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The Funeral Service of Deacon Joseph E. Jennings Held in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Tuesday, May 8, 1951

THERE was a large attendance, almost filling the body of the church. The service opened with the singing of the great hymn, a favourite with Mr. Jennings:

"Jesus, wondrous Saviour!
Christ, of kings the King!

Following that Rev. W. S. Whitcombe read, with moving effect, Revelation 21:22 to the end of the 22nd chapter.

Following the Scripture, prayer was offered by Rev. H. C. Slade, as electrically recorded, as follows:

We find our comfort this day, O God, in Thy Holy Word. It is to us a revelation of Thy beloved Son, Who came to us to reveal the Father, Who said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We thank Thee because Thou hast disclosed to us in Him Thy great love toward us. Thou didst commend Thy love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Our Father we thank Thee because He is the Way into Thy Holy presence, that ladder which reaches from earth right into heaven, which has effected communication between sinful souls and a Holy God, and has brought us nigh to Thee. He Who suffered the just for the unjust did this that He might bring us to God.

We bow before Thee, O God, and give Thee thanks to-day because He is come. And what a difference it has made since the Son of God has come to us! We praise Thee for the purpose of His coming, wherein He said, "I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." We look to Him to-day Who is the Resurrection and the Life, Who said, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Our Father we bow before Thee to thank Thee for the great grace which has come to us in Him. We rejoice to-day in the reign of grace, wherein, though sin did reign unto death, even so does grace reign through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We thank Thee for the one whom Thou hast taken to be with Thyself, who revelled so much in Thy marvellous grace. We thank Thee for his testimony; we thank Thee for his great life, and that which he experienced from Thy hand, and never received such without great gratitude. O God, we thank Thee for this great monument of the grace of God! We bless Thee for his life. And we thank Thee for his going to be with Thyself. In Thine own wonderful way Thou didst come, and in Thine own time Thou didst come to take him to be with Thee, which is far better. Our Father we thank Thee for this assurance which is

ours, which comes to us from the Holy Scriptures, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So we are comforted to-day with these words of Thine because of the departure of this one.

We commend to Thee those who mourn; we thank Thee because they do not sorrow as those who have no hope. They know the hope of the Scriptures; they know, O God, what it means to die in Christ. They know what it is to have this inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us. May Thy blessing attend them! Our Father, we realize that human words fail, but Thou canst come to the very springs of their being; Thou canst apply Thy balm; Thou canst give them comfort that no one else can. Take each one into Thine own arms, and bless them we pray with the blessing of the Lord.

Now we commend this service to Thee. We thank Thee for Thy presence with us. As our Lord Jesus came to the house of Mary and Martha on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, so we believe Thou hast come to us to-day to be everything we can possibly require. And so our God let us sense Thy nearness; let Thy word be spoken through Thy servant. Give every one we pray the hearing ear, that they may again hear the glad tidings of Thy grace, and the good news of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hear us for Thy great Name's sake. We ask it through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Following the prayer, Mr. Slade read a number of telegrams received from various individuals and churches, expressing their sympathy, and the sense of loss sustained in Mr. Jennings' passing.

Following this, Dr. Shields spoke as follows:

"And they glorified God in me." Galatians 1:24.

I shall direct your attention this afternoon to, perhaps, an unusual passage for such an occasion as this. Yet I am sure instantly those of you who knew Brother Jennings, will recognize the appropriateness of such a text as this: "And they glorified God in me."

In this place we are not accustomed to hold men's persons in admiration because of advantage. It is rather foreign to us to eulogize anybody, living or dead. This is the house of the Lord, and the only One entitled to supreme honour in this place is the Lord of the house. Notwithstanding, it is incumbent upon us as Christians that we should discern the operations of divine grace in those who have become its subjects. "Perceiving

the grace of God in us," Paul says, "they gave to me and to Barnabas the right hand of fellowship." It is possible to perceive something of the operations of divine grace in a human life, and give God glory for the reality of His salvation.

The apostle Paul was an eminently religious man before he was converted. He was a righteous man, a man of unblemished moral character before he knew the Lord; "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, (he was) blameless." He notes in this chapter the one great error of his life, which was that he had persecuted the church of God. In his darkness he had supposed that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He had no idea that he needed Him at all until the Lord Jesus introduced Himself to him, and he fell on his face before Him. And from that moment he ceased to be the proud pharisee who needed no salvation, but marvelled that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom he conceived himself to be the chief.

There is reason for great rejoicing when a man, having run to an excess of riot, and having lived in violation of most of the precepts of the Decalogue, is saved from all that. But it is an even greater miracle in some respects when one with whose life in the flesh, apart from Christ, even carnal eyes did not see very much to find fault with. Brother Jennings was always a man of sterling character before he was converted. He was the soul of honour, and always abhorred any departure from principles of righteousness—even in his unregenerate state. But when he saw the Lord Jesus he learned that God required something more than an external righteousness; that He looked not at the outward appearance, but at the heart. And Brother Jennings saw that he needed that which no one but God could provide to wash the stain of sin away.

He went north hunting some years ago, and was rather marooned, I think, on an island, and had to stay there for a few days. Before he went away Mrs. Jennings had put a Bible in his bag. He had nothing else to read, so he read the word of God. Marooned? No; he was not separated from God. The Lord Jesus came to him, and in the simple reading of Holy Scripture this man, naturally so noble, was made aware of the higher and holier standards obtaining in the presence of God, yielded himself to Christ, and came back home a Christian.

Thereafter, always he had a great love for the word of God. He could enjoy any kind of preaching, how ill prepared or awkwardly served the meal might be, so long as it was the word of God. Often he said to me, "That is all I ask, Pastor, that like my Master, they should give me God's word. I do not want any more than that."

He told me once how he happened to come to this church the second time. I do not know how he came the first time, but he said, "I will tell you what brought me the second time. The first time I heard you preach you told rather an amusing story. You said you remembered seeing a man one hot summer day driving a team of lean and bony horses, pulling four wheels that were supposed to be a wagon, with two or three planks thrown on them, and on the planks, several bales of hay. The horses were moving along slowly with their heads down, the wagon wheels creaking, and the man sitting on the hay listlessly holding the lines, and you said when you saw that you were half minded to stop that driver and

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Editor

T. T. SHIELDS

Associate Editors

W. S. WHITCOMBE, M.A. (Tor.)

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

S. S. Lesson and Exchanges

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

Address Correspondence:

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada

Telephone RAndolph 7415

Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada

to say to him, 'My friend, why didn't you leave your wagon at home and let those horses carry that hay inside? They look as though they need it.' Then you said you had seen a lot of religious professors like those lean and bony horses, dragging some bales of religion behind them, and making a creaking noise of it, professing to have plenty of food, but looking as though they never had any." He said, "Pastor, I never forgot that, and when I heard you say that I said, 'I do not want to be a Christian of that sort.'" Nor was he. He could say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found; and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." That text alone is an epitomized biography of Brother Jennings.

Well, in this place we conceive it to be the most important thing of all, so to present the word of God that men will see themselves to be sinners, and in need of salvation, and be saved. That is what we live for; that is what we exist for. But we have never believed that salvation consists only in getting a ticket for heaven and saying, "Hallelujah, I am saved." "The Lord added to the church daily such as (were being) saved." They were both saved and "being" saved; they were putting off the old man, and putting on the new.

You will let me say this, as his Pastor for twenty-seven years, twenty-seven years last February. In 1933 he became a Deacon of the church. He was slow to accept responsibility, because he felt it to be such a great responsibility, but he did at last, when the church laid its hands upon him, accept the office of Deacon in 1933. And so for eighteen years he has been a Deacon, and for twenty-seven years a member of this church. And neither this church or any other church ever had a more faithful member, and never a more faithful Deacon than Brother J. E. Jennings.

It would be perhaps beside the point to say it, and yet I feel that I do want to say it, that in my long experience as a Pastor I have never had a truer, a more loyal friend. Brother Jennings was planted in the house

of the Lord; he flourished in the courts of our God. I saw him grow. Oh, it is one of the blessings of an extended pastorate that one has an opportunity of seeing people grow. In the beginning Brother Jennings had a very slight legal touch about him. There were certain things that a Christian ought to do; there were certain other things that a Christian ought never to do. He had his standards, and I think they were right, but still there was that little legal aspect to his life. But as I saw him grow, and he came to learn what grace was, he revelled in the riches of Divine grace.

I told the Prayer Meeting something the other day; I think I will pass it on to you. A few years ago I came from my doctor's office with a sentence of death upon me. I might live a year or two; they would do the best they could for me, but that was about all. I didn't tell my wife, but I sent for Brother Jennings. The only other man that knew it was Brother Whitcombe, because he had gone with me to the doctor. Brother Jennings came, and I told him. He dropped his head in his hands and sobbed like a little child, and said, "Pastor, I have since learned it from the Word, but you were the first to teach me something of the meaning of the grace of God." He said, "I learned from your lips that He did it all, and I did nothing. Of course," he said, "we shall have to submit to the will of God; that is all we can do, but I want you to know just the place that God has given you in my heart." And sometimes when I was ill of a sleepless night I used to, perhaps, think of something like this, when they would bring me here, and I used to say to myself—I have said it often, "I know one thing of a surety; there will be one real mourner at my funeral." But God called him first. I take my place with you, my dear friends of the family, and mourn with you in the consciousness that I have suffered perhaps the greatest loss that a Pastor can suffer.

And yet, I do not want to sound that note this afternoon. I wanted this service to be a service of triumph, and I wanted to say how I saw Brother Jennings go on with Christ, and grow up into Him in all things. He became extremely intolerant of anything in himself that might be unworthy of a Christian, and increasingly tolerant and charitable toward everybody else. He would say to me again and again, "Well Pastor, it is no use; we cannot judge you know. After all—that was his great word—it is all of grace, and we must leave them there."

Brother Jennings was never a persecutor like the apostle Paul, but he was like him in this respect: the grace of God effected an absolute transformation of life, and Jesus Christ became his Object, his Master, his Lord, his Environment, his All and in All. He grieved inexpressibly when he saw a professing Christian go wrong; he grieved even to tears when men behaved in such a way as to bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. But I am sure of this, that all who knew Brother Jennings knew that he was absolutely a new man, that old things had passed away, and all things had become new.

I am sure that many have glorified God in him, and have said that if all who profess and call themselves Christians were like Deacon Jennings it would be a different world.

I have been with him in all sorts of circumstances; in business affairs, the reconstruction of this church, in the administration of the affairs of this church, in the administration of the affairs of the Union. I travelled with him once. He and I went off together on a four

thousand mile jaunt. We talked, we lived together, shared the same room, we were so to speak *in negligee*, without uniform, but Mr. Jennings was never off duty, never in the world. And never in these twenty-seven years, in the discussion of all sorts of things, have I ever heard his lips give expression to a sentiment but that which would be worthy of a high class Christian gentleman. Always his question was, not "will it pay?" "what will somebody think?" "how will it advantage me?" Never! That was utterly foreign to his view. His question always was, "What is right?" And the moment he was persuaded of what was right, that had to be done, regardless of all consequences.

What an example he set to younger men! A layman. What an example he set to ministers, to everybody, of truth and honour, and utter unselfishness! They glorified God in him.

I should not be at all surprised if there are some people here this afternoon to whom Mr. Jennings has borne a faithful testimony, whom he has entreated to come to Christ. You might find fault with a good many who profess and call themselves Christians, but it is pretty difficult to find any justification for unbelief in the consistent character and conduct of this man of God.

He had a great mind; too great for many to understand him I think. I have said it privately many times—if J. E. Jennings had had the necessary training in his youth he could easily have been Prime Minister of this country if he had wanted to be, and a better one than we ever had; or in the United States could have been President, had he been an American. He was a great man! He had a way of brushing aside all secondary considerations when a problem was submitted. You know before he was a Christian he was the champion shot of Canada, and he never got over it, because in all our deliberations he always just aimed right at the target, and never missed; and when he had spoken one looked around and said, "Well I think there isn't much else to be said." Do we mourn his passing? Yes.

I think the Lord Jesus loved to go to Bethany. He loved to be with Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead; He loved to talk with Mary and Martha, and I believe Mary understood Him as perhaps no one else ever did; and she brought her ointment aforetime to anoint His body to the burial. And the whole scheme of redemption is predicated upon the assumption that God needs us for Himself. I do not mean for His purposes, but that He wants us, just as a father wants his children. —He wants to have us with Him. Why does He take men like Mr. Jennings home? I shall not be irreverent when I say it, but I wonder if it may be that He has said, "I could do with him in Heaven. He will understand the glories of this place as a great many would not." I wonder if He did not call him just because He wanted him home?

I believe that the saints are not called to a life of idleness. I hope you do not think of Heaven as a place where we shall sit down and do nothing. It wouldn't be much of a Heaven for J. E. Jennings, with an active spirit like that. Why no. When we get to Heaven we shall serve Him day and night in His temple. We shall not get tired there.

Then I believe that there are larger purposes than we have ever dreamed. I have often quoted it, and I quote it now for my own comfort when I think of Brother Jennings' departure. Mr. Spurgeon once said to a great

company of ministers, "Brethren, shall we some day have a pulpit amid the spheres? Shall we have voices so strengthened as to be able to reach attentive constellations? Shall we be the witnesses of the God of grace to unfallen worlds, who will be wonder-struck when they hear the mystery of redeeming love?" And then Spurgeon answered in the affirmative. He said, "I think we shall." God has other and larger work to do than we are engaged in now, and so often He selects His choicest and most thoroughly trained servants for promotion to the Heavenly places.

So this afternoon we know where he is. I was at the house shortly after his passing, and I went in to see Mrs. Jennings. She just had this to say, almost ecstatically: "Pastor, he is with Christ, which is far better." So he is.

Well, he leaves a great gap. Some of you boys will have to take on your father's burdens. Prove worthy of your heritage. That will be something, but gloriously and blessedly possible by the abounding grace of our God.

So I bring you this word of comfort. I have said it before, but Brother Jennings was my companion on the night of the death of King George V. We started out for Florida, and when we got to the Peace Bridge the snow was coming down in clouds, you could hardly see your hand before you, and it was cold and windy. The Immigration officers came out with their collars all turned up, and their hats down. "Where are you going?" We said, "To Florida." "Florida? What are you going there for? What do you want to leave a lovely climate like this for?" Then he smiled and said, "Will you put me in the back of the car?" Why should we want to leave a climate like this? Ah, to go to the city of which we read this afternoon. It is all prepared by God's grace to enjoy the everlasting felicities of the Father's home.

I do not think I can say any more; I do not think I should, except to commend you all to God, and to the word of His grace, and to say that I count it one of the highest privileges of my life to have known in intimate Christian fellowship Deacon Joseph E. Jennings. Let us pray.

O Lord, we are before Thee this afternoon as Thy children who know something of the reality of Thy salvation. Many of us in our measure have experienced something of Thy matchless grace, and this afternoon our memories are thronged with recollections of happy associations with this Thy dear servant, no longer here, but with Thee. We should belie his testimony, we should impugn the sincerity of his profession, if we were not to try this afternoon to share in his triumph. Absent from the body he is now present with the Lord. We do not know anything about it; we do not know a thing but that which Thy word tells us, and that is enough — to know that he is with Thee, shut in with Thee forever more.

We thank Thee that he has left behind him a record which will be an inspiration to all who knew him as long as memory lasts. An unusual man, who exemplified in an unusual degree what the super-abundance of Thy grace can do. All we can do in respect to him is just to thank Thee, O Lord, and praise Thee with all our hearts that Thou didst find him in his solitariness on that island years ago, and from then until now Thou hast never left him for a moment, until Thou hast called him home to Thyself.

Now our prayers, O Lord, are for the family. We pray for Mrs. Jennings in her weakness. How she will miss his personal ministrations, which no other hands but his could give, nay, we will not say so — the wounded hands of Calvary can do still better! We commend her to Thy

gracious care and keeping, and pray that it may please Thee, for her children's sake, to prolong her stay with us, and to give her full recovery of health and strength. For the children and the grand-children we pray. We thank Thee for them all. How often we have read in Thy word, in the record of some worthy man, that his sons walked in the ways of their fathers, doing that which was right in the sight of God, and in some cases, the very opposite. We are assured that the opposite cannot be true in this case, for Thou didst suffer our Brother to live long enough to know that all the children were gathered in. Bless them every one. Lay Thine ordaining hand upon them for the kind of service for which they are fitted, and to which they shall be called in Thy good time.

For the daughters-in-law and the sons-in-law, as well as for the children, we pray, that God may bless them every one.

And may it please Thee, O Lord, to bless this sorely bereaved church. Let not his place long be vacant. Thou hast set some in the church for this and that and the other. So may someone step into the breach, that the work of the Lord may go on.

So now Lord we would dry our tears, and think of the painless, deathless, tearless City, where the Lamb is all the light, and in simple faith follow our Brother thither, not regretting, but with a holy envy, thanking Thee for his safe arrival at home. Bless us still, for Thy Name's sake, Amen.

Following the prayer Dr. Shields announced as a closing hymn, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," and he said, addressing Mr. Jennings' son, George, "George, your father died in your arms, and when you could do no more the arms of Jesus enfolded him and carried him home."

A GREAT MAN GONE HOME.

OUR readers who live beyond the bounds of Jarvis Street Church, and beyond the bounds of this Dominion and this Continent, will perhaps indulge us a little in permitting us to speak of Jarvis Street Church. As we write, the church is bowed down with a great grief. We have lost one who was a veritable pillar in the House of our God.

Deacon Jennings suffered a stroke the morning of May 1st, and Saturday afternoon, May 5th, he fell asleep in Christ. He was one of those men with whom one scarcely ever associated the idea of death: tall, vigorous, active in mind and body, and until the last couple of weeks, apparently in exuberant health. But he is gone. It seems almost impossible for us to think of Jarvis Street without him. For so long he seemed to be a part of its life, its strength, its service, its character as a church. He seemed to be indispensable.

The funeral was held on Tuesday, May 8th, in the auditorium of Jarvis Street Church. An account of the service, with the address delivered by the Pastor, is given elsewhere in this issue.

Mr. Jennings' passing shows how large a place one consecrated man can fill in the life of the church, and the churches.

A number of ministers came from long distances to be present at the funeral,—Rev. John R. Boyd, from Sudbury, Rev. George and Mrs. Stephens, from North Bay, Rev. Duncan Macgregor, from Sault Ste. Marie, Rev. John Byers, from Hamilton, as well as a number of local ministers. Dr. Shields conducted the service, assisted by Rev. H. C. Slade and Rev. W. S. Whitcombe.

A great man has left us. How great only the unfolding following years will tell.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"FOR AS OFTEN"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, May 6th, 1951
(Electrically Recorded)

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. 11:26.

I SUPPOSE if the addresses I have delivered from this pulpit on the subject of the significance of the communion, and which have been published, were assembled, they would make several volumes. And yet I ask you to turn to it again. I may not have anything new to say to you, I do not know, but you remember the apostle Peter recognized it as a duty to stir up the pure minds of those to whom he wrote by way of remembrance.

I shall speak this evening on the question of the frequency of the observance of the Lord's Supper. "As often as ye eat this bread . . ." There is no Biblical instruction given us specifically as to the frequency with which the Lord's Supper should be observed. So far as the teaching of Scripture is concerned, that aspect of it is left an open question. We have two sources I think of information on the subject. One is the example, the practice of the apostolic church, and the other is such teaching as may inhere in the spiritual significance of the ordinance itself, as to whether it should be observed frequently or at remote intervals. In this place until our great fire in 1938 the Lord's Supper had been observed every Sunday for more than one hundred years. Then it became impossible for us so to do in the straitened circumstances of our condition, when we had to go to Massey Hall and elsewhere, and subsequently we have followed the practice of a monthly observance. Certain I am that we are not violating any specific Biblical principle in observing the ordinance only once a month. I believe, however, there is good ground for assuming that the apostolic church observed the supper weekly, perhaps on the first day of the week, although that cannot be absolutely proved from Scripture. But such a deduction may reasonably be drawn inferentially from the record of the apostolic practice: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Then I think very much may be learned from a proper understanding of the significance of the ordinance in respect to the frequency of its observance. There are churches who observe the Lord's Supper quarterly, some half-yearly, some only annually. Some years ago I heard of a strange sort of Baptist church that had allowed two whole years and more to pass without ever gathering about the table of the Lord. So what I say this evening, if it is of value on Scriptural grounds, may be useful, not only to us, but to some others. Let it be clearly understood then that there is no specific direction given at all in the Scripture as to how frequently the Supper should be observed. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup . . ." It is left an open question to be

decided on other grounds than any specific command of the word of God.

I.

IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND SOMETHING OF WHAT THE SUPPER OF THE LORD MEANS. We cannot of course accept the teaching of Rome in respect to the Mass, the substitute for the memorial feast, as being a sacrifice to be repeated with great frequency, and for the purpose of effecting the remission of sins. We who worship here are not sacramentarians; we believe there are two ordinances enjoined upon all believers in the word of God. One is baptism, which properly stands on the threshold of the Christian life, and is the divinely appointed means by which we are to make confession of our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The other is the Lord's Supper, which we regard as a memorial feast, not in any sense a sacrament, not conferring merit. We do not acquire merit by yielding obedience to either one or the other.

Baptism does not save anybody, although our Romanist friends say it does. The observance of the Lord's Supper does not save anybody. We are saved by grace alone, which means that we are saved by the act of God, and not by any effort on our part. The human mind seems to be constitutionally pendulous, and we are tempted sometimes to swing from one extreme to the other. I say baptism does not save anybody; it does not confer merit. It is not a particularly meritorious thing to do as you are told, and even if we thus obey, we are at best unprofitable servants. On the other hand, in the keeping of His commandments there is great reward, and there is blessing to be obtained by the believer in a life of obedience. And there is blessing in obedience to the divine command, even in the matter of baptism.

I was telling some friends in the Southland one afternoon, when they proposed that we should have an afternoon of conference and questioning on some of these important matters — a good number of ministers were there from considerable distances, and I told them that when I was converted I experienced no accession of joy particularly; my emotions were not stirred in the least, and if I had been asked how I felt I should have said that I felt just exactly as I did before. "Then why do you believe you are a Christian?" Well, simply because I have laid hold of the word of God, which says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I heard a Professor quote that in my father's pulpit.

I wondered why in the world he had been brought there. I used to think then, and I think more profoundly still that my father was a great preacher, but this Professor could not preach a little bit. He may have been a good teacher, but I said, "What in the world did they put him in the pulpit for?" I could not see any reason for it. I suffered it — I was only a young lad, but I endured it in loyalty. I was not a professing Christian, but one night he quoted that text, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And he said, as though he were talking to a kindergarten class — of course I, in my silly pride, thought I had graduated from that, but I hadn't really — he said, "Now there you are, if you confess your sin and take your place as a sinner, that moment Jesus Christ will take His place as your Saviour, or else God is a liar." That startled me. I said, "That could never be." Then what is the logic of it? You must be forgiven. And I believed I was, but I had no Hallelujah in my heart. I was rather reserved, but however, I felt it my duty to be baptized, so I asked for baptism. They asked me how I felt, and I said, "Just the same as I always feel." "What do you want to be baptized for?" "Because I believe my sins are forgiven." "What makes you believe that?" "Because the Lord said so. I have His word for it and that is all I know about it." "You do not feel especially happy?" "I told you I do not feel at all." I had not much respect you know for the shouting kind of Christian. I think I could have made a good Anglican; I was rather reserved, and supposedly in those days — I have got bravely over it — a little bit dignified. And so I wanted my religion served to me very quietly please, but I was saved. But I shall never forget my baptism. Baptism did not save me, not at all, but when I emerged from the water that night although I did not see the heavens open and the Spirit of God descending like a dove, I tell you what I did know: God in His mercy gave to me an overwhelming consciousness that His grace had made it possible for a poor sinner like me to do at least one thing with which He was well pleased. And I got straight into heaven. I learned then, as I have learned since, that in the keeping of His commandments there is great reward. But it was only because God in His grace led me just step by step to do what the Word taught. I did it because of that, expecting no reward at all, but in my obedience the Lord in His mercy said, "Well done, I am pleased with you." I am not sure that at that time I knew it was in the Bible, but I have long been sure that in my baptism I found "not the putting away of the sins of the flesh; but the answer of a good conscience toward God."

So that you see we must not fail to recognize that there may be, and ought to be, great blessing and great profit in just doing as God tells us.

Similarly in respect to the Lord's Supper. It does not impart or impute merit to me because I do this in remembrance of Him. It is not especially a praiseworthy act of mine just merely to do as I am told; but if there be within my heart the spiritual preparation, if I come to that ordinance, as I did to baptism, solely on the ground of what is written, and with a sincere desire to be in fellowship with Him, I have always found that He meets me at the Table, and that a like blessing comes to us in yielding obedience to His commands, whether expressed specifically in words, or whether in

some unmistakable Biblical principle of righteousness and truth. I must do that, and if we do it the Lord is with us, and He says that we have well done.

Now that is about our view of the Lord's Supper — that it is a memorial feast, and that just as baptism symbolizes our union with Christ in His death and burial and resurrection, so the Supper of the Lord symbolizes our dependence upon Him for spiritual sustenance. The life that is given He now comes spiritually to sustain. And so by faith we look beyond the symbols to the spiritual reality represented, and find our souls really nourished with the bread of life.

II.

Then the question remains: HOW OFTEN OUGHT WE TO OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER? *Is not our observance of it as an act of obedience to His requirement an expression of our loyalty and love to the Lord Jesus?* Don't you think it is? Did He not say, "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments." And if we really love Him, so far as we know how, and are enabled by His grace so to do, we shall delight ourselves in His commandments which we have loved. Then if that be really so, I feel, so far as I am concerned, it affords me an opportunity of telling the Lord of my love for Him, and my gratitude to Him for having come, as we heard this evening, "Out of the Ivory Palaces, into a world of woe," all for me, I think I ought to say "Thank you" for that; I think I ought to love Him because He first loved me, and if I love Him I think I ought to tell Him so.

That was rather pathetic wasn't it, almost as if He hungered to hear Peter say so, when after His resurrection, ready to ascend to His Father, Jesus said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He said to him the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And he similarly responded, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." And He repeated it the third time, "Lovest thou me? Have you put me first Simon? Have I got the place that properly belongs to me?" And Simon said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Don't you think the Lord Jesus likes to have you tell Him of your love? Don't you think He likes to see you at His table, and by taking the bread and the wine declaring your love for the Saviour?

I knew a man, a friend of mine, years ago, who occupied really a very important position, and he was faced on one occasion with a very, very onerous duty, for which he had to make preparation. And so he said to his wife, "Now really I must today shut everybody out. I have no time to see anyone; I am going to my study, and I shall not answer the telephone, and you may tell anybody that I am so engaged that it is impossible for me to spare a moment, for this public engagement will come, and I must be ready." So he went up to his study, and was working away at his desk. How long he had been there I do not know, when the study door was pushed open, and two little feet toddled in. It was a little boy of about four years of age, and he didn't ask permission, or he didn't knock. He just walked up to his father's desk, and put his little curly head between his arms and across his knee, and said, "Hello Daddy." His father put down his pen, and said, "What do you want?" "Nussin," he said. And then without invitation he climbed up on his father's knee and put his arms about his father's neck. He said, "What do you want? What

did you come here for?" "Just to tell you I love you Daddy." Do you suppose there was any more important public duty to that man than listening to the music of that child's declaration of love? Don't you think the Lord Jesus loves to have us come sometimes when we have to say, like that little boy, "We don't want anything; we didn't come with a petition; we didn't come begging. We just came because we belong to the family, and we just wanted to say, 'I love you.'" I know He is waiting to hear us say it.

Don't you think that we say that when we observe this Supper? You remember how John said of himself and calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." "Nobody else ever said that of John; that was a name John gave himself, as though he would say to others, "Call yourselves what you like; I have a name of my own. I am the disciple whom Jesus loves." And in his gospel, writing the story of the disciples' asking, "Is it I? Is it I?" he tells us that the disciple whom Jesus loved leaned on His breast at supper, and said, "Lord, who is it? Who can it be? One thing I know, I could not do it." We never could, dear friends, leaning upon His breast! That is where He wants us. This is a family affair when the children come together to tell the Lord how much they love Him.

Now if that be a fair and reasonable assumption, *how oft should we observe it?* Can you tell me? How often should we express our love for each other? How often should a husband express his love for his wife, or a wife for her husband; parents for their children, or children for their parents? I know what you would say. Do not ask for any particular regulation. In respect to that matter they must not be under law but under grace. That is why there is not any particular regulation as to the frequency of this observance. As oft as ye do it; as oft as ye want to tell Him. And I am sure, dear friends, that in that mutual exchange of affection, of which we are conscious, as is our Lord, I am sure there is an accession of real spiritual blessing, no merit, but just a reassurance of our mutual love.

Then there is another consideration. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." *How often should we proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus?* How often? I think you will say surely as often as we can, and if this is the divinely appointed way for that proclamation or announcement, certainly we cannot regard it too lightly, as having no value and no binding obligation upon those who are the lovers of the Lord.

There is a Scripture which admonishes us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." I wonder if in that there is not really perhaps included an exhortation not to forsake the table of the Lord, and as we see the day approaching, and the skies darkening, and the world becoming increasingly forgetful of Calvary, and its debt to the atoning Saviour, don't you think at such times "so much the more" we ought to proclaim the Lord's death?

I believe that as we do so—I do not quite like that word "reaction". I have rebelled against it, although it is so generally used. It is properly a chemical word that belongs to the laboratory. But to use another word, there is a subjective response to that objective reality of which we are reminded when we proclaim the Lord's

death until He comes. Is there not a deepening of our conviction, that there lies our hope? Do you not feel it as often as you observe this ordinance, that you rise from the table with a deeper conviction that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good? I feel sorry for people who are not preachers. You say preachers have a hard time, and I suppose they have. Yet if I could foresee all that would come to me, and I had my life to live over again, I would ask the Lord to let me be a preacher of the Gospel, because you see as often as I preach it to others I have got to preach it to myself, and as often as I ask others to believe, I have got to believe it myself, and the more I proclaim it, the more profoundly I believe it. And so we can sing — it is chiselled on the modest tombstone of the grave of the great C. H. Spurgeon:

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

You see, we are assured, as often as we do it, of its absolute finality. No alteration, no deletion, no amendment, no correction, no improvement of any kind at all. It is all finished "till He come". That is one thing that will never change.

That being so, it does seem to me that we ought frequently to be found at the table of the Lord. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do (proclaim) the Lord's death till he come."

Then, of course, *observance of this ordinance, like obedience to the ordinance of baptism, is in itself a testimony.* Why that is the greatest witness any of us can give, isn't it? when we are buried with Christ, and I confess that His death was my death, and His burial was my burial, His resurrection was my resurrection; I am planted in the likeness of His death, and now I rise in the likeness of His resurrection. What a glorious testimony every believer is permitted to give in that ordinance! But, my dear friends, we give a like testimony when we come to the table of the Lord. We not only confess that all our hope is in Him, but by our frequent observance of it we confess our complete dependence upon Him. We can go nowhere else; we have to keep to the King's banqueting house. We come to Bethlehem, the house of bread. Here is the bread of life; here is the wine of life; here is everything, and by my coming I give a testimony to the world about me. You may go where you will, but as for myself, I must have Jesus, and Jesus only.

"Come ye and rest: the journey is too great,
And ye will faint beside the way, and sink:
The Bread of life is here to eat,
And here for you the Wine of love to drink."

"Then fresh from converse with your Lord, return:
And work till daylight softens into even:
The brief hours are not lost in which ye learn
More of your Master and His rest in heaven."

Now I do not say that observance of the Lord's supper is necessarily an infallible indication of a healthy spiritual state. I can conceive of someone, as a matter almost of legal duty, misunderstanding perhaps the meaning of this blessed ordinance, resolving to be always there "to acquire what merit I may, or get what blessing may be mine." One may do that in a very cold and unspiritual state, and receive no blessing at all. Therefore, the fact that people come to the Lord's table is not in itself an infallible indication of a healthy spiritual state. Our

Lord spoke of the time when He shall rise up as the Master of the house and shut to the door, and some shall begin to stand without saying, "Open to us," and He shall say, "I never knew you." And one of their arguments will be, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. We have been at the Communion table." That is quite possible, but that does not mean that they were necessarily appointed for residence in the Heavenly City ultimately. So on the positive side, to be often and always regularly at the Lord's table is not an infallible indication of a high state of spiritual life.

But on the other hand, *to be unnecessarily absent from it is an infallible indication of spiritual declension*; for I am very sure that if we really love the Lord we shall want to be in the things of God; we shall want to observe His ordinances, and we shall be able to say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

Our brother Jennings is gone to the place whence he will go out no more forever: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." I like to see people getting ready, accustoming themselves to the ways of heaven. And if people are absent from the table of the Lord, and absent from the house of the Lord, and find no relish for the word of the Lord, and no place on their lips for the praises of the Lord, I cannot help asking whither they are bound. That is reasonable, isn't it? O let me say it to you. Brother Jennings was an unusual man. He had a summer place up at the lake, and ever since I have known him, though he went up there in the summer between Sundays he always came back for Sunday, because he was wont to say that he could not starve his soul in order to please his body. He was always here, and always in his seat there, you remember. Now he is forever yonder.

O may the Lord deepen in every one of us a love for the Lord Jesus. If I know anything at all of myself, and anything at all of my desire for you, it is that we should every day fall more deeply in love with Him who is the Lover of our souls. Let us pray.

O Lord, Thou hast brought us by Thy grace to a very high and holy privilege. Thou hast brought us from alienation and strangerhood into filial relationship to Thyself, and Thou hast put us among the children; Thou hast given us membership in the household of faith. There is no higher privilege, nor higher joy, in all the universe than this. O Lord, help us to be better Christians; help us to be worthier of the grace Thou hast bestowed upon us; help us to give a clearer testimony to Him who died for us; help us that we may be readier, yea, wholly ready when the Lord shall call. Amen.

"When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

"See! from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

"NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto
Sunday Morning, May 6th, 1951

(Stenographically Reported)

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—Zech. 4:6.

SURELY this is an ageless, timeless, undated, text! It is an enunciation of a divine principle, showing us by what means, by what methods, the Divine purposes are accomplished in the world. What is the candlestick? What are these seven lamps? What are these two olive trees? What do they all mean? Just this: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." I say it is a declaration of the principle of divine operation in the lives of individuals, of churches, of the church at large, in providence, and in grace. Whatever God does, He does "not by might, nor by power, but by (His) Spirit."

I.

So you see THE TEXT EXCLUDES FROM ALL POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT, CERTAIN AGENCIES.

God's work cannot be done "by might", nor "by power"—whatever they may mean. The word here rendered "might" is a very interesting and instructive one. It has the idea of force in some collective form: "Not by an army", it may mean; not by a company of men, not by collective human wisdom, nor energies; not by human virtues, not by wealth, wealth assembled, wealth in the aggregate — not by collective human counsels, not by any gathering together and mobilization of any kind of human resources. Within the sphere of divine operation in the fulfilment of His purposes; not only in the building of Zerubbabel's temple; nor, recognizably, that great temple to which our Lord referred when He said, "Upon this rock will I build my church," — whatever the undertaking, whatever the project in view may be, so far as God is concerned, He regards, if I may so say, with holy contempt, all the efforts, ancient and modern, of the Babel builders, who would build a city and tower, "whose top may reach to heaven." My text declares it cannot be done that way.

My dear friends, the principle *has application to the individual life*. We are not born, spiritually, to a vacuum, but to "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We have our place in the divine economy. We are included in the instrumentalities which the Master Workman is pleased to employ; but we are warned in advance that we are not in independent possession of any tool-box, or machinery, or organization, or wisdom — though it be the wisdom of many counsellors — or strength, or wealth, or virtue or valour — whatever our resources may be, they cannot be independently mobilized, and instrumentalized for the effecting of the divine purpose. Hold as many conferences as you like. Spend what time you can in meditation and research, let your investigations, as to the possibilities of life, be as profound, and as comprehensive as they may, the sum total of all our individual

efforts will be nothing at all, apart from that divine element which is sovereignly monopolized by the Lord of all worlds.

The prodigal asked, before he became a prodigal, that he might be given the portion of goods falling to him. The lord of the house divided unto them his living; and taking his journey into a far country, very soon he had wasted it all in riotous living, and had brought himself to complete, utter, bankruptcy. A picture, not of an individual only, nor of an organization only, but of a church, or a nation, and of the world! "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." He has not sense enough to use, by his own wisdom, such resources as he may command. It all issues in abject poverty in a country far away from God. When the prodigal came home, the father did not again divide his living. He said in effect: "My son, you will in future live on this principle, 'Give me this day my daily bread'."

You and I cannot be trusted with power of any kind at all; and we are helpless and impotent in the service of the Lord the moment, yes, I say the moment—not necessarily the day, nor the hour, but the moment we attempt to stand by ourselves independently of God.

How true that principle is *as applied to the Church of Christ, to organized religion!* How many institutions called "churches" are endeavouring to get along, and to do their work in the name of the Lord, really, without God! Just think a moment, and see how true that is.

What do you think of an institution calling itself a Christian church that has no meeting for prayer; never, as an institution, comes together, even formally, to pray! I have seen some church calendars which are virtually programmes of the church's activities, and there is no place, from beginning to end, for the exercise of prayer. There is—by implication—an announcement that we don't need God; we don't need His help; we can do whatever we have to do, of ourselves. We can organize our human resources. We can have clubs, and classes, and Sunday Schools, and societies innumerable. Look at some of the church calendars, and you would wonder if they represent anything at all but just a show. The mystery is how the people ever find time even to eat or sleep, with all their multiplied activities. And yet I dare to say — and I am not censorious — a great number of so-called Christian institutions give no place in their thought at all for a recognition of this principle. No; "We will do it by an army". Why not? "We have some people who are fairly substantial, so far as this world's goods are concerned. We will have a canvass, and we will get them all to give of their money, so that we shall have plenty of money to carry on the work. There are many people roundabout here, families here and elsewhere. We will organize them. We will make a show of force. We will get a great crowd." They may get the crowd, but God's work cannot be done that way: Not by an army, not by all the human efforts imaginable, can that be done which lies within the realm of the divine prerogative, and which only God, Himself, can do. We may as well give up before we start.

And how true it is *on a world scale!* What is the trouble with organized Christianity? "We are too divided" — say the ecumenicists. "We will get them all together. It does not make any difference what they believe or whether they believe anything at all. We will organize them in small bodies, then we will bring the smaller bodies together into a larger body. We will

make it national; then we will make it international. Then we will organize on a world scale, and we will talk about The World Council of Churches"! What folly the whole thing is! Not a thing has it ever accomplished, nor can it accomplish. It is contrary to everything that is written.

That was a great saying of the man, whom I, at least, regard as incomparably the greatest living American, General Douglas MacArthur. You talk about your Western Powers, and your Eastern Powers, and your armies of one sort and another! But he dared to tell the Congress of the United States that victory was a thing of the Spirit, and it could never be accomplished without God. He even went so far as to say, this is a theological problem. And so it is. So are all the problems of the world today, theological, — the word about God, the science of God. Where is He? Amidst the candlesticks of God, and the seven lamps, and the two olive trees. Organize as you will, by whatever cunning workmanship you may — what are these? I don't know. Then, said the Lord, "I will tell you what they are: 'This is the word of Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts'."

Consider that word "might" here as of force in some collective form, I care not what it is, learning, eloquence, wisdom, wealth, social organization, whatever you like, it does not make any difference. It is all the same thing. It is all included in this comprehensive word: that no kind of collective force can effect God's purposes anywhere, in the individual life, or the church, or the world at large.

II.

"Not by might, NOR BY POWER." The same idea is there, except, I rather think that it indicates power in a single repository. It may mean the might of a man. It may mean the might of learning in the singular sense. It may mean the wealth of individuals. A man says, "I am tired of organizations. I have belonged to them all, and they have all disappointed me. That is not how things are done, anyway. I am just going to be an individual. I am going to do what I want to do myself. I will be beholden to, and dependent upon, no one else. I will do it." Did you ever find people like that? There is likely to be some division in the collective effort. "But if I do it myself there is no one to consult but myself." Well, my dear friends, go ahead; do it yourself. "I will be the most learned man of my day in respect to Biblical matters. I will do it myself." Well, subject to certain considerations, that would be a wise course. You may contemplate every plane, every possible field of human endeavour, where, unhindered by incompatible partnerships, you may enjoy the freedom that belongs to an unfettered individual — "I will show you what I can do."

I have seen a great many men attempt that, and so have you. But remember, "In a multitude of counsellors there is safety." But neither in the aggregate wisdom of a multitude of counsellors, nor in what the man himself may suppose to be the larger wisdom that resides in his own cranium — neither in the one nor the other have you the secret of spiritual progress and ultimate victory.

What an example we have in that familiar story of David and Goliath! The great army is there, but their knees are knocking together, and their teeth are chattering for fear. The Philistine giant issues his chal-

lenge, nor did Israel hope, by an army, to be victorious. And when that stripling came from the sheepfold, and said, "I will go and meet him," Saul said, in effect, "Good! But we must clothe you with might," and he put upon him his armour. But David said, "I cannot go with these things." "Not by an army, nor by might." It cannot be done. He put Saul's armour off, and he ran toward the giant with his sling and stones. How memorable are his words, when the giant, with, perhaps, almost excusable insolence, said, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." "Yes," said the young man, "you have the army behind you, and you stand out as their individual representative of might. I am not mighty on that plane at all. Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name—whose name?—in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

Ah! that was the principle that brought the victory, was it not?

I must not labour that, but leave it to you as a subject of meditation. Some years ago I had a very interesting and extended correspondence with the great Editor of *The British Weekly*, who had paid THE GOSPEL WITNESS some compliments. I said to him in one letter, rather playfully, "I have one criticism of your style. It is very fine. But you take us through the orchard, and you seem to wave your walking stick. Then you seem to say, 'There are some fine peaches yonder.' 'That is a good apple orchard.' 'There are some good pears.' But you never pull a bit of fruit, and give it to a fellow. You don't put any nuts on your bolts, and you don't clinch your nails." He wrote me back, and said, "Thank you for that most discerning criticism. That is exactly what I deliberately try to do. I let people pick their own fruit. I don't try to do their thinking for them. That would not help them in their development."

The best of all sermons is the one which does not say too much, but suggests a world of meaning, and if, when you go from here, you don't go with something to think about, there is something wrong either with you, or with me. One or the other of us has been asleep.

I want you to consider these principles, and think. Turn them over in your mind. Make application of them in all your endeavours, apply them to all plans, and blueprints of your contemplations and meditations. "I am going to do this, or that, or the other thing." Very well, let this ring as a warning bell in our mind: By all means do it, but — but — "This is the word of the Lord: Not by an army, nor by power." Success does not lie in that way—"but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

III.

How wonderful it is, is it not? that AGAINST OUR IMPOTENCE HE SETS HIS OMNIPOTENCE; against our unwisdom He sets His omniscience; against our temporalities, the limitations to which we are subject by the rise and set of sun, and by the inevitable arrival, at last, of Anno Domini — against all that He sets His eternity!

David thought he would build a temple for the Lord, you remember. But the Lord said, "No; you may make preparation for it." "But, Lord, I shall not live to see it done!" "That does not make any difference. I shall live. I shall see it done. You do your little part. You

go out and fulfil your day's duty; but I, the great Architect, and Builder, will carry on the work I have initiated." It is so beautifully said of David that "after he had served his own generation by the will of God (he) fell on sleep." A man cannot do anything more than that. Sometimes when I have been a little under the weather, some good friends have said, "You ought to stop and take a holiday." Not so much now as in other days. And I have said, "I cannot do that. I have a lot to do." "Well, things will have to go on after you are gone; and you might as well conserve your strength." My answer is, "I am not responsible for to-morrow; but I am responsible for to-day, to serve my own generation by the will of God, and in serving, to depend absolutely upon the only energy that can accomplish anything, 'not by might, or by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord'."

So, my dear friends, our great problem is a matter of individual soul concern. How shall I be a better Christian? How shall I know more of the word, and will of God? How shall I translate into character and conduct whatever I may learn? How may I be what God wants me to be? Just in this way: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

I had a man bring some top dressing, loam, to put on my lawn yesterday. He was laboriously shovelling it out of his truck. I said, "How long did it take you to put that on?" "Not fifteen minutes." "How did you do it?" "Oh, I did not do it with these muscles. I have a loading machine." You and I need a Loading Machine. We need something more than electric energy on wash day, and ironing day, and every other day.

Do you ever meet exasperating people, people who seem to have got out of the wrong side of their bed — and some of them seem to have made that a practice all their lives. They are just as awkward and contrary as possible, as the Western people would say, just as "ornery" as they can be. You cannot afford to be like that. "The customer is always right" even if he does behave like a monkey. You just have to put up with it. I dare say you feel sometimes like a man I saw once in a store, when a woman came in in a petulant mood, to complain of something. He listened for a moment, then he opened his cash register, and took out a quarter, and put it down on the counter, and said, "Madam, I shall be greatly obliged if you will accept that with my compliments. And when you go out that door, never come back again." I said to him, "Have you not lost a customer?" "I don't know, but I have reached the limit of my patience." We all do sometimes. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city". How can I do it? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

That applies to the mother with the children, the teacher with his or her pupils. It applies to all of us in all the exigencies, and emergencies of life—when at last we have discovered that we have reached the end of everything, and then by His Spirit, we can still go on.

Need I say more to you teachers, to you parents who long for the conversion of your children, the husband for the conversion of his wife, the wife for the conversion of her husband? No; you cannot nag him into the kingdom, my dear friend. You cannot do it that way: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

That is my simple message this morning — that whatever our problems, whatever our task, our obligations,

our duties, our high and holy privilege, whatever life holds for any one of us, let us find our way into the divinely-ordained path, and we shall walk in step, as our steps are ordered of the Lord, to the extent to which we remember that we can be victorious only by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou didst say, I will not leave you comfortless, I will not leave you orphans. I will not leave you to stand alone: I will send Someone to stand by you. He shall be *with* you, and He shall be *in* you.

So may it be with every one of us, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

Let us sing for our closing hymn:

"Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove!
With all Thy quickening powers,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.

"Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view,
Of Jesus and His Word.

"O Lord, and shall we ever live
At this poor dying rate? —
Our love so faint, so cold to Thee,
And Thine to us so great.

"Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove!
With all Thy quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours.

WAS THERE NOT A CAUSE?

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

The Case Proved

Following is the third in the series of four articles on the "Downgrade" controversy. Here the issues which confront the church today, even as in Spurgeon's time, are discussed, and the principles upon which the International Council of Christian Churches rests are seen.

The sub-headings in the article have been added by THE GOSPEL WITNESS.

THE controversy which has arisen out of our previous articles is very wide in its range. Different minds will have their own opinions as to the matter in which the combatants have behaved themselves; for our own part we are content to let a thousand personal matters pass by unheeded. What does it matter what sarcasms or pleasantries may have been uttered at our expense? The dust of battle will blow away in due time; for the present the chief concern is to keep the standard in its place, and bear up against the rush of the foe.

Our warning was intended to call attention to an evil which we thought was apparent to all: we never dreamed that "the previous question" would be raised, and that a company of esteemed friends would rush in between the combatants, and declare that there was no cause for war, but that our motto might continue to be "Peace, peace!" Yet such has been the case, and in many quarters the main question has been, not "How can we remove the evil?" but, "Is there any evil to remove?" No end of letters have been written with this as their theme—"Are the charges made by Mr. Spurgeon at all true?" Setting aside the question of our own veracity, we could have no objection to the most searching dis-

cussion of the matter. By all means let the truth be known.

Putting the Telescope to the Blind Eye

The Baptist and *The British Weekly*, in the most friendly spirit, have opened their columns, and invited correspondence upon the point in hand. The result has been that varied opinions have been expressed; but among the letters there has been a considerable number which may be roughly summarized as declaring that it would be best to let well alone, and the writers see little or nothing of departure from the faith among Baptist and Congregational ministers. This is reassuring—as far as it goes, but how far does it go? It goes no farther than this—it proves that these worthy men view matters from a standpoint which makes them regard as mere changes of expression novelties which we judge to be fatal errors from the truth; or else they move in a peculiarly favoured circle; or else they are so supremely amiable that they see all things through spectacles of tinted glass. We cannot help it, but in reading these carefully-prepared epistles, there has passed before our mind the vision of the heroic Nelson, with the telescope at his blind eye, and we have heard him say again and again, "I cannot see it." With a brave blindness he refused to see that which might have silenced his guns. Brethren who have been officials of a denomination have a paternal partiality about them which is so natural, and so sacred, that we have not the heart to censure it. Above all things, these prudent brethren feel bound to preserve the prestige of "the body," and the peace of the committee. Our Unions, Boards, and Associations are so justly dear to the fathers, that quite unconsciously and innocently, they grow oblivious of evils which, to the unofficial mind, are as manifest as the sun in the heavens. This could not induce our honoured brethren to be untruthful; but it does influence them in their judgment, and still more in the expression of that judgment. With one or two exceptions in the letters now before us, there are evidences of a careful balancing of sentences, and a guardedness of statement, which enable us to read a good deal between the lines.

If we were not extremely anxious to avoid personalities, we could point to other utterances of some of these esteemed writers which, if they did not contradict what they have now written, would be such a supplement to it that their entire mind would be better known. To break the seal of confidential correspondence, or to reveal private conversations, would not occur to us; but we feel compelled to say that, in one or two cases, the writers have not put in print what we have personally gathered from them on other occasions. Their evident desire to allay the apprehensions of others may have helped them to forget their own fears. We say, no more.

"Peace, Peace!"

Had there been no other letters but those of this class, we should have hoped that perhaps the men of the new theology were few and feeble. Let it be noted that we have never made an estimate of their number or strength: we have said "many", and after reading the consoling letters of our optimistic brethren we try to hope that possibly they may not be so many as we feared. We should be rejoiced to believe that there were none at all, but our wish cannot create a fact. There is little in the letters which can affect our declarations, even if we

read them in their most unqualified sense, and accept them as true. If twenty persons did *not* see a certain fact, their *not* seeing cannot alter the conviction of a man in his senses who has seen it, has seen it for years, and is seeing it now. The witness rubs his eyes to see whether he is awake; and then, bewildered as he may be for a moment that so many good people are contradicting him, he still believes the evidence of his own senses in the teeth of them all. I believe in the conscientiousness of the divines and doctors of divinity who tell us that all is well, and I cannot but congratulate them upon their ability to be so serenely thankful for small mercies.

But over against the bearers of cheering news we have to set the far more numerous testimonies of those to whom things wear no such roseate hue. What we have said already is true, but it is a meagre and feeble statement of the actual case, if we judge by the reports of our correspondents. We have been likened by one of our opponents to the boy in the fable who cried, "Wolf!" The parallel only fails in the all-important point that he cried "Wolf!" when there was none, and we are crying "Wolf!" when packs of them are howling so loudly that it would be superfluous for us to shout at all if a wretched indifferentism had not brought a deep slumber upon those who ought to guard the flocks. The evidence is to our mind so overwhelming that we thought that our statements only gave voice to a matter of common notoriety. Either we are dreaming, or our brethren are; let the godly judge who it is that is asleep. We consider that what we have written in former papers is quite sufficient to justify our earnest endeavour to arouse the churches; but as more proof is demanded we will give it. Our difficulty is to make a selection out of the mass of material before us, and we will not burden our readers with more than may suffice.

The Downgrade

In the month of July last the secretaries of the Evangelical Alliance issued a circular, from which we quote a paragraph:—

"It is only too evident to all who are jealous for God and his truth, that on one side there is a perilous growth of superstition and sacerdotalism, and on the other, of unbelief and indifference to vital religion. The substitutionary sacrifice of our blessed Lord and Saviour is lightly esteemed, and even repudiated, by some prominent teachers; the future destiny of the sinner has become, in consequence, a vain speculation in the thoughts of many. The plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the personality of the Holy Ghost, and his presence and power in the church of God, with other verities of the faith of Christ, are qualified or explained away in many instances. The results of this erroneous teaching and perversion of the gospel are painfully apparent; worldliness, sensuality, and luxury, with the desecration of the Lord's day, abound, and Christian liberty has become license in the walk and conversation of many professed disciples of Christ."

This circular we had not seen or heard of when our first "Downgrade" article appeared in August. We had had no communication, directly or indirectly, with the Alliance. This Association has a Council, by no means fanatical or precipitate, and we are prepared to say, with no disrespect to the happy brethren who judge everything to be so eminently satisfactory, that we think as

much of the judgment of this Council as we do of theirs. Possibly we now think far more of that opinion, since we have seen extracts from letters of brethren of all denominations, sent to the Alliance, in which they cry "Wolf!" in tones as earnest as our own.

There is no use in mincing matters: there are thousands of us in all denominations who believe that many ministers have seriously departed from the truths of the gospel, and that a sad decline of spiritual life is manifest in many churches. Many a time have others said the same things which we have now said, and small notice has been taken of their protests. Only this day we have received by post the Report of the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Association of Baptist Churches, issued in June last. It contains an admirable paper by its President, of which the keynote will be found in the following sentences:—

"We live in perilous times: we are passing through a most eventful period; the Christian world is convulsed; there is a mighty upheaval of the old foundations of faith; a great overhauling of old teaching. The Bible is made to speak to-day in a language which to our fathers would be an unknown tongue. Gospel teachings, the proclamation of which made men fear to sin, and dread the thought of eternity, are being shelved. Calvary is being robbed of its glory, sin of its horror, and we are said to be evolving into a reign of vigorous and blessed sentimentality, in which heaven and earth, God and man are to become a heap of sensational emotions; but in the process of evolution is not the power of the gospel weakened? Are not our chapels emptying? Is there not growing up among men a greater indifference to the claims of Christ? Are not the theories of evolution retrogressive in their effect upon the age? Where is the fiery zeal for the salvation of men which marked the Nonconformity of the past? Where is the noble enthusiasm that made heroes and martyrs for the truth? Where is the force which carried Nonconformity forward like a mighty avalanche? Alas! where?"

Scepticism in Ministers

Dr. David Brown, Principal of the Free Church College, Aberdeen, in a valuable paper upon Scepticism in Ministers, which will be found in *The Christian Age* of September 14th, says:—

"This is a very covert form of scepticism, which is more to be feared than all other forms combined; I mean the scepticism of ministers of the gospel—of those who profess to hold, and are expected to preach, the faith of all orthodox Christendom, and, as the basis of this faith, the authority of Scripture; yet neither hold nor teach that faith, but do their best to undermine the sacred records of it. Now, what is the root of this kind of scepticism? I answer, just the same as of the more sweeping and naked forms of it, the desire to *naturalize*, as far as possible, everything in religion."

"The one thing common to them all is the studious avoidance of all those sharp features of the gospel which are repulsive to the natural man—which '*are hid from the wise and prudent, and are revealed only to babes.*' The divinity of Christ is recognized indeed; but it is the loftiness of his human character, the sublimity of his teaching, and the unparalleled example of self-sacrifice which his death exhibited that they dwell on. The *Atonement* is not in so many words denied; but his sufferings are not held forth in their vicarious and

expiatory character. Christ, according to their teaching, was in no sense our Substitute, and in justification the righteousness of the glorious Surety is not imputed to the guilty believer. It is not often that this is nakedly expressed. But some are becoming bold enough to speak it out."

"I should not have said so much in this strain were it not that all our churches are honeycombed with this mischievous tendency to *minimize* all those features of the gospel which the natural man cannot receive. And no wonder, for their object seems to be to attract the natural mind. Wherever this is the case, the spirituality of the pulpit is done away, and the Spirit Himself is not there. Conversion of souls is rarely heard of there, if even it is expected, and those who come for the children's bread get only a stone—beautiful it may be, and sparkling; but stones cannot be digested."

We have occupied no time in selecting these three testimonies, neither are they more remarkable than a host of others; but they suffice to show that it is not a solitary dyspeptic who alone judges that there is much evil occurrent.

"New Theology" Rampant

The most conclusive evidence that we are correct in our statement, that "the new theology" is rampant among us, is supplied by *The Christian World*. To this paper is largely due the prevalence of this mischief; and it by no means hides its hand. Whoever else may hesitate, we have in this paper plain and bold avowals of its faith, or want of faith. Its articles and the letters which it has inserted prove our position up to the hilt; nay, more, they lead us into inner "chambers of imagery" into which little light has as yet been admitted. What is meant by the allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity in the extract which is now before us? We forbear further comment, the paragraph speaks very plainly for itself:—

"We are now at the parting of the ways, and the younger ministers especially must decide whether or not they will embrace and undisguisedly proclaim that 'modern thought' which in Mr. Spurgeon's eyes is a 'deadly cobra', while in ours it is the glory of the century. It discards many of the doctrines dear to Mr. Spurgeon and his school, not only as untrue and unscriptural, but as in the strictest sense immoral; for it cannot recognize the moral possibility of imputing either guilt or goodness, or the justice of inflicting everlasting punishment for temporary sin. It is not so irrational as to pin its faith to verbal inspiration, or so idolatrous as to make its acceptance of a true Trinity of divine manifestation cover polytheism."

Nothing can be required more definite than this; and if there had been any such need, the letters which have been inserted in the same paper would have superabundantly supplied it. As several of these are from Baptist ministers, and are an ingenuous avowal of the most thorough-going advance from the things which have been assuredly believed among us, we are led to ask the practical question: "Are brethren who remain orthodox prepared to endorse such sentiments by remaining in union with those who hold and teach them? These gentlemen have full liberty to think as they like; but, on the other hand, those who love the old gospel have equally the liberty to dissociate themselves from them, and that liberty also involves a responsibility from which there is no escaping. If we do not believe in Universalism, or

in Purgatory, and if we do believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the Fall, and the great Sacrifice of Christ for sin, it behoves us to see that we do not become accomplices with those who teach another gospel, and as it would seem from one writer, have avowedly another God.

A friendly critic advised us at the first to mention the names of those who had quitted the old faith; but, if we had done so, he would have been among the first to lament the introduction of personalities. At the same time, there can be no objection to a gentleman's coming forward, and glorying in his "modern thought"; it spares others the trouble of judging his position, and it is an exhibition of manliness which others might copy to advantage. Those who have read the statements of the advanced school, and still think that from the orthodox point of view there is no cause for alarm, must surely be of a very sanguine temperament, or resolutely blind.

The Growth of Worldliness

Our lament was not, however, confined to vital doctrines; we mentioned a decline of spiritual life, and the growth of worldliness, and gave as two outward signs thereof the falling-off in prayer-meetings, and ministers attending the theatre. The first has been pooh-poohed as a mere trifle. *The Nonconformist*, which is a fit companion for *The Christian World*, dismisses the subject in the following sentence: "If the conventional prayer-meetings are not largely attended, why should the Christian community be judged by its greater or less use of one particular religious expedient?" What would James and Jay have said of this dismissal of "conventional prayer-meetings," whatever that may mean? At any rate, we are not yet alone in the opinion that our meetings for prayer are very excellent thermometers of the spiritual condition of our people. God save us from the spirit which regards gathering together for prayer as "a religious expedient"! This one paragraph is sorrowfully sufficient to justify much more than we have written.

The same newspaper thus deals with our mention of theatre-going preachers. Let the reader note what a fine mouthful of words it is, and how unwittingly it admits, with a guarded commendation, that which we remarked upon with censure:—

"As for theatres, while we should be much surprised to learn that many ministers of the gospel take a view of life which would permit them to spend much time there, yet, remembering that men of unquestionable piety do find recreation for themselves and their families in the drama, we are not content to see a great branch of art placed under a ban, as if it were no more than an agency of evil."

Let it never be forgotten that even irreligious men, who themselves enjoy the amusements of the theatre, lose all respect for ministers when they see them in the play-house. Their common sense tells them that men of such an order are unfit to be their guides in spiritual things. But we will not debate the point: the fact that it is debated is to us sufficient evidence that spiritual religion is at a low ebb in such quarters.

Can Evangelicals Be Silent?

Very unwillingly have we fulfilled our unhappy task of justifying a warning which we felt bound to utter; we deplore the necessity of doing so; but if we have not in this paper given overwhelming evidence, it is from

want of space, and want of will, and not from want of power. Those who have made up their minds to ignore the gravity of the crisis, would not be aroused from their composure though we told our tale in miles of mournful detail.

It only remains to remark that brethren who are afraid that great discouragement will arise out of our statements have our hearty sympathy so far as there is cause for such discouragement. Our heart would rejoice indeed if we could describe our Nonconformity in a very different manner, and assure our friends that we were never in a sounder or more hopeful condition. But encouragement founded upon fiction, would lead to false hopes, and to ultimate dismay. Confidence in our principles is what is most to be relied on, next to confidence in God. Brave men will hold to a right cause none the less tenaciously because for a season it is under a cloud. Increased difficulty only brings out increased faith, more fervent prayer, and greater zeal. The weakest of minds are those which go forward because they are borne along by the throng; the truly strong are accustomed to stand alone, and are not cast down if they find themselves in a minority. Let no man's heart fail him because of the Philistine. This new enemy is doomed, to die like those who have gone before him; only let him not be mistaken for a friend.

Deeply do we agree with the call of the more devout among the letter-writers for a more determined effort to spread the gospel. Wherever more can be done, let it be done at once, in dependence upon the Spirit of God. But it is idle to go down to the battle with enemies in the camp. With what weapons are we to go forth? If those which we have proved "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" are taken from us, what are we to do? How can those evangelize who have no evangel? What fruit but evil can come of "the new theology"? Let us know where we are. In the meantime, those of us who raise these questions are not among the idlers, nor are we a whit behind the very chief of those who seek to win souls.

Spurgeon Branded as a Pope

Some words have been used which call the writer a Pope, and speak of this enquiry as an Inquisition. Nothing can be more silly. Is it come to this, that if we use our freedom to speak our mind we must needs be charged with arrogance? Is decision the same thing as Popery? It is playing with edged tools when the advanced men introduce that word, for we would remind them that there is another phase of Popery of which a portion of them have furnished us grievous examples. To hide your beliefs, to bring out your opinions cautiously, to use expressions in other senses than those in which they are usually understood, to "show", as *The Christian World* so honestly puts it, "a good deal of trimming, and a balancing of opposite opinions in a way that is confusing and unsatisfactory to the hearer," is a meaner sort of Popery than even the arrogance which is so gratuitously imputed to us. It is, however, very suggestive that the letting in of light upon men should be to them a torment equal to an Inquisition, and that open discussion should so spoil their schemes that they regard it as a torture comparable to the rack and the stake. What other harm have we done them? We would not touch a hair of their heads, or deprive them of an inch of liberty. Let them speak, that we may know them; but let them not deny us the same freedom; neither

let them denounce us for defending what they are so eager to assail.

What action is to be taken we leave to those who can see more plainly than we do what Israel ought to do. One thing is clear to us: we cannot be expected to meet in any Union which comprehends those whose teaching is upon fundamental points exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear. Those who can do so will, no doubt, have weighty reasons with which to justify their action, and we will not sit in judgment upon those reasons: they may judge that a minority should not drive them out. To us it appears that there are many things upon which compromise is possible, but there are others in which it would be an act of treason to pretend to fellowship. With deep regret we abstain from assembling with those whom we dearly love and heartily respect, since it would involve us in a confederacy with those with whom we can have no communion in the Lord. Garibaldi complained that, by the cession of Nice to France, he had been made a foreigner in his native land; and our heart is burdened with a like sorrow; but those who banish us may yet be of another mind, and enable us to return.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 16 Second Quarter Lesson 8 May 20, 1951

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

JOSEPH'S DREAMS

Lesson Text: Genesis 37:1-11.

Golden Text: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—1 Pet. 5:6.

I. Joseph the Young Shepherd: verses 1-4.

God's covenant, made to Jacob at Bethel, was fulfilled to the letter (Gen. 28:15). In mercy He brought the wanderer back in safety to his own land, and it became home to him, whereas to Abraham his father it was a strange land (Gen. 12:1).

The patriarch Jacob had twelve sons (Gen. 35:23-26), of whom Joseph and Benjamin, as being the sons of Rachel (Gen. 30:22-24; 35:18-20) were especially beloved of their father (Gen. 42:4; 44:20). To Joseph at this time did his father display his affection by having a coat of many colours made for him (1 Sam. 2:19). This was no doubt a beautiful garment, made of pieces of various colours woven together. We presume that this was previous to the birth of Benjamin (Compare v. 10 with Gen. 35:18, 19).

Joseph was distinct and separate from his brothers (Gen. 49:26). It takes strength of character and the grace of God not to become involved in the misdeeds of those with whom we are closely associated by force of circumstances (Eph. 5:11; Rev. 18:4). Joseph reported their sins to his father (1 Sam. 2:23, 24). It is probable that Joseph had attempted to rebuke them, but without success; they evidently would not listen to their young brother (Prov. 9:8; 13:1).

Joseph began his career as a shepherd. When meditating in the night watches he learned to know God (Psa. 63:6), and when tending his flocks — leading, feeding, guiding and protecting them — he was being trained to become a leader of men (Exod. 3:1; 1 Sam. 16:11; 2 Sam. 7:8; Psa. 78:70-72). Christ our Saviour is the Good Shepherd (Psa. 23:1; John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

In many ways the experiences of Joseph foreshadow the life and ministry of our Lord. Joseph, the father's beloved son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5), loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Heb. 1:9), even as did our Saviour. The unreasoning and unreasonable hatred which Joseph's brothers felt toward him is like the hatred which the Jews displayed toward Christ.

Joseph was hated by his brothers because of his goodness,

which was a rebuke to their own wickedness (John 7:7), because he was beloved by his father (Mk. 12:6, 7) and because of the favour of God evidenced in the revelation of future events to him. Jealousy, which has been described as "the fear of another's superiority", seized their hearts, so that they became suspicious, cruel and vindictive (Song of Sol. 8:6), even as for envy the Jews delivered Christ to the authorities to be crucified (Matt. 27:18). How carefully we must avoid jealousy and envy (Rom. 1:29; Jas. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:1)! It breaks homes, churches and hearts. Let us love one another with a holy, God-given love (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11; 4:7).

The envy felt by Jacob's sons had its rise in their minds and hearts (Jas. 4:1, 2), but it was soon displayed in their speech, and later in their actions. They could not speak peaceably unto him; they refused to greet him civilly, even with the salutation given to strangers, "Peace to thee."

II. Joseph the Youthful Dreamer: verses 5-14.

The dreams of Joseph were prophetic. God sometimes revealed His will to men in dreams (Gen. 20:6; 1 Kings 3:5; Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22). These two dreams were also appropriate to the family occupations.

In the first dream, Joseph saw the sheaves of grain standing in the field. His own sheaf remained upright, but the other sheaves, standing around the central sheaf, seemed to bow down before it. God thus prophesied that Joseph, the younger son, would one day receive the homage of his older brothers (Gen. 25:23; 43:26; 44:14).

At first thought, one would suggest that it might have been wiser for Joseph to refrain from telling the dream to his brothers, since they used it as tinder to kindle the flame of their unrighteous wrath. On the other hand, Joseph was carrying out God's purpose for him to reveal these facts, possibly intended as a warning to the heedless brothers.

The second dream was appropriate for one who lived in the open air, as did the young shepherd, Joseph. Like David, he had the opportunity to observe the heavenly bodies (Psalm 8:3, 4). The second dream was similar to the first. Joseph dreamed that the sun, moon and stars bowed in humility before him. This dream was communicated not only to his brothers, but also to his father. Jacob, like his sons, did not relish the thought of being subservient to young Joseph, but the time would come when deliverance would be theirs because of the exalted position of Joseph as ruler of Egypt (Gen. 50:20).

The ten brothers readily recognized the significance of these dreams, but, instead of submitting to the revealed will of God, they hated the one through whom the disclosure had been given (Lk. 19:14; John 19:15). It is not uncommon for those who are rebuked in heart by the word of God to turn against the messengers of the truth (1 Kings 18:17, 18; Amos 5:10; Matt. 14:3-5).

The prophecy of the future leadership of Joseph antagonized his brothers, but mystified his father, who pondered over the meaning of these strange sayings (Lk. 2:19, 51).

The brothers attributed pride to Joseph when he told them his dreams, but in reality he was a humble shepherd lad, bearing witness to what God had revealed to him. Years of trial, discipline, persecution and suffering, during which Joseph submitted patiently to the will of God, preceded the period of his exaltation and sovereignty (Rom. 8:17; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 1:29). He who humbled himself under the mighty hand of God was indeed exalted in due time (Lk. 14:11; 1 Pet. 5:6).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- May 14—Dreams from God Job 33:1-17
- May 15—Vanity of Dreams Eccl. 5:1-7
- May 16—Promissory Dreams Joel 2:18-29
- May 17—Prophetic Dreams Dan. 2:1-49
- May 18—Evanescent Dreams Job 20:1-8
- May 19—Delusive Dreams Isa. 29:1-8
- May 20—Assuring Dreams Acts 27:14-25

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart. Saviour! Thy dying love. God holds the key of all unknown. Beneath the cross of Jesus. There are lonely hearts to cherish. I hear the Saviour say.

TO A TORONTO ANONYMOUS DONOR

Many thanks for your gift of \$50.00 for the fund most needy.

BITTER-SWEET MEMORIES

"When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me."—Psalm 42:4.

MEMORY is one of the crowning blessings that God has bestowed upon man. It marks him off from the brute creation, which cannot look before and after, and thus he is capable of drawing treasures of strength from the past to fortify himself for the trials and tasks of the days to come. It is not only man's privilege but his duty to remember. Again and again Scripture exhorts us to remember, to "look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." Indeed it is one of the chief arguments of the Bible to point to the record of God's deliverances as proof that what He has once done He is able and willing to do again: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee" (Deut. 8:2). It is for that reason that so large a part of the Bible is composed of history, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. God does not reveal Himself to us *in vacuo*, but in concrete acts of mercy wrought for the sons of men. The Bible is not a book of philosophy written in abstract terms but the story of how a gracious God has again and again bared His arm in saving power. Truth is not presented merely as a theory divorced from every day needs, but as wearing flesh and blood. This is the very principle of the incarnation by which "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

In days of darkness it is a healthy exercise to follow the directions of the familiar chorus and

Count your blessings, name them one by one
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

If we have actually felt the hand of God laid upon us in our need, if we have really heard His voice and known His power in the past, then we may rejoice not only for the sake of the deliverance He has wrought for us so far, but still more for the sake of what He has thus engaged himself to do for us in the future. Paul speaks of the "earnest" of the Spirit, that is to say the foretaste and the pledge of the good things that the Lord has laid up in store for those who trust Him. It is on this ground that he argues concerning his beloved Philippians: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Our Lord warned His disciples that no man was worthy of Him who, having put his hand to the plough, looked back. The God of all grace, once He has put His hand to the plough, we may reverently say, will not turn back, for from the beginning He counted the cost and knew that His resources of grace were sufficient to save the worst sinner. In this we may rejoice, and in this alone, for all our hope is built upon what God is, upon His nature as disclosed in the past.

Yet there are terrible days in the experience of God's saints when this gracious argument seems to be reversed. The psalmist was passing through such a dark valley when he wrote the words quoted at the head of this article. Instead of providing a reason for quietness and confidence, the memory of God's past dealings with his soul brought the bitter realization that the blessing lay in the past, and that the present brought nothing to take its place but a great aching void the world could never fill. There is often a note of

wistful pathos in Cowper's hymns that bring tears to one's eyes and sorrow to one's heart at the very thought:

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

When such is the language of the heart, the sweetness of past blessings is turned into the bitterness of gall. Memory comes not to heal but to stab with the sad thought that such blessings are no longer ours.

This is truth the poet sings,
That sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Into such depths of despair had the psalmist sunk and his mournful dirge has, alas, been the heartsong of many of God's saints.

There are some would-be comforters who tell us that no believer ought ever to be found in such a state, but the simple fact of the matter is that many of God's saints, and those among the choicest, have turned to this psalm to find there the mirror of their souls. We are not given any indication in this beautiful psalm of why the writer was shut out from the house of God or why his enemies and God's reproached him daily as with a sword in his bones "Where is thy God?" It is certain that he was an exile from the land of promise and from the house of God, but whether he suffered for the sins of his nation and of his fathers rather than for his own sins we are not told. It may be that when God's saints "go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy" that there is some sin they have cherished secretly, and then they must needs take as the language of their soul Cowper's other verse:

The dearest idol I have known,
What'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only thee.

But lest those who would remind us of the necessity of confessing sin, undoubted truth as it is, should become fit companions for Job's miserable comforters, let us remember Elijah under the juniper bush, or David in his many plaintive psalms, or even the spotless Son of God in dark Gethsemane and upon the cruel Cross as He employs the inspired language of the psalmist: "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" If any lesson in Holy Scripture is clear, surely it is the truth that "many are the afflictions of the righteous." For some reason unaccountable to our finite minds, God sometimes allows our enemies to triumph over us and seems to hide His face far from us. What can we say at such times? That is the anguishing problem that the psalmist wrestles with in this inspired dialogue of the soul and its God.

His answer is simple because it is profound. The psalmist looks his sorrow full in the face: he realizes his bitterness of soul, he even dares to lay his complaint before God: "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" The very weight of his sorrow is his starting point, the fulcrum by which he will remove its crushing burden: "As the hart panteth after

the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." He knows beyond all peradventure that God once commanded His lovingkindness upon him; he knows that his own soul ardently desires the renewal of those blessings. Implicitly he suggests that the longing for God comes from Him who is the author of the tender mercies that follow him. Thus does he reason with God: "Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." It is the remembrance of the goodness of God that brings him pain of heart, "Therefore," he says, "will I remember thee." He ventures to reason with God, but while he thus entreats Him, the chastened saint with boldness of faith calls Him "My God", "God my rock". He clings with desperate hope to the immovable, unchangeable fact that God has already wrought for him. He appeals to what God has done in the past as to the word of God thus written in deeds, which is to say that he pleads the very nature of God, the God that cannot lie, with whom is no shadow of turning.

This dialogue of the despondent soul with its God points the way for all who pass through deep waters. What is our hope, what is our plea? Nothing but God Himself. He has graciously disclosed His hand to us in days gone by; His word contains the record of what He has done. Therefore we may call upon Him despite all appearances, we may come to His very footstool and call Him "My God," "God my rock". In the fuller revelation of the New Testament, God offers us Himself in the person of Christ, the Son of God and the Man of Sorrows, by whose stripes we are healed.

—W.S.W.

NEXT WEEK-END IN JARVIS STREET

NEXT Sunday will mark the forty-first anniversary of Dr. Shields' pastorate in Jarvis Street Church, which began on Sunday, May 15th, 1910. The special preacher for the occasion will be Rev. Robert McCaul, D.D., of Brooklyn, N.Y., a great favourite with the Jarvis Street Church Family, who has served, in addition to his pastoral work in New York for two years as a Professor in Toronto Baptist Seminary, coming from New York to Toronto every second week.

It was planned also to hold a congregational meeting on Monday evening such as was held last year. The question was raised as to whether the home-going of Mr. Jennings should change the plan for Monday night. The Pastor was consulted, and he said he thought no greater tribute could be paid to Mr. Jennings than to make the Monday night, while being a night of spiritual, social, fellowship, a service of reconsecration for the whole church, that it may rededicate itself to the great work, made all the more urgent by the passing of Deacon Jennings. That, therefore, will be the programme.

NEXT SUNDAY IN JARVIS STREET

The Forty-first Anniversary of Dr. Shields'
Pastorate in Jarvis Street.

REV. ROBERT McCAUL, D.D.
of Brooklyn, N.Y.

will be the preacher morning and evening.