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## "Prepare Thy Work Without, and Make It Fit for Thyself in the Field; and Afterwards Build Thine House"

VOLUMES of wise counsel are often condensed into a single sentence in the Proverbs of Solomon.

A statesman, or a military commander, is never wise to disregard the information supplied by Secret Service agents. In the Book of Proverbs the wise man often takes a reconnaissance flight over the enemy's territory, and then gives us information of his subtle devices, and of his plans for our undoing; or he performs an autopsy on the career of one who has utterly failed, and points out the reasons for his failure. Sometimes he gives us a clear photograph of the road to success, and of the sign-posts pointing in that direction.

When the king of Syria said to his servants, "Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O King: but Elisha, the prophet, that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." Just such a service as Elisha rendered the king of Israel, who by taking Elisha's advice "saved himself there, not once nor twice", the Proverbs of Solomon would render to any one of us who would give heed to their wisdom.

The proverb we have quoted at the head of this article gives wise counsel for us all:

The farmer must recognize that he gets his living from the field. He is therefore admonished to give his first attention to that which is indispensable to his sustenance. He is to prepare his work "without, and make it fit for (himself) in the field". When thus he has thoroughly cultivated his farm, and made it profitably productive, he may then build his house.

What lessons are wrapped up in these simple words! They counsel the man of affairs to *put the interests of his business before the comforts of his home*—not merely "business as usual", but business first. He needs machinery for the farm, or for the factory. He may require enlargement to take care of a growing business. When his business becomes like a growing child, constantly needing new shoes, new clothes, and more food, he must "plough" his profits back into his business. He will provide himself with a more comfortable house by and by. Undiscerning neighbours will, perhaps, wonder that a man with such a prosperous business should re-

strict himself to the plainest of living, and the narrowest of quarters. What he is really doing is carrying out the principle of the proverb, preparing his "work without", making it fit for himself in the "field"; and he leaves the building of his house till "afterwards".

The principle may be applied in many directions. For example, it means that *the wise and conscientious person will always put duty before pleasure*. Every normal person is subject to certain moral obligations; as, for example, to be regular and faithful in his daily occupation, whatever it may be—it is his duty to be there, and to do his best. It may be, however, that pleasure will call in another direction. It may be perfectly innocent and harmless pleasure. It may be *good or better*. But this wise man will say, "Duty is best; and where duty calls, or danger, I must never be wanting there." Such an one becomes strictly conscientious in the discharge of his duty. He is not averse to pleasure. He knows it is legitimate that he should have some relaxation, and find mental and physical rest in some form of recreation; but he will insist that that must wait until duty is fully done.

The principle applies to people in all walks of life. A woman is a *housewife*. She is the mother of several children; but she is endowed with an attractive personality. People of all sorts find her socially desirable; and if they are going to have a social gathering of any kind, whether an afternoon tea, or an evening party, they immediately think of Mrs. Agreeable as the first of their guests.

In due course their invitation reaches her. If she is a faithful housewife, and a real mother, notwithstanding the lure of the invitation, she subordinates all such considerations to her primary duty to her house; and to her children. Consistent with faithfulness, and thoroughness, and dutifulness at-home, she will be glad to go. But where the interests of the children are concerned, and even her obligation, perhaps, to her husband, if such social demands conflict with what she will regard as her primary duty, she will politely say, "No."

The children of such a woman will never be burned to death in their beds, while their mother is at the movies. Nor will they be wandering the streets, like neglected

waifs, while she is attending a missionary meeting, called to provide something for people in Africa.

The principle applies to *ministers of the gospel, very especially*. We knew a man who, in many ways, was a very good man. He was a country pastor. He had several children. He kept a cow, and several pigs, and a lot of chickens. As the requirements of the children made considerable demands upon his wife, he did the family washing, and a good many other things. By the time he had looked after the cow, and the pigs, and the chickens, and had done the family washing, and some other things, he had no time left to visit his parishioners, and very little time to prepare for his Sunday duties.

Now his "field" was the work of the pastorate. The work "without" was the work of shepherding his people, and being prepared to feed them on the Lord's day. But because he looked after his "house" first, the "field" was soon grown over with weeds. The fences were down, and the barns in ruins, metaphorically; and it became necessary, therefore, for the people to find another occupant for the "house". Ministers need to study how much time and thought and energy they can rightly devote to their personal affairs.

The principle may even apply to a *minister's physical condition*. Many a man, not feeling quite up to the mark, drags himself off to his work in the morning because he must. He cannot afford to nurse a sore toe, or give up when he has a headache. Neither can the minister. He has a duty to discharge toward his people, and toward all the interests of the church which sustains him; and he must often preach when he does not feel like it, and attend to other "work without" when he would, perhaps, much rather be at home in an easy chair with a book.

The proverb means that whoever is wise will rate *the value of personal discipline above that of easy relaxation*. Everybody needs a "house". It is not sinful to furnish it with a bed to sleep in, or an easy chair to rest in, or a dining room in which to eat; but the discipline which comes from the practice of subordinating all these matters to the primary duties of life, whatever they may be, is the discipline that produces character, stability, a symmetrically-balanced life; and in the end, a man so disciplined will build a far better house than one who drifts into a condition of *laissez-faire*, which leaves the "work without", and the cultivation of the field to look after itself.

### NOT A RELIGION OF SORROW

The religion of Christ is not a religion of sorrow. It consoles wretchedness and brightens with a divine glory the lustre of every inferior joy. It attracts to itself the broken-hearted, the lonely, the weary, the despairing, but it is to give them rest, comfort, and peace. It rekindles hope; it inspires strength, courage, and joy. It checks the merriment of the thoughtless who have never considered the graver and more awful realities of man's life and destiny, but it is to lead them through transient sorrow to deeper and more perfect blessedness, even in this world, than they had ever felt before the sorrow came.

—R. W. DALE.

God, being so great, great gifts most willingly imparts;  
But we continue poor that have such narrow hearts.

—TRENCH.

## The Gospel Witness

and

## Protestant Advocate

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### THE 122nd ANNUAL MEETING OF JARVIS STREET CHURCH

THE Annual Meeting of Jarvis Street was held Thursday, September 14th, when reports were received from all Departments as of the year ending March 31st, 1950.

There was a large attendance, and the meeting provided an occasion for an evening of happy fellowship. From the beginning to the end, every vote was an unanimous one.

The Treasurer's Report was most gratifying, showing total receipts, for all purposes, of \$121,959.53. The receipts for the General Expense Fund, or "Church Operating" as it is now called, were \$35,125.96 as against \$28,255.54 for the year ending March 31st, 1949; or an increase for 1950 of \$6,870.42 over the General Expense receipts for 1949.

The Treasurer's Report was adopted by the whole congregation's rising and singing the Doxology.

One hundred and eighteen new members were received during the year; fifteen by letter, thirty-one by experience, and seventy-two by baptism. This number is smaller than the additions of some years, but the exuberant spiritual health of the church, as a whole, encourages us to expect better things in the future. Already we believe there is "the sound of abundance of rain".

Following are the names of members who passed away during the year:

Miss Emma Blair, Mr. A. E. Brocklesby, Miss Susan B. Bynes, Mrs. E. Charlton, Mrs. George Cupit, Mrs. Matilda Gildersleve, Mrs. William Hunter, Mr. A. A. Martin, Mr. James McGuire, Mr. J. T. Smith.

Difficulties are God's errands, and when we are sent upon them, we should esteem it a proof of God's confidence.—BEECHER.

# The Jarvis Street Pulpit

## "ENOUGH AND TO SPARE"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, September 17th, 1950  
(Electrically Recorded)

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

LAST Wednesday evening I preached the sermon at the ordination of the Rev. B. R. Oatley-Willis in Essex, and I spoke upon the latter part of this parable, the elder son. In that connection this verse, which I have read to you, came before me, and I had time to notice it just in passing. I felt it would be profitable for us to spend a little while considering the great principle here enshrined as being the rule of the father's household. There they always had "enough and to spare."

That is a most unusual condition of things—to have enough of anything, of everything, and something left over.

When I was crossing by a flying boat, the Tasman Sea, from Sydney, Australia to Auckland, New Zealand, I fell in with a man whom I almost envied. He had spent twenty-five years in China, and while still a comparatively young man had apparently retired from active business life, and he and his daughter were on their way to New Zealand where he expected to make his home. He said he had travelled the world looking for a comfortable place to settle down. I told him I was from Canada, and asked him why he hadn't visited us. He said, "I did. What part of Canada do you come from?" I said, "Toronto." He said, "I have been there. A nice city, but your climate is anything but hospitable. I couldn't think of living anywhere in Canada." But New Zealand, he thought, was ideal, and yet, as things are now, it is but a few hours from troubled Asia, and I am by no means sure that anybody could settle in Australia or New Zealand, any more than in Canada, with an assurance of security from all molestation, and with any certainty of being able quietly to spend one's evening time at rest. In fact, I do not know where you could go to-day, do you? If you had unlimited funds, and had all the world to choose from, where would you go?

Sir Harry Oakes, a multi-millionaire, who had found gold in this country, strenuously objected to the payment of the heavy income tax imposed upon him—although I should think that if anybody should be willing to pay income tax it ought to be the man who had dug his fortune out of Canadian soil. However, he went to Nassau, a lovely place, to live, but there he lost his life by somebody unknown. He was murdered. He might better have remained in Canada and paid income tax I should think.

Well, I do not know where we could go to enjoy any kind of security. I have noticed by the headlines, I do not read what is underneath very carefully, but I have noticed by the headlines, that stocks and bonds fluctuate according to the war news; and something that may have

a certain value to-day, if the news of to-morrow is unfavourable, may suffer a very serious decline. Because this world, every part of it is so sensitive, almost like a human body full of nerves, that what happens in any one part of it affects all the other parts, and there is no security anywhere. A man who is rich to-day may be a pauper to-morrow; a man who is in peace to-day may be in the midst of war in a very short time, and there is not much rest anywhere in the world to-day, as far as I know.

But it would be a very fine thing if there were any sphere of existence to which we might find admission, where the doors would be shut against our enemies, and where we should have sufficient supplies within, not only to meet our needs, but to have "enough and to spare". But where can this principle obtain, and be operative? We have been singing about "amazing grace". Grace argues infinity. The richest man in the world, I do not care how rich he might be, could not continuously give, give, give, every day of his life, without coming to the end of his resources, and at last he would be reduced to poverty. I have read of one who came to the Iron Duke, the Duke of Wellington, and asked pecuniary aid of him, and the Duke said, "Why should I give you anything?" Said the mendicant, "Because I am your brother." "Quite so," said the Duke, handing him a penny, "Now get all your other brothers to give you a penny, and you will be a richer man than I am." That would be true too, but here in this mundane sphere we are limited, limited in life—we shall not live here always; limited in all the resources by which life is to be sustained. We come to the end of things, and we have to husband our resources, we have to economize. You women know something about "budgeting", don't you? You have only so much, and you must make it do, that is all. You would like to have more, but you have to cut your coat according to the cloth, and if you haven't "enough" well, then you have to skimp a little.

The prodigal had thought he knew a better place to live than at home. He was entitled to a share of his father's wealth, and he asked that he might be given in advance of his father's decease the portion of goods that might fall to him. So he went away, like Sir Harry Oakes, to find a good place to live, and he selected a far country, but he didn't get along very well. We have known many people who have gone away as though they were going to challenge the world and come back as a conqueror, who have had an experience similar to this young man. I do not know what sort of job he had, or jobs, except that he became at last a swine-herder, had spent all his money and had nothing, and at last

came to himself. It was then he remembered another condition of life from which he had foolishly, wilfully exiled himself. He said, "I begin to be in want, nobody gives me anything"—"no man gave to him." I do not know that we can blame the people of the far country so much, for they didn't know anything about grace. They bought, sold and got gain, but as for giving things away, that wasn't their custom at all, and he found it out. Then he remembered that there was a house, there was a proprietor, there was a man of great wealth and large estate, and he said, "Even the servants are better off than I am; they have plenty to eat, and some left over, and I perish with hunger, so I had better emigrate to that other realm, where there is enough and to spare."

I do not wonder that the parable of the prodigal is one of the most worn passages in the Word of God, because it is so true to human life. Every man's experience is mirrored here, and it never wears out, because these experiences recur, these histories are written and rewritten, and it is all the same; and bless God, it is still true that there is a place of plenty where there is "enough and to spare".

Now I say grace argues infinity. No one but God can keep on giving, and be none the poorer for his giving. I do not know where it originated, whether it is in an old hymn or whether it was a saying that was common in Methodist class-meetings, but I have heard it in prayers sometimes to this effect: "Giving doth not impoverish Thee, neither doth withholding enrich Thee." I do not know where it came from, but it is blessedly true. God is none the poorer for His giving, nor the richer from withholding.

I would like you to think of Him, think of where He lives, and what His store-houses are like. I like to dream sometimes—I have said that to you before; but I lift myself out of the dumps sometimes. Were you ever in the dumps—blue Monday—ever depressed, and wrapped about with the spirit of heaviness, when you did not know why? Well I have often been, and I like to lift myself up and dream sometimes even about the impossible. Talk about building castles in Spain! I have built streets of them, hundreds of them, and I have a great time, because when I give my imagination play I might as well have the best and the biggest as the poorest, and so I always build the very largest, and I am always very wealthy in my dreams. Of course I always have to come back to earth again, but anyway, it gives me a little surcease from worry and anxiety sometimes imaginatively to transport myself into the realm of the impossible.

Ah, but when we meditate upon the things of God, although we are transported into the realm of the infinite, they are not impossible. They are great realities, as a matter of fact—the only real things; and I should like to try to show you this evening how incalculably rich we are, or may be, if only we advantage ourselves of the supplies that are at our command. Now, in the Father's house there is always "enough and to spare." "Enough!" That is a big word, and I do not suppose any one of us employs it very often. I have had worry enough, I have had trouble enough, I have had enemies enough, I have had weariness enough. On that side I have had enough. A brother came in to my vestry one day, and he said, "Well, Pastor, you know the promise: 'With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation,'" and then he chuckled to himself and said, "You know, some-

times I feel like telling the Lord I'm pretty near satisfied." Yes; on that side we have had enough, and I suppose most of us more than enough, but on the brighter side, no, we have never had quite enough; we are always hoping for better things.

I used to live in England, and I have visited the Old Land very often. In some of the newspapers, in addition to the weather forecast, they report how many hours or minutes of sunshine they had yesterday. So many hours of sunshine. These little cars that some people drive here, "Roadbugs," they call them in some places—they have roofs that you can push back, and in England they call them "Sunshine Roofs". There is so little sunshine that when the sun does peep out from between the clouds and between showers, you push the thing back and get what sunshine you can. Canadian weather is making those sunshine roofs very useful in Canada.

Well, that is life. We need to get all that we can, but there is a condition of life where this word "enough" finds its realization. We may experience its real significance.

#### I.

In the provisions of grace, THERE IS ENOUGH TO MEET THE UTMOST REQUIREMENTS OF A BANKRUPT SOUL. That is what we all are by nature, like the prodigal, with empty pockets, everything gone, coming home empty-handed, and nothing to offer as a term of admission to the Father's house. But we come, because we are attracted by "enough and to spare".

There is *enough to meet the requirements of our obligations to the law of God*. Sin is lawlessness, and how we have missed the way! Up to the eyes in debt! It is required of a man, who is a member of organized society, that he pay his taxes of one sort or another, and thus assist to maintain the government, and to ensure law and order. And if he has a house he must pay for it, or if he doesn't he must pay his landlord. He has certain obligations that are binding upon him. I have had many people come to me and say, "I am in danger of being put out of my house, and I cannot pay the rent. Could you help me pay this month's rent?" My answer is, "If I should pay this month's rent, who will pay the rent for next month? Don't you think you might as well go out this month as next month, because one more month's rent won't help you very far."

Well now, we come to God heavily indebted. We have failed to fulfil any of the requirements of His Holy law. We have not loved Him as we ought; we have not served Him as we ought; we have not recognized and acknowledged Him in all our ways. There is a "backlog" of taxes and obligations undischarged, and we come home heavily in debt. But there is enough in the Father's exchequer to meet all our obligations.

Then on the positive side, we have violated His law, we have done a thousand things in thought or in word or in deed that were acts of rebellion against God. We are under the condemnation of His law. Much punishment is due us if the law should lay its hand upon us, but when we come there is enough to meet that need. All our requirements were anticipated at the Cross, and "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

A young man came to see me last week, and told me of his struggles to get on, how he had had to borrow some money, but how at last he had paid it back, and he said with a smile and a hearty laugh, "And now I owe

no man anything. My," he said, "what a relief!" Oh, to stand before God, and to be sure that we owe nothing to the law of God, which has not been supplied in our behalf by His boundless grace. Owning nothing we can start all over again.

There is enough to provide us *with a respectable covering in which to appear in the Divine presence.* This young man hadn't much when he came home. He was all in rags, I suppose, certainly he needed something new, and he was given the best robe. How should we, granted that all the past is blotted out, how are you and I to live in the presence of God? How can we clothe ourselves? How can we hold up our heads among the angels? I am afraid that there is very little taught in our day about the adequacy of the Divine provision, the perfect righteousness of Christ which is imputed to us. When this young man got home and had his wardrobe replenished, — no! he had no wardrobe to "replenish" — a new wardrobe supplied, there wasn't anyone in the father's house better dressed than he was.

I remember a millionaire once saying to me, "I always feel a little better when I get a new suit of clothes." He had plenty of them, but he said, "It ministers something to my self-respect. When I feel that I am appropriately and decently, and perhaps attractively apparelled I can go among my fellows without apology." I daresay there have been times when you have felt as though you would like to have a lot of money to spend on clothes, haven't you? You go down town and you look at things; — you women, for instance, and you see these dummies dressed up, and you say, "Oh, my, how much is that?" And then when you find out how much it is there is a drop in the countenance, and you do not want to look at that any more because you cannot afford it. Wouldn't it be fine if you had enough, plenty of money, and hadn't even to look at the price tag of anything? But could go down to any store and walk around anywhere, see what you want, and say, "I'll have that." The sales-woman would look at you, as you say, "I'll have that too." Then you take another look, and after a while, "I think I'll have that too." Presently she says to herself, "Who is this I'm serving? What an extravagant lady is this, going to buy out the store!" But wouldn't it be comfortable to be able to do it if you wanted to? Well, there is all that in the Gospel. The Robe of His Righteousness is the most expensive robe that ever was made. It emptied the Divine exchequer to pay for it. "Her clothing is of wrought gold," it is said of the spouse of the Well-Beloved. Ah, yes, that Robe of Righteousness is incalculably costly! But there is "enough" to pay for it, and you get it for nothing.

I heard a young student say once, when we were in a restaurant together: "I am a student of Hebrew, and am getting on fairly well too. At least I have learned to read things backward." He said, "I always read a menu like that; I look at the price first, and order accordingly." I do not know that I have ever wished that I could indulge in that direction, but if we were really hungry, and our pockets were empty, we should look longingly at that which was displayed in the cook-shop window, and wish we had money to go in. I talked to somebody who had just returned from the East this morning, and she said, "How did you get along with the food?" I said, "I didn't get along." I said, "In India I lived on dry toast with a little bit of marmalade, and

tea without any milk. I was afraid of the butter, and afraid of the milk, and afraid of the meat and every other thing, and I existed for what time we spent in India just on that because I didn't like what they prepared." It wasn't a case of having money or not having money, you couldn't get anything. I suppose those of us who have never been reduced to the point of starvation really do not know what it means to be ravenously hungry, and to have empty pockets as well as empty stomachs. It must be distressing, terribly distressing.

This man knew all about it. He came home hungry, but there was enough, enough. Do you always have enough? It is a little difficult sometimes to know where to stop with the children, isn't it? I remember some years ago we had some kind of a supper at Christmas time for one of our Departments, and they served sandwiches, and I do not know what else. I saw one man, and heard him as he came back to the kitchen and put down his plate. He said, "I give up." I said, "What is the matter?" He said, "I can't fill them up." But you can be filled up here. "Enough!" Always plenty, and "enough" to satisfy the hunger of a starving soul, to make adequate provision for all its needs, if we but come to Christ.

But, dear friends, it is one thing to come home and find our initial requirements supplied; it is another thing *to be sure of continuous maintenance.* Plenty for today, but what about tomorrow? Our Lord said, "Take no thought for the morrow," "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" — counsel that very few people, I am afraid, take. People do take thought for tomorrow, but in the Christian life that is the all-important thing. A birth is something to be noted, and to rejoice over, but the birth of a child into any family increases the responsibility, and really the maintenance of the home then becomes a serious matter. The family is increased and there are more mouths to be fed, more children to be clothed, and children to be trained and educated, and fitted for a station in life. That is a big job. I wonder sometimes how people manage it, with prices going skyward. I was in a store yesterday, I didn't know it was a chain store, but I stumbled into it, and I saw a woman with one of these little things on wheels with a basket on it, and it seemed to me that she had half the store piled in. I do not know what in the world she was going to do with it, and when she took it out to pay for it, the girl called somebody to bring something to put these things in, so she would have room to put the other things and reckon them up. I said to myself, "That woman must keep a boarding-house, or otherwise, she must have a large family." Piles and piles of it, and the cost of it! It is a serious matter when you have to provide on that scale, isn't it? But oh, in the Divine Family our Father has plenty, and He is never at a loss to buy shoes for the children, to provide the table, and all the clothing they need, and to provide too for their education. That is an important element in the Christian life. Justification, standing before God. And then sanctification, growing up into Christ in all things. But it is all here. There is enough to meet all the requirements of a growing and enlarging soul. We may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and we shall never come to the end of the Divine resources.

So all the way through the Christian life to meet all the exigencies of life, whatever they may be, there is light enough, there is power enough, there is grace enough, there is peace enough, there is joy enough, there is enough of everything to satisfy the soul. Why should we go elsewhere for satisfaction? What would you think — here is a newly married couple, and she is very proud of her husband, and he is very proud of his wife. But someone observes him one morning — he leaves the house, hurries downtown to business, and the first thing he does is to go into a restaurant, and order a big breakfast. Someone who knows him, observing, says, "Did you not get your breakfast this morning?" He is an honest man, and he says, "Yes, such as it was." "What was the matter?" "Oh, my wife is the best woman in the world but she would be a lot better if she could cook. But really, I looked at the breakfast, made a feint to eat it, kissed her goodbye, and said to myself, 'I'm going down town to get something to eat.'" That wouldn't be very complimentary to the provisions of home, would it? Why do the Lord's children go to the devil's restaurants? Why are they found in places where He Himself will never go? Is it really true that there is no satisfaction in Jesus Christ? Must we go to the well-springs of the world to satisfy our thirst? Is there not a blessing promised to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, to the effect that they shall be filled? We do not need to go elsewhere, dear friends.

When I have been travelling all over the country, sometimes when I have got home my wife has said to me, "I do not know whether I can satisfy you; you have been in hotels I suppose, and entertained by people who could afford anything, and I do not know whether such fare as I give you would be satisfactory." But I always say, "Let me get my feet under my own table and get the cooking you provide at home, and there is no hotel in the world that can entice me."

So ought we to find in the banqueting house of the King all that is necessary for our development in grace, and for our satisfaction as children of God.

*There is enough to provide the Christian with sustenance for his journey.* It costs something to travel, doesn't it?" "Oh, yes," you say, "the fare is so-and-so." The fare isn't much, it is your road expenses, it is your hotel, it is your provision by the way that costs, any traveller will tell you.

I remember once, years ago, I had a bicycle. Nowadays I read sometimes of some hardpressed preacher who actually has to go from one station to another on a bicycle! He hasn't a car, poor man. He has to use a bicycle. I remember a man asking me if I was related to a certain Mr. Shields, referring to my father, and he said, "I have walked twenty miles many times to hear your father preach." I said, "And my father, when he was a young man, walked twenty miles many times to preach." Oh yes, I have known of preachers who had to walk from place to place. They had no other means of transportation. That is how the Apostle Paul travelled except when he "was minded to go by ship". But I had a bicycle, but I was afraid almost to let anybody know that I had it. I was afraid they would think I was putting on airs. I was afraid my people would think I was living extravagantly. Why he actually has a bicycle! And it did seem at that time to be one of the signs, if not of affluence, at least of a fair provision.

A friend of mine and I decided to go for a holiday on

our bicycles. We pedalled miles and miles, and I learned then what a head wind could do for anybody. There were no roads such as we have now, and we travelled, and we had to get to a place about noon or at the time of the evening meal, because there were no restaurants. The only gasoline we had was what we ate; that supplied the power. We pedalled away, and at last we got to a place where there was a student pastor. He was unmarried, and his aunt, a lady from this church, was keeping house for him for a little while. She belonged to the well-to-do class, where everything was nicely done. So we were invited, hungry as wolves, to tea. She sat at the tea-table with a little bit of a loaf about the size of a good sized roll, and she had a knife with which she cut little slices off, and it seemed to me that she cut it just as thin as she possibly could, and she would pass out these little slices of bread! I felt almost like being rude and saying, "Mrs. So-and-so, give me that roll and go and get another one for my friend." We could take it all, for I say we were hungry. But she passed these little slices of bread, and then when she was only half way through, she stopped, and she didn't ask us to have any more! I can remember the feeling I had when I came out of that place, more hungry than when I went in; and I have had a quarrel with that thin bread and butter business ever since, because I remember those days of my youth when it was difficult to satisfy my hunger when I was a cyclist on the road.

Ah, but my dear friends, when we come in footsore and weary from climbing the hills and travelling over rough roads, and we come at last into the Father's house, that isn't the way he treats us. Oh, no. His supplies are bountiful; He lavishes the fulness of His house upon us, and so as we make our pilgrim journey we can be sure that He will see to it that we are provided with all that is necessary for our sustenance on the way.

If I had time I would like to name a number of other figures — the Christian warrior provided with adequate arms for the battle. General Pershing said that he went over in the First War in command of an army that had no arms. They had none — they had none when the war ended, that I knew. But our Lord doesn't send us a warfare at our own charges; He equips us for the battle, and all the exigencies of life, and when the giant is laid low and the victory is ours, we still have four smooth stones from the brook in our scrip. There is enough for victory, and to spare.

## II.

But then, my dear friends, there is "ENOUGH AND TO SPARE". I like to see something left over. That is always the rule where our Lord Jesus is the host. Once upon a time there were a great number of people who came to dinner, and when a survey was made of the resources it was said that there were only five barley loaves and two small fishes. You cannot supply a great multitude of people with that, but you know the story, that when they had all they could eat, for it is said that they were "sufficed", they gathered up the fragments that remained and there were twelve baskets full! There is always enough over for somebody else. What I want to remind you of is, that in the Father's house there is enough and to spare, and you can invite as many as you like to come and share it.

I remember years ago, when I was first married, we were rather economical in our provision, there were just

two of us, and my wife didn't buy extravagantly. The fact of the matter was, we couldn't. So one day, thoughtlessly, I proudly brought somebody home to lunch. The supplies were put upon the table, and he and I were engaged in conversation. I served my wife first of all, then I served him, and then I looked, and there wasn't anything left. Our guest was a little embarrassed, and he said, "You haven't anything left for yourself." I forget how I got out of it, but he was one whom I knew very well, and I got out of it somehow, but after that we weren't quite so economical, and usually I found out how things were at home before I invited people. But I do not like that. I remember a man's saying to me once — he had bought a house, and it was a little bit of a house, oh, a neat little place, and he was a little man. "Now," he said, "this is just the kind of house you want." I said, "What makes you say that?" "It just suits you." I tried to put my overcoat on, and I couldn't get it on because there wasn't room, so I had to get cornerwise to get the coat on. "Why," I said, "man, there isn't room, as Dickens would say, 'to whip a cat' here; I don't want a little house like that." No, if I had plenty of money I would have a big house. I should not care how big it was. I do not like little houses for myself; if I could afford it I would have a big house, and I would have lots of guest-chambers, and I would have plenty of servants, and I would have a great big refrigerator, and I would have everything in that refrigerator that could be put there. Then I would invite anybody I liked to come home to dinner. Come along, come along! Just call up the house — "I have ten guests tonight." That would be fine. I like company; I like society, and if I had plenty of money, plenty of room, plenty of help, I would love to do that, wouldn't you? That is my ideal of living, to be able to surround yourself with your friends whenever you want to.

I remember a house where I was entertained years ago in the West. I was preaching as a vacation preacher, I was on my holidays, and the host was a man of substance. He had a big house, and lots of servants. In the church of which he was a Deacon they called him the "Pater". He was everybody's father. I do not mind telling you where it was — it was in Winnipeg, and if and when this address is printed many who read it will remember a Mr. Sharp. A "great big man" he was, physically and in every other way. One Saturday afternoon I was in his home, and his wife said to me: "Come out to the kitchen, I want to show you something." I went out into the kitchen, and there was a long white table, as long as that Communion table, and much wider, and it was piled with home-made bread. Enough, it seemed to me, to fill a baker's wagon. Their children were married, and away from home, and I said, "Why, Mrs. Sharp, what in the world are you going to do with all that bread?" "You will be here tomorrow, and you will see," she said, "but I just wanted you to see. Doesn't it look fine? Does it make you hungry?" I said, "Yes." So the next morning I watched him. It was at a time when Winnipeg was full of young people away from home. He would go around and say, "Where do you come from?" "Oh Montreal, Toronto . . ." "Glad to see you. Where are you living?" "So and so." "Where do you get your meals?" "Oh, so and so." He would put his arm around him — "You come home and have dinner with me." Then he would go around and find somebody else. When I got there that day at noon,

after the morning service, the dining room table was out to its utmost length, and it was surrounded by these young men which the "pater" had picked up in church. When I looked around I said to Mrs. Sharp, "I understand your bread pile now, Mrs. Sharp." And I do not suppose there was much of it left by the time we all got through. That home was a little bit of heaven. He took care of me as I have never been taken care of before or since. He put his arms about me.

Well, now, that is how our Lord does. He puts His arms about the hungry, and He says, "Come home with me." There will be plenty, enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore. "Enough and to spare."

And, my dear friends, as children of the household, we are in this happy position, that we can take just as many people as we like home to dinner, and that is the essence of evangelism; that is what we ought all to be doing all the time, looking after the people whom we can take home to dinner and introduce to our Father's house and to His table. The people you know in Toronto and everywhere else; the people of Africa, of China, of India, of Japan, of the Islands of the Sea, of the South Americas, all the Republics, everywhere, no matter where they are, we can invite them all to come home to dinner, and we can never exhaust the supplies of the Heavenly Household. There is always "enough and to spare". Shall we do it? Shall we first of all take full advantage of the bountiful provision of the Father's house, and then invite others to come.

So I invite you into this realm of the plentiful, of the Infinite. Come, as they came to Joseph's storehouses. No one was ever sent empty away. May we find it so, for His Name's sake. Let us pray.

Oh Lord, we thank Thee that we are never straitened in Thee, but only in ourselves, that our sufficiency is always of God. Thou dost uphold us with the right hand of Thy righteousness. Bless our meditation, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

### IN HIS HAND

Inasmuch as our life and death are in His hand, He will preserve us by His might that not an hair will be plucked out of our heads without His leave. Believers, therefore, ought to feel assured into whatever hands they may fall, that God is not divested of the guardianship which He exercises over their persons. Were such a persuasion well imprinted on our hearts, we should be delivered from the greater part of the doubts and perplexities which torment us and obstruct us in our duty.

—JOHN CALVIN

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## "THERE IS A SOUND OF ABUNDANCE OF RAIN"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,  
Sunday Morning, September 17, 1950  
(Electrically Recorded)

### Prayer Before the Sermon

Thou hast taught us, O Lord, that we are not heard for our much speaking. We are heard because Thou hast promised to hear the cry of the needy. We rejoice to know that as we come in the name of the Lord Jesus, our prayers are acceptable to Thee. Already we have invoked Thine aid for this service, last night, and in the school to-day, so that we now wait for the answer to believing prayer: that as we pray, by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, light may be shed upon the sacred page, and that our hearts by the grace of Thy Spirit be made receptive to the truth, that this service may be honouring to Thy Word, and glorifying to Thy name.

We commend all the assemblies of the saints everywhere to Thy gracious care, and all who preach the gospel in any way, or testify to the grace of our Lord Jesus. Make this, we beseech Thee, a day of very definite progress for the kingdom of God.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

"There is a sound of abundance of rain."—I. Kings 18:41.

**I** MAY safely assume that we are all familiar with the historical background of this text, and that I need but remind you of a few of the salient features of that history.

It was a time of great apostasy in Israel, when the whole nation had turned to the worship of Baal, under the leadership and by the inspiration of Ahab and Jezebel, particularly of Jezebel, who had set up her own gods in place of Jehovah. Because of the wickedness of the nation Elijah was sent, and he came saying to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." For three and a half years thereafter the heavens were shut up: there was neither rain nor dew, until the pastures were withered, granaries were empty, the streams were dry, and people, and cattle, were dying for want of food.

Ahab, instead of repenting, sent in all directions seeking for Elijah, as the cause of all his troubles. That is ever so. Those who remind people of their spiritual declension are invariably blamed for the very thing they seek to remedy. But at the end of the three and a half years Elijah showed himself to Ahab. You are familiar with his great challenge that Ahab should summon all the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves, four hundred, to Mount Carmel; and that they should there let God speak for Himself; "And the God that answereth by fire, let him be God".

Then follows the story of the prophets of Baal calling upon their gods, and receiving no answer and being mocked by Elijah because of the failure of their gods to respond to their prayer. Then Israel's altar was restored, the wood and the sacrifice were placed upon it, and three times it was drenched with water, a trench was dug about the altar and that also was filled with water. Then about the time of the evening sacrifice Elijah prayed very briefly, not as the prophets of Baal, calling upon their false gods all day long — he simply put his case before the Lord, and begged Him to answer by fire, and to vindicate him as His servant, but espe-

cially to show that He was God: And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word! Hear me, O Lord, hear me that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there." Then when this was done, Elijah said to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain". There was not a cloud in the sky. The situation had not changed at all, apparently. And Elijah went up to Mount Carmel and prayed. Seven times he sent his servant, and the seventh time he reported a cloud as big as a man's hand. Soon the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.

That is the story of what came to pass because one man prayed. The New Testament tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves, subject to all our limitations, and temptations, and yet he prayed, and for three and a half years the heavens were shut up, and it did not rain. And he prayed again, and there was a great rain. We are told, really, by implication, that we, too, may pray, as did Elijah; we, too, may receive answers by fire.

We live in a day which I think you will grant is comparable to that of the day when Elijah first presented himself to Ahab. There is much religion in our day, great organizations, most of whom deny the verities of the Christian faith. They no longer believe the word of God, nor proclaim the saving efficacy of the blood of Christ. Plenty of religion on Sunday, but very little vital godliness! Very little real trust in God!

We have examined this story many times; but I think we may find some new refreshment for our spirits if we look at some of the underlying principles which have application to us; that we, also, may so call upon God that we may hear "the sound of abundance of rain".

### I.

WHAT PRECEDED THIS GREAT MIRACLE? First of all, *there was prayer by one man* — not a great concert of prayer, not multiplied prayer meetings; not a great stir — there was one man who stood before God. This is the only address he gave: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand". Elijah is noted in Holy Scripture as a man of prayer.

We are accustomed to think that we must have a great multitude to get anything done. I was in a city in the United States, not long since, and I saw a prayer meeting announced for a Friday evening. I attended. I was one of eighteen. There were four men, including myself, and fourteen women. I think everybody there prayed, and they prayed especially for a certain evangelistic meeting. The evangelist had demanded that before he should come there must be five hundred prayer



meetings. Well — that is merely cloaking five hundred advertising centres with the name of prayer. There is nothing in the word of God that would condition His blessing upon our ability to have five hundred prayer meetings. If that were true, you and I might well find excuse for not receiving the Lord's blessing. We might say, "I am only one. Of course if there were a great multitude of people we might have the blessing of the Lord. I do the best I can. I am a man of prayer; but I am only one, and because I am only one the blessing does not come."

But you see the word of God is very clear that His promise is given to "two or three", as, indeed, it is given to one. Nearly all the great revivals of history have begun with a small fire: "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" I know we may have such meetings and call them meetings for prayer; we may have an elaborate organization, and much newspaper publicity, and assemble a great crowd, and accomplish no lasting good. I have been in this city for a long time, and I have seen many such bonfires that have made a stir and a lurid glare at the time, and left behind them nothing but ashes — no real spiritual accomplishment, for all the effort. That, my dear friends, is not God's way of doing it. The responsibility rests, not with a great multitude, but with one, just one.

How easy it would be for me, as a Pastor, to say, "I am praying earnestly, but of course I am dependent upon the co-operation of my people, and if they do not pray, it isn't my fault, if no blessing or little blessing comes." Long since I learned that we must take the responsibility upon ourselves, and if we do not have blessing, it is not somebody else's fault, it is ours. Five hundred prayer meetings are not indispensable to revival. All we need is that we ourselves, men and women of like passions with Elijah should learn how to stand before God and talk with Him, and He will hear us, as he heard Elijah. That is the reason for his mention in the New Testament. A long time had elapsed between the days of Elijah and the time when James wrote those words, but the Apostle James wrote by inspiration, still believing that God would hear the prayer of a believing man or woman then, as readily as in Elijah's time.

Now *what does it mean to pray after the manner of Elijah?* Does it mean merely to say words, to utter verbal petitions? No, we may do all that, and never reach the throne of Heaven. What was Elijah's prayer? First of all: *that God would interpose and withhold both dew and rain.* I think that was much harder than to pray for rain. "He prayed," the Scripture says, "that it might not rain." Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better; sometimes individuals and churches and nations have to be taught what it is to be without God's help. When the United Nations Assembly met there was a question as to whether there should be any prayer, and it was decided that they would have no prayer, and the work began without God. A union of all the nations of the earth can never bring peace and security if God is left out of it. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." The same is true of all these religious assemblies. You may have United Church Councils and World Councils, and talk about gathering together all organizations that bear the Christian name, and thus promote the interests of peace. It will all amount to nothing. It is only a larger aggregation of unbelieving men, such as we have had in Tor-

onto; even at the United Church Council meeting — Bishop Oxenham and Dr. MacKay, who teach their people not to believe in the unique Divine inspiration and authority of the word of Holy Scripture; and who certainly do not stand before God. I know you may make a great show in that way but that does not bring a Divine visitation, nor are the hearts and lives of men changed by religiosity of that sort. We have plenty of that in the world; but if we are to measure progress by numbers then we should be forced to accept the preposterous contention and claim of the Roman Catholic Church that that is the only true church. I passed by one of their churches coming here this morning, and for blocks and blocks on either side of the street, and up the side streets there were cars and cars, hundreds of them — praying to idols, praying to Mary, honouring the Pope, the vast majority of them with no consciousness of God at all. We do not need that; that isn't faith.

What sort of faith had Elijah? Elijah's faith led him to believe in the very thing which these men declare to be impossible. He believed that, though God had made this world, and that though it was an ordered universe, and summer and winter, cold and heat, seedtime and harvest should not cease yet *he believed that the Divine Creator could interpose, He could suspend His law, He could make bare His arm,* and He could visit a nation with chastisement and impoverish them to the point almost of starvation, to teach them that there could be no prosperity or peace without God. Elijah believed that, and he prayed that it might not rain, and it rained not for three and a half years. I think through that three and a half years Elijah must often have asked the Lord for permission to pray for the end of the famine, and he must often have received the word, "Not yet"; until at last God came to him and said, "Go show thyself to Ahab." You know the story of how Ahab was already scouring the country looking for water or for a little bit of grass, that he might save the cattle alive. He went in one direction and Obadiah in the other, and Elijah met Obadiah and said, "Go tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here," and Obadiah was afraid. He said, "He has searched everywhere to find you, and if I go and tell him the Spirit of the Lord will catch you away, and when you are not to be seen then I shall have to pay for it, and my life will be forfeited." "No," said Elijah. "I will show myself to Ahab this day." Only one man! Not a multitude. No committee, no board, no council! Only one man with God! That is all we need at any time, when God's hour of visitation shall strike.

Now I say *Elijah believed that God was a factor in human affairs;* he believed that He could seal the heavens that there might not be rain, and he believed too that He could send rain and revive His land. Now, my dear friends, do we believe God after that fashion? Have we a naked faith in the reality of God? I met a layman a few weeks ago in the United States, who said rather an interesting thing to me. I haven't examined it since, but I think he was correct. He said, "Have you ever thought of the significance of Christ's saying that 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove'?" He said, "I know there is another passage which speaks of the mustard seed as being the smallest of all seeds, but it seems to me in this case it is referred to with a different significance. So," he said.

"I was at pains to inquire of all authorities, and to study this metaphor of the mustard seed, and," he said, "I found that it was unique among seeds. A corn of wheat, as it is called in the Scripture, falling into the ground, must die, and its outer covering must decompose until at last the vital germ is touched and the blade appears. But first of all a lot has to be destroyed before the seed can germinate, and that is true of nearly all seeds." My friend said, "They wear clothes, and the clothes have to be taken off, so that the life-principle can express itself. But," he said, "the mustard seed is a seed without any clothes; it is a very small seed, but it is a vital principle. There is no admixture of anything that has no life in it; it is a living thing, and 'if you have faith, unadulterated, naked faith,' as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain remove hence to yonder place."

How little faith of that sort there is. What is our faith? A little bit of confidence in ourselves, a little bit of trust in favourable circumstances, a little bit of dependence perhaps upon some good people whom we know, and altogether we think we have faith. But our faith must be tried—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Our faith has to be put into the furnace, just as gold is, that all the dross may be burned away, and that we may be left at last with nothing but a naked faith in God Himself. I do not believe any of us can be of any real value to God, or to others, for that matter, as Christians until we have been brought to the very edge of the precipice, until there is absolutely nothing to help us; no one who can assist in any way at all. There is the precipice, and it means that as we go forward one of two things must happen—it must be God or ruin, one or the other.

Do we depend on anyone but God? It is not organization, it is not wealth, it is not learning, it is not eloquence it is not social prestige. The Kingdom of God is never advanced by carnal means. God does not need it. He is God, and beside Him there is none else, and all that we need is a faith that will move the very arm of God. Then we may have the very blessing we desire. That is what Elijah had. He had nobody else. He hadn't even one companion with whom he could confer. He stood utterly alone before God, and yet he shut up the heavens, and again he opened them.

What I want to ask you is this, and I want you to search your hearts: Is the Lord God Himself actually a factor in your life? Has He the supreme place? Can you forsake everybody and everything, and cast yourself entirely upon God, trusting nothing, trusting nobody but God Himself? God will not divide His honour with another; He will not "disgrace the throne of His glory." "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." There is nothing this world needs so much as to be shown that Jehovah is God. Let Him break in upon us; let Him make bare His arm; let Him send fire from heaven. Then you will see the critics running; then you will see those who depend upon the multitudes discovering the fallacy and the futility of all their schemes.

## II.

WHAT DID ELIJAH ASK FOR? *Elijah proposed something which nobody but God Himself could give. No-*

body. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." God is His own apologist; the Holy Ghost is the only effectual defender of the faith. We may argue as much as we like, but we cannot establish the truth of God's Word; we cannot by any rational process prove that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. That is something that God must do for Himself; nobody else can do it for Him. Therefore, He must break in upon our smug complacency, make bare His arm and show that He is God.

I wonder if we are ready for a test of that sort? I do not believe the conditioning of any sort of religious effort upon the prior assembly of a great multitude is God's way. I cannot find a single instance of it in the Scripture. I know the promise having been made to two or three, the hundred and twenty continued in prayer, and they were all, not in five hundred different places, but they were "all with one accord in one place"; and it was then that God answered by fire, and the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost.

I need not go into the details of the story. You can see it for yourself — the altar of Baal erected, the sacrifice prepared, four hundred and fifty on their faces calling upon their idol to answer, cutting themselves with knives and lancets until the blood gushed out, and from morning until evening crying, "O Baal, hear us," but there was no voice nor any that answered. Then you see what Elijah did. Not only repaired the altar, laid the sacrifice upon the wood, but he poured water upon it, and it seemed as though he were determined to make the miracle impossible, if it were possible to make it impossible. Drenched with water, contrary to all nature, then he asked the Lord to answer, and the fire came.

We do not need favorable circumstances, dear friends. All we need is God, and He will provide the circumstances. So then I call upon you as an individual, every member of this church here, get before God, do your own praying, and remember that the responsibility is an individual one: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

When the people of Israel were threatened in the days of Mordecai, and he was not permitted to enter into the King's gate, there was one within who had access to the King, and that one person, only one person, made petition for the threatened people. That is God's way always. "I called (Abraham) alone." Let us see what we can do each for ourselves. See what God can do in us and through us.

But now, Elijah challenging God to do the humanly impossible, challenging God to manifest His Divine power — what did He do? *What was the meaning of the restoration of the altar?* The twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes; the placing of the wood upon the altar, and the sacrifice upon the wood — of what did the altar speak to the people of Israel? Always, first of all, of atonement by blood; always in symbol looking forward to Him Who is the great Intercessor. You will find it all through the Scripture that there is only one way into the Divine presence, that is through the rent veil of His flesh; hence we need a new confidence in the efficacy of the blood of Christ, in the availability of His grace to us on the ground of the meritorious atonement of the Lord Jesus. Let us have no confidence in the flesh. I do not care what may be your spiritual stature, what may be your growth in grace, there is no

ground upon which any one of us at any time can ever pray to God but the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. You accumulate no merit, it is always the merit of Christ; it is always for His Name's sake. Therefore, let the altar be erected, let our trust be in Him.

But there is another side of it. I remember a lady saying to me years ago of a certain popular preacher: "He is soundly orthodox in his preaching, he preaches the cross, but," she said "you cannot hear him without feeling that he knows nothing about its subjective power, there is no cross in his life." The altar meant more than atonement. It meant consecration. When the offering was put upon the altar, and it was cut in pieces, inwardly cleansed and then put piece to its piece, the whole was consumed with the Heavenly Flame and as the people saw it they saw themselves consumed by the Holy Ghost. They were wholly devoted to the service of God, subordinating everything to His will and His glory.

Do you allow anything to come between you and your service for Jesus Christ? Your pleasure, your ease, your comfort, your family, your house, your business. Anything at all that stands between you and direct communication with God through Christ is a sin. There must be nothing to prevent our intercourse with the Most High. As Elijah prayed, "Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word," Elijah virtually said first of all, "Vindicate Thine own great Name. Men have dragged it in the mire; they have said, 'There is no God;' break in upon us that everybody may know that Thou art God." He also asked that they might know, "That I am thy servant." I think we are justified in praying for that. A company of people that have endeavoured, as God helps them, to cut themselves loose from everything, and to set up a testimony for God, and have been derided, mocked at, persecuted, slandered, lied about, because of their stand for God — can we justify ourselves? Can we vindicate the course we have taken? No. In that as in the evangelical sense, it is God that justifieth. The Psalmist said, "Show me a token for good, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed, because Thou, Lord, has holpen me." We have a right to pray that God would so honour us if we trust in Him, and cast our all upon Him; that He will so manifest Himself that people shall know after all that these are God's servants: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

You remember how the spirit-possessed damsel cried after the apostles: "These men are servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Even "the devils also believe and tremble." Modernists do not; ecclesiastics do not; church councils do not; denominations, many of them, do not, but the devils believe and tremble; and we have a right to ask that God would vindicate the trust to His people. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." "When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it." I have seen it again and again, and shall see it again.

... "And that I have done all these things at thy word" Elijah asked that God would vindicate Himself, His servant, and His Word. That is what the world

needs to know now, that the Lord is God, that there are people somewhere, few it may be here and there throughout the world, who are yet His people; that He has the seven thousand who haven't bowed the knee to Baal, and then that He Himself should prove the truth of His word. That is what we need. Someone read in prayer meeting last night, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world," having nothing to do with it, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," (we must have a new attitude toward life) "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." That is possible for us, but we must erect the altar, we must present ourselves as living sacrifices, acceptable to God. Then the fire will come.

### III.

AND WHAT THEN? A great many people stop there, but after the fire, *when God had shown His hand, something occurred, which could not possibly have occurred before.* There were four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, there were four hundred prophets of the groves, eight hundred and fifty of them altogether, and Elijah was hopelessly in the minority—one against eight hundred and fifty — what's the use? No, he wasn't in the minority. God was with him, and God was more than all the eight hundred and fifty, and when the people saw the fire they confessed "The Lord, he is God." And then Elijah said, "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape." "And they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there." Purge the nation of idolatry, put this thing out of the way altogether. Elijah prayed that the people might know that the Lord had turned their hearts back again. That is exactly what He did.

Well now, my friends, there are Baal principles in your life and mine. What is it but a substitute for God? What is it but something which takes the place of God? Whatever it may be, take it down to the brook Kishon and slay it there, put it to the sword, let the two-edged sword of the Word of God pierce it, and slay it. Let us have no more of it.

May I dare to say I believe that *there is a sound of abundance of rain, for I believe that God came to us and did this very thing not long ago.* No matter how carefully you may tend your garden, how assiduously you may care for it and pluck out every weed, when you go out to see it tomorrow or the next day, there will be more weeding to do. So is it in the vineyard of the Lord. It is very difficult to keep it clean, very difficult to distinguish between the wheat and the tares. But God knows how to do it, and periodically He visits the vine of His planting. "Awake O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out." God does that, but, my dear friends, it is for you and for me to remove everything that is alien to the Spirit of God.

You say, "I cannot do it." No. *This had been impossible if Elijah had attempted it before the fire came.* I have never believed that the gift of the Holy Spirit was conditioned upon our, first of all, by our own efforts, so preparing ourselves that there should be nothing in me or in you that is contrary to the Spirit of God. That is Keswick teaching! Cleanse the heart yourself. But you cannot cleanse it; slay the prophets

of Baal, but you cannot slay the prophets of Baal; prepare yourself to receive the Holy Ghost, but you cannot prepare yourself. You can only ask Him to come in and take possession, and purge the house for Himself. But it was after the fire that the prophets of Baal were slain, and it is after the fire, when we have really received the Divine Spirit, that we find it possible to do things which we could not do before.

#### IV.

Then, WHEN ALL THAT WAS DONE ELIJAH HEARD THE SOUND OF ABUNDANCE OF RAIN. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It was God who said, "Elijah go and present yourself to Ahab;" it was God who had directed. And when he had done all these things according to God's word, he listened, and while there wasn't a cloud in the sky his spiritual hearing detected that the rain was on the way.

I read a story in the early days of what they then called the "wireless", of a ship that was sailing down the Mediterranean on a beautiful moonlight night. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, the stars were out, everything was calm and peaceful, and the operator said, "I hear rain." "Can you tell where it is?" "Well, I have an idea we shall run into it in a few hours," and it wasn't very long before the heavens were black with clouds, there was a great wind, and a great rain. Elijah was the wireless operator. He was in communication with Heaven, and he could hear a thing that nobody else could hear. He said, "Go and tell Ahab he had better hurry; there is the sound of abundance of rain." He had to tell him the second time: "Get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."

My dear friends, I believe it is possible for us to come into such relationship with God that in advance of its coming, we may be sure that the rain is on the way. "There is a sound of abundance of rain." I do not believe that God has forsaken this earth; I do not believe that He has given it up to the devil and his angels; I look for a revival of pure and undefiled religion, such as the world has never seen. I do not believe that this world is to go to the devil and to the dogs, and that the Lord is to be defeated in this planet. He is waiting, delaying His coming, the Scripture says, "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" and there is good ground in the Word of God I think for believing that God will visit this planet with such a revival of religion as this old world has never seen. Why shouldn't it begin with you and me? Why should not we be among the first to hear the "sound of abundance of rain?" May the Lord grant that it may be so for His Name's sake. Amen. Let us pray.

Oh, Lord, as Thou didst summon Elijah into Thy presence, and shut him up to converse with Thyself, so do Thou summon everyone of us, not tomorrow, not tonight, but now. May we all have direct dealings with God, so that we also may pray and move the hand of God. We ask it for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

#### MAY CHRIST BE THY ALL

"For the weariest day  
 May Christ be thy stay!  
 For the darkest night  
 May Christ be thy light!  
 For the weakest hour  
 May Christ be thy power!  
 For each moment's fall  
 May Christ be thy All!"

—FRANCES-RIDLEY HAVERGAL

#### THE SEMINARY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAUSE OF THE GOSPEL

NEXT week Toronto Baptist Seminary will open its doors to commence another year's work. As we think of the young people who will return from their various mission fields, and of others who for the first time take up their studies to prepare for the Lord's work, we are almost overwhelmed with the great responsibility that is ours. To teach men and women the truths of the Word of God is not only a great privilege, it is also a great responsibility, for we must answer for their souls. But the task of teaching teachers, of preaching to those who will in turn preach to others and establish churches is fraught with even greater possibilities and responsibilities. As we contemplate the magnitude of our task, we are constrained to ask ourselves, what can Toronto Baptist Seminary contribute to these young people so as to prepare them to answer the divine call they have heard? And a still greater question thrusts itself upon us, that is but the same one with larger bearings: What can the Seminary hope to contribute to the cause of the Gospel, to the work of the churches at home and abroad? We feel that after nearly a quarter of a century of existence as a Seminary, we have gained some title to attempt an answer to that question, howbeit we do so with a sense of profound humility, remembering that our Lord's saying is as true of institutions as it is of individuals: "Without me ye can do nothing."

#### Our Utter Dependence Upon the Lord

We begin then by emphasizing our utter dependence upon the Lord in every department of our work and in every phase of its activity. We recognize this principle in accepting students for we seek only those whose heart God has touched. Our first question to students is "Are you saved?" and our second is, "Are you called of God to the ministry?" Only then do we ask the secondary though important questions concerning their natural aptitude for the work of the Lord and their actual experience in His service, and their academic standing. A missionary who has spent many years on the foreign field told the writer the other day that when she went to apply for entrance to a certain Bible College, the principal asked her to fill in the admission form. The first question was, "Are you a Christian?" The principal hastened to answer the question for her by saying, "Of course you are, or you wouldn't be here." The young lady, too, supposed that she was a Christian for she was a church member and had a desire to serve her fellow-men. It was not till long after that she discovered that to be a Christian in the Biblical sense, she must meet Christ for herself in a personal way. We deem it of the greatest importance to hear from the lips of prospective students of the ongoings of God upon their souls. We likewise recognize that we cannot prepare them for the work unless they have already heard the Master's voice calling them.

It is difficult, indeed it is impossible, to determine at first sight whether or not a man has received the divine call to the ministry, but the record of what he has sought to do sheds much light on the matter and the way in which he makes proof of his ministry while still a student is also eloquent. In Toronto Baptist Seminary we do not regard the mission field and the work of preaching as something far distant, to begin after

graduation and ordination. It commences with the first day of classes and goes on throughout the whole term and during the summer "holidays" it takes on fresh meaning as the students go to their summer fields. In this Scriptural and practical way do our young men make their calling and election sure both to themselves and to others. If in the course of time, a young man fails to give evidence of call to the work or his fitness for it, we regard it not only as our bounden duty but also as a kindness to him to advise him to seek some other sphere of activity. A square peg in a round hole is always a sad spectacle, but in the ministry it is a tragedy, both for the man and for the church.

#### "A Common Danger and Calamity of the Church"

It is a source of very serious weakness to Protestant denominations that they have pressed into the ranks of their ministry, men who, despite their high training, have neither divine calling nor Christian experience. Too often the churches have not heeded the warning sounded in clarion tones by Richard Baxter nearly three hundred years ago in his classic *Reformed Pastor*:

"Alas! it is the common danger and calamity of the church, to have unregenerate and inexperienced pastors, and to have so many men become preachers before they are Christians; who are sanctified by dedication to the altar as the priests of God, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication as the disciples of Christ; and so to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, to pray through an unknown Spirit, to recommend a state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory, and a happiness, which are all unknown, and likely to be unknown to them for ever."

We are convinced that any contribution the Seminary can make to the cause of the Gospel will not be determined solely by the number of its graduates but rather by their spiritual quality. We seek to maintain a high academic level, and certainly our course taxes the powers of the best students, but in everything it is our constant purpose to hold before both faculty and students the great goal of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. This sort of knowledge comes only from personal intercourse of the soul with its Saviour; the power of the Spirit cannot be monopolized by any institution or channelled through outward forms. God does not tie Himself to mechanical means but comes upon whom He will.

#### The Mission of the Seminary

Thus, Toronto Baptist Seminary clearly recognizes both in theory and in practice that, like all human institutions, it is limited in its sphere of operations. It cannot do the work that God has reserved to Himself and does not profess to do it. But there is a task for us to do, and we dare to believe that this Seminary has been raised up of God for the purpose of teaching the doctrines of grace to faithful men "who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). In Old Testament times bands of young men gathered around the great prophet Elijah to learn from him and to perpetuate his message. Our Lord spent much of His time on earth teaching and training the twelve whom He chose to be with Him and to send forth to preach. In the Epistles of Paul there is much stress laid upon teaching. The seeds of the pure Gospel were first sown in England nearly two centuries before the Reformation by Wiclif's band of Poor Preachers. And in their day the Reform-

ers took special care to train men who would care for the souls of their fellows and teach them the Word of God. The enduring strength of the Evangelical Revival in England was in large part due to the attention the Wesleys paid to the supervision of their converts and to the organization of bands of lay preachers. It was natural and inevitable that Spurgeon should found the Pastors' College, which carried on and multiplied his own great ministry.

We in the Toronto Baptist Seminary are not so spiritually obtuse as to suppose that we can hold a corner on grace, nor are we so spiritually ignorant as to be unaware of the important and necessary place for careful study of the Word and fellowship in the things of God. Each one of us as believers must give an account of himself to God, but His presence is also promised to those who unite in common prayer in the Saviour's Name. We have already seen something of the blessing of God accorded to us as we have met with one mind in one place, and we pray that it may please the Lord to grant even greater outpouring of His Spirit in the future than in the past. It is a teacher's greatest compensation to see his students developing and growing in power. It has been our joy in the Seminary to see men who have come to us with only rudimentary notions of Christian doctrine grow in knowledge and lay hold upon the truths of the Word with new and deeper appreciation. This growth cannot be recorded in the form of academic credits, but those who have seen it, know the reality of it. Others have come to us with strange ideas concerning preaching and a still stranger practice of that art. But we have seen them form an enlarged conception of what the pulpit can be and eventually become able and faithful ministers of the Word. We are happy to note that Toronto Baptist Seminary has gained a reputation for producing preachers, men who know the Book and believe it and who have learned how to proclaim its glorious truths. And best of all we have seen men and women growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the explanation of why our students do not ask for large established churches which will provide a sinecure where they may be at ease in Zion. They are willing to endure hardness as good soldiers and to take up pioneer work in difficult places. One can feel the spiritual atmosphere of the Seminary in the student prayer meetings, in the daily chapel services, in the class rooms and in the residences. What our graduates have already accomplished by the grace of God is proof of the quality of the work done by this institution, but it is our earnest prayer that the Spirit of the living God may send revival blessings upon us, that God open the windows of heaven and pour out such blessing that we shall not be able to receive it.

#### Relating Theory to Practice

From the beginning of our work, we have stressed the value of the close connection that exists between the Seminary and Jarvis Street Church. Medical students are required not only to study the theory of medicine but to learn by actual experience in the wards of the hospitals. Lawyers are required to serve a term of apprenticeship in a law office. In every art and science theory must be related to practice. This is particularly necessary in the work of the ministry, where many of the chiefest lessons must be learned from life rather than from books. The Seminary forms an integral part of Jarvis Street Church, and there our students study the art of preach-

ing and of pastoral work under the example of a great pulpit master. And there is ample field for practical endeavour in the great Sunday school, which includes visitation of scholars and door-to-door work.

We recently came upon a fine passage in a sermon by Dr. John A. Broadus, delivered seventy years ago, that expresses our ideal in this matter. Said this great Southern Baptist scholar and educator:

"The only way to learn to preach is to preach, the fathers used to say. Certainly. The only way to learn to saw is to saw, or to learn how to make horse-shoes is to make them. At the same time, it is the experience of mankind that while some men take up these pursuits and acquire some skill from their practice, yet it is usually better for a man who purposes to be a mechanic, to work in his early attempts under the guidance and with the correction and encouragement of those who are far ahead of him in experience; and if men have found that so in all the mechanical arts, why should we be surprised to find it so in the great work of life of which the apostle speaks? 'A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.'"

#### Past Accomplishments

Already we have seen some of the fruits of the Seminary. Many churches have been established, old ones revived. We think of the members of last year's graduating class with special joy, as will those who read the account of the ordination service of Rev. B. Oatley-Willis on another page of this issue. Or take as another example the French-Canadian work in Northern Ontario and in Northern Quebec. This work began in the Seminary French classes and has been carried on very largely by men and women who caught the vision of it here and received both their biblical and linguistic knowledge in these halls. All about us are other mission fields that are white unto harvest and await only the labourers whom our Lord shall send out. We speak not only of French Canada but of English Canada, and not only of this Dominion but of the world. God give us men, men of the right sort, men of His own choosing.

#### A Joint Stock Enterprise

In closing, we venture to remind our readers of the financial needs in maintaining such a school as this. A few weeks ago when preaching at one of our churches, a student of our Seminary handed the writer an envelope with the request that it be delivered to the President. On being opened it was found to contain twenty-five dollars for the upkeep of the school. How this particular student managed to scrape together such a sum must remain something of mystery, but it was all the more welcome on account of the poverty of the donor and still more so because it betokened this student's appreciation of what we are attempting to do in the Seminary. In closing we venture to borrow another paragraph from the above-mentioned address by Dr. John A. Broadus:

"When I go to a rich man and say, 'Come help us, won't you, in this enterprise,' I present to him a joint-stock concern, a very popular idea now-a-days, an investment which will yield him large dividends, and which will last a long time. . . . There are no investments in the civilized world so permanent as investments in institutions of education and religion. . . . A man who wants to put money which God has enabled him to gather where it will last when he is gone, doing the work that he has chosen for it in the long centuries to come, must choose a mode of investment in some institution of education or religion; and if it be combined, an institution of education and of religion, of course all the better."

Toronto Baptist Seminary is such a joint-stock enter-

prise, and as we open our doors for another academic year, we earnestly request the prayers of our friends that we may be specially conscious of the good hand of our God upon us.—W.S.W.

### ORDINATION OF MR. B. R. OATLEY-WILLIS AT ESSEX

**A**N ORDINATION Council called by the Essex Baptist Church, met at Essex, Wednesday, September 13th. We have not the official report before us, but we recall that eleven churches were represented, including: Calvary Church, Ottawa; Berean Church, Sudbury; Victoria Ave. Church, Hamilton; Jarvis St. Church, Toronto; Courtland Church; Campbell Ave. Church, Windsor; Tilbury Church; Harriston Church; Essex Church; Detroit Church; and the Guélfh Church.

Rev. H. C. Slade was elected Moderator, and Rev. Geoffrey Adams, Clerk. By a motion of the Essex Church the Council thus constituted was accepted by the church, to act in the church's behalf and with its cooperation.

The candidate gave a brief, but comprehensive, statement, with which the Council expressed its complete satisfaction; and a motion to proceed to ordination was unanimously carried.

As the hour was still early, it was decided to proceed with part of the programme immediately. Rev. George Olley, of Calvary Church, Ottawa, gave the charge to the candidate, which was really an admirable exposition of Paul's charge to the Elders of Ephesus. Rev. John Byers of Victoria Ave. Church, Hamilton, gave the charge to the church. In this Brother Byers ran true to form. His address was wholly scriptural. It was characterized by wholesome exposition and Mr. Byers' usual sparkling humour.

There was a large gathering in the afternoon, several carloads attending from Jarvis St., Courtland, and Tilbury, as well as, we suppose, a large number from Essex and vicinity.

We wondered how the ladies of Essex would manage to entertain so large a company, but they did it with perfect ease, and on the most generous scale. There were two sittings, and we believe that when all were "sufficed" there was still "enough and to spare."

The church was crowded at the evening service, which was presided over by the Moderator. The Minutes of the decision of the Council in the afternoon, were read by Rev. Geoffrey Adams. The Ordination Prayer was offered by the former Pastor, Rev. John Hunter, of Detroit, and the ordination sermon was preached by the Pastor of Jarvis Street Church.

The occasion was an experience of delightful fellowship, which always obtains where there is the unity of the Spirit.

The benediction was pronounced by Rev. Bert R. Oatley-Willis.

#### SECURITY

Without Christ, the matters of this world are but a puzzled maze. Poor blinded man sees nothing as it really is. He knows not the true end of being. He takes the tinsel to be gold. He counts the gold as dross. He treasures up the chaff as wheat. He casts the precious grain as playthings to the wind. . . . He profits no one and he ruins self.—HENRY LAW.

### THE ABERDEENSHIRE REVIVAL OF 1859

**I**N 1859, the Heavenly rain-cloud that so mightily refreshed the American Church in the previous year, crossed the Atlantic, outpoured upon Ulster an unspeakable blessing, and then hovered over the whole extent of the British Isles. Nowhere was the effusion more marvellous than in Aberdeenshire. For some years before, many had mourned in secret the long spiritual dearth and, as God's set time approached, these gathered into little praying groups throughout the county. In Aberdeen itself there were not a few of these watchful bands of intercessors, the largest meeting on Saturday evenings in the Free North Church.

It was surely in answer to these prayers, that Reginald Radcliffe, a Liverpool solicitor, came to Aberdeen at the close of 1858. He came to conduct a ten days' mission. It extended to five months. In the most unpretentious fashion he began in the small Mission Hall of Albion Street Congregational Church. Here he was content to labour first amongst the boys and girls, but soon men and women came to hear his simple and earnest appeals. His message breathed the love of God in its infinite tenderness, but was full of terrible warning to the Christ-rejector, calling constantly for instant decision. Soon old Greyfriars' Parish Church was opened to him, and the work then grew with great rapidity, until the whole city was deeply moved. He frequently preached six or seven times on the Sunday, and so great was the hunger for the Word, that whenever a congregation dispersed, the waiting multitude without at once poured in and again filled the place.

It became known that in the house of Mr. Brand, in Dee Place, anxious inquirers would be welcomed. To this house many flocked at the close of the services, and every room was filled with weeping penitents. On the Broadhill and on the links by the seashore memorable meetings were held, and here Duncan Matheson, with George Campbell, James Smith, Dr. Duncan, and other zealous ministers of the city, co-operated with Mr. Radcliffe. For a time, Divine things formed the one absorbing theme of conversation. People might be seen reading the Bible in the railway carriages and in the streets, and even customers in the shops, when they had completed their purchases, would make wistful enquiries as to the way of salvation.

A passion for prayer and for the Word of God seized the converts. They spent many hours together in prayerful study, and in Rubislaw Quarries all-night prayer meetings were held. As in every Revival, these praying converts became most potent evangelists, their abundant life overflowing in soul-winning service. Organized by Mr. Radcliffe, in whom the gift of wise leadership was fully consecrated, they went forth to the surrounding districts; and Aberdeen became a fount of spiritual life to the whole county.

In the little town of Old Meldrum, Radcliffe's faith was tested in a very striking manner. The Free Church was crowded to hear him. Expecting an address of extraordinary eloquence, the people were greatly disappointed by the simple, unadorned message of the evangelist. At the close the workers gathered about him in dismay. Not one person had remained in response to his appeal. But now the God of wonders revealed Himself through the man who utterly trusted Him. "Friends," said Radcliffe, "have faith in God. Let us ask God to send them back."

Then he prayed, speaking to God with the simplicity of a child addressing his father. As he continued in prayer there was a movement at the door. Someone entered, then another and another. The people were all coming back! For, on their homeward way, even as they were criticizing "the poor discourse" they had just heard, a Divine hand arrested them and compelled them to return! And now all cold indifference was gone. The simplest word pierced and melted their hearts. Soon the whole assembly, children, youths and maidens, fathers and mothers, were bathed in tears at the feet of Jesus. Old Mr. Garioch, the minister of the church, was transported. His face shone like an angel's, and that night a work of grace began that continued for months and entirely transformed the community.

If there were space, one would fain tell the story of James Turner, the Peterhead cooper, who continued Radcliffe's work. He was devoid of learning, and had no gift of utterance. He was a consumptive, and when his great task commenced, a dying consumptive, whose days were nigh numbered. He was little in stature, his voice was feeble, his eye deformed by a squint. But this frail, disfigured, vessel was filled with a passionate love to Jesus Christ, an intense hungering compassion for souls, and an invincible faith in God. He could pray! Therefore God was able to lift him up, out of weakness made him strong, and in two crowded years of glorious life, He used the dying consumptive to win for Him eight thousand souls! On December 6th, in the little fishing village of St. Combs, he began his memorable mission. From village to village he went, and everywhere along the sea coast his course was marked by the trail of Divine fire. As he went on, the blessing increased, and his coming was awaited with intense eagerness, and then, as happens when Revival reaches its flood tide, a wave of great joy passed over the people. They thronged around him and marched in a body from town to town, singing as only those can sing who have drunk "the Royal wine of Heaven," the joy unspeakable and full of glory. In this way he at last reached Banff, and the night of March 10th is one much to be remembered by the Church there. It was found impossible to dismiss the people, and through the whole night the great reaping went on. Many of the most notorious sinners in the town were saved, and many who first saw the Lord that night went forth to declare His glory in all parts of the earth. Turner had much of the spirit of M'Cheyne, and his end was like his. The matchless love of Christ filled his vision, and his last words were, "Christ is all."

Time tested the Aberdeenshire Revival and proved that it had the enduring quality of its native granite. Fifty years after, at a jubilee celebration meeting in 1910, a multitude gave thanks to God for its precious and abiding fruits, manifest not only in the county itself, but in every part of the world. The material results alone have arrested the careless eye. A gentleman once drew his friend's attention to several rows of beautiful cottages. "Look! these houses have sprung up as if by magic in room of the wretched hovels in which the fisher folk used to live. Formerly the money that came from the deep salt sea went down into the depths of that more dark and bitter sea, the public-house. All that is changed. The Revival came. The public-house was dried up to the bottom, and you see the hard-won earnings of the fishermen in these handsome and comfortable

homes. Revival is a reality here. You can see it, you can touch it, you can measure it, you can go into it and be sheltered by it, and taste some of its material sweets!"

Its spiritual fruits? Eternity alone will disclose how much Aberdeenshire owes, under God, to Reginald Radcliffe and James Turner.—*Old Time Revivals*.

## Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Fourth Quarter Lesson 1 October 1, 1950

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

### EZRA'S JOURNEY

Lesson-Text: Ezra 8:21-36.

Golden Text: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."—Psa. 34:15.

#### I. The Arrangements: verses 21-30.

In the Providence of God the first band of captives, numbering some 50,000, set out for the homeland in 535 B.C. (Ezra 1, 2). Under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel the sacred institutions were re-established, and in spite of every obstacle, the temple was rebuilt and dedicated about 516 B.C. (Ezra 3-6). In the following year Ezra the scribe, who "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it," was constrained to lead a second and smaller band of 1,754 pilgrims back to Palestine (Ezra 7:1-10, 8:1-14).

The exiles desiring to return had assembled on the banks of the River Ahava, the identification of which is uncertain, but it would seem to be a river in Babylon, near a city of the same name, chosen as a convenient rendezvous. There they pitched their tents and rested in preparation for the long journey (Ezra 8:15).

What a profitable three days for the travellers! Ezra surveyed the host and found that no priests of Levi were to be found in the company. He forbore to lead the exiles without priests who would be responsible for the worship of God. Doubtless most of the priests had gone to Jerusalem with the first band, but more were now summoned, men called and chosen according to the will of God (Ezra 8:18). Are we as careful to be spiritually prepared for every new undertaking (Esther 4:15-17; Dan. 2:14-18; Lk. 6:12-16)?

In the meantime Ezra had proclaimed a time of special feasting and prayer. He would not presume to undertake the leadership, or allow the people to travel without the presence and power of God, without His good hand being upon them (Ezra 7:6, 28; 8:18; Ezek. 1:3; 8:1; 37:1). At the River Ahava the people took time to afflict their souls (Lev. 16:29; 23:29; Isa. 58:3, 5), to search their hearts that they might be made ready to receive a revelation from God as to the right path they must travel for a safe and successful journey (Psa. 5:8; 16:11; 27:11; 36:9; 107:7; 119:35). How necessary that we should wait upon the Lord before taking any important step or making any decision!

This earnest prayer for guidance and protection was especially necessary, inasmuch as Ezra did not wish to ask for the usual military escort. This would have been the logical procedure, but the leader of the Jews had evidently told the king about the faithfulness of God in protecting His own. (Psa. 33:18, 19; 34:15, 22). For the sake of the testimony to this heathen king the noble scribe put his whole trust in the Lord (Psa. 125:1; Prov. 3:5, 6). Nor was he disappointed; his prevailing prayer, accompanied by such perfect trust, was abundantly answered (Isa. 19:22; Jas. 1:5, 6; 5:16).

Ezra prayed with his full heart for a prosperous journey, then put forth every effort to help answer his prayer (Neh. 2:4, 5; 4:9). He planned the expedition wisely and carefully. Human organization is not sufficient in the work of the Lord (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5), but directed by the Spirit of God, it has its place. The work of God is too sacred to be done in a careless or indifferent manner; it deserves our best.

Ezra did not take all the responsibility upon his own shoulders, but wisely distributed burdens among the priests (Exod. 18:17-25). In the Christian church each member of the body of Christ has his own peculiar duty to perform. How splendid if each one would realize and obey this Scriptural principle (Mk. 13:34; 1 Cor. 12:4-11)!

As Ezra weighed out the treasures to be carried by the

priests, he gave them a solemn charge, based upon three facts. They must ever remember that their persons were holy unto the Lord (Exod. 28:36; Isa. 52:11); that the vessels and utensils were holy unto the Lord, to be used for no other purpose but the sacred services of the temple (1 Kings 8:4); that the free-will offerings which they carried were holy unto the Lord, holy gifts consecrated to His glory (Heb. 13:15, 16). Christian workers in our day need to be reminded of these three facts.

The priests were charged in the name of the Lord to guard the treasures committed to their care and in due time present them to the proper guardians at Jerusalem. So did our Saviour pledge the Father to watch over the precious souls given to Him as a gift, to keep them securely and to present them faultless before the throne (John 17:6-12; Eph. 5:27; Jude 24). Preachers, teachers and Christian workers have received a similar charge (Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 1:14; Heb. 13:17).

#### II. The Arrival: verses 31-36.

No outward token of prosperity can take the place of the favour and blessing of God. The hand of God was upon these holy pilgrims, and notwithstanding all the difficulties and hazards involved when this band of 1,754 persons made their way across desert, mountain and stream, they were carried safely to their journey's end (Psa. 107:30). Surely this was a stupendous miracle of four months' duration (Deut. 8:2-4, 11-16; Ezra 7:9). They had been delivered from all evils, including the fierce desert tribes who roamed about the country. So will our Saviour preserve us, and He will bring us safely at last into the promised haven, delivering us from all our foes (2 Tim. 4:18).

As the large caravan arrived in Jerusalem, the people rested for three days, as they had rested three days before setting out from Babylon (v. 15). Doubtless their former prayer was now changed to praise, as they gave thanks to the Lord for His protecting and preserving care (Psa. 107:1-8). Gratitude is a rare, but becoming quality among Christians.

The time had come for the priests to give an account of the treasures which had been committed to their charge. They would rejoice greatly to hand over the vessels, the silver and gold, all intact (2 Tim. 1:12). May this joy be ours (Matt. 25:14-30)!

Not content with yielding praise with their lips only, the Jews, released from their captivity, offered burnt-offerings, symbolizing their wholehearted devotion to the Lord, and sin-offerings, in acknowledgement that they were not worthy of His sovereign mercy and grace in delivering them.

#### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

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|--|----------------|
| Sept. 25—The Hand of God upon Ezra .....               | Ezra 7:1-10.   |
| Sept. 26—The Hand of God upon the King .....           | Ezra 7:11-28.  |
| Sept. 27—The Hand of God upon the Priests .....        | Ezra 8:15-20.  |
| Sept. 28—The Hand of God upon the Sinful People .....  | Ezra 9.        |
| Sept. 29—The Hand of God upon the Separated Ones ..... | Ezra 10:1-17.  |
| Sept. 30—The Hand of God upon Ezekiel .....            | Ezek. 3:10-21. |
| Oct. 1—The Hand of God upon Daniel .....               | Dan. 10:10-21. |

#### SUGGESTED HYMNS

Precious promise God hath given. He leadeth me. All the way my Saviour leads me. Abide with me. Saviour, like a shepherd lead us. Under His wings.

When will talkers refrain from evil-speaking? When listeners refrain from evil-hearing.—HARE.

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