a full look at the worst. And with us are ranged not only the King, but the Word of God, which not only names the disease but offers an efficacious remedy. Shall the Book of Life be charged

with pessimism merely because it dares honestly to diagnose the dread malady?

There is some small comfort in reminding ourselves that if present conditions are evil, they have been so before, have indeed never been anything else since man first rebelled against God. If the Judge of all the earth were willing to spare wicked Sodom for the sake of ten righteous, may He not in the riches of His goodness and long-forebearance and suffering spare our age and generation in order to lead them to repentance? But our age needs to be reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus who said:

"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. 11:23-24).

Who would deny that there is a terrible menace hanging over the world to-day? Dare we call our hemisphere Christian and boast of our righteousness as a claim on divine protection? Certainly our privileges have been greater than those of other peoples, but has our goodness been in proportion? Were we to dare assert it, the sentence of the Gospel would surely be pronounced, indeed, is already pronounced against us: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee!"

Our little world has become a neighbourhood; each house in it is built of highly inflammable material, and there is abroad a maniac-strewing fire. We may hope that his sense of self-interest may restrain him from dropping a spark in the tinder box, but what guarantee do his past actions give of this? Shall we plead that his system is atheistic? Have our nations not forsaken the ways of God? What is so-called Christendom but a system of practical atheism? If the materialistic philosophy of Communism changes ethics into physics, have we too not been guilty of forgetting God for the things of earth?

The real danger that we face does not lie ultimately in the might of Russian armies or in the atom bomb it is said they possess. It is not to be found even in the imperialistic schemes of the Kremlin for world dominion, or in its denial of righteousness and of God. Our real danger comes primarily from the fact that we have forsaken God for the worship of earth's vain golden images.

The message of the prophets is timely for the world to-day. The Word of God teaches not only by precept but by example. It recounts how a personal and holy God dealt in judgment with the sin of the world in the days of Noah, and, it reminds us, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the day of the Son of Man." (Lk. 17:26). God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah as an act of moral and spiritual sanitation. Nor did He spare the Chosen Race when they departed from Him. He sent as His instruments the cruel and rapacious Assyrians, the rod of His power, to scourge the people of promise. He used ungodly kings and heathen hosts to bring to repentance those to whom the oracles of God were committed. Nor were the Gentiles overlooked in the divine longsuffering for Jonah preached to the Ninevites and the prophets threaten believer and unbeliever alike with the righteous judgments of the Lord. Before the earthly ministry of our Saviour there was sent the last and the greatest of all the prophets, John the Baptist, to preach in the wilderness saying "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

In the midst of the Dark Ages when superstition reigned, even in the church that called itself by the name of Christ, God raised up messengers to call the people back to Him and His Word. The Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century is another example of the goodness and mercy of the Spirit of God in lifting up a standard when the enemy came in like a flood.

Our sole hope to-day — and we venture to assert the great truth even at the risk of being called pessimistic by those who are spiritually obtuse — our sole hope, we venture to assert, is in the holy and gracious God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that they turn from their evil way and live. The only bright and shining hope to cheer human sight anywhere is the principle of the ancient promise given to Israel long ago and fulfilled many times since in God's gracious dealing with men:

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." (Isaiah 59:1).

Because we believe that God will rend the heavens and come down and cause the mountains to flow at His presence, we must summon men to repent and believe the Gospel. Whether in His sovereign grace and wisdom God will visit men in mercy with reviving power before He will come in the great and terrible day of the Lord, it is the business of the Christian to summon his fellowmen to forsake their transgression and return unto the Lord who alone can heal them and give peace in a troubled world. —W.S.W.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Third Quarter Lesson 3 July 16, 1950

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

VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Lesson Text: Micah 7:7-20.

Golden Text: "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—Micah 7:19.

I. Vindication Promised: verses 7-15.

Micah the prophet was given visions of judgment, destined to fall upon the children of Israel (chapp. 1-3), but he was also sent to them with messages of hope (chapp. 4, 5) and encouragement (chapp. 6, 7).

The days before the captivities, when Micah prophesied (about 758-700 B.C.), were days of darkness and confusion. There seemed to be a discrepancy between the principles of God's word as taught to the people and the prevailing conditions. According to the laws of the Lord the righteous should prosper and the evil-doers should perish (Psa. 1:6; 34:17, 21; Prov. 11:21). But, alas! it seemed as though evil were in the ascendancy, and as though good men could scarcely be found (vv. 1-4; Isa. 57:1; 59:4, 14, 15). The age-long problem of the apparent triumph of wrong over right troubled the people of God (Job 12:6; 21:7; Psa. 37:1; 73:1-7; Jer. 12:1).

In the midst of all the darkness and moral corruption, the prophet perceived that the time was ripe for a visitation from the Most High, for when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord Himself by His Spirit will lift up a standard against him (Isa. 59:19). It was time for the watchman to take his place upon the tower and peer into the distance for the first sign of the approaching Captain of the Lord's hosts (Isa. 21:11, 12; Ezek. 33:2; Hab. 2:1-4).

It is natural to seek a refuge in the time of storm and calamity. The first thought would be to turn to friends, counsellors and loved ones, but all human help will be of no avail (Psa. 118:9; 146:3; Isa. 2:22; Jer. 9:4, 5). Even mem-

bers of one's own house may oppose in spiritual matters (Matt. 10:35-37; John 7:5). But there is one Friend who will never fail nor forsake us (Deut. 31:8; Josh. 1:5; Prov. 18:24; Heb. 13:5). The prophet Micah had placed his entire confidence in the Lord. Unto the Lord did he look (Psa. 5:3; 34:5; 123:2), and upon Him did he wait patiently and believingly, confident that the Lord in His good time would hear (Psa. 40:1; 62:1; 130:6).

Assurance that the Lord would undertake gave the prophet holy boldness in the face of his foes (Psa. 35:19). Although cast down, the trusting soul will rise again in hope and courage (Psa. 42:11), and although plunged in the darkness of untoward circumstances, the light of the Lord would rest upon him (Psa. 27:1; 107:10; Isa. 50:10).

The man who would be courageous before his foes must be humble before God. The prophet realized that it was because of their sin that the judgment of the Lord was descending upon the people, and therefore he humbly confessed their sin, as though it had been his own (Ezra 9:5, 6; Lam. 3:39-50). Only when the people had been purified from sin, and stood justified before God, would they have the right to expect Him to plead their cause (Psa. 43:1) and bring complete vindication (Psa. 35:19-28; 37:9-15). The prophet would be brought into the clear light of the righteousness of the Lord (Psa. 36:9; 37:5-7; 97:11). Then would those who had opposed the righteous be put to shame for their insolence; they would be utterly subdued.

But this complete victory was still a far-off event. There would first be further opposition and bitter warfare. The prophecy concerning the delay in carrying out the decree for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was literally fulfilled (Ezra. 4:23, 24). Also, the Assyrians did invade the land, "even to the River, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain" (v. 12, Revised Version). The land did become desolate because of the evil-doing of the children of Israel (Neh. 9:24-27).

But this was not the end. The Lord through His prophet conveyed His message of encouragement. The princes and prophets would again rule the people, who would inhabit the land formerly wilderness and forest (Isa. 35). All this because God would visit them and display for them His mighty power, delivering them once again, as He had delivered them from Egypt by the hand of Moses (Psa. 78:12).

All this prophecy and history illustrates the grace of God as manifest in the life of the individual believer. He thirsts after God (Psa. 42:1; Matt. 5:6), realizes that none but Christ can save (Acts 4:12), and then looks to Him by faith (Isa. 45:22). Humbly bowing and confessing his sin to God, he is justified (Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; 8:1), and joyfully triumphs over every foe (Rom. 8:31, 37). The Good Shepherd feeds him in green pastures, and he will finally be delivered from all evil through the miraculous intervention of God (Psa. 23; Isa. 49:24-26; Jer. 16:14-21).

II. Vindication Accomplished: verses 16-20.

The prophet saw into the future to the time when the righteousness of God would be fully vindicated in the eyes of the people. History would reveal that in the end the Lord would manifest Himself as the Rewarder of the good and the Judge of the wicked, and the problem of the seeming prosperity of the wicked would be for ever settled (Psa. 73:12-20).

The nations which had plagued Israel and Judah would be astonished at the might displayed by those whom they supposed to be weak and defenceless. They would be confused and utterly discomfited (Psa. 72:8, 9). They would be afraid of the God of Israel and would fear His people (Deut. 2:25; Isa. 41:5).

The prophet bursts into a psalm of praise to God, the pardoning, just, mighty and merciful One (Exod. 15:11; 34:6, 7; Psa. 89:8; Jer. 31:34). When the people should return to Him, He would return to them, pardoning their iniquities and casting all their sins behind His back, to be remembered against them no more for ever (Isa. 38:17; Heb. 10:17). God is ever mindful of His covenant (Exod. 6:5; Psa. 105:8; Isa. 54:10). He is faithful that promised (Heb. 10:23).

FOR YOUNGER CLASSES:

Emphasize the possibility of the forgiveness of sins in Christ, using the illustrations suggested by such passages as Micah 7:19 and Isaiah 38:17. Show that we must confess our sins to the Lord and trust Him fully (1 John 1:9).