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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

Martha and Mary: A Study in Christian Psychology

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, July 30th, 1950

(Electrically Recorded)

"Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary sat still in the house."—John 11:20.

WHAT the alphabet is to all literature, what the ten numerals are to the science of numbers, the Bible is to human experience. The Bible is elemental—I do not mean elementary, but elemental. It reveals the elements of human life, the stuff of which life is made, and it shows those elements in every possible combination.

The text is taken from the story of the sickness and death, and subsequent resurrection of Lazarus. It is a story of disease and death, such a story as we are all familiar with, and it may be that if we follow these sisters into the place of shadow we may be able with them to emerge into the garden of flowers and sunshine beyond.

I.

I begin with this observation, THAT THIS BOOK OF INFINITE WISDOM RECOGNIZES THE DIVERSITY OF HUMAN TEMPERAMENTS, WHICH THE FACTS OF LIFE AFFIRM. Martha and Mary, though sisters, were not alike. They were two distinct personalities with different temperaments, with different points of view. Life to one was not precisely what it was to the other. They were, in fact, about as different as two women of the same family could possibly be. They had some things in common, of course, and the one thing which was most prominent, was their common devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. They had different ways of expressing that devotion, of showing it, but there was no doubt that they were virtually equal in their love to the Lord, in their passion for the Son of God.

The Bible makes allowance for differences of temperament. It does not require that all personalities should be run into the same mould. It makes allowance for differences of mental constitution and stature; for differences in our emotional natures; for differences in gen-

eral, and I suggest to you that much of our misunderstanding of each other, and of the facts of life, and especially our misunderstanding of Divine Providence, God's dealings with us, is due to our desire for, and insistence upon uniformity. I say this story of disease and death, the story of deep sorrow, and as they thought, I suppose, unexampled grief, is one with which we are all familiar, and here, as always, there emerges the everlasting problem of the relation of God Himself to these events. And in our endeavour to interpret Divine Providence, to understand the ways of God with men, we are in danger of setting up our own standards of judgment, and insisting that even God Himself should conform to our way of thinking, and to our schedule of events on the plane of time. There is a colloquialism, almost a proverbial saying, common with most of us I suppose, when we address each other in certain difficult circumstances, and presume to say, "If I were you I would do so-and-so." What a presumption that is! What a piece of arrogance to undertake to tell somebody else what they should do in given circumstances on the ground that we think that, were we in their situation we should do thus and so. Very probably we should not do anything of the kind. But why should we insist upon, or even desire our own way? What is there particularly attractive in any aspect of life in mere uniformity? I am sure that the soldiers were glad to get out of uniform, and I suppose most of them would be reluctant to put their uniforms on again. They preferred names to numbers, and preferred to be able to adorn themselves, or to dress in something distinctive and different, so that they would not all be taken for the same person.

I very often wish that the waiters and waitresses in some places might have large numbers, easily distinguish-

able, because when you put them in uniform I declare they all look alike, and I cannot tell which is the waiter that waited on me, and that is the one I want to get. Sometimes I have made the mistake of addressing another waiter or waitress only to meet with the response, "I am not your waiter, sir." "Well, where is he, or where is she?" Simply because they all look alike. Now, you do not look like anybody else. That may be fortunate or unfortunate, according to the point of view, but why should we want uniformity in our facial features and expression? I like to meet with people who are almost as changeable as the weather. I do not want them to be always weeping; I do not want them to be always beaming on me, as though they wanted something; I like a little variety in human personality. Out on the outskirts of the city I have noticed streets of new houses, and they are every one alike. I rather suspect that there are exactly the same number of bricks in each house, and I said to myself, "How in the world do the people who live on that street know which house is theirs? How do they manage to avoid going into their neighbour's house?" And then I noticed that the roofs are painted red and green and blue, and I say to myself, "Ah, that is the reason. They wouldn't know where they lived if there were not some distinctive mark upon their house."

Well now, I think that the temples in which our human spirits dwell may well be distinctively marked. I travelled with a couple of men, both of them men of distinction, years ago in Europe. We were together, I suppose, two or three months. One of them, a very prominent man publicly, attracted great audiences, but privately was one of the most monotonous characters I have ever met. No matter what was shown him in our travels, he always had the same almost inane response to make. I think sometimes I heard him say it a dozen times in a day, and I felt like prodding him, if I had had one of my wife's hatpins, and saying, "Man alive, can't you find something else to say?" But again and again with wearisome monotony, face to face with some stupendous matter, he would say, "Well, this reminds me of a saying of Josh Billings: 'I am now standing by Shakespeare's tomb; she is a success.'" It was supposed to be humorous, but at last it seemed to me to be utterly silly. The other man had a different type of mind, and his speech was like a flowing fountain, a bubbling spring. He never said the same thing twice. He was just as fresh as the morning dew. You know, when you get up early in the morning, if you do, and the dew is on the grass, the sun is just rising, the birds are just beginning to sing, you say to yourself, "Really, this is the freshest morning I have ever known." Because God's mornings are all fresh so are His mercies: fresh every morning and new every evening; and infinite variety in His dealings with men.

And so he has apportioned to His human creation different temperaments, and He knows what is in man; He knows how to deal with men, and what is more, with women too. Mary and Martha, I say, were entirely dissimilar. They lived in the same house, they were children apparently of the same parents, and yet, temperamentally, they were poles apart. And how sweetly the Bible deals with both of them. With what understanding the Divine Spirit has inspired the record of their sorrow, their unspeakable grief, and their recovery at last in the Divine presence, as they stand in resurrection glory!

Therefore, I think we ought to try and learn that lesson, and take people pretty much as we find them. I do

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

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not mean to say that the parents should not correct the children of their errors. I do not mean to say that we should not subject ourselves to the disciplines of life, so that the angular corners may be rounded and the rough places polished. I do not mean that, but I mean that elemental thing in life, a man's essential nature, that thing that came into the world with him when he was born, and which no school or trainer, however expert, can ever change. That is the thing we need to understand as the others need to understand us; and therefore, in the varied exigencies of life, in the stress and strain of sorrow, and even of temptation, we should learn to study what is in that man, what is in that woman, and come to an understanding of them according to the nature of their own disposition.

I say the Bible everywhere makes allowance for that. Have you noticed how different the twelve men were from each other, whom the Lord Jesus chose to be apostles? Some of them unobtrusive, willing to serve obscurely, and yet, servants of the Most High. Some of them impulsive and outspoken, endowed with great initiative; some of them with greater depths of understanding, and I suppose, with profounder depths of character. But no two of them alike. I think very probably the Lord of Glory wanted a little variety when He selected the apostles whom He chose to be with Him.

II.

Now let us look at THESE TWO TEMPERAMENTS, SO DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER, AND YET SO ENDOWED BY THEIR MAKER WITH ADMIRABLE QUALITIES, BOTH OF THEM.

Martha was of an active temperament; Martha was always doing things. I do not suppose she spent very many quiet or inactive hours; she was always bustling about doing something. She had a large place in her heart for the Master, even as she had deeply loved the brother, now so sadly removed from her side. But the active temperament seems to take sorrow a little less lightly than the contemplative. When Martha came home from the funeral she didn't sit down to wipe her eyes and to mourn. I am quite sure you would have found

her, within ten minutes of her entrance to her home, busy in some form of household duty. Active temperaments like that have some advantages over the contemplative. They are able sometimes to forget their grief in their strenuous endeavours. They go to work to get things done, and the danger is that some people who do not understand will say, "Oh, well, Martha doesn't feel it very deeply; she soon recovers from her grief. Look at Mary. How differently Mary views this great bereavement." True she viewed it differently, but I do not know whether she felt it very much more deeply. At all events, there was contrast between the two.

So in life, dear friends. It is a good thing to be born with an active disposition. It is a good thing to have grace, grace to be agreeable and pleasant. It is a great advantage to be endowed by our first birth with an agreeable disposition. Some people have it; some people look upon life as though every day were a summer day; they carry something of the sunshine within and radiate it without, but I daresay that they are often quite as lonely as Mary was; quite as sad, quite as grief stricken, but they do not show it. They go to work, like Martha did. I say the active mind may relieve itself, may escape some of the tortures of the more contemplative disposition. Martha does not nurse her grief, she gets to work.

I wonder if there are any here this evening who have shut themselves up within a dark room? I knew a woman like that who used to make a long and weary pilgrimage every day for years to the grave-side of her daughter, and there she would sit and mourn. And hard beside that grave was the grave of another young woman whose mother was a Christian. The Christian mother occasionally visited her daughter's grave, took some flowers there, and always she found this other mourning woman sometimes in her grief calling her absent daughter by name. The Christian mother said, "I could never do that. There is the earthly tabernacle of my lovely daughter's spirit, but her spirit is not in that deep dark grave; she is gone to be with Christ, which is far better."

One winter's day I was driving into Mount Pleasant Cemetery. The cemetery was mantled with a new robe of fallen snow, everything was immaculately white. I met a Christian man of some years, whom I knew very well. He used to carry a walking stick for company. I met him briskly walking out of the cemetery, and I stopped my car to speak to him. He said, "Well, I have just been up to my wife's grave, I went to think of the holy and happy memories of the past, and to praise God for what she was and where she is." His was the active disposition; he did something, and found relief from his soul's anguish by expression.

Martha was in the habit of speaking her own mind. Some people are. Some people excuse their rudeness by saying, "I always say what I think." I wouldn't, if I were you. Very often you think what you ought not to think, and still more frequently, the things that you think might be better left unexpressed. That is no excuse for rudeness at all. But Martha was given to expression, even when she grumbled, and she did grumble. And implicitly she grumbled at the Master, and Mary, but she loved them both. Do not judge the grumbler too harshly. I knew a man who was, we used to sometimes say, born in the objective case. He always had a little growl about something, and whenever I met him he had something to complain about. I learned just to listen to him, and then when he stopped to take a breath, say to him,

"Well, have you finished? If you have perhaps we can talk a little sense together." Let the grumbler grumble if he wants to. Let Martha have her way, for that disposition will always give vent to what is within. She will not bottle up her sorrow, she will tell about it.

But note will you, "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming," what did she do? She "went and met Him." I do not know whether really in the first flush of her, I had almost said displeasure, she felt like saying, "I am just going to meet Him and give Him a piece of my mind, and ask Him why He was so long in coming." Did you ever meet people like that, who are in the habit of going out and giving somebody a piece of their mind? I think perhaps Martha intended to do that. Anyway when she heard that Jesus was coming she went out to meet Him, and when she met Him she poured out her complaint before Him.

Do you like to read the Psalms that are full of complaints and grumbles? I do. I like to hear some man pour out his complaint before the Lord. That is a good One to talk to when you feel like complaining. Do as Martha did, hurry out and meet the Master and tell Him whatever is in your mind. He will understand. As you pour out your complaint before the Lord, He will listen to you, and He will not reprimand you. Why? Oh, He knows your heart better than you know it yourself, and He knows that it will do you good to do a little bit of grumbling, if you grumble to the right person.

I happened to be in a sick room one time when a physician was examining a patient, and as he rolled the patient over to examine the chest, or something, I forget what it was, there was a bit of a sigh, and the Doctor said "Stop your grunting." But I do not know why we should. Little children, you know, when they get into trouble, like to climb up into mother's lap and pour out their grief, and sometimes their complaints. "What is the matter with you now?" "Tommy wouldn't give me a piece of his apple." Well, if that is your trouble, go and tell mother, and if that is your trouble in life, go and tell the Lord that you would like a piece of somebody's apple. Maybe He will give you a whole one. Anyway, tell Him. If you have any complaint at all, pour it out. He won't mind. Oh, yes, that is a good thing to do when we are in Martha's state of mind, wondering why Jesus didn't come, who, as soon as she heard that he was coming, said, "I will not wait till He arrives;" and away she went to meet Him. Scarcely had she seen Him when she said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." When she talked with the Lord Jesus like that something came up within. I do not know whether she had said it before she met the Master, but when she had said that, she said, "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." If only we go to Him we may begin with our complaint, but we shall surely rise from our knees to praise the Lord, and faith will come by contact and communion with the Master.

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." Martha said, "Yes, I know." Down in the dumps again. Just now she said, "Even now . . ." But when Jesus said, "Thy brother shall rise again," she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day—but that is a long way off Lord, and Lazarus is gone." Oh, how easily we lapse into gloom and sometimes almost into despondency. Then Jesus said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "Martha,

Martha, believest thou this?" "Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Now that was Martha. She found that in the presence of Jesus it was easy to believe that He was the Son of God.

What about Mary? Mary also heard that Jesus was coming, but she didn't go to meet Him. "Mary sat still in the house." I am very sorry for Mary. She feels very, very deeply. I have had to deal with a great many Marys, who were very difficult to comfort, very hard to bring out of their temporary despondency. "Mary sat still in the house." We know, from the rest of the story that Mary had the same question in her mind that Martha had. I dare say it is possible that they had each expressed that wonderment to the other — "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Notwithstanding, when she hears that Jesus is coming, she doesn't go to meet Him, but she sits still in the house. I knew a woman like that who was bereaved. You couldn't get her to come to church; you couldn't get her to mix with God's people. I read a strange thing of one of the world's great preachers, after he had lost his wife. I was sorry he said it, but I didn't understand. Grief stricken, he poured out his soul to his congregation and he said, "Really, I haven't prayed for a week." "Oh," you say, "that was dreadful." That was the Mary disposition. She "sat still in the house." "But Mary, the Lord is on the way; go and meet Him." No, Mary sat alone with her grief.

I wonder if you have done that, any of you? I wonder if you have spent weary hours of darkness, when you might have been out in the sunshine, if only you had gone to meet the Master?

But that is the contemplative mind and a contemplative mind is often featured by an active imagination, and the more such a mind nurses its sorrow, the larger it becomes, until he or she begins to imagine a hundred things that have no factual existence. I remember once, in the Great War, I had been to a hospital to visit a wounded man. I found him not so grievously wounded, but in bed, and could not be moved. Then I went to visit his mother, who was a widow. She was a Mary. She hadn't been able to make the journey to another city to visit her wounded son, and so she had drawn a picture of him in her own mind, and she said to me, "Is he very badly wounded? Is his face very much disfigured?" And by her questioning she told me, all unwittingly, the sombre picture she had painted for herself. "Oh," I said, "he is wounded but I do not think grievously so; I think he will recover. As for his face, it hasn't a scratch on it. He will be the same son you saw before, so do not worry." But she had magnified her troubles by nursing them, and imagining a hundred things that had not come to pass. Well, it may not be bereavement, it may be some other thing, but if you nurse your difficulties like that I can promise you they will not diminish but rather increase, and they will minister infinite torture to the soul. You had better not do it.

I am not blaming Mary. Oh, there are so many things about Mary that we admire. I can understand Wesley's saying in the hymn we sang just now:

"Oh, that I could forever sit,
Like Mary, at the Master's feet!
Be this my happy choice;
My only care, delight and bliss—
My joy, my heaven on earth be this—
To hear the Bridegroom's voice!"

Yes, Mary had chosen the better part, which was not to be taken away from her. Notwithstanding, she had the defects of her qualities. We used to have an organist here, who was one of the greatest organists of his time, and a great choral leader. A marvellous man he was. I have seen him lead a great orchestra of a hundred pieces, and a choir of three or four hundred people, when he had had only an hour or two to rehearse with the orchestra, from Cincinnati or Chicago, or somewhere else; and I have seen him conduct the choir and orchestra through a whole oratorio, Handel's Messiah, or Haydn's Creation, or Mendelssohn's Elijah, conduct it all without a score before him, and hold that orchestra and his choir absolutely subject to his master mind, expressed in his baton. Many people did not like him. I went down to see him one day in Massey Hall. When the concert was over I made my way down to the platform (he was our organist here) and I said, "A great night, Doctor, that was magnificent." "Huh, glad you enjoyed it," and he went off, hardly civil. Some people said, "Well, that is the man." I said, "No it isn't. You do not understand him. Did you ever hear the proverbial saying that a man has the defects of his qualities? The qualities which make him the musician he is, make him a bundle of nerves, sensitive to the last degree." You could hardly touch him but everything began to quiver like the strings of a harp or some other stringed instrument, and I said to his critics, "I am told that the slope of Vesuvius has the finest climate in the world, but if you want that climate you have to put up with Vesuvius." That was a picture of our organist. He was a veritable Vesuvius but he was that because he was the great musician he was.

I stayed in a minister's home for several days, years ago, who had several little children. One of them, a little girl, was a romancer. She would come down in the morning and tell the strangest stories you ever heard. Alice in Wonderland was nothing. Where she had been nobody knew. Her father (he was a minister) was just like a block of wood; he hadn't a spark of imagination. I had often felt like sticking a pin into him to see if he had any human feeling. Sometimes he would take this little girl to task. I have known him to punish her for "lying". I said to him one day, "So-and-so, you do not understand that child of yours; I understand her better than you do." I said, "My mother taught me that a lie was anything told or acted with intent to deceive. That child doesn't intend to deceive anybody, she only wants to entertain you. If you only knew it, she is a budding novelist; you ought to encourage that imagination." But he couldn't understand it. "I cannot stand lies," he said. "Well," I said, "if that is your definition so be it. I am sorry for you and I am sorry for your little girl." She was a lovely child, and thus early she could write story upon story and she would sit and imagine worlds of her own.

So could Mary, but when the clouds come and the thunder peals, Mary is super-sensitive — she is like a dog we used to have. A lovely creature he was, you couldn't have bought him for a million, but he knew when a thunder storm was hours away and on the way, and he would begin to tremble. He would go into the butler's pantry, a strange place, and wrap himself around the pipes under the sink, the worst place he could go. I have often seen my wife take a chair or a stool and sit down beside him to comfort him. On a few occasions as we were about to leave for church, and there was a thunder

storm threatening, or on, he would leave his place and make a dash for the porch, and stand with his back against the door and put up his paws. "Don't leave me alone; don't leave me alone." My wife understood him, and stayed at home with him to comfort him in the storm. There are people like that. Don't get out your stick, or your strap. Try to understand them. Poor Mary. She "sat still in the house". That was all she could do, alone with her grief.

There is a line in this story which is very revealing. When Martha hurried away to meet the Master, nobody remarked on it, but when later, as we shall see, Mary also went to meet the Master, those who were in the house, the Jews that were there to comfort her, saw her going and they said "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." Why did they say that? I think because she had been doing that ever since Lazarus was buried. She had been there many times, and they thought they knew where she was going. Let us learn to make allowance for each other in these matters, and enter sympathetically into each others' experiences. It will be better for us, and better for them.

III.

Let me now remind you that OUR GRACIOUS MASTER, KNOWING EVERYTHING, CAME IN GRACE TO BOTH OF THEM. He came for Martha's sake, and He came for Mary's sake.

Mary went to meet Him, but *she did not go until she was called*; no one needed to ask Martha; she went of herself. You have known people like that — they cannot see a duty; others can. Mary "sat still in the house", but when Martha had met Jesus and had heard Him, she hurried home to Bethany and called her sister secretly. She said, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Then Mary rose and she too went to meet the Master.

Now if you have met the Lord Jesus in the way of active service, as Martha did, if pouring out your complaint before Him, He has answered you, and you at last have been able to say, "Lord I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world," then go and tell Mary. Tell Mary that, though Lazarus is gone, the Master has come. The world is full of people who need the secret ministry of Martha. Mary was not given to publicity; Mary did not make a show. Martha did. I tell you that when Martha got dinner the dishes rattled, and everybody in the house knew that dinner was on the way. That was Martha's way. Well, that is all right. I have no objection. But Mary had a different way of serving the Lord. Mary didn't make a noise about it, but she was just as passionately in love with the Lord Jesus.

I think I told you of a man I used to have with me. You remember him, many of you. I called him my secretary. He wasn't a secretary, but I called him that so that everybody might know he was my man. A glorious fellow, but very emotional. If he had been here tonight you would all have been on your toes. He would have been saying every little while, "Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!" One day he said to me, in speaking about somebody, "He is so stoical. I wonder really does he feel profoundly, spiritually — is he a spiritual man?" I said, "So-and-So, your 'amens' are not an indication of your spirituality. You cannot help it. It is no credit to you, your hallelujahs are just on the tip of your tongue, and you could say it about almost anything. I like to

hear you, but don't sit in judgment on the people who are a little more quiet, because there are many people who love the Lord just as much as you do who can not say Hallelujah." As a matter of fact, I do not think I ever said Hallelujah from the pew in my life. Oh, I can say it from the platform, but if I were sitting in the pew I should be just as quiet as the rest of you. I say "Amen" inside but it wouldn't get beyond the tip of my tongue, I am quite sure of that.

I met a dear friend in London, who served in one great church for forty-five years, and he spoke of what he called the "American habit", of inviting penitents to come to the front. He said to me, "I have nothing against it but I am glad my salvation didn't depend on it, for I am perfectly sure I never could have done it." He was one of the noblest Christian men, one of the profoundest theologians, and one of the greatest preachers I have known, but a very reserved man who kept his emotions under control, and his feelings to himself.

There are people in sorrow who are sitting still in the house and I exhort those of you who have the happy disposition of going out to meet the Master, and laying all your burdens at His feet, hearing His word, and then making your great confession, when you have done that, emulate the example of Martha—remember the sister who is sitting still in the house. Get away to her as rapidly as you can, and say quietly, do not shout it so that the neighbours will hear it, say, "Mary, the Master is come, and calleth for thee." I can almost see Mary drying her eyes. "He has come at last and is calling for me?" When Mary heard that, she also arose and came unto Him.

"Jesus was not yet come into the town but was in that place where Martha met him." Isn't that a lovely line? Can you see anything in that? Let me explain it. Jesus missed Mary. Martha said, "The Master is come and calleth for thee," but the call is not here recorded. Maybe Martha knew that the Master wanted her, and was almost disappointed that she hadn't come, and when Martha went away Jesus knew where she was going, and so he said, "I will stay in the same place until Mary joins us, and then we will go to the sepulchre together."

In a little while Mary came, and she was very different from Martha. Martha said, perhaps with a tone of reproach, "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Mary had nursed that wonderment too. Why doesn't He come, but after they had sent for Him "He abode two days still in the same place where He was," to give Lazarus time to die, and Mary was pondering the problem of apparently unanswered prayer. "Oh," she said, "I thought He would come at once; I thought the moment He heard our prayer, 'Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick,' He would be on the way, but He hasn't come." She saw Lazarus die, saw him carried out to the sepulchre, buried, and the great stone rolled upon the mouth of it, and she went back home and "sat still in the house". When in response to Martha's call she came, she "fell at His feet"—what does it say, "When Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet," and I think she said with deep emotion, and without any tone of reproof, broken with sobs perhaps, she said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord,

come and see." Then follows the shortest verse in the Bible. Mary weeping, others weeping—"Jesus wept." Yes, He weeps with those who sit still in the house; He weeps with those whose grief is perhaps too deep for expression, and when they said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave." He said, "Take ye away the stone." "Oh," they said, "it is too late Lord, he has been buried too long." Martha said, "Lord it is too late, no use now." Shall I read the horrid words? Terrible! The stench of death was there. "I don't want to see him now, Lord. It would have done before, but not now, not now!" "Then they took away the stone . . ." "And Jesus", tears still in His eyes, "lifted up his eyes, and said, Father . . ." Oh, what a stillness fell upon the crowd! "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe . . ." "And when he thus had spoken . . ." that Voice which spoke all worlds from naught, uttered itself, and "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth". And he that was dead stirred in his rocky sepulchre, and "came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes . . ." Different as they were in their disposition, they were alike in this—they rejoiced in their Lord, and in His mighty power, and in the resurrection of their brother.

I wish I had time to go farther with you, but I haven't. But only to remind you that Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." Then if you follow him—is that the Gospel? "Loose him; let him go." Can a man do as he likes? May he go where he wants to go? Yes. "Loose him, and let him go" and follow him to see where he goes. The next mention is this, "Jesus . . . came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." Nobody told him to go there; he naturally gravitated to the presence of his Lord, as Christians always do.

Mary also was there—don't you say that Mary was not active! She came with a box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, she came to the Master, and broke it upon Him, "and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." Of course Judas complained of the waste, but Jesus said, "She hath done what she could . . . Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she

hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." This quiet, contemplative soul, who sat at the feet of Jesus, touched the ends of the earth with her influence, through all generations, even until at last our Lord shall come again.

"I tried to comfort a man who had lost his son, one day, and when I had spoken a few words to him, he nodded his head and said, "Thank you, I see clearly now. I have lost my son but not my Saviour." No, we do not lose Him! Whether we serve with Martha, or sit at His feet, let us give our all to Him.

"I read a story of a monk who painted
In an old convent cell in years agone,
Pictures of martyrs and of virgins sainted,
And the sweet Christ face, with the crown of thorns."

What of it? He painted, he painted, like some other people who paint, and who think they can paint,—

"Poor daubs, not fit to be a chapel's treasure,
Full many a taunting word upon them fell;
But the good Abbot let him, for his pleasure
Adorn with them his solitary cell."

"One night the poor monk mused, Could I but render
Honour to Christ as other painters do?
Were but my love as great as is the tender
Love that inspires me when His Cross I view."

"But no, in vain I toil and strive in sorrow,
What man so scorns, still less must he admire;
My life's work is all valueless, tomorrow
I'll cast my ill-wrought pictures in the fire."

"He raised his eyes within his cell, O wonder!
There stood a Visitor; thorn-crowned was He;
And a sweet voice the silence rent asunder:
'I scorn no work that's done for love of Me.'

"There is a meaning in the strange old story,
Let none dare judge his brother's worth or meed;
The pure intent gives to the act its glory,
The noblest purpose makes the grandest deed."

Let us pray:

Oh, Lord, the entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple, and we are very simple; and understand but very little, except as Thy word enlightens us. Make our simple evening meditation profitable to us; help us to be more sympathetic in our ministries, more helpful to those who must serve Thee in some other way than that in which we endeavour to serve. Bless us every one, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

AN ULSTERMAN IN JARVIS STREET PULPIT

Last Sunday morning Rev. Samuel Dempster, presently of Manitoba, but recently of Belfast, preached in Jarvis Street Church.

Mr. Dempster is blessed with a bright and sparkling personality, which seems to attract everybody to him. He is but a young man of twenty-seven years; but he preached splendidly in Jarvis Street, and the whole congregation fell in love with him. We really covet him for this part of the Dominion. Close personal converse with him only enhanced our appreciation of his worth.

Jarvis Street congregation is not easily pleased, but the congregation, which comprised many ministers, on holiday from different parts, was not merely pleased, but delighted.

Well done, Brother Dempster! Come again!

BOOKS AND BOOKLETS

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The Gospel Witness

130 Gerrard Street, East, Toronto 2 - Canada

FINDING TREASURE IN TROUBLE

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, July 23, 1950

(Electrically Recorded)

"And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

"And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much."

—II Chron. 20:24, 25.

This Sermon is published as a sequel to the message in last week's issue entitled "The Enemies, The Prayer, The Promise, The Victory."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON

O Lord our God, we pray for the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we come to Thy Holy Word. It may be there are many in Thy presence who are harassed with many cares; who anticipate the morrow with anxiety; who have come to the place from which there seems to be no escape. We pray that Thou wilt lift our thought this morning above the carking cares of earth. Help us that we may hear Thy voice. We pray Thee to lead us to the place of victory this morning, where we shall all be enabled to rejoice in the Lord. Grant us a sense of Thy nearness. May the Holy Spirit Himself take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to us! We ask these things for Thy name's sake, Amen.

WE CONTINUE this morning our study of two Sunday mornings ago.

The twentieth chapter of the second book of Chronicles, although it is a chapter taken from ancient history, is, in principle, true to the record of the daily life of the people of God. The story is here told of the Lord's people being beset with trouble and difficulty. There gathered against them the children of Ammon, the children of Moab, and the children of Mount Seir,—a threefold conspiracy to overwhelm the people of God. But Judah was fortunate at that time in their king, for he himself, sought help of God, and gathered the people together that unitedly they might pray. In the face of this great national trouble they held a great prayer meeting—a most impractical thing to do; and, according to some modern standards, involved a great waste of time! He did not mobilize his armies, he did not attempt to invent new weapons of war; but he set himself to seek the Lord his God, and encouraged all the people to do likewise. They came into the Lord's presence and prayed.

That is what we ought all to do when we get into trouble—and at every other time, for that matter. But we are especially encouraged to call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, and we have His promise that He will deliver us, and that we shall glorify Him. I fear there are many of the Lord's people who imagine that the Lord's help is confined strictly to spiritual matters. They have not learned to take their business cares and their household difficulties to the Lord in prayer. The truth is, that when we are faced with a combination of distresses so that we are hedged in on every side, the wise thing for Christians always to do is to betake themselves to prayer. Our Lord spake a parable to this intent, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

Jehoshaphat led the people, and reminded the Lord of His promises—the Bible is full of promises upon which we may lean when we are in need of deliverance

—and as they thus prayed they received another promise. The Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the prophets. He spoke to Jehoshaphat and to the people after this manner, "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

Jehoshaphat had told the Lord that he was at his wits' end: he said, "Neither know we what to do." There are some people who, when they do not know what to do, say, "I must do something." But when Jehoshaphat did not know what to do, he did the only thing he could do in the circumstances: he kept on praying. When you get to the place where you cannot move forward or backward, or to the left or to the right; when you come to "wits' end corner", and you do not know what step to take, you can always look up, and keep on praying until God tells you what to do.

While Jehoshaphat and his people prayed, they received the message that the Lord had undertaken their case, and that they were to stand still and see the salvation of God. The truth is, God did not want them to do anything. He said, "I will do it for you if you will trust me, and await the going forth of my power."

When Jehoshaphat received that promise he bowed his head with his face to the ground, and Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord worshipping Him. While the Moabites and the Ammonites and the children of Mount Seir were just as real, and just as menacing, as they ever had been, Judah was not afraid. The enemy filled the country like grasshoppers, so that in her own strength Judah had no power against them. But all the Lord did was to give them a promise through one of their own prophets; and as soon as Jehoshaphat received the promise he bowed before the Lord and worshipped, and all the people worshipped with him.

Were you ever thus inspired by a promise of God? It is very easy to hold a thanksgiving service after the victory, but have you learned how to give God thanks in advance of the victory? Have you ever received a promise, and seen the victory in the promise, and said, "If God has said it, the thing is already done. Now

let us worship God." That is all Jehoshaphat had, just the promise. And what did he do? He prepared for a great service of praise: "And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high."

Then there follows one of the strangest stories in history. But there were the enemies of Judah. Jehoshaphat did not draw a bow or unsheathe a sword, but sent the choir in advance of the army. Let me read it to you: "And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out"—where? At the rear of the army? No! "as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever."

What a strange spectacle that was, marching out to meet the foe, yet never drawing a sword nor putting an arrow to the string, but just with all their hearts praising the Lord! I suppose the enemy must have thought they were beside themselves! They must have said to themselves, "They will be a ready prey for us, and we shall soon have the victory." But "when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." If we were to praise the Lord more we should have more to praise the Lord for. If we would receive the promises of God for what they are, they would tell us of the accomplishment of victory. These people said, "It is now time to give thanks to God." And the moment they took God at His word, and began to praise Him, that moment God began to work, and the enemy were smitten.

That is introductory really to what I desire you to notice this morning. This chapter is a fine illustration of the principle of one of Cowper's hymns,—

"Ye fearful saints fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy and shall break
With blessings on thy head."

The very things you fear are God's messengers of blessing; and the trouble that threatens to overwhelm you is often God's way of bringing you such vast wealth that you will be unable to carry it away.

Let us look at this, that we may learn how to find treasure in trouble; how by the grace of God to turn all that seems to be against you to your own profit; or rather, how to believe that God is doing that all the time: "The Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee."

I.

First of all, THESE PEOPLE SANG THEIR WAY TO A HIGHER ELEVATION, to a new point of view: "When Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness." They got up, you see, and looked down upon their enemies. The watch tower may have been a miniature fortress built for the purpose of a lookout; or it may, and probably was, merely a higher point of land from which they could survey the surrounding country, and keep watch against their

enemies. If Israel had remained in the lower levels they would not have seen what they saw from the watch tower, but when they began to sing they set their faces toward that higher level, and sang their way up to the watch tower; and from that point of view they saw things that would never otherwise have appeared to them.

I believe it is possible for us to sing our way out of trouble; to praise the Lord before the deliverance comes; to give God thanks for all the blessings that His promises declare are already ours in His sovereign purpose. Read some of the Psalms, and you will find how often the Psalmist pours out his complaint before God. He is down in the dumps, he is trying to sing on the morning of a blue Monday, and he begins in a minor strain. But you will always find that before he finishes he has reached the higher levels, and there he praises the Lord with all his heart. You will find examples of this principle in psalms seventy-one, seventy-four, seventy-seven, and many others.

What you and I need is to learn to look at things from God's point of view. If we can receive God's word, and look at all our difficulties through the medium of the divine promise, we shall find that they look very different. If only we could get where God is, and look down on things from the watch tower, we should see that even our biggest difficulties are very, very, small. We can reach the watch tower by singing our way, in faith, to the divine viewpoint.

Let me show you what they saw when they got to the watch tower. They found that the concert of the enemy had been dissolved. The difficulty was three-fold: there were the children of Ammon, and the children of Moab, and the children of Mount Seir. I should not be surprised if some had said, "If it were the Moabites only we could handle them; or if the Ammonites had come against us by themselves we should have been equal to them; or the children of Mount Seir. If we had had one at a time, or even two at a time, we might have got along very well. But to have all three together, that is a terrible experience!"

That is what Jacob said, "We have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin also away. I thought it was bad enough when I lost Joseph; and when Simeon went, that added to my difficulties. But now you demand the whole surrender." That is the negative side of the same truth,— "Moab, Ammon, Mount Seir; let me have them one at a time, but do not let all three come together."

If Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem had had one at a time they would have been overwhelmed: any one of them was more than a match for Judah's strength. But when they got to the watch tower this is what they found: "The children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another." If Ammon had come alone, there would have been no one to fight against him but Judah. And if Moab had come alone, Jehoshaphat would have had to fight him. But when the three of them came together they fought each other—and Judah had nothing to do but to see the confederacy go to pieces. When they got to the watch tower they found that these three conspirators had fallen out among themselves, and were

destroying each other; they had nothing at all to fear. Whereas on the lower levels they might have wailed and said, "All these things are against me", on the watch tower, all things were working together for their good. It is always so. They found it to be so when they began to praise the Lord.

They discovered that the enemy was now powerless to hurt them; the enemy of whom they had been so much afraid had ceased to be an enemy. They were all dead bodies. If we could view life from the standpoint of Jesus Christ we should know that there is nothing in the universe of which a Christian need be afraid. God shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. The devil thought he was having it all his own way at the Cross; but, as a matter of fact, he met his Waterloo at the place called Calvary. At Calvary, potentially, every enemy of the children of faith was destroyed, and there is not one remaining who can hurt you.

"Ah," says someone, "but you do not know where I work. If you had to work for the man I work for you would not talk like that. Down in my office everyone is jealous of everyone else, and every man is looking for the position of the man above him, they are ready to cut each other's throats. Of course we are polite enough to each other's faces. But there are all kinds of difficulties, and if you knew where I work you would not talk like that." It makes no difference where you work, or what your circumstances are, it is forever true that if you are a Christian, if you are a follower of that which is good, there is no power on earth or in heaven that can hurt you.

I remember a newspaper man came to see me one day, and he told me that a certain newspaper was going to publish something that would do me great injury—and I laughed at him. "Why," he said, "you do not seem to be disturbed?" I said, "Not a bit! not a bit! You go back to the man who sent you and tell him that if he does not care for consequences he may publish anything he likes right on the front page of the paper." I told him that Spurgeon once said, "You may write my life across the skies. I have nothing to conceal." And then I said to that newspaper man, "You know, my friend, there is just one person in the world who can hurt me, only one." "Who is that?" he enquired. I said, "Myself. I defy you and your employers, and all the newspapers in America, and all the devils in hell, to do anything to hurt me. Now go ahead."

We have nothing to fear. Why? Because our enemies are dead already, that is why. When Jesus Christ died at the place called Calvary He dealt the devil a blow from which he has never recovered. He bruised his head, and some day He will bruise him under our feet. Meanwhile we have nothing to fear. Cheer up, my friends. I wanted to bring you a bit of Christmas cheer this morning, and tell you that there is nothing in the world to be afraid of if you are a Christian.

II.

Then there is another point: THE WEALTH FAR EXCEEDED THE WORRY, for "when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away." What does it mean? Surely it means that every man had all he could carry, that every man was filled with riches

to his own capacity. In the very place where the enemy had camped, and which they expected would be their graveyard, they found a gold mine! It is a great thing to turn a graveyard into a gold mine, a battlefield into a treasure-house, a valley of trouble into a valley of blessing. But that is God's way always when we trust Him, and praise Him for His grace.

I wonder what they expected to find in the valley? You remember the woman who had but a little oil in a cruse, and a little meal in a barrel, that never failed? You remember the other woman who had a creditor, and she was afraid of being sold out? The prophet said to her, "What hast thou in the house?" It is a wonder she did not answer, "I did not come to give an account of what I have: I came to tell what I have not, I have nothing to pay my debts with." But the prophet said, "That is not my question, What hast thou in the house?" "Well," she said, "I have a little oil." "That is all you have?" "Yes." "Well, go to all your neighbours, and get as many vessels as you can; borrow not a few." She went and borrowed all the vessels of her neighbours. (That is an ancient practice, but people do it still, I understand! I went to a wedding once—I have been on several occasions, but I remember this particular wedding. It was a very up-to-date, flashy affair. But I noticed that the spoons and the knives and the forks had little different coloured silks tied around them. That was to indicate where they belonged when they were home! I discovered that they did not belong there. They had gone out to their neighbours and borrowed everything so as to have a big celebration.)

But this woman was told to go and borrow as many vessels as she could into which to pour the oil—and you know what followed. She kept on sending her son for more vessels. She said, "Bring me another vessel." She called for more—more—more. When at last the son said, "Mother, there are no more; that is the last,"—then the oil stayed. The woman paid her debts, and she had enough left over to live on. But I should not be surprised if she and her sons sat down and said, "If we had only known we might have borrowed twice as many vessels, for the oil never stayed so long as we had vessels into which to pour it; according to our faith it was unto us."

I wonder what Judah and Jehoshaphat expected to find in the valley? If they had believed God up to the hilt, if they had believed with a mightier faith, they might have borrowed horses and waggons and gone out to load themselves up with treasure. Much depends on how we meet our troubles, whether we meet them with horses and waggons to bring home the treasure, or meet them with a long face, and behave as though we were going to our own funerals. Let us meet all our difficulties with a smiling face. Let us believe all things work together for good. No matter how contrary circumstances are, say to your own soul, "I have come upon a gold mine; I will find my way to this treasure somehow, God helping me. God wills that I should be rich, not poor." Is it not written that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"? He intends that we should be rich; and we may be rich in all that is worth while; we may have pleasures that fade not away.

I call your attention to the fact that they were longer in gathering the spoils than they were worrying about the enemy. The enemy came one day, and immediately they

had a prayer-meeting. They got the promise, and very early in the morning it was all over. The enemies were destroyed, and they went out and were three days in gathering the spoil, it was so much. *One day praying—three days gathering up the spoil.* It is always so: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—but remember, it depends on the point of view—"while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The principle is, that if they had not had trouble, they never would have had the treasure. "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." The greatest values of life come out of our greatest difficulties.

I read an account in one of the Toronto papers—written by a certain man who writes frequently about the ministry—based on an article in some American magazine. As I read it I said, "What is this poor man talking about? He does not know what the ministry is." The way to have a happy ministry according to his view is, look after the salary, have the church properly organized, have authority properly distributed—as though it were merely a business concern. But of course if a minister is to be happy he must not have any trouble! This poor man complained that most ministers were very unhappy, and that they had no joy in their work at all; they had no end of trouble. Well, a minister cannot have any joy if he does not have any sorrow. When I have been away from home speaking to bodies of ministers, I have sometimes spoken to them about the Hebrew children who were cast, bound, into the fiery furnace; and the record says that when the king-looked in he saw three men loose, LOOSE! Three men LOOSE! Would you not like to be loose? When school is over, and the bell rings at twelve o'clock every boy goes out like a shot out of a gun. You run out; you do not walk. I never saw children walk out of school! Did you? There is a psychology in that; they have been pent up, you know, and as soon as the door is opened they burst out, and away they go—they are loose.

I know a great many ministers who are not loose; they are bound hand and foot. And I do not wonder they are full of misery. I say to my ministerial friends, "Brethren, there is only one way to get these bands off, and get free: get into the furnace, and the furnace will burn them off. Then you will be loose; you will be a free man."

If we are to have treasure, if we are really to be rich, we may—I had almost said, ask the Lord to send us plenty of trouble. Judah might have said, "O Lord, do not send the Ammonites, and the Moabites, and the children of Mount Seir." And the Lord would have answered, "Wait a while. I am sending them all together; but they will not hurt you; they will leave something on your doorstep that will keep you busy for three days bringing it in." That is what God's messengers are for, to bring us real and lasting wealth, and to make us what He wants us to be.

III.

They never could have had this had it not been for Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat is one of the Old Testament

types of Christ. First of all he *prayed*. He prayed! You and I do not pray as much as we ought to. But we should be in no end of trouble if we had not our Jehoshaphat Who prays all the time, for "He ever liveth to make intercession for us". Our Jehoshaphat is always calling down blessings on our head.

And then *Jehoshaphat led the way*. He said, "Come on! come on!" And out they went into the battlefield. There were the dead bodies, and they stripped them of their jewels and silver and gold and raiment, and came back loaded with spoil. When our Lord went to the cross they took off His robe before they crucified Him. He went to the cross empty-handed; but He "spoiled principalities and powers; he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." And by means of the cross He opened the treasure-house to all believers, so that now we are the children of God, begotten unto "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for us.

At last *Jehoshaphat came back into the city leading the army, and the singers*: They sang when they went out—but I do not know what they sang like when they came back! They came back praising the Lord, weighted with the wealth that they had gathered from their experience. Some day, when it is all over, the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads"; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. We shall be forever with the Lord in a nightless, painless, deathless, tireless, shadowless, city.

Let us give God thanks:

O Lord, we bless Thee for Thy full salvation. If there are any troubled hearts here this morning, we pray that they may have grace to cast their burdens at Thy feet, and bear a song away. Especially, if there are any who have not received Christ as Saviour, may such an one come to Him this morning, casting his burden of sin upon Christ, and leaving it with Him. Then they shall find that even their sin, by divine grace, shall be made an occasion, because of their deliverance therefrom, to praise the Lord. Give to every one of us Thy victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Therefore let us act in the fear of God and prudently. The greater the might of the foe, the greater is the misfortune, if we do not act in the fear of God and with humility. If popes and Romanists have hitherto, with the devil's help, thrown kings into confusion, they may still do so, if we attempt things with our own strength and skill, without God's help.

—MARTIN LUTHER, *Address to the Nobility*.

REMEMBER THE SEMINARY IN YOUR WILL

We suggest that our friends should remember Toronto Baptist Seminary in their wills. The proper form for this is: "I give, devise and bequeath the sum of ----- to Toronto Baptist Seminary, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, Canada, associated with Jarvis St. Baptist Church." We are laying foundations for the future, and we are determined to make it as impossible as it is within human power to do, that not one dollar given to Toronto Baptist Seminary shall be used for anything but the propagation of the gospel. No amount would be too large, and certainly no amount would be too small. We earnestly solicit the gifts of those who believe in ministerial and missionary education.

THE PINCHING SHOE NOW ON THE OTHER FOOT

WE do not think there is a British subject anywhere, who has greater love for the United States, nor greater admiration, nor deeper gratitude for its splendid contribution to the victory of the Allies in the last war, than this writer. Certainly we never could have done without the United States. We have long believed that the only effective League of Nations, and the only abiding and effective United Nations, will be found in the mutual understanding and cooperative action of the United States of America and the British Commonwealth. Anyone who would do, or say, anything to jeopardize the friendship and united action of the English-speaking peoples of the world, would render a great disservice to the cause of world peace.

Having said that, we should like to add that friends ought to be able to speak very frankly to each other, sometimes to criticize, and even disagree, without the semblance of a quarrel.

Last evening we read the following press dispatch:

CAN'T SQUANDER STRENGTH ON U.K. TRUMAN IS TOLD

Washington, July 31—(AP)—Eight Congressmen yesterday accused Britain of avoiding risks faced by the United States in defending Formosa by putting "dollars over principle." Gen. Douglas MacArthur, U.N. commander in Korea, is in Formosa conferring with Gen. Chiang Kai-shek.

Assailing as "indefensible" a British order that her fleet remain neutral if Chinese Reds attack Formosa, members of the House of Representatives called on President Truman to protest British policy in the Far East. They wrote:

"At this time, sir, we cannot squander our strength on allies upon whom we cannot depend."

The letter was signed by Representative Earl Wagner (Dem., Ohio) and countersigned by Representatives Chester Chesney (Ill.), E. E. Cox and Don Wheeler (Ga.), Democrats; and Noah Mason and Richard Hoffman (Ill.), Lawrence Smith (Wis.) and Roy Woodruff (Mich.), Republicans.

"By this decision," Wagner wrote, "Britain announced that she is half-way for this common cause—when it helps her trade, but not when it hurts her trade."

We confess that we felt a like disappointment when we read of the order to the British Navy to remain neutral if Chinese Reds attacked Formosa. But we are not the British Government. We have not before us all the facts which must have determined this decision. The decision may be wrong; we are inclined to think it is. We are not so sure, however, that it is "indefensible." There are several considerations these American Legislators should bear in mind:

It should be remembered that while Britain stood absolutely alone in defence of the world's liberties for one whole year in 1940, she was compelled to pour out both blood and treasure; and in so doing, to liquidate her assets in practically all foreign countries; to call home all invested capital, and reduce herself almost to bankruptcy—not because then she had "allies upon whom (she) could not depend," but because she had no allies at all.

During all that dreadful year the American slogan was a promise that she would do everything to help "short of war." Meanwhile Britain was bleeding to death; and just across the Channel, less than fifty miles away, stood the armed might of Hitler's millions; and

every man, woman, and child in Britain was in the front line trench, and under fire.

We repeat, in all that time, the United States declared she would stop "short of war."

We do not recall that Britain, either governmentally, or through any of her elected representatives in Parliament, uttered a word of complaint. We read a story by a newspaper correspondent at that time, to this effect:

"When the King of the Belgians had surrendered his army, when three hundred and thirty-five thousand men had been miraculously extricated from a trap at Dunkirk, when France had surrendered, and Britain stood alone, this particular war correspondent was making his way over the rubble of one of the southern English cities, which the night before had been terribly blitzed.

Picking his way over the stones, he met a woman, who would be called in England a "charwoman," a woman who was on her way, we suppose, to do her day's work somewhere. Addressing her familiarly, the correspondent said, "Well, mother, how do you think things are looking to-day?" With a smile she brightly replied, "I think they are looking up, sir." In astonishment he replied, "Looking up! You have heard of the surrender of France and Belgium?" "Oh, yes; but now there is nobody left to let us down." That was the British spirit.

We would venture, with all respect, to remind these eight United States Congressmen that the war in Korea is young, and that only a little while ago the American Government announced its decision not to lend military aid to Formosa, nor to fight in Korea. We commend the President's wisdom in changing his mind, and deciding to face the facts as they are.

We are glad to know that Britain is not standing aloof. This writer has no brief for the present British Government; notwithstanding, the responsibility is theirs, and very probably the Government have good reason, or think they have good reason, for their present decision. But after all, these American representatives are complaining in respect to a situation which has not yet arisen. The Chinese have not yet attacked Formosa, and if, and when, they do so, in all probability Britain would exercise her privilege, as the American President has done, of changing her mind. But it is useless to complain of contemplated conduct in a situation which may never occur. We suggest to the eight Congressmen that they try to put themselves in the place of the people of Britain during that long and dreadful year, when not a shot was fired by the United States; and let them remember that Australian airmen were at the side of the Americans from the very beginning of the Korean war; that they have been joined by some British forces; that it is proposed to send a ground force from Britain; that Canadian destroyers are actually in Korean waters under a U.N. commander; that the Canadian Thunderbird squadron of North Stars is already in Asia, and we rather think is already engaged in shuttling supplies to the Korean forces of the U.N.—and all this when the Korean war is less than two months old.

With all Britain's defects, and her economic exhaustion occasioned by the last war, she did not wait for a British "Pearl Harbour" to make up her mind to fight.

We are confident that the great majority in the American Congress, and among the American people, would be as critical of the complaint of the eight Congressmen, as we have been.

We shall send a copy of this issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS to each of the Congressmen named.

Incidentally, we may remind our American friends that in Britain's case, as we have said, the war was less than fifty miles away. It was, in fact, not a yard away, but was raining destruction on British homes and murdering thousands of civilians, including women and children. As yet we are thankful the Korean war has not endangered the lives of American women and children, but is being fought on the other side of the world. We only hope that the flames of war may be confined to that region, and extinguished before they touch this Continent.

A GREAT LETTER FROM BOYD OF SUDBURY

Sudbury, Ontario, July 29, 1950.

Rev. H. C. Slade,
Toronto, Ontario.

Dear Brother Slade:

I am grateful to acknowledge your letter and cheque enclosed covering the accounts for the French ministry, and I regret that the pressure of other matters caused a rather sad delay in our sending of news for the publication you wanted.

The Lord has given us some blessing in the rather extensive fields in which we labour. The Sudbury Church has just concluded a very happy series of children's meetings in which Rev. F. R. Wellington gave us useful assistance. Though the heat and summer attractions made it a little more difficult to get children, our attendances ranged up to about 250 and blessing attended so that a number have acknowledged the Lord as their Saviour.

Apart from this, some others have been saved and some have been baptized, while others expect to obey the Lord in Baptism next Sunday. The Sudbury Church is still working toward the beginning of their building task, and with some eagerness we anticipate getting at the job within the next few weeks. At Lavigne and Minnow Lake, God's Word has not returned void, but has created encouraging interest and has led some to take steps of obedience in which we rejoice. Three converted French Canadians were baptized at Lavigne just before Mr. Appéré's departure, while others are continuing to give worthy account of themselves as workmen in the Kingdom of God.

Our most extensive and expensive work, of course, is the radio ministry but this too has not been burdensome only, for in it we have found joy and rich blessing. The reports from the far-flung areas which we cover between Montreal and Manitoba are so regular and varied that only a volume of some size could contain them, but we are profoundly grateful because the Word which is preached in English, French and Ukrainian to these unseen thousands is so directed by the Spirit of God as to bring response from many hearts. Isolated and deeply troubled Christians write rejoicing because the Lord heard their prayers, and through the messages helped to solve their problems. The darkened little communities where only one or two small flickering candles remain are awakened to the beams of truth because some who stood alone have found in God's Word strength sufficient to enable them to bear testimony and to gather around them little groups of children and adults to hear the Gos-

pel of God's abundant grace. Some collect their friends to share with them the message of the broadcast. Others arrange to pass on God's truth in little Sunday Schools, which we endeavour to assist in one way or another as we find they need.

The inspiring report published last week from Kirkland Lake and Heaship greatly thrilled our hearts because of the part our radio ministry has played throughout the years in helping as God saw fit to use it to bring about these conditions in which we now rejoice.

It was indeed a high day for me when I was privileged to officiate for the baptismal of eight believers in Kirkland Lake on that memorable night of July 14. However, we are particularly pleased because we have reason to believe that these eight who followed then in this path of simple obedience were merely the forerunners of a goodly number of others who shortly will follow their example in obeying the Lord.

I think we ought also to acknowledge with deep gratitude the great things which the Lord has done through providing sufficient financial resources to enable us to carry on in the different rather expensive enterprises in which we are engaged. No doubt when the ultimatum was sounded some months ago that some must break with Dr. Shields and with the things for which he stands or suffer financially, it seemed rather ridiculous to think of carrying on with our French Paper, our extensive visitation programme, the French broadcast in which the Union shared the expenses, and all the district work for which we need additional man-power continually. However, the Lord so supplied through gifts coming directly to us, and passed on through the office of the Emergency Committee, that we were able to carry on our full programme all winter and were able to undertake to engage and support Mr. Appéré while he was available to us, and to provide sufficient funds to carry him to his native land and the worthy work that awaits him there.

Quite apart from these interests in which the Union treasury formerly assisted us, our regular ministry requires that we raise more than \$50.00 a day, every day of the year. When we saw God supply this and make up for the loss of the other besides, we surely were strengthened in our faith and encouraged in our resolve to press on to greater things for Him.

To begin our 15th year of adventure in Sudbury and district, we started a second publication, an English bulletin known as the Berean Ambassador, by which we hope to further and perpetuate the ministry we are carrying on by radio and by other means. Therefore, to all who have by their prayers or gifts been instrumental as God's agents in furthering this work so dear to our hearts, we would again say thanks and once more offer the word of assurance that as God honours His truth, He will also bless your gifts and see that that which is given and spent for His sake and for the sake of the truth will not be invested in vain. Confident that the days of trying in the past will be followed by greater trials and victories in the future, we are continuing on to reach the ever increasing thousands whose appalling needs we would not suffer and dare not neglect.

With best wishes and thanks, I am,

Yours in Him,

J. R. BOYD.

Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.—BUNYAN.

THE HOMEGOING OF MRS. J. W. HOYT

WE HAVE just received a telegram informing us that Mrs. J. W. Hoyt, widow of our late life-long friend, Dr. J. W. Hoyt, has passed away.

With this news, the years have seemed to roll away, and we remember the day when we first saw him, when "Hoyt" as we always called him, and this writer first met. We became fast friends, and that friendship continued without a break until but a short time ago when he was called to his reward. We were present in the capacity of "best man" at their wedding in Dresden, Ontario, and knew them both quite intimately through all the intervening years.

Dr. and Mrs. Hoyt used to sing beautifully together. Mrs. Hoyt was an exceptional woman. She is almost the only preacher's wife we have ever known to enter publicly and officially into the life of the church of which her husband was pastor, without making trouble. But Mrs. Hoyt had the passion of Paul, and the wisdom of Solomon. She was an exceptionally able teacher of the Word of God, and had an almost uncanny understanding of all the complexities of the pastoral relation.

When Dr. Hoyt was overseas in nineteen hundred and eighteen (we were together through the entire summer) Mrs. Hoyt took his place, conducting all services in the First Baptist Church in Peru, Indiana, of which Dr. Hoyt was then Pastor. She did it with extraordinary skill, so that when her husband returned he found everything in the church in the proverbial "apple pie order".

During a large part of the married life of Dr. and Mrs. Hoyt, Mrs. Hoyt's sister, Miss Agnes King, lived with them. She was Mrs. Hoyt's inseparable companion, and aided both of them in all their ministry.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Miss Agnes King in what must be her lonely eventide; while we give thanks for the memory of two noble servants of Christ now with Christ "which is far better".

INFERIOR THINGS

There is something sad in considering how much thought there is in the world about inferior things, and how very little about this. Look round a great library; the men whose names we see there gave their days and nights through many years to thinking out what is printed in their books, and it is certain that half of them could have seldom or never thought at all about the morality of their own lives. Artists, fired with passionate enthusiasm for their lofty calling, spent their health and strength in covering their canvas with noble forms and beautiful colouring, but left their own character shapeless and repulsive. In the souls of famous musicians there has been harsh discord; and the imagination of famous poets has shed no splendour on their personal history.

—R. W. DALE.

GOSPEL WITNESS PUBLICATIONS

(Reprints)

- "The Antichrist—His Portrait and History",
By Baron Porcelli50
- "The Greatest Fight in the World", by C. H. Spurgeon,
64 pages25
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"AN ANATOMY OF ALL THE PARTS OF THE SOUL"

John Calvin on the Psalms

I HAVE been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, "An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul"; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated. The other parts of Scripture contain the commandments which God enjoined his servants to announce to us. But here the prophets themselves seeing they are exhibited to us as speaking to God, and laying open all their inmost thoughts and affections, call, or rather draw, each of us to the examination of himself in particular, in order that none of the many infirmities to which we are subject, and of the many vices with which we abound, may remain concealed. It is certainly a rare and singular advantage, when all lurking places are discovered, and the heart is brought into the light, purged from that most baleful infection, hypocrisy. In short, as calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety, and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise cannot be found elsewhere than in the Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine. Genuine and earnest prayer proceeds first from a sense of our need, and next, from faith in the promises of God. It is by perusing these inspired compositions, that men will be most effectually awakened to a sense of their maladies, and, at the same time, instructed in seeking remedies for their cure. In a word, whatever may serve to encourage us when we are about to pray to God, is taught us in this book. And not only are the promises of God presented to us in it, but oftentimes there is exhibited to us one standing, as it were, amidst the incitations of God on the one hand, and the impediments of the flesh on the other, girding and preparing himself for prayer: thus teaching us, if at any time we are agitated with a variety of doubts, to resist and fight against them, until the soul, freed and disentangled from all these impediments, rise up to God; and not only so, but even when in the midst of doubts, fears, and apprehensions, let us put forth our efforts in prayer, until we experience some consolation which may calm and bring contentment to our minds.

PATIENCE

On the 8th of August, 1529, Luther, with his wife, lay sick of a fever. Overwhelmed with dysentery, sciatica, and a dozen other maladies he said: God has touched me sorely, and I have been impatient; but God is better than we whereto it serves. Our Lord God is like a printer, who sets the letters backwards, so that here we must so read them; when we are printed off, yonder, in the life to come, we shall read all clear and straightforward. Meantime we must have patience.

Tribulation is a right school and exercise of flesh and blood. The Psalms, almost in every verse, speak of nothing but tribulations, perplexities, sorrows, and troubles; they are a book of tribulations.

—LUTHER'S Table Talk.

THE GREAT MISSIONARY REVIVAL

IN EVERY revival there is the reassertion of the Church's missionary character. Men return to Calvary, and the world is seen afresh through the eyes of Christ. The infinite compassion of Christ fills the heart, and the passion evoked by Calvary demands the whole wide world as the fruit of His sacrifice. Thus the Evangelical awakening of the 18th century culminated in a mighty missionary movement which restored the Church's Pentecostal witness to every nation, and established a real and growing dominion of Christ in every land.

In the accomplishment of this great work, God, who loves to uplift the small and despised, was pleased to use a poor cobbler in the Midlands of England. Born in 1761, in Paulerspury, near Northampton, born again of the Divine Spirit in his eighteenth year, the story of William Carey is one of fierce, almost desperate, struggle with poverty. He found solace in books, the money for which he obtained by the simple expedient of starving himself, so that he literally fed his mind at the expense of his body. His cobbler's shed in Hackleton became his college, and here as he wrought with open book before him, he mastered Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and acquired a working knowledge of French and Dutch. Soon a still higher delight entered his life. He developed power as a preacher, and in 1785 he became pastor of the little Baptist church at Moulton. His salary was but £15, and he was obliged to teach a school; but this necessity that seemed to confine his usefulness was really the narrow door through which he entered upon the illimitable field of his great life work. It was while he taught the children geography with the aid of a leather globe he had constructed, that the great missionary idea entered his mind, and became the passion of his soul. Isaiah saw the Lord in the Temple, and as surely did William Carey see Him in that little schoolroom, as surely did he hear Him say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and as earnestly did He respond, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

Carey was now a man of one grand idea. One glorious thought dominated his whole life. Christ had died for all mankind, and to every creature under Heaven must be borne the glad tidings of salvation. In conversation this was his uppermost, ever-recurring theme, but he found no response. The missionary enterprise seemed wholly Utopian, a "wild impracticable scheme." Repulsed by his brethren, he turned to the Press. He wrote his "enquiry," showing the still binding force of Christ's last command, and pleading for concerted prayer for men and money. Repression only served to make the fire within him burn the more intensely, and gradually some of the men about him began to share his passion, namely, Andrew Fuller, of Kettering. Then, after six years of waiting, came his great opportunity. Now pastor of the church in Harvey Lane, Leicester, he was invited to preach to the ministers' meeting at Nottingham, and in his sermon the long-curbed fire leapt forth, a fire that was destined to set the whole church ablaze. He took for his text Isaiah 54:203, implying its truth in two mighty maxims that have been the inspiration of missionary endeavour from that day to this:

"Expect great things from God,
Attempt great things for God."

His brethren were deeply stirred, but even then there was danger that feeling might evaporate in tears, and fail to move the springs of action. The meeting closed; the ministers were about to separate. Even Fuller, on whom he had counted, made no sign. It was a moment big with fate. If it passed without some definite deed, all was lost. In an agony he seized the arm of Fuller. "Oh," he cried, "are you, after all, going to do nothing?" Fuller looked into Carey's eyes, and found their appeal irresistible. He recalled his brethren, and then there was inserted in their minutes this momentous decision: That a place be prepared against the next meeting at Kettering for forming a Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen." The Society was formed a few months afterwards, on October 2nd, 1792 (it is one of God's dates), in the low-roofed back parlour of Widow Wallis, at Kettering. It consisted in the beginning of twelve men; and its first subscriptions amounted to £13, 2s, 6d. Its first secretary was Andrew Fuller, and its first missionary was William Carey.

The Society was nearly strangled in its birth. The East India Company refused to convey missionaries to India. It held them more dangerous than the pestilence. Thus Carey and his companion, Dr. Thomas, sailed in a Danish vessel, and it was finally in the Danish soil of Serampore that the young Society struck its roots. Long and cruel were the hardships he now endured, but he toiled and toiled with unflinching faith and hope. He laboured for seven years without a convert. Then Krishna Pal, long burdened by the sense of sin, found in Carey's Saviour the great Rest-Giver and the Great Deliverer. Carey baptized him in the river on December 28, 1800, the first of a countless host, who, from every kindred and tongue and nation, have come to adore the Name that is above every Name.

For fourteen months no news came to England of the great venture of faith. But Fuller and his Society laboured in prayer and held fast the ropes in the Homeland, assured that God was with the toilers in the dark mine beneath. When at last Carey's letters arrived, a joy that was truly unspeakable and full of glory filled their hearts. They came together and sang the hymn of William of Pantycelyn, the triumph-song of Missions:

"O'er those gloomy hills of darkness,
Look, my soul, be still and gaze;
All the promises of travail
With a glorious day of grace."

In that same year, 1794, they began to publish their *Periodical Account*, relating the story of the Mission, and then fast-crowding and glorious events showed that the Spirit of Missions had indeed gone forth. These simple leaves went through the land and over the earth like flakes of Pentecostal fire, and society after society sprang into being in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and America. In 1794 the London Missionary Society, in 1799 the Church Missionary Society entered upon their glorious careers. So deeply moved was Robert Haldane that he at once sold his estate at Airthrey, and gave himself and all he had to the Heavenly Cause. Thwarted by the Government in his design of going abroad, his eyes were opened to see that the great Field of Missions is one and that it begins at a man's own door. He and his brother James became missionaries in Scotland, and

bore the Evangel to the remotest, glens of their native land. Haldane's Home Mission, now merged in the Baptist Union of Scotland, is one of the finest proofs of the great law enunciated by Dr. Chalmers, that foreign missions act upon the Home Church, not by exhaustion, but by fermentation, revitalizing its drooping life. On the other hand the manna that is kept unused, becomes a fount of corruption. When the life energies of the Church are restrained, and turned in selfishly upon itself, at once they begin to break it up; they are transmuted into the awful and horrible activities of death. But the Church lives and flourishes exceedingly when it gives its life to a perishing world.

Carey never returned, but lived to a green old age in India, dying in 1834, no less than thirty-four distinct translations of the Bible into the Indian tongues having come from his hands. On his tombstone, by his own desire, are inscribed the words: "A wretched; poor and helpless worm, on Thy kind arms I fall."

—*Old Time Revivals.*

SIN THE ONLY ENDURING EVIL

When driven to the very verge of sin by fear of poverty or by a feverish thirst for wealth, we should remember that He who is enthroned in the very centre of all the splendours of the city of God was once a poor man, and had not where to lay His head; that His elect and most illustrious servants who sit as princes near their King were almost as poor as Himself; that suffering and destitution and shame in this world, so far from diminishing our future glory, will make it shine the brighter, if only they are borne with devout patience and courageous faith; that sin is the only enduring evil, and holiness the only eternal good.

—R. W. DALE.

NEGLECT

A story is told of a young man who stood at the bar of justice to be sentenced for forgery. The judge had known the young man from childhood, for his father had been a famous legal light and his work on the Law of Trusts was the most exhaustive work on the subject. "Do you remember your father," asked the judge, sternly, "that father whom you have disgraced?"

The prisoner answered, "I remember him perfectly. When I went to him for advice or companionship, he would look up from his book on the Law of Trusts and say, 'Run away, boy, I am busy.' My father finished his book, and here I am." The great lawyer had neglected his own great trust with awful results.

A PERSIAN PROVERB

He who knows not,
And knows not that he knows not,
Is a fool—shun him.

He who knows not,
And knows that he knows not,
Is a child—teach him.

He who knows,
And knows not that he knows,
Is asleep—wake him.

He who knows,
And knows that he knows,
Is wise—follow him.

TRIAL

We know not in what form or at what time the fiery trial may come to us in this world; to try our work of what sort it is. It comes to some men early, and if they fail, there is often nothing for them but a life of obscure misery and shame; it comes to others when grey hairs are beginning to show on their heads, and, after years of honour and blameless integrity, they have a miserable end. Thank God that every day's well-being makes us stronger for the struggle, as the silent peaceful days of summer during which the oak is stretching its knotted roots deeper and deeper into the soil, prepare it to meet the fury of wintry storms.

—R. W. DALE.

"I HAVE A FRIEND"

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end;
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it a year has gone,
And I never see my old friend's face,
For life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell,
And he rang mine. We were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men:
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.
"Tomorrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But tomorrow comes, and tomorrow goes,
And the distance between us grows and grows.
Around the corner!—yet miles away
"Here's a telegram, sir."
"Jim died today."
And that's what we get, and deserve in the end:
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

—Charles Hanson Towne.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Third Quarter Lesson 7 August 13, 1950

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

COMING JUDGMENT

Lesson Text: Zephaniah 1:1-16.

Golden Text: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."—Zeph. 2:3.

Introduction:

Little is known concerning the personal history of Zephaniah except his ancestry and the date of his ministry (v. 1). His name means "Jehovah hath guarded". Inasmuch as he described the destruction of Nineveh as still future, which occurred about 625 B.C., we understand that he prophesied during the early part of Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22, 23). Israel had already been taken into captivity. Doubtless he co-operated in the reforms of Josiah, especially in the matter of Baal worship (2 Kings 23: 5-8).

The Prophecy of Zephaniah may be outlined as follows:

- I. Judgment upon Judah and the Idolaters: Chap. 1.
- II. Judgment upon Judea and Nineveh: Chap. 2.
- III. Judgment upon Jerusalem and Restoration: Chap. 3.

Exposition:

I. The Coming Judgment Declared: verses 1-6.

Even as Israel had been removed from the land, so would Judah be utterly destroyed (Jer. 8:13). Judgment would be certain, swift and inescapable. It would be complete, reaching even to the animal creation, under the curse because of man's sin.

God's wrath would be poured out upon idolaters especially. The remnants of Baal worship were to be eradicated. Baal was a Phoenician god, appearing among the Israelites in the

time of the judges (Judge 2:13). Manasseh, the grandfather of Josiah, allowed an idol of Baal to be erected even in the sacred temple (2 Kings 21: 3, 5, 7), but Josiah cut down the black-robed priests of Baal called Chemarim (2 Kings 23:5). The priests of Jehovah had not put down idolatry (Ezek. 22:26; 44:10; Zeph. 3:4; Mal. 2:7, 8), and therefore they would not be exempt from Divine punishment, nor would those who worshipped the stars, moon, sun, the heavenly bodies (2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; 23:5). Some idolaters made a pretence of swearing allegiance to God (Isa. 48:1; Hos. 4:15, 16), while at the same time they dedicated themselves to the god Moloch (1 Kings 11:7; Ezek. 20:39; Amos 5:26). Such hypocrisy is an abomination to the Lord (1 Kings 18:21; Matt. 6:24).

This was an age of spiritual declension. Those who claimed to walk with God had turned back (Numb. 15:39, 40; Psa. 78:34-37; Ezek. 20:16-21; Acts 7:39, 40). Others had not sought Him (Hos. 5:15), or enquired concerning His will. Upon all such sinners the judgment of God will ultimately fall (Prov. 1:24-32; Isa. 65:11, 12; 66:4).

II. The Coming Judgment Described: verses 7-16.

Zephaniah counselled sinful man to bow in silence before our holy God (Hab. 2:20), for He was about to manifest His presence among them; His wrath was to be poured out upon His backsliding people. The day of wrath was at hand (Isa. 13:6; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; Rev. 6:17), and He was about to make a sacrifice, as it were, slaying the guilty Jews that His justice might be vindicated (Isa. 34:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 39:17, 18). The Lord had prepared or sanctified His guests, setting apart Nebuchadnezzar whom He was inviting to come and take vengeance upon those who had forsaken God (Jer. 25:9; 27:6-8; Ezek. 26:7-14). None would escape, not even the princes, the king's children or the rich. Those who had exercised violence and deceit would be punished, notwithstanding their exultant rejoicing when they obtained spoil.

The prophet described in detail the noise and confusion which would fill the city of Jerusalem when the enemy should attack. There would be a cry as Nebuchadnezzar and his army swarmed in at the fish gate (2 Chron. 33:14; Neh. 3:3), as they really did, then as they entered the second gate at the lower part of the city, and finally reached the hills in the interior, Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. Maktesh, meaning "Mortar", probably refers to Jerusalem, situated in the midst of hills (Isa. 22: 1, 5). The merchants would be slain, and also those who attempted to carry away silver or anything which might become a burden (Hab. 2:6).

No one could escape the coming judgment. The Lord is represented as one who searched the city with a light, leaving

no corner where a sinner might hide (Psa. 139:7-12). The wealthy merchants had long been left undisturbed, like wine that had become crusted at the bottom (Psa. 55:19; Jer. 48:11; Amos 6:1-6), but they would soon meet their doom. In their carelessness they imagined that the Lord Himself was indifferent as to their conduct (Job 22:13, 14; Psa. 10:4-6; 94:7; Mal. 2:17). Such men would have a rude awakening. Their homes and vineyards would become the property and prey of their enemies (Deut. 28:30; Amos 5:11; Hag. 1:6).

The great day of God's wrath was imminent, and would be characterized by a loud roar, as it were, of vengeance (Jer. 25:30; Amos 1:2). Trouble, anguish, distress and desolation would be on every hand (Joel 2:1-3; Amos 5:18-20; Nah. 2:10). The trumpets of the invaders would resound along the bulwarks and city walls (Jer. 4:19-22; Amos 2:2). The Hebrew word translated "towers" means literally "angles", doubtless referring to the fact that the walls of Jerusalem were built with curves and angles, so that the Jews might assail any besieging forces from all sides.

The prophet, although faithful in declaring God's wrath against sin, remembered to deliver the message of mercy (Hab. 3:2). There was a way of escape from the righteous wrath of God (Joel 2:13, 14). Those who humbly sought the Lord and His righteousness would be sheltered from the impending doom (Psa. 105:4-8; Prov. 1:33; Isa. 55:6; Amos 5:15; Zeph. 2:3). Let us urge unbelievers to flee from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9, 10), and to take shelter with the Saviour (Col. 1:13).

For Younger Scholars:

Explain the folly of attempting to cover up our sins before the Lord, illustrating with Scriptural narratives (1 Sam. 15: 1-23; Acts 5:1-11). He sees and knows all that we think, say and do (Psa. 139). Urge scholars to be sincere before the Lord and before others, and to seek Him early with their whole heart (Eccl. 12:1).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Aug. 7—The Day of Judgment.....2 Kings 22:15-20.
- Aug. 8—The Day of Wrath.....Isa. 25:1-18.
- Aug. 9—The Day of Correction.....Jer. 2:11-19.
- Aug. 10—The Day of Destruction.....Jer. 4:19-31.
- Aug. 11—The Day of Desolation.....Jer. 25:27-38.
- Aug. 12—The Day of Storm.....Joel 2:1-14.
- Aug. 13—The Day of Darkness.....Amos 5

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Blessed be the fountain of blood. Hide me, O my Saviour! The Lord's my Shepherd. O safe to the rock! When He cometh. Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.

THE GOSPEL WITNESS,
130 Gerrard Street East,
Toronto 2, Ontario, Canada

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