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Four-Faced Living Creatures

A Sermon by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered at a Service in Memory of

DR. J. FRANK NORRIS

in First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, Sunday Morning, August 30, 1953.

"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

"Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

"And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

"And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

"Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

"As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. "Thus were their faces; and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

"And they went every one straight forward; whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went." Ezekiel 1:4-12.

I ESTEEM it a high privilege to have the opportunity, by the invitation and courtesy of the Church, and of your Pastor, Mr. Ritchie, to pay my tribute, not merely of respect, but of love and affection to the memory of the great man, who, for so many years, held aloft in this pulpit the torch of truth; and proclaimed with power the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

I knew Dr. Norris somewhat intimately. For many years we travelled together, and participated in meetings held in defence of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints". I think there is scarcely a city on the American continent of any size in which he and I have not shared the platform together.

During the last few years, when he was quite poorly, we corresponded frequently, and I have some letters of his written just about the time of the going down of the sun. He wrote me some time in the Spring of 1952, saying he was planning to come to Toronto, not to preach, but only that we might have some days of fellowship together. He named, I think, the month of July, to which I agreed. But unexpectedly, I found it necessary to go to Europe that month, and I wrote him suggesting that we postpone the meeting until my return. It was while in Paris, France, I received word of Dr. Norris' home-going.

Some day I am sure we shall fulfill that engagement together, not in Toronto, but in a better "country", and in a better "city", where we shall be able to recount the experiences we have had together; and where we shall have a long time, even that "ten thousand years" you sing about in the hymn, "Amazing Grace", in which to talk over our experiences in the long Battle for the Book.

Before I speak of Dr. Norris, of the man and his ministry, I desire to lay a foundation for what I have to say, by expounding certain principles, suggested by the text I have announced.

I hope you will not allow yourselves to be frightened by the announcement of such a mysterious text as this. You need not fear. You will find no need of wings, or telescope this morning. I shall make no attempt to identify these mysterious living creatures. It is difficult enough sometimes to identify creatures who are supposed to have only one lawful face; one might therefore very easily be mistaken in creatures of whom it is said, "every one had four faces." I shall not attempt to give you the name and address of these four-faced, four-winged creatures: nor shall I venture to date the vision, nor to assign

to them a particular place either in history, or in prophecy.

As a matter of fact, I am afraid of those who interpret the word of God by the calendar. Who shall say when His hour shall strike? Our time "is always ready", but His time shall come when He wills. Moreover, I am afraid of that human wisdom which claims an intimate acquaintance with everything in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. I do not think it is necessarily humiliating for one to admit that even a telescope may have its limitations; that there may be stars beyond its reach. I consider it no confession of weakness, even in this late day, to cry, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky".

There are many things in Ezekiel's vision "hard to be understood" — so hard are they that only the "unlearned and unstable" presume to have reached finality, and to be in a position to dogmatize upon them. And in this category of "hard" things, I should include the things of this first chapter.

But as much as this—and I do not say that it is all—is sufficiently clear: When Ezekiel was "among the captives by the river of Chebar" he had visions of the coming glory of God. And in contemplation of that growing effulgence, he saw these four-faced living creatures, and he observed that, in conjunction with the wheels whose rings "were dreadful", and the spirit which animated all, they bore some mysterious relation, and exercised an undefined ministry, contributory to the glory of God, and the good of His people.

So this morning I content myself with pointing you to the throne — the sapphire throne with the appearance of a Man above upon it; and remind you that along that track, which lies between the throne and the captive's viewpoint on the banks of the sobbing Chebar, the track which is so bright, because trodden by feet which sparkle as burnished brass, and which yet is so dark with the shadows of mystery thrown by the wheels whose rings are so dreadfully high — I say, along that track from Chebar to the throne, which is so like the path we tread who "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" these four-faced, four-winged creatures, exercised a God-given ministry.

I.

The text therefore may be taken as suggesting THE POSSIBLE UNITY OF APPARENTLY INCONGRUOUS CHARACTERISTICS IN ONE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

This figure is not altogether strange. We have heard double-minded, deceitful people, described as "two-faced". But I am sure we have all known men and women — Christian people, too, of whom we could say, "Every one had four faces" — and their faces were much more conspicuous than their wings! They seemed to be, each one of them a bundle of opposites, a combination of incongruities. We have found it difficult to believe that the man we met on Monday had any legal right to answer to the name of the man to whom we were introduced, and with whom we worshipped, on Sunday.

At different times, and under changed circumstances and conditions, we have all met four faces answering to the same name. *This is literally and physically true.* Have you sat for your portrait three or four times on the same day in a photographer's gallery? When the proofs were returned to you, you could scarcely believe

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that they were all representations of yourself; indeed, you would not have taken one of them, but for the artist's assurance that he would touch it up, and improve it somewhat. And yet each of those proofs is a faithful reproduction of your expression at the time. Does it ever occur to you that your acquaintances have the same difficulty in choosing between the mental impression which they have received of your character, that you have experienced in choosing between those proofs? It may be that you seem to them to have four faces; and perhaps not one of them is very beautiful; and there is no one to touch it up.

Have you not seen people, under varying conditions, display totally different, and apparently contradictory characteristics? You have met one who had "the face of a man". There were human weaknesses, but there were human virtues too. You were not afraid of him. You understood him, and you felt that he understood you. You called him "brother"; and you lingered lovingly on the name, because your heart was in it. But it was not long until you felt that you had met a stranger. Now he kept you at a distance — you thought! In reality, you withdrew yourself. There was such unusual strength, such apparent ungentleness, almost ferocity, such dreadful majesty of power and purpose — behold "the face of a lion on the right side"! And when you had thought that such a lion-like character was separate from all others, you suddenly observed some common domestic tendency. This character, who raves like a lion, condescends to the most menial tasks, and indeed displays a most unheroic disposition; and in his new appearance you involuntarily associate him with the stolid, yet useful contentment of the ox, who has no ambition outside of his own pasture field.

And when you would have approached him again as one of whom you need not now be afraid, suddenly he developed wings, and the face of an ox gave place to the face of an eagle — as an eagle toward heaven, you saw him soar away from you, looking, with Moses from

Pisgah, beholding the transfigured Saviour on Tabor, seeing and hearing things "unutterable" with Paul. That intensely human character, that fearful lion-like creature, so savage in its steadfastness, that domesticated soul of little vision, now develops a seraphic zeal, and positively angelic aspirations: "Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward."

It is difficult to understand such characters, but as they soar above us, we observe, as did Ezekiel, "the hands of a man under their wings." There is in them a combination of opposites, it seems to us: the spiritual and the carnal, the angelic and the human: but we acknowledge in the end, "This was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man"; and we know that they exercise a ministry in the path that leads to a throne.

May we not legitimately warn ourselves on the strength of this text against *the danger of viewing character from a single point of view*. You see only the face of an ox, or of a lion. You may miss the man or the eagle. The superficial observer will contend that a man cannot have four real faces; he cannot be such a many-sided, four-square character as I have described. Such an observer will insist that one face is real, and the other three are masks: that in only one aspect of character can a man be sincere; that in the others he is guilty of simulation. Some people are painfully exact. They would make a mould of one ideal day's experience, and make every other day of life, till the end of time, just like that. They cannot understand why all people cannot square their lives by *their* religious square and compass. *They* are the embodiment of every principle of sound logic, and of every inexorable rule of mathematics — *they* have only one unalterable-marble-like sphinx-like face — and nobody likes to look at it! You know what I mean. There are people who, under given circumstances, did a certain thing when they were twenty: and it is their constant boast that if they lived to be as old as Methuselah, on their nine hundred and sixty-ninth birthday they would do exactly the same thing, without the slightest variation in the programme. They call that consistency! They are proud of their unalterable face. Such changelessness would be consistent with the nature of a lifeless sphinx in a desert: but in a thing supposed to be possessed of life, it ought not to be dignified with such a name. But these sphinx-like, short-sighted, one-eyed souls, cannot understand why one should appear to be a man on Thursday, a lion on Friday, an ox on Saturday, and an eagle on Sunday: *they* are always the same!

But these faces were not external to the nature of these living creatures: they were four aspects of character; and the character was the nature in action. Do not try to make all men alike. Let each year, and day, and hour, have its own distinctive individuality. Learn to look for, and to love, many faces in the same person. If you photograph a machine twice — a month apart — you may get pictures as alike as though printed from the same negative; but you cannot take two photographs of a man that will be exactly alike. Where there is life there is bound to be variety and apparent difference.

You will see that *these four-faced creatures were directed by one Spirit*. God is not shut up to one particular type of life. The Spirit of God may dwell in all the fullness of His power in persons totally unlike each other. Our God is a God of variety.

Observe also — contradictory as it appears, *these four-faced creatures went every one "straight forward", they turned not when they went*". You must not mark out

the path to the throne by your little rule. It may be that all these many faces are looking the same way. If you examine the text closely you will see that that is suggested. Yonder is the throne, and all faces were turned in that direction. The eagle-eye, accustomed to gaze at the sun, will see farther than that of the ox, whose gaze is bent upon the grass. Let them not quarrel over the vision. What they see, put together, is a divine revelation; each item of knowledge the supplement and complement of another.

I have seen a family of children, every one of whom was unlike all the others in disposition, and physical appearance, and yet running through the family was a line of resemblance to the father and mother of all.

I have no desire to be able to wear other people's clothes; spiritually, any more than physically. I should like, in some respects to be unlike everybody else. I should like, by and by, a crown which would fit nobody else's-brow but mine. And yet I would fain see in others, and in myself, some resemblance to Him Whose name we bear. And I think these longings will ultimately be realized when, totally unlike each other, we shall yet be like Him, and see Him as He is.

The test of character therefore is rather in the spirit than in the face, in expression rather than in feature, and of conduct; not so much in the shape of our face, or of the wings, as in the "straight forward" direction which they take toward the throne. Let us, therefore, differing as we may in personal characteristics, endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace", "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

II.

One other truth suggested by this text we may consider: THE IMPORTANCE OF A VARIED MINISTRY IN THE WAY THAT LEADS TO GLORY.

There are various aspects of the truth we are sent to teach. Some commentators have identified these four faces with the four aspects of truth presented in the four Gospels. Such an interpretation is perhaps somewhat fanciful, but it is at least suggestive. Of one thing we are sure: truth has many faces: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, *hath* in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." And, though the speech of each of those many prophets of "sundry times" and "divers manners" was unlike each and all of the others, and all less complete than that of the Son, their united witness agreed together: Jesus did not destroy the law and the prophets: but fulfilled them.

So there is a human element in the truth: it looks at us with the face of a man, and he must be a man who preaches it. But there is a sterner side: there is the lion-like majesty of the law — we must show the inflexible and inexorable quality of divine justice. There is also the sacrificial aspect of truth which the face of the patient ox suggests, and as well the soaring, uplifting eagle-like power of the Gospel to set men in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. How varied and multiform is the truth as it is in Jesus!

And what different types of minds are needed to adequate apprehension and representation of truth! One said to me recently that he could make nothing of the Levitical types; he thought it unwise therefore for anyone else to attempt to expound them. What folly! He

had only the face of a man. Do not try to make everybody think in your groove, even concerning divine things. When a Voice speaks from Heaven of the divine glory there will always be a difference of opinion as to whether it thundered, or whether an angel spake. Perhaps it is both: perhaps the thunder glorifies Him as truly as does the speech of angels.

Does not this also suggest that *there may be characteristically different ways of presenting the truth?* What a blessing that all preachers are not alike, and there is no room for complaint that there is a difference among other people too. But some people would like to have a plaster mould made of themselves, and have everyone heated in the fires of their displeasure until they could be run like molten metal into it. Saul seemed determined to make David kill a giant in the way in which Saul would do it, if he could. What a number of Sauls there are in the world! Why not let the lad use his sling and stone? How many different characters God has made use of in His wars! What different weapons they have used! Some of them have fought with the left hand, some with the right, some with both, and at least one did his greatest work without eyes. In a picture gallery of God's heroes there would be a great variety of faces representing men warring, and working in a variety of ways; and perhaps there would not be a picture in any respect resembling any one of us. That, however, is no reason why ours should not be hung there by and by. You may serve as no one else in human history ever served God.

What different kinds of service are required! Jacob had menservants, and maidservants; he also had oxen, and camels, and asses. In the camp of the army of the Lord of Hosts there is gathered a great variety of gifts, because He requires a varied service. Why are men so foolish as to contrast, and compare different forms of service or different kinds of servants? Why say that the uttermost parts of the earth are dearer to God than Fort Worth? Must all His servants be eagles, to fly away? Are we to despise the ox that prefers to stay at home, and tread out the corn? Must all His servants be as lions, hungry for the prey—stalwart and majestic in their public ministry? Is there no honour for the man or woman who is content lovingly to minister at home? Shall we follow the eagle's flight, and praise his showy pinions, and ignore the toil-worn "hands of a man under his wings", the hands that nourished him in the nest when he was but a fledgling, and which made it possible for him to fly? Why will men play on a harp of one string instead of upon a harp of a thousand? Is it not written: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord?" Solomon got him "men singers, and women singers, and musical instruments, and that of all sorts." Why should you insist on being allowed to play a solo on your little lute? Because you sing soprano are you going to forbid someone else's singing in the choir because he sings bass? Is there no such thing as spiritual harmony? I have listened at night time to the monotonous dripping of water from a leaky tap, until I have

been almost distracted; but I could sleep within hearing of the thunders of Niagara, and dream of that heaven where a volume of praise ascends as "the voice of many waters".

Do not therefore attempt to monopolize anything which lies in the wake of the divine glory. There is room in that track for an infinitely varied ministry. Follow the "straight forward" path of these creatures of many faces, so unlike your own, until you see at length with clearer vision, what Ezekiel saw:

"Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it . . . as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain" — when the rain-drops prismatically resolve a sunbeam into its elements, and spreading its diverse colours in glorious harmony across a darkened sky, declare: These are the colours of which God makes the light of day. So in redeemed human character and conduct, as in the divine, there is unity of apparent opposites and this is "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

III.

Let us consider now THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF DR. J. FRANK NORRIS.

Few men, whose names are now held in honour, historically, were really understood, or appreciated by their contemporaries. To the names of many of those immortalized in that list of heroes inscribed in the heroes' corner in that transept of the Temple of Truth, known as the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, might be added the names of such as I have referred to; and it might be said of all of them, "of whom the world was not worthy".

Many such men of renown were of such gigantic stature that they found themselves, unwillingly, in the way of lesser men. Others were obscured by their greatness; and little men were mortified by their sense of littleness in their presence. Great men do get in the way of others through no fault of their own; but just because they are great. And very often the envy and jealousy, and feeling of frustration which their greatness engenders, so blinds the minds of many of their contemporaries that the little men wish the giants out of the world.

Such a man was Dr. J. Frank Norris. He was, as we shall see, a many-sided genius, but a genius of a very high order, whom only unselfish spirits could appreciate. But now that he is gone, and looms no longer athwart the path of others' ambition, his character and record may, perhaps, be viewed without prejudice; while his great achievements may be appraised for what they have been, and are, worth, to the generation of to-day, and what they may be worth to generations to come.

One cannot see, or estimate, the height of a great mountain, while touching its base. It must be viewed respectively, from a distance, if its grandeur is to be recognized. So is it of some personalities, of whom we venture to believe Dr. Norris was one.

"The Face of a Man"

So, looking at him through the medium of the teaching of our text, we may say that Dr. Norris had, in very truth, "THE FACE OF A MAN".

My great predecessor, Dr. B. D. Thomas, addressing a company of ministers, once said, "Aside from any spiritual, or educational equipment, and regardless of any natural gifts with which he may be endowed, the minister of Christ must first of all have a great volume of manhood."

I was once invited by the Chairman of a Pulpit Committee, in New York City, to have luncheon with him, that we might discuss the vacant pastorate of his church; and perhaps name someone whom the church might approach with a view to his becoming their Pastor. They had just said farewell to a man who prided himself on his diplomacy, and on his ability to avoid all trouble and troublers in his church. This Pulpit Committee Chairman, we recall, said over the luncheon table: "First of all, Dr. Shields, we want for our Pastor, *a man!* Of course we want one sound in the faith, a good preacher, and, if possible a good executive; but first of all, and especially, we want a MAN!" And he added, "I mean by that just what I say, a real man, someone to whom we can all look up, whom the young men will make their pattern and ideal. We want a Pastor who will be the incarnation of every worthy quality of manliness." Dr. Norris was all that. When he entered a room, or stepped on a platform, or even engaged in private conversation, everyone felt that a great man had arrived.

How necessary that is in a minister! The function of the ministry is primarily, not to build institutions, but to make men.

The gifts to the church, by the ascended Lord, are all bestowed with a view to the "perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Such characters are not produced in quiet, floral, and fragrant, sequestered places. The rather this describes their origin and development: "I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; THEY HAD THE LIKENESS OF A MAN."

I have heard Dr. Norris described by many figures. I have heard him called "The Texas tornado", "a whirlwind", "a fire-brand", and I know not by how many other formidable figures. But it was out of the midst of such brightness, and heat, and motion, "came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man." Our Lord said to the multitudes concerning John, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily, I say unto you. Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom

of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

One is tempted to dwell long upon the significance of "the face of a man". It is enough to say that Dr. Norris was characterized by many manly virtues. He could weep with those who wept, as well as rejoice with those who rejoiced. He had a man's sympathy where sympathy was needed. And we believe his manly ministry tended to beget manliness in others, even as the record of the heroic exploits of David had to contain the names of "the mighty men that David had".

"The Face of a Lion"

But our text suggests a further aspect of Dr. Norris' character: "They four had the face of a man, and THE FACE OF A LION, on the right side."

There was something that was very lion-like about Dr. Norris. *He was not afraid* of the entanglements and darkness of the jungle. He did not tremble at the growl, or wail, or howl, of other denizens of the forest. Like the lion, he invariably appeared as king of all his opponents. Dr. Norris was *lion-hearted*. There seemed to be no limits to his courage. I heard one say, facetiously, that when God made J. Frank Norris He had run out of the element of fear. In respect to this fearless aspect of his character, one might almost legitimately borrow Job's saying of leviathan: "Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear."

But Dr. Norris was *as strong as he was courageous*. He could wield a giant's sword, or throw a giant's spear. And, like a lion, when he went out in search of the jungle beasts of Modernism, how he roared after his prey! Often have I seen him come up "like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong."

It may be that some would be disposed to discount the value of lion-like qualities in a Christian minister. But I remember that among David's mighty men there were some "whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains." I would remind you also that our Lord represents Himself as "stronger than the strong man armed"; and while He was meek and lowly, and rode upon an ass's colt, it was also said of Him, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book."

Never did the church of Christ stand more in need of lion-like men than in this day, when the Lord's sheep are being assailed from every quarter, in a day which puts a premium upon cowardice, and rewards compromise with a crown.

I can recall many a field of conflict when Dr. Norris roared like a lion; and yet I have seen him, when he was still lion-like, but *as companionable as the lion with which the prophet, Daniel, seemed to have the most joyous fellowship*.

"The Face of an Ox"

But our text suggests a further characteristic: "And they had THE FACE OF AN OX ON THE LEFT SIDE."

The ox may not seem to be a very heroic character; but they were wont to use the ox to *tread out the corn*; and Dr. Norris was expert at this work. He could turn a field of wheat into bread: He knew how to feed the people. His was largely a teaching ministry, and his record was characterized by the patience of the ox that treadeth out the corn.

But in order that corn might grow, *the field had to be plowed*, and Dr. Norris knew how to plough, and knew

how to plough deeply, and how to prepare the soil for the good seed of the Word. What a hard worker he was! Who that knew him would find difficulty in seeing a resemblance in him to the strong and patient persevering ox, which, from morning till night, faithfully pulls the plough, and turns the soil in preparation for harvest!

And what an ox-like burden-bearer Dr. Norris was! We have seen great trucks inscribed with letters, "load limit" so many tons. We have seen railway cars similarly placarded. But there seemed to be no one authorized to set a load limit for Dr. Norris. Few people knew what burdens he carried; what loads he lifted; what great weights he upheld. And I shall surprise some when I say that to those who knew how to deal with him, *he was really as tractable as a well-trained ox*. He did not so appear to everybody. But he always so appeared to me. I never had any difficulty with him. While he was never wanting in initiative, and never suffered from an inferiority complex, he was not unwilling to receive counsel, or to profit by the experience of others. This characteristic may have been a left-sided feature of Dr. Norris. But those who studied him would surely find it there.

"The Face of An Eagle"

Another characteristic of this remarkable man: he resembled Ezekiel's creatures in this: "They four also had THE FACE OF AN EAGLE." He could see far, and was not dazzled by the sun's brightness. He was probably misunderstood by the clucking hen who could not see over the barnyard fence. But Dr. Norris certainly had the face of an eagle. He was quite at home on the jagged mountain peak. And when the sluggard would not plough by reason of the cold, he knew how to fly above the clouds, and put all doubt, and discouragement, and timorousness, beneath him: We have heard his speech when it was suggestive of the majesty of the eagle in full flight. We have seen him as he has gone on and on, with unwearied wing, daring things which would fill others with the greatest trepidation.

Dr. Norris had an eagle's love for the heights, for the open spaces, for freedom in its largest and truest signification. No one could put Dr. Norris in a cage, much less keep him there. He had all an eagle's qualities. As the lion is the king of beasts, and the eagle is the king of birds, so Dr. Norris was, in mental and ministerial stature, head and shoulders above others.

"The Hands of a Man Under Their Wings"

But there is still another characteristic of these four-faced creatures: "They had THE HANDS OF A MAN UNDER THEIR WINGS on their four sides: and they four had their faces and their wings."

What a striking figure! "The hands of a man under their wings!" Dr. Norris was one of the most practical of men. He felt a fine contempt for mere theorists. It mattered little to him whether the man's face was handsome, his tongue eloquent, or whether the lion had a great mane, and a loud voice, or the ox was fat and well-favoured, or the eagle had the widest of all wing-spreads: he always looked for "the hands of a man under their wings". He wanted working hands, dexterous hands, highly skilful hands, hands that menial tasks could not soil; hands that were withal serviceable. He used to say, "We specialize in the impossible." And when asked when a task was to be completed he was wont to answer, "Yes-

terday". He, himself, always had "the hands of a man under (his) wings."

"The Wings of Each Were Alike"

But while the four faces were different and distinguishable, *the wings of each of the four were all alike*. None of them were earth-bound. None of them were terrestrialized. Even the ox must fly, and the lion must leap, and the man must run like Asahel, and the eagle must leave all other birds behind, and below him.

"They Went Every One Straight Forward"

But once more, complex, and ambiguous, and often seemingly contrary as they were, *"they went every one straight forward."*

I never knew a man who could pursue a course so steadfastly, so strongly, so unswervingly until the end was reached as Dr. Norris could, and did. And the explanation of it all was here: in each of them *there was the spirit of a living creature*. And as these living creatures moved straight-forwardly, and sometimes "ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning", there was a great *"wheel upon the earth by the living creatures"*, and the spirit was in the creatures and in the wheels, and the wheels and the four living creatures moved together: "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels." And it is said: "And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host; when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings."

I do not think I am exaggerating when I say there was a kind of supernaturalism about Dr. Norris' character, and about his ministry. He seemed to those who had any spiritual discernment, to have been made a providential instrument, "a living creature" within the wheels that "worked together for good to them that love God".

"The Likeness of a Throne"

And I felt in all Dr. Norris' ministry, with its multiple-faced characteristics, that this was true: "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was THE LIKENESS AS THE APPEARANCE OF A MAN UPON IT."

It would be difficult for anyone at all intimate with Dr. Norris not to recognize that he kept his eye upon "The Man" upon the Throne; and that he was always moving straightforward toward that end. Often, as we talked together privately, he evidenced a real passion for Christ. As I think of him, and the totality of his work and ministry, I may close my attempted characterization of this man with these words: "As the appearance of the bow that is the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake" — "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments

of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, White, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

L'Envoi

"Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ:
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy."
The voice at midnight came;
He started up to hear:
A mortal arrow pierced his frame;
He fell, but felt no fear.

Tranquil amidst alarms,
It found him in the field.
A veteran slumbering on his arms,
Beneath his red-cross shield:
His sword was in his hand,
Still warm with recent fight,
Ready that moment at command,
Through rock and steel to smite.

It was a two-edged blade,
Of heavenly temper keen;
And double were the wounds it made,
Where'er it smote between:

'T was death to sin, 't was life
To all that mourned for sin;
It kindled and it silenced strife,
Made war and peace within.

Oft with its fiery force
His arm had quelled the foe,
And laid, resistless in its course,
The alien armies low:
Bent on such glorious toils,
The world to him was loss;
Yet all his trophies, all his spoils,
He hung upon the cross.

At midnight came the cry,
"To meet thy God prepare!"
He woke,—and caught his
Captain's eye;
His spirit with a bound
Burst its encumbering clay:
His tent, at sunrise, on the ground
A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past;
Labor and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.
Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be the new employ;
And, while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Saviour's joy.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"Behold, I Stand at the Door, and Knock"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, September 27th, 1953
(Electrically Recorded)

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3.20.

Prayer Before the Sermon

We rejoice, O Lord, in the assurance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. We thank Thee that He has entered, not into temples made with hands, nor with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with His own blood He has entered into Heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. We thank Thee for the rent veil, and for all its implications. Now unhindered we too may come into the immediate presence of God.

Help us, O Lord, that we may not think of Thee as being remote from our dwelling places, or from our experiences. Hast Thou not raised us up together with Him, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ? Vouchsafe, we pray Thee, an experience of the Spirit's ministry in our own hearts, that every one within this house this evening may be made to feel that he or she is actually now in the presence of God. We are just as near to Thee as was that stricken woman who touched the hem of Thy garment and was made whole. We bless Thee for this great truth, that Thou art with us still:

We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He;
And faith has still its Olivet
And love its Galilee.

The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

For the nearness of God, for the accessibility of the Divine Healer and Helper, and as we have heard in song this evening, the irresistible Conqueror — for this we praise Thee. We of ourselves have no strength, no might with which to match the power of the enemy. Of ourselves we are poor defeated mortals. Yet we triumph in Christ Jesus, and in Him we always have the victory.

O Lord, draw near to us this evening. We want to learn a little more about Thee. Grace and peace are to be multiplied to us through the knowledge of God, and of Christ Jesus our Lord. Help us, therefore, to know Thee better. Help us that we may learn some simple lessons this evening that will teach us something of the availability of the resources of grace. We have to pray for things, spiritual as for temporal: Give us this day our daily bread. We thank Thee that Thou dost not give us a surplus; we thank Thee for the daily manna, for the necessity of coming to Thee for new supplies day by day and hour by hour. If we know our own hearts, O Lord, we love Thee, and we delight to be here Thou art. We love to hear Thy voice. We delight to have some little part in magnifying Thy great and glorious Name, but we are here below in the valley, face to face with a hundred difficulties, meeting continually problems which defy our solution. Oh, how soon we come to the limits of our wisdom, how soon we discover the end of our powers!

Lord God come to us. O Lord, come to us this evening, every one of us. Seek us, search us out, find us by Thy gracious Spirit, and incline us every one to a closer walk with Thee, to a more intimate fellowship with Thee, to a more complete dependence upon Divine grace.

Thy Word is before us. We thank Thee for it. We thank Thee for this vast ocean of truth. We have but skirted the shores of it, and little do we know of its depths. Oh, teach us something of it this evening—if not of the depths then help us to wade a little further out in the shallows. Teach us how to go on with Thee, until we have experience of those vitalizing waters, to the ankles, and to the knees, and to the loins, and by and by waters to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over.

So deal with us that we may know how to revel in the luxuries of Divine grace. Save us from living poor famished lives, from presenting to the world emaciated characters, as though we were living on the edge of things. Oh, help us that we may enter into the fulness of Thy house. Grant to us we pray Thee grace for grace. Anoint us with fresh oil.

It may be there are some here tonight who have been looking in at the banqueting table, but have never tasted that the Lord is good. They do not know what it is to hear the echo of the ringing of the bells of Heaven in their souls. Lord bring them in tonight. It may be there are some here who have lost their first love; they have grown cold in the service of the Lord, and have been neglecting the daily and hourly cultivation of their souls. Put Thine arms about them also; indeed, put Thine arms about this whole congregation, every one of us. Help us to feel that about us and beneath us are the everlasting arms. Draw us one and all, allowing not one to escape, closer and ever closer to Thy bleeding side, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

OUR text you know is part of the address of the great Head of the church to the church at Laodicea. It was not a flagrantly apostate church; indeed, it was eminently respectable. They thought so themselves, and said so. They were, in fact, not wanting in a very good opinion of themselves—a church in a smugly complacent mood, well satisfied, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

There are a good many professing Christians like that. They are not conscious of any short-comings at all; they are perfectly satisfied, particularly with themselves. And yet the discerning Master said that they knew not that in reality they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." There is sometimes a vast difference between what appears externally of a Christian, life and what the Lord discerns of its inner spirit. It is very easy for any of us to become spiritually slovenly and untidy—just to neglect the cultivation of the soul, to put the duster aside—no more dusting and cleaning and sweeping; just let things drift.

A friend of mine told me a few years ago of going up somewhere through the North country, through the bush. I do not know whether he was hunting, or what he was doing. But he called at a certain house, not much more than a cabin, and there he met with the woman of the house. She was barefooted, and not well clad. Nothing was neat and tidy about the place. He was invited within, and he went inside, and he engaged her in conversation. Very soon he discerned that she was a woman of education. He learned also that she was a registered nurse; she was a woman who had had really a very rich experience in days gone by. She married a worthless man, as some good women manage somehow to do. He was careless, and was not particular about anything, and gradually she let everything slip. The household went down. There were no children, and by her own personal appearance one would suppose that she was born to the slums, and had never known anything better. He talked with her, and she confessed her discouragement. She did not speak unkindly of her husband, except that he was

a man coarse grained, indifferent to the amenities of life, almost as much at home in a barn as in a well kept house. At last she had given up, and she had let everything slip. And there she was away in the bush somewhere. My friend talked with her, and told her she ought not to allow herself to be dragged down by her worthless husband. He urged her to recover herself, for her own sake, and for the sake of her household. He had a little prayer with her, and went on his way. Some time afterwards he came back that way and he went to see her again. When she opened the door he scarcely knew the place. Everything was as clean as the proverbial new pin; everything was in order, and she had dug out of her chests, or somewhere, a different kind of apparel. She was a new woman in a new world.

There may sometimes be something like that in the Christian life, when people allow the world to come in and drag them down. Things get worse and worse, until all of life is in a state of confusion, so that one would scarcely know that the person ever had made a profession of Christ. I have seen that often. Yet if you had opportunity to sound the depths you would discover that that person really did know the Lord once, and if you talked a little while you would find awakening in her, or in him, a kind of spiritual nostalgia, a longing for the better things to which he or she had been accustomed in earlier life.

These Laodiceans were professing Christians, but their lives had been reduced to a carnal state. I asked Mr. Slade to read that passage in Corinthians purposely this evening, for it is possible for good people to allow the mind of the flesh—not in any vulgar way, or in any irregularity of life; I am not speaking of that particularly, although that sometimes takes place—but to let the fire go out. And when you do the hottest things become luke-warm before they become cold. And how nauseating a luke-warm thing is! I get it sometimes on an aeroplane, and I feel like calling the stewardess and saying, "Why don't you do one thing or another? If you cannot make it hot then have it cold, but do not bother giving me this luke-warm stuff."

But the question is, Where is the Master of the house? He does not appear to be around. No, He is outside; He has withdrawn Himself, and the door is shut.

I venture to say that there are MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS TO WHOM THE LORD JESUS IS AN ABSENTEE SAVIOUR. They do not talk with Him, they do not walk with Him, they do not work with Him, they have no fellowship with Him. They are called by His Name, they pass as those who are Christians, but the Master is not there; their Beloved has withdrawn Himself and is gone.

So that is my theme this evening—how Christian people may gradually lapse into a wholly carnal state, without any sense of the Divine presence, and wholly without experience of the Spirit's ministry. Suppose we could see a revival of all the people in Toronto who at some time or another had professed and called themselves Christians, but who now have cast away their profession, and do not even call themselves Christians—backsliders in very truth. I am sure in this great city there must be tens of thousands of them. If only they could be quickened, if only they could be recalled to a life of fellowship with God! That would be a revival of incalculable dimensions.

I.

Let me remind you then that THE OFFENDED LORD DOES NOT WHOLLY FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE. They may forsake

Him, but He does not forsake them. They may forget Him, but He does not forget them. How sadly true it is that many Christians forget and neglect the Lord. They hold no converse with Him, ask no counsel of Him, evince no desire for His presence; they live without Him. If you had someone in your house whom you treated after that fashion, for whom you had no word of greeting to exchange in the morning, and never for a moment sat down where he or she might be to engage in conversation, but utterly ignored him or her—you would not be surprised if some day you should walk through the deserted rooms of the house and say, "Where is he gone?" "Where is she gone?" What would you expect him to do—to remain? Why no. Your utter neglect has given evidence that you do not want him, and he goes where he will be more welcome.

I am always sorry, profoundly sorry, for a man whose wife is not a good housekeeper. Listen to me young men—it is all right if she can sing well, it is to the good if she looks fine on set occasions, but if I were you I would take a day off and call about nine o'clock in the morning and have a look at her; see what she looks like, and what she is doing. That is the test. See that you get somebody who is a good housekeeper. But a man who has an indifferent housekeeper—poor fellow, everything is out of place. In the kitchen is a pile of unwashed dishes, and everything else awry. Try to walk across the room and—what's that? Oh, something that ought not to be there, but there it is, something under foot—untidiness everywhere. And if the man is cast in another mold it is not surprising if he does not enjoy that kind of thing. He may mildly suggest an improvement, and when it does not take place he finds some other place, it may be a club, or a lodge, or somewhere else, where things are a little orderly. He is happier almost anywhere than in his own house.

Do you know who Jesus is? He is the Lord of all creation. Do you know that He is the Source of all law and orderliness in a myriad worlds. Our God is not the author of confusion; He is not happy in a life that is all confusion, characterized by spiritual neglect and carelessness, until the house is wretchedly untidy. The Lord of Glory becomes uncomfortable, and the Spirit is grieved. That untidy housewife says, "I do not know why my husband should be away so much; I haven't done anything." That is the trouble, my dear woman; you have not done anything. That is the reason. "I haven't given any offence?" Is that what a wife is for—to avoid giving offence? Suppose you live on the positive side of the street and see if you cannot minister a little pleasure and comfort and ease and satisfaction. Our Lord comes to abide with us, and how do we trust Him? Is the house an unruly place, all topsy-turvy, with everything where it ought not to be? Not one of us could complain if the Lord were to leave us for good. I should like to find some man or woman this evening who has sadly neglected the Lord. You have not talked with him—oh, formally said your prayers, but what is that?

I heard a lovely story this morning from one of our young mothers. She said a neighbour came to her and said, "I would like to tell you something, but I do not know whether I should, and whether you would be offended." She asked her to continue and she said, "It is about Johnnie." "Well what about him?" "Well he came in with the other children, and we were having a meal. The others pitched in as the meal was served, but

Johnnie sat there—only a little boy of five—and he did not partake of the thing before him." At last his hostess said, "Johnnie don't you like it?" "O yes," he said. "Well," she said, "why don't you eat it?" He said, "We haven't given Jesus thanks yet, and I can't eat until we do." The Lord be praised for little children that are so taught. His mother said, "Perhaps that was his first testimony for Christ." It is well when Christians live an ordered life, and when wherever they go they make everybody to know that they keep in step with the Lord Jesus.

I am talking to that man that does not pray, or to that woman. You have rather neglected the Lord, and you have not talked with Him much today, or at all. Perhaps you have not let Him talk with you. Could you complain if He were to leave you altogether and never come back again? What if He were to do that? I am afraid, dear friends, that we have all given Him abundant reason for doing so, do you not think so? Oh, what a gracious Lord He is!

II.

HE DOES NOT GO VERY FAR AWAY, AND HE MAKES HIS NEARNESS KNOWN. Listen, listen, and see if you can hear Him: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Who is it? "I stand at the door and knock." Ah, how He knocks, how He loves us with a love that will not let us go, how His grace abounds even towards luke-warm people!

He knocks *sometimes with His wounded hand, yes with a wounded hand*. A dear old saint called on me one day, one Prayer Meeting night. He said, "I wanted to come in to see you just before I go home to get ready for Prayer Meeting." He always tried to find an hour before Prayer Meeting to get ready for it, and somehow or another he always had a great blessing. But he said to me, "I am troubled today." I said, "Why are you troubled?" He said, "I read the story of the crucifixion once more today, and for the first time that I can remember I read it with dry eyes. I am going back to talk to the Lord about it, and ask Him why." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." If we could just remember that.

I broke my arms, both of them in one day. It was a stupid thing to do, just like you do. But I did it anyway. They fixed me up, and as far as I knew my arms were all right. Then one day somebody shook hands with me. I like a good handshake, don't you? I do not like this fish's tail business; I like a good grip. I did not blame my friend for gripping me, but he gripped and somehow got his thumb on a nerve that in the right hand is a little nearer the surface than it used to be. I felt as though I had been pierced from head to toe. It was a wounded hand. I wonder does it cost my Lord something to knock with a wounded hand at my door? I wonder! But you have heard Him, haven't you?

Then sometimes He knocks with a firmer knock, *with the Shepherd's rod*, and makes you feel that there is somebody outside who really means business. Have you heard Him? Then He identifies Himself. "Who is there?" "It is I. Behold, I stand at the door and knock." You know how the spouse in the song listened at the closed door; she listened intently, and she said, "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love . . . for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Have you never heard the Lord Jesus bring to bear upon your

awakened consciousness all the force of His redeeming grace, making you to feel that it is the Saviour Who stands without knocking?

III.

Then let me say HE AWAITS THE OPENING OF THE DOOR. He might have come with the thunders of the law, demanding admittance. He might have come, saying, "This is the law; this is the police, open the door." No, we are not come to the mount that could be touched, that burned with fire; we are come rather to the gentleness of the Lord Jesus. He comes graciously to us in our spiritual declension. Oh, listen —

"Behold, a Stranger at the door!
He gently knocks, has knocked before,
Has waited long, is waiting still:
You treat no other friend so ill."

Oh, that gentle knock!

I wonder *what that door represents, that thing that obstructs His entrance?* If I had time I think I could work out a parable. It is a many-panelled door. There is the intelligence, and the emotions, and the memory, and all the faculties of the mind. The carnal mind is enmity against God, it shuts the door, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. In some cases the door has been long closed. Have you ever tried to open a door that has been exposed to the weather, and that has not been opened for a long time? Nothing will open it. The lock and the hinges are rusted, and within there are all sorts of things piled against the door—bundles of pride and prejudice, and carnal pleasures, envies, and jealousies, and hatreds, and ambitions — and all sorts of things. Have you got a door in your house like that? "Why do they come to that door? I don't open that door." But there it is, and whenever you hear that gentle knocking you say, "Why it would mean almost a housecleaning just to open that door. Everything is piled in the hallway against it, as though I never expected to go out, or anybody to come in." So sometimes when you hear that gentle knock you have to admit that you tried the lock and it would not turn. What is the lock? *The human will.* But it will not turn, it is rusted, and it is fast. You say, "I cannot open this door. It is no use talking to me about being a Christian. I would like to be but I cannot; I cannot open this door." No, but there is Someone outside knocking, and if you cannot open the door tell Him so. Cry through the lattice, and say, "Lord I recognize Thy voice, and I want Thee to come in, but I cannot open the door." Let me tell you something: He has a master key that will open the door of any human heart. That is a lovely story about Lydia, isn't it? — down there by the waterside when Paul preached, and it is said, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." O no, He does not wrench it open, like a burglar breaking open the door; He comes as Lord of the house, He takes out His master key and fits it into the wards of the lock, and opens the door.

IV.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HE DOES? Said He, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door . . ." Let me tell you — nobody will even desire to open the door who does not first of all hear His voice. You will not open the door to strangers. At least I hope you have sense enough not to do so. Make sure you know who is at the door

before you open it; it is not very safe to open the door to anybody. But when the Lord comes He identifies Himself by His voice, for said He, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." We know His voice, do we not? And when He speaks it is safe to open the door, and if we cannot open it, if we even desire it to be opened — only the word of the Lord spoken in the power of the Spirit can induce people to desire the open door.

When He comes in what will He do? He said, "If any man hear my voice . . . I will come in." Take that promise, just that; you can remember that can you not? "*I will come in!*" that is all. "Open the door and I will come in." Put it the other way: "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "I will come in." And He will come in, my dear friend, as a guest. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him." Do you women like people to come uninvited about dinner time? Are you always ready, do you always have plenty? Ah, but He comes to us if we haven't anything. He comes as a guest, but becomes our Host. In Britain they have been rationed for about twelve years. English people are usually very hospitable. They like to invite people home to dinner, but what are you going to do when you haven't anything to put before them? A few years ago when Dr. Wilmot was here one night at dinner he looked at his plate and he said, "You have served me with as much meat on my plate as (at that time) would be served to a whole family for a week." I felt very badly one day when I was a guest in a home in England during that time. They had a precious "joint", as they call it, not very big. I was their guest. They did not know I found it out, but I did find it out. Their friends said, "You are going to have a guest? How will you do? — you haven't enough coupons. Look here, we don't mind, we will give you some coupons. And I know Mrs. So-and-So will give you some coupons." And so they went around and made a little collection of coupons, and then they went out and bought a roast, just for me who had come from a country where I could have a whole ox if I wanted it!

But spiritually we are not only rationed; but there are no stores open, and we have nothing to eat. But when our glorious Lord comes *He brings all His provisions with Him* — tea, and sugar, and butter, and bread, and meat, and all the other things that go to make up a meal. He brings them all, and spreads the table, and says, "Now come, let us sup together." "I will sup with him, and he with me." I have been entertained by a good many people in different parts of the world; I have been entertained by some rather rich people too, and taken to great hotels that almost frightened me, especially when I looked at the prices on the menu. I was only glad I had not to pay it. But I have been royally entertained in many, many places — in your country, Brother Bauman, in Switzerland, my, how they look after you there! And in other places. But I have never been

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The Gospel Witness

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entertained by anybody as I have been entertained by the Lord Jesus Christ. What a meal He spreads! He comes to abide. How foolish it is for any of us to try to do without Him!

I thought of one of Longfellow's translations, this evening that had not crossed my mind in years. But it is just my sermon:

"Lord, what am I that, with unceasing care,
Thou did'st seek after me; that Thou did'st wait,
Wet with unhealthy dews, before my gate,
And passed the gloomy nights of winter there?"

"Oh, strange delusion! that I did not greet
Thy blest approach; and oh! to Heaven how lost
If my ingratitude's unkindly frost
Has chilled the bleeding wounds upon Thy feet!"

"How oft my Guardian Angel gently cried,
'Soul, from thy casement look, and thou shalt see
How He persists to knock and wait for thee';
And oh! how often to that voice of sorrow
'To-morrow we will open,' I replied,
And when the morrow came I answered still
'To-morrow'."

Shall it be so—tomorrow? "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

If there is one man or woman here this evening who

has lost the joy of his or her salvation, who is out of fellowship with God, will you not come back? Will you not just open the door and let Him come in? Let Him go home with you tonight. Or if there is one is not a Christian, you never were a professing Christian — you so much need Him. Will you not let Him in? He will come in if you just open the door. Or if you cannot open it, tell Him, and He will open it. Then He will come in. What other states could I describe? No matter what our state may be let us fling wide the door. And for those of us who are already Christians, and who enjoy some measure of fellowship with our Beloved and the sweetness of His presence, shall we say to Him this evening, "O Lord I am so glad I am not outside the door, but inside. Please, please do not leave me. Abide with me, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent." What a blessed thing it would be if every door were opened and every heart this evening were occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

We believe, O Lord, that Thou art here tonight, that some have heard Thee knocking, and some have heard Thee speaking. O Lord, do come in. If any are unwilling we beg of Thee to knock a little louder, speak a little louder, Lord. Let not the door remain fast locked again Thee, Thou Prince of life. Sovereignly open the door in Thine own way, that this may be a night of grace for us all. We ask it in Jesus' Name, Amen.

MORE ABOUT AMALGAMATION

From *The Regular Baptist Call*, August, 1953

Mrs. C. J. Holman, Editor

Dear Mrs. Holman:

I have read the *July Regular Baptist Call* throughout, and parts of it several times, and I feel with you your tremendous heart concern regarding "The proposed amalgamation of Union and Fellowship churches."

I believe however that the reason for the compromise referred to goes deeper than you have described. You state on page four that "the coldness of many churches to-day is caused by the departure of the heart from true obedience to the God outwardly served". That surely is the truth in a nut shell. But what is causing this departure of the heart from true obedience? Surely it is a lack of Holy Spirit teaching on the meaning of the ordinance of baptism. On page five you give the clear significance of baptism:—"the declaration before the world of the whole redemptive work of Christ and its acceptance in the soul of the one immersed. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST and His redeeming vicarious sacrifice is expressed in that great picture." But it would appear that great numbers of those who have been so baptized have a very inadequate understanding of the meaning of those words.

For instance in Baptist churches it is not generally taught that it is necessary to accept Jesus Christ as Lord in order to be saved, but that He may be accepted as Saviour only, taking Him subsequently as Lord IF SO DESIRED. How then can baptism, which is a picture of the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ, have any meaning at all to such?

Maybe you have not been made aware of this lack of or rather wrong teaching, having yourself lived a completely surrendered life for so many years. But it is true that this teaching is wide-spread. I quote from the pen

of J. C. Macaulay, D.D. (Baptist minister and teacher at Wheaton College, who also writes the "Lesson as a Whole" for Sunday School Times). In writing of Saul's conversion, he said "This whole radical change can be summed up in one word, the word by which Saul addressed Jesus when he met Him on the Damascus road—Lord! Notice that he did not use this title lightly (Matt. 7:21) but as signifying Christ's right to command—'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' That is the very heart of conversion. WE HAVE A PRACTICE OF OFFERING JESUS AS SAVIOUR, LEAVING THE INVITATION TO ACCEPT HIM AS LORD TO SOME LATER TIME. This is not New Testament procedure. It is as Lord that He is Saviour, and the apostle Paul teaches us that our salvation is wrapped up in our confessing Him as Lord as a corollary of believing. The fact is that no man is morally capable of receiving salvation until he owns the Lordship of Christ."

I believe that this false teaching is at the root of all departure from the revealed truth of God's Word and is responsible for the superficial living of which we see so much today.

People dissatisfied with the results in their lives because of such teaching turn to other churches where the truth of which baptism is a picture clearly taught—"dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God", etc.—where it is explained that a life of resurrection victory can be a daily experience through the indwelling Spirit. Quickly they see that baptism is a picture of all this, and are soon asking as did the eunuch "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" The ordinance is full of meaning to them.

It surely must be because baptism has come to be largely only a form to Baptists that they do not realize its

important place. Otherwise, they surely could not take the emblems of His broken body and shed blood upon their lips until they had been baptised, thus indicating their heart acceptance of the Lordship of Christ. If Baptists are letting slip only a form, then it surely doesn't matter much after all. The need would seem to be that the true meaning of baptism should be taught to the pastors that they in turn might impart it to their people.

The whole body of redemptive truth is in that picture, as you know, but it is not generally taught in Baptist churches. People cannot let go of any truth that has really gripped their hearts. So I feel the need is, not so much a warning against the misplacement of an ordinance as such, but an exhortation to get back to the teaching of the truth it represents. I believe that the response to such teaching would be that the ordinances, in their proper order would be maintained—at any cost.

In His Name and for His Sake

The Editor Answers

This paper has ever stood for the doctrine that immersion as the declaration before the world of the saved believer that he has taken Christ as Lord over his life.

The omission of that statement at the time of immersion reveals that meaning of Baptism has not, in all probability been presented to the candidate at the time of his conversion. We have fallen upon an age when the unsaved are not even instructed, that when they come to Christ as Saviour, His Saviourhood rests upon the fact that He is God, the Lord and must have control in the life and soul of the one who comes to Him as Saviour.

We have many times urged this matter in this paper, namely the acceptance by the seeking soul of Jesus Christ as Lord of the life. Upon this acceptance, and this obedience depends the future Christian life of the young convert.

In the brochure entitled "Little Talks on Soulwinning" this Editor has strongly contended that the presentation of the Lordship of Christ must be made to the seeking soul at the hour of their conversion. It will not do to tell the young convert, when he has accepted Jesus as Saviour only that he is a child of God. On the authority of the Scripture, he must accept Him also as Lord. Look through Paul's Epistles, and see how he constantly says, "the Lord Jesus Christ." The Lordship of Christ is the basic doctrine of the New Testament. Without surrender to Him, there is neither full growth on the part of the believer, nor promise of full blessing in the Christian life; but with full acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, there follows, not only rich spiritual experience, but unlimited usefulness in the life given up to Him.

It was the conviction that it is essential to present the Lordship of Christ to each seeking soul at the time of conversion and before baptism, that led this editor years ago to become (uninvited) a worker in the Enquiry Room of her church, that she might do her part at least, to preserve the truths of God on Earth.

She found that often the first response of seekers was "But He might ask me to do something I did not want to do."—A great opening to lead that soul to right relation to their Lord and Saviour!

We are grateful for these two letters. May the Lord bless them to our readers.

ANABEL SAGE MILLS SPEAKS HER MIND!

Re July "Call"

"Surely — — and — — can see that any compromise on the Scriptural foundation of a N. T. Baptist church will destroy its testimony as effectively as modernism.

They talk about building more and more churches—Baptist churches they say—yet joyfully proceed to weaken the Baptist message.

What's the use of having unity on something that isn't right? Surely somebody must be doing some thinking.

I like that cover page of The Call to the "Members of the W.M.S.R.B.C." I wonder how many will get out their membership cards and see just what they signed, "Having done all, to stand". I love that text, but, instead of "and take the consequences whatever they may be," I like better Dr. S.'s "and let God take care of the consequences." You may recall that message God gave me for the annual meeting, some years ago—"I am not told to lose or win—I'm only told to fight."

I liked the page on Joshua's Challenge, and that is a real teaching sermon on "History Repeats Itself." I believe there are many in Baptist Churches who have but hazy ideas of these basic doctrines.

There is so much involved in the subject matter of the Call that I fear the rank and file will not think it through, but do as it has always done—follow people—rather than principle; which, in this case—is God's Word.

He was right—Baptist missionaries should build Baptist causes for Baptist Churches. But Baptist young people continue to go to Inter-Denom. seminaries, and Baptist money is poured into Inter-Denom. Missions that fail to emphasize the New Testament Baptists' testimony. Maybe this emphasis will come back to us from some faithful mission field—definitely taught of God those Chinese Christians of whom Dr. S. spoke—"Hungry for the Word of God". Hearts like that will not be satisfied with shallow superficial teaching.

And I come to page 6 in R. B. Call. That 2nd paragraph, col. 1, will dig deep. I feel that the 2nd (col. 2) paragraph re Article 10 in Statement of Faith and Article IIIA in Constitution is too short and that the complete wording is needed and the full implication made clear—as is done with the word "order."

Do you recall Mr. Baldwin's conversion to Baptist teaching? Just question and answer—Mr. B. told Dr. S. that he wouldn't be at Adelaide St. Church the following Sunday morning as it was Communion Sunday in his church—

Dr. S.: "Why not observe the Lord's Supper with us?"

Mr. B.: "Oh, you only admit those who have been immersed."

Dr. S.: "Why do you want to observe the Communion Service?"

Mr. B.: "Because our Lord commanded us to do so."

Dr. S.: "Why are you so anxious to obey one of His commands and so willing to disobey the other?"

I think Mr. B. was baptised that same evening. I do hope that many will read The Call carefully and prayerfully. It has always been such a help to me.

Mrs. Mills Is Right

In referring to Article 10 of the Statement of Faith and Article IIIA in the proposed Constitution for amalgamation, the Editor should have given the text. It is a just criticism, and we herewith give the text of Articles I & IIIA and the intervening Article II that the matter may be clear.

Article I Name

The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada.

Article II Purpose

The purpose of this organization is to provide fellowship for Baptist Churches of like faith and order; to spread the Gospel at home and abroad by preaching the Word and establishing New Testament Churches; to encourage sound Christian education; earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; and generally to co-operate with other Baptist bodies of like faith and order.

Article III Membership

Membership in this organization shall consist of:

A. Churches that are, at the date of the adoption of this Constitution, members in either the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec, or the Fellowship of Independent Baptist Churches of Canada.

B. Churches that have been duly recognized as Baptist Churches, which apply in writing for membership and subscribe to the Statement of Faith and Constitution of this organization and whose application is approved by an Annual or Special Convention.

The Name

Thus, concerning the first, the name, omitting the word "Regular" omits entirely the statement of the doctrine, on which, as Baptists we should stand. "The Union of Regular Baptists," by its very name, announced to all and sundry, its doctrinal position. The word "Evangelical" does not in any way indicate the doctrinal position of the Church concerned. We say advisedly, the word "Evangelical" in no way safeguards the Baptist position. Many other bodies, not Baptist, are evangelical, and if that is all we are, as Baptists, there is no reason for our separation from other denominations, and there is no guarantee as to where we will stand.

Through the ages, Baptists have remained separate, because they have held to the Word of God, and stood for the Lordship of Christ. If we are only evangelical, and do not teach the supremacy of Jesus Christ, and a refusal to depart therefrom, we are not true Baptists, nor will we long remain evangelical.

(When this article I. was passed at the Union Convention unanimously without comment, a Baptist brother near us said in a whisper, "They do not need to go any further, they have given up everything now." And so they had).

Membership Mixed

Now concerning Article IIIA. Membership. This says Membership shall consist of "Churches that are at the date of the adoption of this constitution members of either the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec or the Fellowship of Independent Baptist Churches of Canada."

We explained in the July issue that the "Union" stood on Regular Baptist position on the order of the Ordinances, but that the Fellowship did not, leaving that to the individual Church and welcoming to its membership Churches of open Communion practice, as well as regular Baptists.

"Autonomy" Lost

The proposed amalgamation therefore does not permit the individual Churches to decide whether they shall enter this amalgamation. It simply declares that all the members of either Union or Fellowship are automatically in it when the proposed Constitution for Amalgamation passes the two separate bodies.

We have not drawn this conclusion without evidence, for we have heard murmurs from more than one Church,

saying, "Are we not going to have a chance to vote on this question?" And the answer from an influential minister of the "Union" was, "Oh no, we are all in it together."

In our July issue of this paper we said "These articles I: and IIIA. do away at one swoop with both the Lordship of Christ as Head of the Church, and the autonomy of the local Church—two age old basic principles of New Testament Churches."

Shall We Make It Plain?

To unite in one body those who desire to obey the commands of Christ concerning the order, of the Ordinances, with those who will not accept that New Testament command of Christ in practice, is to deny Christ's Lordship.

Did Christ give the Churches liberty to obey Him or not to obey Him as they might desire? And still claim His approval? In other words, church obedience didn't matter, and He did not care? Yet the Churches are now asked to combine in one organization of opposite intentions as to obedience, willy-nilly, in this combination.

We would like to know how many Churches of the Union and the Fellowship knew this was in the proposed constitution, and discussed it, pointing out its import, and knowingly and deliberately voted for it in their own assembly.

This Editor was not a delegate but attended both the Union and Fellowship meetings on the amalgamation, and failed to hear from any one of our Regular Baptist ministers a word of disapproval, nor did any one of them rise to say one good word for the Lord Jesus Christ, as Head of the Church and for obedience to His commands. We listened all day and heard it not. A strange silence fell upon them all, save that some of the more prominent ones (who we understand believe in the Regular Baptist position, and practice it in their own Churches) yet stood up to move or second or discuss favourably this membership clause in the proposed constitution!

We were told that the ministers of both organizations had met together beforehand repeatedly, and we could only conclude that all the ministers of both bodies had agreed to that clause beforehand, which eliminated the Lordship of Christ and the autonomy of the local Church.

What Were We to Think?

After long consideration, we were forced to the conclusion that their silence in the meetings meant they were "watchfully waiting" to see if anyone saw the point and would challenge it. Only two or three did, and their remarks, not being in the form of a motion, were heard without comment in return.

The Union had stated beforehand that they were for amalgamation if their basic doctrines were preserved. Yet here they threw both basic doctrines away holus-bolus to go into amalgamation with others of a different view and intention!

We here quote from the Editorial pronouncement of the June "Union Baptist" (copied also later into the Fellowship "Evangel") on the "Autonomy of the Local Church".

"We definitely assert that no body of Baptists anywhere on the face of the earth to-day holds more militantly to this autonomy than we. We hate all ecclesiastical machines and abominate all hierarchies. We acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ alone, and ever stand on guard over the glorious liberty He has given to the local assembly of believers to follow only His leadership in the conduct of its affairs. We challenge any man to

threaten the independence of even the most insignificant congregation among us, knowing he will immediately find the whole Union declare war against him."

Strong statements truly. Could they be more belligerent?

Yet as we read them, there flitted through our mind that Shakespearean phrase — "Methinks he doth protest too much."

And so it proved, for on June 18, by the terms of Membership of the proposed Amalgamation the Autonomy of the Local Church was thrown into the discard, and the Lordship of Christ over His church repudiated.

Did the "whole Union declare War" against this high-handed invasion of autonomy of the "most-significant congregation?" Did they reveal its hatred "of all ecclesiastical machines or hierarchies", and did they "rise as one man" to oppose it? Did they, alas! desire another Lord than the Lord of Glory?

By pre-arrangement (Imagine it) among our dearly beloved brethren of the ministry, unity among brethren (greatly to be desired if obtained righteously) was secured at the price of the surrender of loyalty to Christ, the Head of the Church!

What Are the Ordinances?

Are not the Ordinances a succinct and perfect exposition of the whole Gospel of a Holy God, provided by the Blood of His only begotten Son! and which alone portray the way of salvation which we are to preach? Who should put a hand upon them and so destroy the Gospel they represent? Surely not the ministers of the Church of God, nor any soul that has sought salvation through faith in that Blood!

This action was so diametrically opposed to the Editorial pronouncement of the Union in the June issue of "The Union Baptist" that as the meeting of the Union, we expected to see every minister on his feet refusing it. But no, not one. It was announced that it "had been arranged" that the clauses of the proposed constitution be moved and seconded, by certain ministers who were prepared to answer all questions concerning it and named as the mover for these articles in question one known to be of the staunchest of Regular Baptists in the Union. Was the thought that his endorsement would indeed quench all opposition, save of those brave enough to challenge such high support?

Why?

A great "why" arose in our hearts. These were leaders chosen by God for the ministry of the Gospel! Why should they to a man go astray? We heard a sermon afterward, one of its points began: "Sin blinds the intelligence." We had our answer.

What was the sin in this case? Putting human fellowships above fellowship with God and obedience to Christ? Or some other motive more mundane?

We heard of one prominent minister remarking: "You know, we do not think the order of the ordinances is very important"!! And another said: "All of the ministers believe the Scriptures teach that order, but the fact is, it is not practicable."!

The plan of a Holy, omnipotent God for the salvation of the world, not practicable!! To what depths of pride and sin have we fallen!

Are there today no Shadracks, Meshachs and Abednegos among us? The furnace may be heated seven times hotter, but "one like unto the Son of God" shall walk with you!

And Daniel! What was he doing when God gave him

his great vision? He was on his knees confessing the sins of his people.

We will have a wonderful time of blessing in the proposed "campaign" of Evangelism if the ministers will lead their churches first of all in falling before God in confession of sin, and in renewed obedience and surrender.

May God give us all the spirit of repentance—for is not repentance the gift of God? Shall we not seek it at all costs?

The Campaign of Evangelism

We are always for it rightly secured, but what should precede it? We are told plainly in the Scriptures that "judgment must begin at the House of God." It is not a stream of inquirers coming to an inquiry room! It is Christians on their knees before God, giving up all for Him, and confessing the sin of indifference and disobedience which often reigns. The letter quoted on page 4 strikes the right note. How are young inquirers to be dealt with when they seek God? Are you brethren and your workers in the inquiry room prepared to deal properly with inquiring souls?

Shall we make it plain to the un-saved that to seek salvation is to be dealing with a Holy God who will not brook disobedience? Our Churches are now suffering from two or three generations of careless dealing with inquirers, taking them into the Churches without surrender to Christ.

When souls come to be saved in the coming meetings, what will be taught them by the workers in the Inquiry Room? Will they teach them it is not enough to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour? Will they tell them they must accept Him as Lord? Will they tell them what Baptism means? That it means complete surrender, that the individual has pledged allegiance to the Holy God and His word, to do His will alone, and that God will not be trifled with, but if trusted wholly, will lead one to future blessing and usefulness unlimited, as he follows the Holy Spirit and the Word.

Oh, Pastors! Train your workers in the Inquiry Rooms that this generation at least may come to know the meaning of becoming a Child of God.

DR. SHIELDS IN BATHURST STREET UNITED CHURCH, TORONTO

Wednesday, October 7th

Bathurst St. United Church has announced "A School on Evangelism", from September 30th to December 16th, each Wednesday evening between those dates: Sept. 30—Dr. J. R. Mutchmor; Oct. 7—Dr. Shields; Oct. 14—Mr. Gus Ambrose; Oct. 21—Rev. Jack Scott; Oct. 28—Dr. E. C. Hunter; Nov. 4—Canon J. Patterson; Nov. 18—Dr. W. A. Hunnisett; Nov. 25—Dr. P. P. W. Ziemann; Dec. 2—Dr. John Ross; Dec. 9—Dr. Maurice Zeidman; Dec. 16—Dr. George A. Little.

Each speaker is allotted thirty minutes for his address, to be followed by thirty minutes of questioning and discussion.

Dr. Shields' subject will be: "The Bible as the Inspired Word of God; The Essential Deity of Christ; His Expiatory Death; Regeneration and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit: — the only Saving Message for this or any other Day."

GOSPEL WITNESS readers will be welcome to any and all of these services.

SEMINARY CLASSES RESUMED

On Monday, September 28th, Toronto Baptist Seminary classes were resumed for the fall term. Dr. Shields, the beloved Founder and President of the Seminary, took charge at the opening session. The message of counsel, given as it was by one of rich and ripe experience as a minister of the Lord, was a source of unusual blessing to the young men who are just commencing their ministerial career. Friends of the Seminary will rejoice to know that the present enrolment of new students is the largest in recent years.

The lectures of Dr. Shields in the English Bible Course on Thursday evenings are most helpful, and all are cordially invited to attend. Any who wish may enrol as students in this course, write the examinations and receive a diploma at the end of three years' successful study. The new series of lectures on the New Testament will commence October 8th.

—O.L.C.

FOR YOUNGER READERS

Ice in Summer

Some years ago a Christian merchant, in an American city, failed in business, and lost everything he had. After talking over their affairs with his wife, who was a good Christian woman, they concluded to move out to the west and begin life again there. He bought some land on the wide rolling prairie, built a log cabin, and began to cultivate his farm. In the midst of the second summer, hard work and exposure to the sun brought on an attack of sickness, and a raging fever set in. They were twelve miles away from the nearest town. One of the neighbours went there, and came back with a doctor. He examined the case very carefully, and left some medicine with them and told them what to do. He said it was a very dangerous attack. If they could only get some ice to apply to the burning brow of the sick man, he thought he might get over it; but, without that, there was very little prospect of his recovery.

As soon as the doctor was gone, the sorrowful wife gathered her family and friends round the bedside of the sick husband, and knelt down with them in prayer. She told the Lord what the doctor had said, and prayed very earnestly that He Who has the power to do everything, would send them some ice. You see, this was before people had ice-boxes or refrigerators, and there was no ice to be obtained in summer away off in the prairies.

When the prayer was over, some of the neighbours whispered to each other that the poor distressed woman must be losing her mind. "The idea of getting ice here," they said, "when everybody knows there isn't a bit of ice in all the country round! It would be contrary to all the laws of nature to have ice in summer."

The wife of the sick man heard their remarks, but they did not shake her faith in God and in His willingness to answer prayer that was according to His will. Silently, but earnestly, her heart breathed forth the cry for ice.

As the day wore on, heavy clouds began to gather in the western sky. They rolled in darkness over the heavens. The distant thunder was heard to mutter. Nearer and louder it was heard. The lightning began to flash. Presently the storm burst in its fury. It came first in rain, and then in hail. The hailstones came in lumps of ice as big as eggs. They lay thick in the fur-

rows of the field. The thankful wife went out, and soon came in rejoicing with a bucket full of ice. It was applied in bags to her husband's head. The fever broke, and he was restored to life and health.

The grateful woman never troubled herself with any questions about whether it was a miracle or not. She only knew that she had prayed for ice in summer, and that the ice had come. And her faith was stronger than ever that the gracious Saviour, Who did so many miracles when He was on earth, has just the same power now to comfort His people when they are in trouble.

—Selected.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 17 Fourth Quarter Lesson 2 October 11, 1953

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

SAMSON

Lesson Text: Judges 16:21-31.

Golden Text: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."—Numbers 23:10.

I. Samson's Enslavement: verses 21-24.

After Gideon's great victory over the Midianites the children of Israel enjoyed quietness for forty years (Judg. 8:28). He was followed in office by Tolai (Judg. 10:1, 2), then Jair (Judg. 10:3), then Jephthah, the champion against the Ammonites (Judg. 11:29). In turn Israel was judged by men who were not made famous; Ibzan (Judg. 12:8-10), Elon (Judg. 12:11, 12) and Abdon (Judg. 12:13), till the period of oppression came at the hands of the Philistines which lasted for forty years (Judg. 13:1).

The Philistines were a wandering tribe, whose headquarters were in Philistia, a strip of land bordering on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the south-west corner of Palestine. They had attacked Israel on various occasions.

The heavenly annunciation to Samson's mother indicated that this was to be no ordinary child (Judg. 13:1-7). In fact, he was to be separated unto God from his birth until his death (1 Sam. 11; Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:15; Gal. 1:15). The laws governing the Nazarite vow represented various aspects of their utter devotion to the Lord (Numbers 6:1-21). The Nazarites abstained from wine or any fruit of the vine, as a sign that they renounced human joy (Judg. 9:13). They engaged in no practice which might cause their holiness to be polluted (2 Cor. 7:1). Their long hair signified, perhaps, their willingness to endure shame for the Lord's sake (Judg. 16:17; 1 Cor. 4:10; 11:14).

The name "Samson" means "solar", "like the sun". What a glorious thing it is to see a child growing into boyhood or girlhood with the blessing of God attending its progress (1 Sam. 2:21, 26; 3:19-21; Luke 1:30; 2:52). The ministry of Samson began in his early life (Judg. 13:24, 25), showing that the Christian boy and girl can serve the Lord acceptably. The Holy Spirit empowered him for service.

Samson had various encounters with the Philistines, whom he resisted on every occasion (Judges 15). He was made strong when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him (Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14). Using a strange weapon, "the jawbone of an ass", he won a great victory over the enemy (Judg. 15:15, 16). It was well for Israel that Samson was their judge for twenty years, which constituted half the period during which they were subject to the Philistines.

Samson was betrayed and delivered into the hands of the Philistines by a wicked woman, Delilah (Judg. 16:4-20). Because of his associations with this evil person, he lost his separation, his strength, his sight, his freedom and his life. Samson had been enticed to give her the real secret of his strength (Prov. 1:10-16; 7:25-27). As a Nazarite, his uncut hair was the physical sign of his separation unto God. Hair was regarded among the ancients as a symbol of personality, and the Nazarite injunction against shorn locks implied the devotion of the entire individual to God (Numb. 6:5; Judg. 13:5). When Samson was shorn of his hair, he was robbed

of his fellowship with God, of which his unshaven head was the sign. We must beware of those who would deprive us of our faith in God and our fellowship with Him, for such losses cannot easily be reclaimed.

It was a sad awakening for Samson. When he came to himself, he did as many another backslider has done; he determined to "snap out" of his stupor and go forth as usual. Too many attempts to turn over a new leaf and reform their outward habits, when the cause of their weakness is the breach of fellowship with God. Samson knew not that the Lord had departed from him for the change had been imperceptible (verse 20; Hos. 7:9; Luke 2:43). Sin has paralyzing power; like a snake, it fascinates its victims before fastening itself upon them. Show the young people that their only safety rests in maintaining unbroken spiritual union and communion with the Lord (Psa. 1:6; Prov. 10:29).

Sin is cruel; the Philistines put out his eyes (v. 21). Sin is degrading, for we read that they "brought him down" to Gaza, in a spiritual sense, as well as in a literal sense. It brings slavery; they put fetters upon him (John 8:34). Sin also brings wretchedness, for the strong man, the former judge of Israel, spent monotonous days fastened like an animal to the shaft that was used in connection with grinding the grain.

Restoration to fellowship with God is gloriously possible for those who truly repent (1 John 1:9). Samson was returned to favour. His hair began to grow again, and with it his strength returned. He again experienced power in prayer.

It is not always safe to attribute material success to favour with God. Right will win in the end, but not always in this life (Job 21:7-13; Psa. 37:34-40; 73:12-20). Satan sometimes makes people prosperous and victorious in order to win them to his side. The Philistines praised their god Dagon for their triumph over Samson (1 Sam. 2:2-5).

II. Samson's Death: verses 25-31.

The wicked are exceedingly cruel when they gain the upper hand. Such find malicious pleasure in tormenting the afflicted. The Lord would have us deal kindly with the blind, the deaf, the lame and the suffering ones (Lev. 19:14; Job 6:14; 29:12-17; Psa. 82:3, 4; Matt. 11:5; Luke 14:13; Heb. 12:13).

The Philistines were evidently gathered in one of the amphitheatres while they feasted and made cruel sport of Samson. He was given the opportunity not merely of avenging the wrong, but also of destroying a host of the enemies of the Lord. He was now restored to complete fellowship with God, and he was willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of his people.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Oct. 4—The Annunciation to Samson's Mother	Judges 13:1-14
Oct. 5—The Birth of Samson	Judges 13:15-25
Oct. 6—Samson and the Lion	Judges 14:1-9
Oct. 7—Samson's Riddle	Judges 14:10-20
Oct. 8—Samson's Victory	Judges 15:1-8
Oct. 9—Samson's Strength	Judges 15:9-20
Oct. 10—Samson's Downfall	Judges 16:1-20

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Come, ye that love the Lord. Abiding, oh, so-wondrous sweet. When we walk with the Lord. There's a royal banner. More about Jesus would I know. Conquering now and still to conquer.

THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH

Is thy faith fixed on the precious blood? Then thou art in the covenant. Canst thou read thy name in the bloody characters of a Saviour's atonement, who says to all "Come unto me"? Then shalt thou read it one day in the golden letters of the Father's election. He that believeth is elected. The blood is the symbol, the token, the earnest, the surety, the seal of the covenant of grace to thee. By this blood, sin is cancelled; by Jesus' agonies, justice is satisfied; by His death, the law is honoured; and by that blood in all its mediatorial efficacy, and in all its cleansing power, Christ fulfils all that He stipulated to do on the behalf of His people toward God.

—SPURGEON

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