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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

The Strait Gate and How to Enter It

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, September 26th, 1937

(Stenographically Reported)

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say, unto you, will seek to enter it, and shall not be able."—Luke 13:24.

MINISTERS of the gospel are described in the Word of God as men "who watch for your souls, as they that must give account". A minister is chiefly concerned with the souls of men. There are many whose task it is to care for other people's property. Sometimes men are charged with very heavy responsibilities in that respect; treasures of great value are committed to their care. There are those whose trust it is to safeguard the lives of others, the life of their bodies. A very solemn responsibility rests upon the physician. Sometimes upon his decision life or death depends, and a man of conscience will feel deeply the responsibility that is his.

But the minister has to do with something of greater value than mere property, with that indeed which is of greater worth than physical life, that is worth more than all else in the world beside. We have the highest Authority for believing that were it possible for a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul, the measure of his loss would be inestimable. How responsible then is the position of the minister! He ought to concern himself, not to please his hearers, not to entertain them, but so to minister to them that their souls may profit.

The minister is said, I repeat, to "watch for your souls". He must watch over the spiritual health of such as are the professed disciples of Christ. Just as thousands of mothers in this city to-day watch every movement of their children, quick to discern the slightest indication of ill-health lest it should be the symptom of the much dreaded malady. They are far more concerned now about the children's health than anything else in life. The affairs of the household may be allowed to go, but the health of the family must be conserved. So ought the minister to be ever watchful of the spiritual health of the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him over-

seer. That should be his supreme concern. How important it is that the lighthouse-keeper should keep his lights burning! Out on the stormy sea many a mariner will look eagerly for the light, that he may be sure to steer his ship away from dangerous places. So ought the minister, above all people, to keep his light burning, that the souls of men may not be wrecked by a false or erroneous testimony.

Ministers are said to be men who must give an account. Sooner or later, the minister must give an account of his opportunity, of how he fulfilled his trust before God; whether he did, from a pure motive, seek the highest welfare of the souls of men. A young minister complained to an older one of his limited opportunity, of the smallness of his congregation. The man of longer and larger experience said, "My brother, I expect you have quite as many people as you will care to be responsible for at the judgment-seat of Christ."

The minister must be careful not to allow himself to become familiar with holy things, nor, with the coming of his weekly opportunity, to treat his duty lightly; for it may be his last chance with someone. They may never hear the gospel again. It may be as he preaches, that with some it will be now or never. Therefore he ought to endeavour always to be faithful.

And with these considerations in view, I shall try again this evening to be very, very simple, and very direct, and as personal as the Spirit of the Lord will enable me to be; for my concern is for the souls of men, not for the preacher's reputation; he has none: he lost it long ago. Will you hear, then, the Word of the Lord? Let us endeavour, all of us, to hear it for our spiritual profit.

The text which I have read to you was our Lord's

answer to the question of one of His hearers: "Are there few that be saved?"

I.

I begin with the remark that MANY PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS, WHO ARE UTTERLY CARELESS ABOUT THE MATTER OF PERSONAL SALVATION. This man, it appears, was not particularly troubled or concerned about the question as to whether he was saved. He rather hoped for a discussion of the question he propounded, whether few or many would ultimately be partakers of salvation.

What a multitude of religious people there are who have no interest in their own personal salvation! How many religious institutions are concerned with almost everything but the great matter of the salvation of the individual. *There are many people who play at religion.* There are many church-goers and church-members and religious officials who play at religion. Here is a man who joins a golf club. He pays his membership fee. Occasionally he takes his wife out to the club to dinner. On fine days he gets away with his sticks, and goes around the course—what doing? Knocking the ball about. It is to be sure an interesting mental diversion. It also affords him an opportunity to get out into the open air, and to enjoy a little useful physical exercise. But it really does not matter whether he wins or loses. The score he makes is a matter of no real importance. His attempt is just as diverting as his achievement—and probably the poorer his score, the more exercise he gets! At the end of the day, what has he done? Nothing. He has only played a game. He has afforded himself a topic for discussion with his fellow-clubmen, or others interested in golf. But he himself will admit that he has really achieved nothing.

That is how some people treat religion. They belong to the church. They sing hymns; they discuss religious questions; they make contributions to religious objects. But it is no more a part of their life, no more indispensable to their existence, than is the game of golf to the most enthusiastic golfer. They only play at it. There is nothing real about it.

There are a great many *who regard religion as consisting of debatable opinions.* We all ought to have some religion! We ought to have some opinions about it! But, oh horrors, the idea of regarding a man's creed as a matter of importance! The politicians talk about "religious strife", as though religion were a matter of no real importance, but something that should be kept in the background, that has no direct relation to character and life. You may have your opinion, and I mine; and we will discuss it when opportunity offers. But in the end, there is no arbitrator; no umpire, no one to say what is right. It is of no importance which is right, you or I, but it is an interesting subject of discussion. That is not an uncommon attitude toward religion. Men like to ask questions about it. To not a few, it affords an opportunity to exhibit their mental agility. It is a kind of intellectual gymnasium, where argumentative people can show their expertness in mental gymnastics.

I am quite willing to contend for the faith, to contend for things that are unmistakably revealed, but I hate mere contentiousness, the making of religion a subject of continual debate, and discussion, and argumentation. Yet with a great many people it is nothing more. They are ready always to ask questions. There is scarcely a

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and

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Editor

T. T. SHIELDS

Associate Editors

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

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

S.S. Lesson and Exchanges

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

Address Correspondence:

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

130 Gerrard Street East; Toronto 2

Canada

Telephone RAndolph 7415

Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada

service when any preacher preaches but somebody comes forward with a few particular questions that they have saved up—not because they are interested in the truth, but only in its discussion. Of course, a man may be a sincere enquirer; but to many people religion is very much like a cross-word puzzle; a problem to be solved, a riddle to be guessed. Such people are here to-day, and are somewhere else to-morrow. Any and every new religious fad interests them. I went into a man's house one day. He had spread before him on the table magazines of nearly every cult that I have ever heard of. I said, "What do you do with these?" "I take them all." His mind was so full of religious rubbish that he could not think straight on anything. That was his conception of religion—New Thought, Unity Truth, Christian Science, Russellism, and every other ism, and I rather suspect he had invented one of his own. That may represent religion; it is not Christianity.

II.

OUR LORD TURNED THE THOUGHT OF HIS QUESTIONER DIRECTLY TO THE SUPREMELY IMPORTANT MATTER OF HIS OWN PERSONAL SALVATION. That is the one thing that should monopolize our interest.

Our Lord used *the figure of a gate, as though there were a dividing barrier, with some on the outside, and some on the inside;* as though all men were not saved; as though some were saved and some not saved. Do you believe that? That is a very unpopular doctrine nowadays. There is a kind of universalism that is almost atmospheric. It is assumed, no matter how a man has lived, no matter what he has done, that when the end of life is reached, it will be all right. We live in days when people are being—I had almost said, fed on a Christianized paganism. When the Indian chief died his tribesmen buried his bow and arrows with him, that he might be equipped in the happy hunting ground to which they believed his spirit had departed. It is a wonder people do not do that now under the sanction of some branch of

the Christian church. Some man who has spent his life making people drunk, or providing people with opportunity to gamble, ought to have buried with him the symbols of his damnable business—and the benediction of the church pronounced over a life that has been utterly godless!

If the Bible be the word of God—and if it is not, we none of us know anything about the future—if it be a divine revelation of truth undiscoverable to the natural mind, if it be the unveiling of a life to be lived beyond the grave, then that assumption is utterly wrong; for the Lord Jesus plainly teaches us here that not everyone is or will be saved. I affirm that. Personally, I believe the Book. If I did not, I would not be hypocritical enough to occupy a pulpit and profess to preach what I did not believe. But believing it, I must preach what it teaches.

The Bible teaches us that, naturally, men are not saved. They are on the outside of the gate, not on the inside—and there is a great difference between the two positions. I do not know who is saved and who is not among you this evening. I cannot tell how many of my hearers are really regenerated, and how many are not. But I am in duty bound to warn you that there is a vast difference between those who are outside of this gate, and those who are inside. I remind you that the Lord Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." That is a terrible possibility, that a man may carry all the sins of his life with him to the judgment-day, unless he be released from them by the interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is the teaching of Scripture, that unless by divine grace, they are removed from him, he will take them into the presence of God.

Let us therefore accept this plain principle to begin with; that *personal salvation is a necessity*; that, however well-born we may be naturally, that fact can not introduce us to heaven's aristocracy; it does not ensure our presentation at the Court above. "Marvel not," said this same Saviour on another occasion, "that I say unto you, Ye must be born again." Not, You ought to be, but, "Ye must be born again." What right has any man to read at the graveside of one who has spent his whole life without God, that "we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection unto eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ." There will be a resurrection—there is no doubt about that—but there is a resurrection "unto condemnation", as well as unto life.

The question, "Are there few that be saved," is displaced by a more important one. I ask, Are you saved? The Lord Jesus implied that there is such an experience as salvation. Then *He defines the entrance to this way of life as a narrow, strait, gate*: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "There is a way which seemeth right into a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." There is a broad road, and there is a wide gate that admits to it—and it is a road that carries much traffic: "Many there be which go in thereat." But the Lord Jesus said that the road that is taken by the multitude leads to destruction. That is almost a forgotten doctrine, or, at least, one seldom preached nowadays. But I give you the word of Someone Who knows. The Lord Jesus says that the broad road leads to destruction. There are many religions that offer a wide gate to those who will become their devotees. The popular religion is that which requires no amendment of life, a religion that has little or no relation to a man's conduct and character. Perhaps

one will enquire, "Can I not go to church in the morning, go through certain religious observances, and finish my religion for the day?" Yes, you may thus deal with religion. I do not want to be censorious; but I do not believe that any one of us can read the Book, or hear its truth expounded, without his conscience being touched. We are all a bad lot at the best. We all need to be better—and the Bible teaches us how to be better. But if you do not want to be better, you may be offended by being reminded that you ought to be better. The Word that cuts like a two-edged sword will be unwelcome.

Notwithstanding, *the religion of Christ is a happy religion*. It is a narrow gate, and a narrow road—and perhaps some people think it must be very uncomfortable travelling in it. I remember the first time I tried to drive a car. I wanted to have an interview with the Minister of Highways! I wanted to give him a piece of my mind. I felt the road ought to be three or four times as wide. I could not understand why the road was made so narrow. But when you are travelling on a one-way road, it need not be very wide, especially when you are not likely to be travelling so fast as to want to pass others. I can be quite comfortable now on a very narrow road. So can you; you drive your car automatically, and it is not hard to keep to the road. The narrow road becomes a delight to those who are led in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. But it is still a narrow road. It means something to be a Christian—it ought to mean something.

We do not enter this gate dragging the world, the flesh, and the devil with us. I do not mean to say that an outward transformation of life is always immediately effected, but certainly in entering upon this road, we must inwardly feel something of the horror of sin. Do you believe there is such a thing as sin? Do you believe there is something in your life and mind that is "abominable" to God? Do you believe sin is "the abominable thing" that God hates, and which must be put away if we are to dwell at peace with Him? Perhaps there is someone here who does not believe the old-fashioned doctrine of total human depravity? We are having exhibitions of it on a rather large scale just now; are we not? Quite enough of it in China, and Italy, and Japan, and Germany, and Russia—but, of course, none in Canada! Nor in Ontario in the present election! I have often said I wish it were more difficult to subscribe to that doctrine. I wish there were less evidence of the innate selfishness and incorrigible sinfulness of men. I wish I could see here and there in public life at least a man or two whom one could believe were sincerely devoted to the interests of the public instead of to Number One.

The strait gate requires us to recognize that sinfulness, to repent of it, and to seek a new nature from God. You say, "But I think religion, Christianity, has to do with the life that is to come?" It has. But how are you going to enjoy the life that is to come if you are not made ready for it here? Mr. Spurgeon once said, when a very young man, that if an unregenerate thief could by any means get to heaven, he would pick the angels' pockets. Some very precise person went to him afterward and said, "Do you not know that the angels have no pockets?" To which Mr. Spurgeon replied; "I had not thought of that. I will revise my simile and say such an one would pluck a feather out of an angel's wing." Of what use would it be to admit unregenerate men to heaven? If a man, with the same sinful nature could,

by any means, come into the immediate presence of God—I had almost said it would be worse than hell itself. Certainly it could be no heaven.

This preacher is a poor sinful creature, yet his presence has frightened not a few people before now. Some are afraid to be even where the minister is, for fear he should ask them, Are you saved? What would people do in the presence of God? Yes; the way of life is a strait gate; and the Bible will teach us how to live a strait life. The Good Shepherd will not only save us, but will lead us in paths of righteousness "for his name's sake". I would give nothing for a man's religion if it consists only in a professed hope of heaven, and has nothing to do with his life and character here and now. People will believe in Christ when His professed disciples show by their lives that they have entered through the strait gate.

I have not time to labour that principle, but, lest you should misunderstand, let me remark simply that the largest liberty simply consists in complete obedience to law. It is when we are taught to live life God's way that life becomes full and rich and exuberant. There is a law written in the members of our bodies. I move my hand in the way in which it was intended to be moved, without pain, with freedom, with perfect ease. Watch the organist or pianist at the keys. See those who are especially dexterous in the use of their fingers, and then tell me if there ever was a machine made to equal those four fingers and one thumb. Sometimes we see things advertised as being "hand-sewn". Some years ago I went through some of the large linen mills in Ireland, and one of the proprietors gave me a box of handkerchiefs for my wife. There were a dozen in the box, and they were worth—a fabulous sum—for handkerchiefs. Why? No machine had ever touched them. I was told that they were woven and embroidered entirely by hand. We have not improved upon God's machine, the human hand. But how does it work? How does it perform such wonders—the paintings of the great masters, the performance of the works of the great musicians, the finest of all sculptures—all wrought by a human hand, with a human brain behind it? How is it done? When that hand is perfectly responsive to the direction of the head, the man works with freedom and felicity, enraptured with his delightful task.

That is life. That is liberty. The way of Christ may seem to the outside observer a narrow path, and difficult to walk. It may seem as though it involved tremendous sacrifices. But to be in Christ, to become members of His body, and subject to His control, is to live the largest, fullest, richest, and most joyous life possible. It is a narrow road, but it leads unto life, and they really live—and they only—who walk it.

III.

HOW SHALL WE ENTER? *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* What does it mean? *It does not mean that a man needs great strength, or some peculiar skill to forge his way in through the crowd.* Certainly he does not enter by any religious trick. I remember a case some years ago where there was a trial in the city. A noted counsel was to address the jury, and the court room was crowded, while only a small fraction of the people could be admitted who wanted to be there. There was one man whom I knew, who was determined to get in. He ought to have been made of brass for he was one of the

most politely brazen men I ever knew. He was determined to hear, and his wife desired to hear also. To her question, "How shall we get in?" he replied, "Do not worry, I will get you in." He armed himself with a portfolio and pushing his way into the crowd he shouted, "Gang-way, please." I do not know whether the policeman thought he was the counsel or not, but by sheer impudence he pushed past everyone. That method will not do at the strait gate. "Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips." There is a Guardian at this gate Whom it were impossible to deceive.

"Strive"? I think it means to be desperately in earnest, among other things; to be convinced of the necessity! "I must be saved. I must get inside that gate. There is no salvation without it. I am determined to get in, to be downright in earnest about the matter." In this place we afford people an opportunity to confess their faith in Christ, and perhaps someone will say, "But, sir, you ask a great deal of a man when you ask him to walk up that aisle." What! If your desire for salvation is not of sufficient intensity to lead you to do a thing like that, you are not very much in earnest. "Strive to enter in." It means that we ought to be desperately in earnest in this matter of salvation.

It must mean too that *we are prepared to face all obstacles.* There are many in the way—"the sin that does so easily beset us"; our natural tendencies; our natural pride. We are all proud—I do not know why we should be. We ought all to be ashamed. We have much to be ashamed of, and nothing of which we may reasonably be proud. Yet human pride keeps many out. Men are naturally unwilling to admit that they are sinners of the deepest dye, and that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. So then one may have to face all these elements in life, his natural tendencies, his human pride, his natural wilfulness, his reluctance to yield to One who is Lord, to surrender and acknowledge a higher wisdom, will, and power than his own. Notwithstanding, I bid you "strive"! Make up your mind that, God helping you, you will not allow anything to exclude you, but that you will enter this strait gate.

It means *persistence and perseverance*, so setting ourselves toward that great object that we shall say, "I will never give up until I have the assurance that my sins are forgiven." So will men do if they do but yield themselves to the Spirit of God. He will enable you to strive. He will make you earnest. He will make you determined. But whatever it may cost, we must resolve before God that we will so yield to His Spirit as to be enabled to enter the strait gate.

I have known people thus earnestly, and perseveringly to resolve. I have had people come to my house past the midnight hour, saying, "I cannot sleep. I must be saved." "Strive to enter." Let it be the all-important thing in life to know Christ, to be washed in His precious blood.

I knew a man who apparently had no conscience in the handling of money. As often as he was helped to get out of debt, he would plunge into debt again. He was always in debt, and in debt in a way that left his creditors exposed, not only to possible but very probable loss. I said to him one day, "My dear fellow, this must become with you a matter of conscience. You must get out of this. You have no right to assume obligations that you have not the shadow of a chance of discharging." "What shall I do?" said he. "Make up your mind that, though

you starve, you will not go any farther into this mire of debt. Somehow or another, resolve you will get out of it." I do not know whether he did or not. But you and I are in debt, terribly in debt, so terribly in debt that if we had all eternity in which to work, we could never cancel the obligation. We should still be in debt.

You ask, "What shall we do? I am determined that somehow—somehow I will get rid of this, but how can I?" You cannot pay it. You remember the story of Pilgrim, do you not, with a great burden upon his back? And how he lost it? Says Bunyan: "So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in—and I saw it no more." Oh that men and women would say, "I will be out of debt this night if there be any way of getting out." Strive to get to that Cross. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He will cancel all, and as we enter in through the strait gate we shall be free men and free women.

IV.

CERTAIN REASONS ARE ADDUCED FOR THUS STRIVING. Our Lord said, "Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." *He did not mean that the door, the gate, would be shut against any now seeking entrance.* Blessed be God, salvation is for the greatest of all sinners. Are you not glad of that? If we could see ourselves as we really are in God's sight, by nature, I am sure we should say as did the Apostle Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." That is our prime qualification, that we are sinners seeking salvation. The gate is thrown wide to everyone who will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet many shall seek to enter, "and shall not be able." *There is an element of time here, for says the context, "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are." I remind you—and I would remind myself, and pray that God will enable me to be more earnest than ever in seeking the salvation of souls—that in the providence of God there comes a time when the Master of the house shuts the door. It will not be for ever possible for us to enter.*

Do you object to that? The stores will be open tomorrow morning, and will remain open all day—and they are anxious for customers—but if you go downtown a few minutes after five o'clock, knock as you will, they will not open the door. You will find the door shut to those who come after hours.

During the war I preached one Sunday evening a few miles out of London. I followed my usual habit of being content with a very limited meal at noon, and nothing else until I was finished for the evening. When I got through, I took a train back to London, thinking to slip into a restaurant for a little supper. I got out at Victoria Station, and saw right across the street a restaurant that would suit my purpose. I said to myself, That is fine; I will go there. Just as I reached the door, a man came to the front and turned a key in the door. I indicated that I wanted to come in, but he shook his head. I knocked at the door, and while I could not hear what he

said, I could read his lips through the glass, saying, "You are too late." The door was shut.

I went to look for another place—it was only about eleven o'clock at night—but I was too late everywhere. I was never so hungry in my life! I said to a policeman; "Tell me of some place where I can get a bite to eat." "There will be a coffee wagon at such a place about two o'clock," he said. But it was of no use: it was too late—and I went hungry to bed.

That is what it means. God will not keep His restaurant open always. He has His hours. The day will come when the Master of the house will shut the door. It will be too late some day; and it will be of no use to knock then. Many will seek to enter in—"and shall not be able".

The context says that *many will knock who, until then, assumed they had a right to enter.* They come as though they were children of the household, saying, "Open to us." But the Lord of the house will say, "I know you not whence ye are." "But you must know us. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets—we were church members; we actually came to the Communion Table; we were religious people." "That may be," says the Master of the house, "but I do not know you."

You remember the word in the book of Revelation where the great Head of the church looked down upon the seven churches? Looking upon the church at Sardis He saw the names on the roll and said, "I have a roll too—and thou hast a few names even in Sardis which I have also on my roll, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." It does not follow because one has his name on a church roll, that it is written in the Lamb's book of life. In that great day there will be myriads of people knocking and saying, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence. We were among the religious people. We were called Christian." "It makes no difference what you were called: I never knew you." That is a terrible sentence! Vastly more appalling than my looking into that restaurant window that night in London—all brightly lighted, when I could not get in. I do not know that I ever saw a place look more attractive than that did—after the door was shut. Mr. Lloyd George, just after the war, described the nations of Europe as being like a man who was down-at-heel, out-at-elbow, hair unkempt, with every appearance of destitution about him, hungry and forlorn—standing looking into what he called a cookshop window. "Wanting everything," said Mr. Lloyd George, "and with no money to buy."

And the Master utters that terrible word, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out—you shall see something of the everlasting felicities of those who are saved, and yourselves shut out."

How ought we to strive? I know that we are saved by grace, and by grace alone; and yet the Word of God, though He does it all, addresses us, demanding our submission and surrender, as though we had something to do, bidding us strive—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." I beg of you, members of this church, members of other churches if such there are here, and members of no church at all, before you sleep this night, make absolutely sure that you are on the in-

side of this gate, saved with an everlasting salvation. Then at last we shall be eternally shut in with God.

Let us pray:

O Lord, how great is Thy mercy! How inestimable Thy patience! Thou art long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish. We bless Thee that the door still stands wide for us all, and we pray that this night some may enter in. We bless Thee for what some of us know of the joys of Thy salvation. Help us all that we may rest this night in the full assurance of faith. For Thy name's sake, Amen.

THE SECRET OF BRITAIN'S GREATNESS

(The following document was found in Westminster Abbey, nameless and dateless.)

A nation would be truly blest if it were governed by no other laws than this blessed Book. It is so complete a system that nothing need be added to it, or taken from it. It contains most things useful to be known or done. It affords a copy for a king, and a rule for a subject. It gives instruction and counsel to a senate, authority and direction to a magistrate. It cautions a witness, requires an impartial verdict from the jury, and furnishes the judge with his sentence. It entails honour to parents and enjoins obedience in children. It prescribes and limits the sway of the sovereign, the rule of the ruler, and the authority of the master; commands the subjects to honour, and the servants to obey, and promises the blessing and protection of its Author to all who walk by its rule.

It promises food and raiment, and limits the use of both. It defends the rights of all, and reveals vengeance to every defrauder, over-reacher and oppressor.

It is the first Book, and the best Book, and the oldest Book in the world. It contains the choicest matter, gives the best instructions, and affords the greatest pleasure and satisfaction that can be revealed. It contains the best laws and the profoundest mysteries that were ever perceived. It brings the best of tidings and affords the best of comfort to the inquiring and disconsolate. It exhibits life and immortality and shows the way to everlasting Glory. It is a brief recital of all that is past, and is a certain prediction of what is to come. It reveals the only and true God and shows the way to Him, sets aside all other gods and describes the vanity of them, and off all who trust in them.

In short, it is a Book of laws to show right and wrong, a Book of wisdom that condemns all folly, and makes the foolish wise, a Book of truth that detects all lies and confronts all errors, and a Book of life that shows the way from everlasting destruction.

To understand it is to be wise indeed, but to be ignorant of it is to be destitute of wisdom. It is a complete code of laws, a perfect body of Divinity, an unequalled narrative, a Book of lives, of travels and voyages. It is the king's best copy, the housewife's best guide, the servant's best directory, the young man's best companion, the schoolboy's spelling Book, and the learned man's masterpiece. And that which crowns it all is — the Author is One in Whom is no variableness nor the shadow of turning.

—The Reaper

ABOUT THE EDITOR

We are happy to be able to report to our readers that Dr. Shields' physical condition is steadily improving, though he has not yet resumed his accustomed labours. We hope to have still better news of him to report in next week's issue.—W. S. W.

"MY JOY"—WHAT WAS IT?

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Sunday Evening, December 5th, 1937

(Stenographically Reported)

"And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

"For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

—Luke 22:15, 16.

Prayer Before the Sermon

O Lord our God, there is but one Name by the merit of which we may dare to come where Thou art. We thank Thee that ever it was said, Thou shall call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins. We thank Thee, O Lord, for an High Priest Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Who understands all our human nature, Who enters into sympathetic relation to us in everything save our sin—and comes to save us from our sin. Oh that we all may be saved therefrom to-night! We bless Thee for the truth that the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

We invoke Thine aid this evening, for we cannot understand the things of God unless Thou shalt interpret them to us. We have no capacity for their reception unless and until Thou dost open our hearts, as Thou didst open the heart of Lydia, that we may attend unto the things that thou wouldst say unto us. Come to us this evening, O Spirit of grace and truth. Lead such as do not know Thee to receive Thy salvation; and may those of us who are called Thy children be brought at least a little nearer to Thee. Help us that we may see the Lord Jesus in such a way that we may love Him better than we have ever loved Him before, that henceforth we may be led to do His commandments, and be more wholly given up to His holy service.

We thank Thee for the privilege that is to be ours a little later in the evening, when we shall gather about Thy table, and once again remember Thy love for us. O that our hearts may be knit to Thee, that there may well up within us a spring of gratitude, thus the love of Christ shall for ever constrain us. Lord, we are very poor and needy. We have no strength, no wisdom of our own. We can do nothing at all unless Thou dost help us. So help us to-night. Help Thy servant to preach, and help the people to hear; and may this occasion minister to the spiritual upbuilding of everyone before Thee, and somewhat at least to Thy greater glory among men. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

I SUPPOSE I may assume that most of us here this evening know historically the significance of the passover feast. When the Lord was about to deliver His people from Egypt, and His final visitation upon the rebellious Egyptians was due, when the firstborn of all in the land of Egypt were to be slain, the people were admonished to take a lamb from the flock, of the first year, and without blemish. They were to take a lamb for each family. The father was to gather his family under the shelter of his own roof; the lamb was to be slain, and the blood to be caught in a vessel, and with a bunch of hyssop the father was to sprinkle the blood upon the doorsteps and the lintel of the house in which they dwelt—and none of them were to go out of the house until the morning. The Lord said that that night He would pass through the land; He would come with sword unsheathed. It was to be a night of terrible judgment, but He said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." That night there was a great cry in the land of Egypt as the stroke of judgment fell, but among the people of God, sheltered behind and beneath the blood, there was only salvation.

That night they were enjoined to eat the Passover: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with

water, but roast with fire . . . and thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover." The king of Egypt thrust them forth at last, yielding to the divine pressure; and they went out, saved through the blood. Thenceforth the people of God were enjoined to keep annually the feat of unleavened bread, which was called the Passover, they were to keep in everlasting remembrance the great miracle of deliverance which God had wrought for them.

But "they kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works and His wonders that He had showed them." And as surely as "their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant," they ceased to observe the Passover. That command was one which, in the subsequent history of Israel, was more honoured in the breach than in its observance; and whenever God visited His people with reviving grace, one of the marks of that revival was their observance of the Passover. When the book of the law was found in the house of God, where it had been buried many years, in the days of good king Josiah, "the king commanded all the people, saying: Keep the Passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah."

Then He came Who was the Lamb of God "slain from the foundation of the world." Through the days of His flesh, He fulfilled to the minutest particular the prophecies relating to that earthly ministry, to that divine parenthesis stretching from Bethlehem to Calvary; and now that the time of the feast of unleavened bread called the Passover was come, and the time was come when the Passover must be killed, He sent two of His disciples to make ready the Passover—I have read to you the story this evening. When He came to the guest-chamber, that upper room was furnished, and he sat down with the twelve, He opened His heart to them and said: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

It is a very strong word employed here, translated, "With desire have I desired." It represents an eager, almost insatiable passion, something stronger than hunger or thirst. He said to His disciples: "With a passionate longing, I have come to this hour." To this last hour He did not come with reluctant feet. He needed no exhortation to observe the Passover. He welcomed the striking of the hour. Through the long centuries He had waited. He was longing for "the fulness of time" to come. At last His hour was about to strike, and He said in effect to His disciples: "I can scarcely tell you how my eager soul has longed for this hour. I wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

That is the subject of our discussion this evening, Why that eagerness? How shall we interpret that outburst of His passionate soul? Why was He so anxious, moved almost with a holy impatience, an inexpressible longing? What was to be accomplished?—for He added, in effect: "This is the last Passover feast I shall observe with you, the next time we will eat it together in the kingdom of God."

It is significant that He said: "I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God; until the Passover, with all that it symbolizes and promises, completely be fulfilled." It was for the complete ful-

filment of that which the Passover prefigured that He longed.

How I wish I could be sure that all of us this evening who come to this Memorial Feast will come in a like spirit, hungry for it, eager for it, desiring with a passionate desire to remember Him.

I.

Let me say to you that HIS DESIRE WAS NOT A MORBID INTEREST IN THE THING ITSELF. We have read of people who morbidly take delight in seeking a kind of martyrdom; as, for example, devotees of pagan systems, who find pleasure in self-inflicted pain, persuading themselves that they are thereby laying up for themselves a store of merit. I am sure that our Lord had no such pleasure in this Passover feast. To Him, this world must have been a world of wickedness, a world of gross darkness. The world, to His holy nature, was like some vast lazaretto, the very soil of it was cursed and corrupted. All its springs were polluted. Its very atmosphere was morally putrid to His holy sensibilities. His very coming into this world must have inflicted excruciating torment upon His sensitive soul, even before He came to Gethsemane or the Cross.

Jesus Christ had no pleasure in the cross. To Him, it was a thing accursed; it was representative of that to which His whole nature was opposed, even the sin that was so hateful to the holy nature of God.

Nor had He any pleasure in the suffering that the cross entailed, the physical agony, and the deeper soul-torture which became His as He yielded Himself to crucifixion. There was nothing of sweetness in that awful cup which He was about to put to His lips, the wine of the wrath of God which was poured out without mixture, into the cup of His indignation. He was not eager to drink that.

Why, then did He come so eagerly to this Passover feast? The Scripture tells us that He "endured the cross," He endured it as no one could have endured it unless humanity had been joined with Deity—but He endured. As for the shame of it: He "despised" it; He rose above it; He trod it beneath His feet. But why did He die? Why did He want to die? Why did He welcome the hour when He should lay down His life? It was "for the joy that was set before Him." The cross and its agony were but parenthetical in His view. He looked beyond them, to all that was to be accomplished by His death; and for the indescribable, inexpressible, ineffable joy that was set before Him, "He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Not the bitterness of the cup, but the sweetness of its issue attracted Him; not the shame and sorrow, but the glory that was to follow. It was upon that His heart was set as He came to His disciples, this "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," saying: "I am happy to be here. It is the hour I have anticipated from all eternity—and all this is to be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

What was that joy? Whatever that joy was, is to be the subject of our enquiry. It was that joy that made our Beloved like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel. What was that joy that was inseparable from the cross, and for which the cross was endured, and the shame despised?

II.

It was first of all, I am sure, THE JOYFUL ANTICIPATION OF THAT POSITION OF AUTHORITY TO WHICH HIS CROSS

AND PASSION WOULD EXALT HIM, WHICH WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO AS MANY AS THE FATHER HAD GIVEN HIM. He longed to get the work done so that He would have it within His authority to say to all the sons of man: "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven." That was His supreme desire, to enrich this human world, to lavish upon the objects of His affection, not only the love of His heart, but that wealth and power which were to be the expression of His love.

I imagine a father whose love is centred upon his home. Above everything else in life, he loves his wife and children. Sometimes he dreams of having ability to do all that he would like to do for them. He cannot do much, but he wishes he could do more. He would like to make them all rich and happy. There is no limit to his desire in respect to them. So he looks forward to a day—perhaps it is the Christmas season—and surreptitiously he sets aside a little of his income, so that he shall not diminish the regular household supplies to such an extent that it will become noticeable, and for months he saves a little. By and by he puts into that amount his last contribution. He had set before him a certain object, saying: "I am going to buy some things for them as soon as I get the money." Now at last he has it. To him, it is representative of hours, days, weeks of hard labour; but it is very precious to him.

At last I see him stealing away from the house—he is going shopping, he is going to spend what he has saved up. He says: "Now at last I am able to do it." I can see how eagerly he makes his way to the place where he is to count down the money acquired at such expense to himself. When at last he stands where these coveted treasures are which he is going to possess for himself, that he may give them to someone else, I think as he pays down the money, and the articles become his, he says to himself: "This is one of the happiest hours of my life. Now I shall be able to show them how much I love them."

It was something like that, but in a divine degree; that our Lord experienced. This sinful world had impoverished itself, it had utterly forfeited the favour of God. Those who should have been princes were paupers. They had no title to light or life. But He must needs come and be made under the law, and do our day's work for us, fulfilling all the requirements of the law. He said: "I want them to wear a robe of righteousness"—I spoke to you about that last Sunday evening—"but I shall have to work for them. I shall have to earn it for them. I shall have to keep the law, and work out a perfect righteousness." Now His day's work is done, and He has a righteousness that He is able to impute—shall I say it?—to a ruined, ragged world. "I will give them all new clothes, so that they can go to heaven in them. I will give them all new natures, so that they will be able to behave like princes when I put my princely robes upon them. I am going to obliterate all stain of their sin."

In but an hour or so He will do it. Do you wonder that He said to His disciples: "I am so glad of this hour." He had said at the beginning of His ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"—oh so poor! He did not mean to people who were without bread and butter: He meant that we were all poor. He came as a Messenger from heaven to preach good tidings "to the poor . . . to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to

set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And in our text, He is saying to His disciples: "I am now ready to sound the trumpet. My work will soon be done. With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer, that all its implications might be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

There is a story in the fifteenth chapter of this Gospel, of a father who was very rich—and when he had divided unto his sons his living, though one took the portion that fell to him and went into the far country, the father seemed to be no poorer. He was so rich! Yet the story suggests that the father did not find any pleasure in his riches. He did not find any pleasure in his home, save as he contemplated the day when he would lavish it all upon one who now was far away from him. I think there is all that in the text. "Soon," said the Lord Jesus, "as Joseph opened all the storehouses, I will open the gates of the storehouse of infinite grace, and lavish it all upon a sin-cursed race." It was the joy of giving that inspired Him.

III.

I think there was THE JOY, TOO, OF RECEIVING, THE JOY OF AN ANTICIPATED REUNION. I wonder why He waited so long after the tragedy of the garden? I wonder why He did not come quickly, there and then? I rather think that Eve thought He intended to come soon, for after Abel's death, when Seth was born, she called him Seth, which means, "Appointed", saying, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."

And what was heaven then? He had been there. He made not a few appearances in the Old Testament time. But in His pre-incarnate state, He dwelt with the Father, and He knew the shadow which sin—if I may without irreverence say it—had cast upon the glory of Heaven. He knew that human sin had marred the joys of Heaven. You ask me for proof? If the angels rejoice over one sinner repenting, I am sure they must sorrow when men sin. The father's house mourned, for a place at the table was empty, while a member of the family was away from home; and I can imagine that that father, when the wild wind moaned about the house, and he heard the storm without, must have often said: "I wonder where he is? I wish he were home, within my own house. He would be safe here. But he is away from home. I can never be happy until he comes back."

How many a son has broken the heart of his father and his mother! How many a daughter has brought sorrow to the home! But it is nothing to the sorrow we all inflicted upon the heart of God. His prodigal world had journeyed to a far country. But now in our text, Jesus Christ is saying: "They will be coming home now soon. I know they are coming home. The hour is about to strike, when I shall pay the last farthing, the price of their redemption. Then they will come back."

Years ago, when I had not been long Pastor of this church, I received a letter from a man, not a member of the church. He told me he was in regular attendance upon the services, and said: "My wife and children are in England, and I am anxious to bring them out. I am employed, and I receive a certain weekly wage, and for some time now—ever since I came myself—I have been setting aside a portion of my wages, saving up to pay their fares out to Canada. The ships are crowded"—it was in the days when thousands were coming to Canada—"and by next spring or early summer, I shall have

enough money saved to pay their fares, but by that time the ships will all be so crowded that I shall not be able to get them over, even though I have the money. The steamship company tells me that the only way by which I can ensure their coming is to buy their tickets three or four months in advance. I am sorry to ask you, but can you help me? I know I shall have the money when it is time for them to come, but that will be too late. I am writing to ask if you could lend me the money, so that I can book their passages and pay the money down. I promise faithfully that I will repay it by such-and-such a time", naming a certain date.

I did not know him, and in any case it was rather a large order coming from a stranger, to pay the passage of a whole family from England to Canada. The fact is, I had not the money. But I sent for him, and when he came I identified him at once. He used to sit up in the gallery to my left. I had often seen him, and I recognized him as a regular attendant. I told him I should like to do it, but I was sorry that I had not the resources that would allow me to do so. I said: "I hope you will not be offended with me", and he said he would not. But I was rather afraid that I should not see him again. But the next Sunday morning he came in that door, walked down the aisle, took his place as usual. I looked at him—he had attracted my attention before. I thought he was one of the saddest men I had ever seen. He had a strong face, but he seemed sad and lonely. Sunday after Sunday he came, and his face haunted me. Often at night I could see him sitting in the gallery. He looked as though there was nothing in life worth living for.

After a month or so had passed, he wrote me again and said, "I have saved up a little more. I shall not need quite as much now. I wonder, sir, could you possibly lend me that money? I am so lonely. I so long to have my wife and family with me. If I do not get the money now, I shall have to wait another year." As that sorrowful face came before me with the letter, I said to myself, I cannot stand it any longer. I must get that money somewhere—and I got it. I wrote to him enclosing the amount for which he asked. He had said he would repay it on a certain day: I did not expect him to do so. I had had many promises like that, few of which had ever been redeemed. I knew there was no wisdom in my doing it unless I was prepared to lose the money; but I felt that if I could take the sadness from that face it would be worth losing the money. However, I sent a note with the cheque, in conformity with his suggestion that the amount should be repaid at a certain date; though prepared to lose it. Time passed, and when the date for repayment came, I had forgotten it. But the first mail in the morning brought a letter. I opened it, and the man had repaid the loan in full, to the last cent.

As the man came to church Sunday by Sunday, he looked a little more hopeful; and I shall never forget the Sunday morning, when I saw that man come in through the door, and with him his wife, and four or five children. He brought them down the aisle, his wife preceded him into the seat, then the children one after another, and he sat at the end of the seat. I looked up at him and caught his eye, and he caught mine. All the sadness was gone; he had his loved ones with him again. His whole aspect reminded me of the passage in the Song of Songs: "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear

on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

That is what my text means. The Lord Jesus said in effect, "I am so lonely, and heaven has been so sad—the sin and sorrow of earth have all but eclipsed the glory of heaven. I joyfully welcome the hour in the fulness of time when I shall pay the price necessary to bring all my loved ones home to my Father's house. I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Our glorious Lord anticipated the completeness of Heaven's joy, the completion of the whole household of faith, of the household of God. He said, "Soon I shall have them all home and heaven will be heaven again." No wonder they "began to be merry" when the prodigal came home.

IV.

I must say this further word before I close: *He anticipated the Joy of Completion*: "He sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover WITH YOU." You remember how, when He expounded the spiritual character of His mission, the multitude melted away until there were only twelve left; and He said, "Will ye also go away?" And Peter said, "No! No! To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Those disciples who came with him—you remember around the throne there were the elders. They were representative of all the others, I fancy, the multitude which no man could number. Just about this time He said to His Father, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

As I thought of that this afternoon, I wondered where I could find an illustration of that principle, and I found one that was so intensely personal that I wondered if I dared use it. Then I reflected that I do not often intrude personal matters upon my hearers, and that perhaps they would forgive me. I was blessed with a godly father and mother, and from my earliest recollection I heard my father pray daily that his might be an unbroken family in heaven. He went home to God when still in his prime. My mother survived him many years, and then she came to the time of departure. She seemed to leave us before she had actually gone. The doctor said to me, "You know, she is here as to her body, but really your mother is away already." Some hours passed, as I recall, and there was no recognition. Then all her children were standing about her bed, but it seemed as though she would never recognize us again on earth. But unexpectedly she opened her eyes and all the brightness came back, and she looked about and viewed each of her children, one by one. Then, with a smile, she said, "Just as I have always prayed it might be." Then the lucid moments ended, she lapsed into unconsciousness, and very soon she had gone "to be with Christ, which is far better". I think she meant that as she and my father had prayed for an unbroken family, she saw them all, knowing they were all Christians, smiled her good-bye, and went away to heaven.

Jesus Christ said, "I have desired to eat this passover

WITH YOU before I suffer, and you are all here"—"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." That hour, I think, was to Him prophetic of the day when we shall all meet, washed in the blood, saved for ever in the Father's house.

Then He said to His disciples, "Now I will leave you a memorial feast—not the Passover feast; that is fulfilled. This is my body: this is my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Then we shall all be together, an unbroken family in the Father's house."

I wonder will any of us be left out? I wonder is there anybody here who is not ready? Rutherford said of a place where he had preached (in Mrs. Cousin's words):

"The little birds of Anwoth
I used to count them blest—
Now, beside happier altars
I go to build my nest:
O'er these there broods no silence,
No graves around them stand,
For glory, deathless, dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

"Fair Anwoth by the Solway,
To me thou still art dear!
E'en from the verge of Heaven
I drop for thee a tear.
Oh! if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My Heaven will be two Heavens,
In Immanuel's land."

I love this place. I love every stone in this building, and every pew in it, every inch of carpet—even that which is worn through these twenty-seven years, literally by the feet of from two to three millions of people; and I am positive that some souls from Jarvis Street will meet me at God's right hand. I wonder are there any here—some of you to whom I have preached for years and years, and yet who have made no profession? I do not know whether you are saved or not, for you have never told me. If I could paraphrase it, I would say of Jarvis Street Church, Toronto—

"To me thou still art dear!
E'en from the verge of heaven
I drop for thee a tear.
Oh! if one soul from Jarvis Street
Meet me at God's right hand,
My Heaven will be two Heavens,
In Immanuel's land."

Will you not come? I wish I could woo you to Christ: I would do anything to bring you to Christ. Will you not come and receive Him as your Saviour, that you may become a member of the household of faith, an heir of glory, ready to become an occupant of one of the many mansions in the Father's house? Will you all join me as we pray together?

O Lord, we are all sinners. We do not deserve to be heirs of glory. We have not merited a place in the many mansions, and we deserve nothing but to be lost waifs in this poor world. But, Thou Good Shepherd, Thou dost seek and save Thy lost sheep.

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove:—

Thou has come to seek the Father's children. Oh help us to come! May those of us who are Thy children come to Thy table with a new gladness in our hearts. And forbid

that there should be any present—as there was one among the twelve—without part nor lot in this matter. Save us all with Thy great salvation; have mercy upon us all, for Thy great name's sake, Amen.

PUTTING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS

An Editorial in "The Toronto Daily Star", Nov. 30, 1953

Dr. J. R. Mutchmor, secretary of the board of evangelism and social service of the United Church, has issued on the board's behalf a call to "put Christ into Christmas"

The document advocates nativity scenes at the centre of cities and towns, church support of "a just and durable peace", and opposition to "arrogance, pride, and the trust in power that leads to war." "The churches should stress giving rather than getting; generosity rather than gluttony. Richly blessed beyond most nations, our country should lead the world in gifts, including large shipments of wheat, for which all our people should pay, to the needy of the world."

Christmas should be a family festival, the board says. "Christmas cards should carry a religious message." Community carol singing should be supported by the churches. And the churches should call upon the authorities to begin now their "If-you-drink-don't-drive — if-you-drive-don't-drink" campaigns. "Drunkenness only degrades and destroys Christmas."

Most of these ideas are good. Certainly eating and drinking are unduly glorified in the usual celebration of Christmas. The board's recommendation is that "social drinking should be reduced to a minimum." It goes on to say that "the churches should urge all members to plan to extend their hospitality in home, shop, office and factory without beer, wine, spirituous liquors and liqueurs." That is good advice, and there might well have been a warning against showing hospitality to mailmen and delivery men by offering them intoxicants — especially dangerous when the men are drivers.

But the advice to reduce social drinking "to a minimum" would have been otherwise worded in old Methodist days. The warning would then have been to eliminate it altogether. And better so.

"NO ROOM IN THE INN!"

AT the first Christmas there was no room in the inn for the Christ Child and His mother. At the first Christmas, though the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good will toward men," bloody war was unleashed upon the innocent babes of Bethlehem and "there was a voice heard of lamentation and weeping, and great mourning." At the first Christmas, though the wise men and the shepherds hastened to the stable to bow at the feet of the Holy Infant, the chief priests and the scribes proud in their greater knowledge of the revealed will of God did not follow the example of these humble believers.

Another Christmas season is upon us, and it does not give promise of differing greatly in its reception of the Good News of great joy sung by the angels. Christ is still relegated to the manger by a great busy world so intent upon its own affairs that it has no time for the Saviour. He is honoured in name, of course, and business men have found the celebration of his birth provides a profitable opportunity to exploit sentiment in the interests of trade. The liquor stores will enjoy the greatest sales of the entire year and thousands of men

and women will get drunk in honour of . . . of what? It would be blasphemous to say in honour of Christ, for that is dishonouring to His Holy Name, as are many of the celebrations that bear the name of Christmas though Christ is left out of them. How much religion pure and undefiled is involved in stuffing oneself with turkey, plum pudding and Christmas cake and all the trimmings? We confess it is somewhat less harmful and much more enjoyable than getting drunk (we speak for ourselves) but who would dare to suggest that such a relatively harmless celebration of Christmas is distinctively Christian?

Some of our Puritan ancestors regarded it as a sin if not a crime to take part in the festivities connected with various holidays of the so-called "Holy Year". One remembers Macaulay's gibe that they objected to bear-bating, not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. Perhaps they went too far, in proscribing mirth. Most of their spiritual progeny to-day make exceptions for Christmas and Easter, with Thanksgiving Day thrown in for good measure. But we shall all be compelled to confess that much of Christmas as we know it to-day is not Christian but pagan, and that ought to give us reason to pause and review the way in which we, who name the name of Christ, shall celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. Will it be honouring to His Name, will it bear a true testimony to the meaning of His coming to redeem sinners?

A campaign is being conducted by various church bodies in Canada and the United States to "Put Christ into Christmas". The aim is praiseworthy, but the means suggested are not always commensurate with the magnificence of the avowed intention. Some of them suggested the erection of nativity scenes as does the call issued by the United Church of Canada, which is commented upon in an editorial from the *Toronto Star* following this article. In response to a similar appeal the junior chamber of commerce of a United States city announced that its Christmas parade would be "entirely spiritual in nature," even to the attire of the drum majorettes. We fail to see how placing a doll in some straw is any more likely to put Christ back into Christmas than is placing crosses over churches or putting images in niches. A more radical remedy is needed than these outward, mechanical changes. We need to give first place to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word not only in our churches but in our lives both at Christmas and on every other day of the year. Let us get back beyond the seasonal good cheer and joyous fellowship of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, back to the message of the angels and to the simple faith of the shepherds who went, even unto Bethlehem. Let us also for ourselves see this thing which is come to pass. Let us take Christ in our hearts and homes not merely one day of the year but all the days of our lives.

The sting of the *Star* editorial is in the tail thereof: "The advice to reduce social drinking 'to a minimum' would have been otherwise worded in old Methodist days. The warning would then have been to eliminate it altogether. And better so." Shades of the valiant saints of the old Methodism who made such vast contributions to the spiritual and moral uplift of the Anglo-Saxon world! A secular newspaper dares to lecture one of their modern successors on the laxity of his ideals and to raise the goal higher than he dares place it! That

is an actual example of what happens to a great church when it belittles the inspired authority of the Word of God and substitutes respectability for regeneration.

—W.S.W.

SEMINARY MEN AT WORK

"THE proof of the pudding is in the eating," says the old proverb, and the principle of it applies not only to the work of a cook but also to the work of any school, including Toronto Baptist Seminary. Not that our graduates are good to eat, but the way in which they put into practice what is taught here in the Seminary is proof of the soundness both of our doctrine and of the training we offer. This school is an academic institution but its purpose goes far beyond merely satisfying a thirst for knowledge and disciplining the faculties of the mind. Its great goal is to honour the Lord and His Word and to prepare pastors and missionaries who shall be able to teach others also. We carry on our labours in the consciousness that we labour in vain unless the Lord build our house. As in preaching the Word, so in teaching it, men are helpless and useless unless the Spirit of God speaks through them.

Winona Church

In the last few months since the opening of the Seminary school term it has been our privilege to visit the churches of a number of our Seminary men and we have been encouraged afresh in our work to see what God has wrought through them. Several weeks ago Rev. James Cunningham of Winona called by phone to pay us the great compliment of asking that we take Dr. Philpott's place at the evening service of Winona Gospel Church on Anniversary Sunday. We at once disclaimed any thought of taking the place of so great a preacher but promised to stand in the same pulpit where he had stood in the morning and to preach the same Gospel. No one could take Dr. Philpott's place. It was a great joy to have fellowship with a fine company of devoted people, faithfully joined in sounding forth the truth of the Gospel in a rapidly growing suburban district a few miles outside of Hamilton. Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham both studied at the Seminary, and it was a pleasant reunion to share the joys of their family circle of four children and to see the blessing that has attended their ministry in the church and community. Mr. Cunningham is a brother of Rev. John Cunningham of Calgary, Alberta, another of our Seminary men who has been richly blessed in his labours.

Niagara Falls, Ontario

Last Sunday we visited the Trinity Church at Niagara Falls, Ontario, to celebrate the anniversary of the church and the first anniversary of the pastor's arrival. Within that brief space of time a transformation has been wrought in the church building, which is but a symbol of the blessing that has come to the work of the church. Any congregation in the land would be proud of the interior of the auditorium in its new dress, provided with fine new pews — the latter a little bit too comfortable, perhaps, but we speak only for ourselves and our own preaching! Almost all the old indebtedness has been paid off and only a little remains for the new improvements. There is an air of joyful expectation in the services and the congregations have increased by leaps and bounds, as has the Sunday-school. The day before our

arrival a young man of Central European origin came to the pastor's home enquiring the way of salvation and went on his way rejoicing. There have been other professions of faith and baptisms. Under the pastor's leadership, the church has declared for complete self-support. We rejoice in these blessings and pray that it may grow more and more under the ministry of Rev. G. H. Stephens.

Mitchell Square Church

Mr. Samuel Tulloch, one of our senior students, has faithfully served the Mitchell Square Church for two summers and has continued during the school term as student-pastor. A number have been led to the Lord and baptized upon profession of faith, greatly encouraging this rural church to meet the needs of its community by an aggressive work for the Lord. It is of the greatest importance that our country churches should continue their testimony for the Gospel, for in past days they have produced some of the greatest men both in public life and in the ministry. Through the years we have visited this church from time to time but never has it appeared in such prosperous health, spiritually and numerically, as on the occasion of our recent visit.

Rev. John Boyd on Television

Next Sunday morning we are to visit Pastor Wilfred Bauman in the pioneer work at North Bay and then to spend Sunday evening and Monday with that modern apostle at Sudbury, Rev. John Boyd, who has now added to his eight weekly radio programmes in three languages the additional burden of a television programme over the first privately-owned station in Canada. The invitation for this fine opportunity to use this latest modern technique to preach the Gospel came from the station management. We understand that the selection of programmes for radio and television is not based on the results of a beauty contest but upon the financial responsibility and the popular esteem of the proposed sponsors of a programme. The charges for this privilege are modest as far as TV programmes are concerned, but very onerous for a pastor who has already undertaken to pay hundreds of dollars each week for other radio Gospel broadcasts. But Mr. Boyd felt that he dare not refuse to enter this great door that had been opened before him, and we are confident it will be blessed of God in bringing the way of salvation to hearers and viewers in the Sudbury area.

Such is a small cross section of the work of Toronto Baptist Seminary, which is by no means confined to the work done in the actual classrooms. We invite the prayers of God's people for our work here and for our work as it goes on in fields of service far removed from our classrooms.—W.S.W.

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QUESTIONS A STUDENT ASKS

Can an Evangelical Student Attend a "Semi-Evangelical" Seminary?

From *The Seminarian*, December 1953

The following editorial from "The Seminarian", published by the students of Toronto Baptist Seminary, is inserted here as a reminder that this monthly periodical may be obtained at the price of 75 cents for a year's subscription.

In last month's issue, we sought to discuss whether an evangelical student could attend a blatantly modernistic seminary. It was our conclusion that such a course would be dishonouring to God and harmful to the future preacher. But how often have we heard some ardent advocate point to the presence of several "evangelicals" on the faculty and use them as baits to lure prospects to the seminary. We are told that such a seminary is not modernist but rather has an evangelical element in it. "Perhaps," we are told, "there are a few professors whose orthodoxy and spirituality is doubtful, but just look at these other fine evangelicals." In other words we are to believe that righteousness has fellowship with unrighteousness and light does have communion with darkness!

Perhaps this curse is even greater than that of the boldly modernist seminary. In the latter it is so obvious that the context of the teaching is wholly anti-Christian; the very atmosphere declares that this is not a school of the prophets but a synagogue of Satan. This is not entirely the case, however, with a seminary which has both modernists and evangelicals on the faculty. Here any dubious observer is pointed to the presence of the evangelicals and told that there is room here for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just at this point is seen the fallacy; for the Lord Jesus Christ does not ask for room with other "isms" and idols. He must have the preeminence. He will not reside in one room of the seminary while Satan controls all others or any others. He is the only Saviour. The gospel is the exclusive message of the church. Any "evangelical" who would consent to a truce with the enemy of men's souls and serve on such a faculty betrays a sad lack of conviction and further indicates that he is not too much concerned for the honour of his Saviour's name.

Likewise a student who attends such a seminary is surely going to be confused. In one classroom, he hears the Word of God ridiculed and the gospel dishonoured while in another a professor seeks to present the gospel but, by his very presence in such a place, he promotes a course of compromise. Any observant student will see the contradiction. Such an atmosphere will not have the effect of helping in the preparation of men to preach the Lord Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Lost will be the exclusive note of the gospel which declares — "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Finally in all such institutions the trend is only in one direction—toward the camp of the modernists. Any denial of this statement is simply an example of wishful thinking. The very fact that the modernist has even gained admission to the faculty is an indication of inherent weakness in the seminary's theological position.

One does not need to be a prophet to predict the future course of the seminary.

Such milk and water institutions can surely have no attraction to real men of God. Speculative philosophers may be intrigued by such a variety of thought but those whom God has manifestly called will turn with abhorrence from such a place. With sturdy old Joshua, they will declare:—"Choose you this day whom you will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

"ONE OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY STATEMENTS . . ."

What Is Faith?

THE daily column by J. V. McAree that appears on the editorial page of *The Toronto Globe and Mail* is, to our taste one of the choice spots in the menu offered by that paper. We always make a point of reading the informing and interesting articles that Mr. McAree puts together with a pinch of spice, and last Saturday we were only mildly surprised when our favourite editorialist referred to THE GOSPEL WITNESS, and to a part of it that is our own special responsibility, namely one of the many smaller articles or "fillers" as our printers call them, that appear in these pages. On several previous occasions this columnist has expressed his appreciation of THE GOSPEL WITNESS. Mr. McAree wrote last Saturday:

One of the most extraordinary statements we have read in years appeared recently in "The Gospel Witness", the words being those of the Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of the most famous preachers of the nineteenth century. Here it is: "I affirm, and the world declares it, unbelief is sin. Is it not a sin for a creature to doubt the word of its Maker? Is it not a crime and an insult to the Divinity for me, an atom, a particle of dust, to dare to deny His words? Is it not the very summit of arrogance and extremity of pride for a son of Adam to say, even in his heart, 'God, I doubt Thy grace; I doubt Thy love; I doubt Thy power?'" Oh! sirs, believe me, could you roll all sins into one mass; could you take murder and blasphemy, and lust, and adultery, and everything that is vile, and unite them all into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal then the sin of unbelief. This is the monarch sin, the quintessence of guilt; the mixture of the venom of all crimes; the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah; it is the masterpiece of Satan; the chief work of the devil."

Mr. McAree did not tell why he regarded the quotation from Spurgeon as "one of the most extraordinary statements we have read in years". We do not recall reading in his column anything of the nature of a profession of faith, though at times we have been inclined to fancy that he was nourished in his youth, like many other great men, on the Westminster Catechism. Perhaps this feeling was induced partly by the "Mc" in his name as much as by any clue he offered in his writings. We have also been led to suspect, on occasions, that he does not now adhere strictly to that form of doctrine. We wish that the following quotation from Spurgeon that appeared in another recent issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS had been printed in Mr. McAree's column alongside the other excerpt:

An Example of Faith

Suppose a fire in the upper room of a house, and the people gathered in the street. A child is in the upper story: how is he to escape? He cannot leap down — that were to be dashed to pieces. A strong man comes beneath and cries, "Drop into my arms." It is a part of faith to know that the man is there; it is another part of faith to believe that the man is strong; but, the essence of faith lies in dropping down

into the man's arms. So, sinner, thou art to know that Christ died for sin; thou art also to understand that Christ is able to save, and thou art to believe that; but thou art not saved, unless, in addition to that, thou puttest thy trust in Him to be thy Saviour, and to be thine forever.—Spurgeon

What is faith? The word is one of the seemingly simple, everyday words whose meaning everyone supposes he knows. But there are many significations attached to it. It may be regarded, for example as a synonym of "creed", and as such it becomes almost equivalent in practise for a religious organization which professes such a creed, as in the phrases, "the Protestant faith," or "the Roman Catholic faith." The common understanding of the word is that it means an opinion or a conviction, a doctrine or a persuasion. This is the Roman Catholic conception of faith which has been given formal definition by Thomas Aquinas, the great theologian of that church, as: "The act of the intellect assenting to a divine truth." Refusal to assent to received dogmas is heresy or apostasy, which, according to Roman Catholic teaching, are not only civil crimes punishable with temporal pains, but which also entail eternal condemnation in the life to come.

The lack of faith which Spurgeon condemned as a heinous sin, was not simply wrong belief in the sense of incorrect opinions, but refusal to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. "True faith," the same preacher says in another sermon, "is reliance . . . The marrow of the meaning of faith is confidence in, reliance upon. Let me ask, then, every professor here who professes to have faith, is your faith the faith of reliance? You give credit to certain statements, do you also place trust in the one glorious person who alone can redeem? Have you confidence as well as credence? A creed will not save you, but reliance upon the anointed Saviour is the way of salvation. Remember, I beseech you, that if you could be taught an orthodoxy unadulterated with error, and could learn a creed written by the pen of Eternal God himself, yet a mere notional faith, such as some exercise when they believe in the existence of men in the moon, or nebulae in space, could not save your soul. Of this we are sure, because we see around us many who have such a faith, and yet evidently are not children of God."

The statement of Spurgeon's that Mr. McAree finds so extraordinary is indeed extraordinary, not less so than the marvel of God's mercy in providing a way of salvation that is "of faith, that it might be by grace". "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 4:16, 3:27). The sin of unbelief is the greatest sin of all, because it departs from the living God, it turns its back upon the merciful Saviour who gave His all for the sinner. But unbelief in this sense is not merely the refusal to accept an opinion but the refusal to accept a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the Scriptures, men are not condemned because they hold wrong opinions but because they refuse to trust in the Saviour, to commit themselves to the Son of God: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

It is true that there is an intellectual element in faith: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." But that is not the whole of faith in its characteristic Biblical sense, for the same text goes on to add these words, "And

that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If the former proposition is an intellectual one, the second involves and implies the moral quality of trust, which is not merely a resolution of the mind but of the will, a seeking God to give oneself to Him. The opinion, or the conviction, or the faith that two and two make four has no moral quality about it. But the attitude that men take toward Jesus Christ is the most important moral and spiritual criterion of all time and of eternity as well. A young man to whom Jesus spoke "went away sorrowful". He was not saved for his good works, nor for his profession of correct opinion; he was lost because, though he went away "sorrowful", yet, notwithstanding, he went away from Christ. That is the essence of unbelief, and it is for that that men are eternally lost: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

It is commonly assumed that men are saved on account of their good works, and that conversely, they are condemned because of their sins. The Bible cuts across generally received opinions and wounds the pride of the ordinary man when it lays down the fundamental principle that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. . . . There is none righteous, no, not one." It teaches that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, without avail in the sight of God. Who then can be saved? queries the man in the street who tries to sound the mysteries of God in the light of common sense, apart from the revelation of God's mercy in Christ. The Scripture answers: "But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Who can be saved? Sinners who trust in the mercy of God in Christ. Men and women who cast themselves upon the merciful Saviour. That is faith, or trust, or confidence in the Scriptural sense of the word. And what is unbelief? A refusal to come, a doing despite to the spirit of grace, a rebuffing of the tender loving Redeemer.

We are grateful to a newspaper columnist for again calling attention to the "extraordinary" character of the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Hymn writers have exhausted their vocabulary in attempting to describe the wonders of God's mercy, and throughout the endless ages of eternity the redeemed shall never cease to sing the praise of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. Spurgeon's statement might be said to be a paraphrase of that well-known verse that perhaps seems less extraordinary merely because it is so old and so familiar: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."—W.S.W.

REV. JOHN BYERS ON VACATION

Rev. John Byers, minister of Victoria Avenue Baptist Church, Hamilton, left by plane on December 1st, for a much-needed rest and vacation in Scotland, his native land. In order to wish him *bon voyage* and God-speed, the congregation gathered in goodly numbers on Wednesday evening last. After the fellowship supper, provided by the ladies, a brief program was given, with Rev. C. J. Loney acting as chairman. Mr. Charles Linklater presented to Mr. Byers a substantial gift of money as a token of the esteem and good wishes of the church family.

—O.L.C.

GRACE FOR EVERYBODY

Now, what is wanted is grace—divine grace for ordinary business men, men who are harnessed from morn till night and all the days of their life — harnessed in business. Not grace to lose a hundred thousand, but grace to lose ten dollars. Not grace to supervise two hundred and fifty employees in a factory, but grace to supervise the bookkeeper and two salesmen, and the small boy that sweeps out the store. Grace to invest not in the eighty thousand dollars of net profit, but the twenty-five hundred of clear gain. Grace not to endure the loss of a whole shipload of spices from the Indies, but grace to endure the loss of a paper of collars from the leakage of a displaced shingle on a poor roof. Grace not to endure the tardiness of the American Congress in passing a necessary law, but grace to endure the tardiness of an errand boy stopping to play marbles when he ought to deliver the goods. Such a grace as thousands of business men have to-day keeping them tranquil, whether goods sell or do not sell, whether customers pay or do not pay, whether tariff is up or tariff is down, whether the crops are luxuriant or a dead failure—calm in all circumstances, and amid all vicissitudes. That is the kind of grace we want.

Millions of men want it, and they may have it for the asking. Some hero or heroine comes to town, and as the procession passes through the street the business men come out and stand on tiptoe on their store step and look at some one who in Arctic clime, or in ocean storm, or in day of battle, or in hospital agonies did the brave thing, not realizing that they, the enthusiastic spectators, have gone through trials in business life that are just as great before God. There are men who have gone through freezing Arctics and burning torrids, and awful Marengoes of experiences without moving five miles from their doorstep.

Now, what ordinary business men need is to realize that they have the friendship of that Christ who looked after the religious interests of Matthew, the custom-house clerk, and helped Lydia, of Thyatira, to sell the dry goods, and who opened a bakery and fish-market in the wilderness of Asia Minor to feed the seven thousand who had come out on a religious picnic, and who counts the hairs of your head with as much particularity as though they were the plumes of a coronation, and who took the trouble to stoop down with His finger writing on the ground, although the first shuffle of feet obliterated the divine caligraphy, and who knows just how many locusts there were in the Egyptian plague, and knew just how many ravens were necessary to supply Elijah's pantry by the brook Cherith, and who, as floral commander, leads forth all the regiments of primroses, foxgloves, daffodils, hyacinths, and lilies which pitch their tents of beauty and kindle their camp-fires of color all around the hemisphere—that that Christ and that God knows the most minute affairs of your business life and however inconsiderable, understanding all the affairs of that woman who keeps a thread-and-needle store as well as all the affairs of a Rothschild and a Baring.

—T. DE WITT TALMADGE

Faithfulness is what God marks, loves and honours; a perfect, sincere and constant desire to obey the will of God in all that is entrusted to our care.

—ADOLPH SAPHIR.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 17 Fourth Quarter Lesson 11 December 13, 1953

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

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

Lesson Text: 1 Samuel 15:1-15.

Golden Text: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—1 Samuel 15:22.

I. The Rebellion of the King: verses 1-9.

Samuel's concern for Israel did not cease when he was displaced as the official leader of the people (1 Sam. 12:1, 2). He had continued to pray for them (1 Sam. 12:23), and he was still the prophet of the Lord, charged with hearing and delivering to them the messages of Jehovah (verses 1, 10, 22, 28). We should thank God for faithful pastors, teachers and workers, whose unceasing Christian love is a priceless gift (Heb. 13:7, 17).

National sins will not go unpunished. The nations, although they may seem great and important, are before the Lord as a drop in the bucket (Isa. 40:15), and He will be just in dealing with their sins (Exod. 34:6, 7). The Amalekites had opposed Israel in the early days of the exodus from Egypt (Exod. 17:8-14; Deut. 25:17-19).

National virtues, as well as national sins, will be remembered by the Divine Judge. The Kenites had assisted Israel in their campaign against their Canaanite enemies (Judg. 4:11-7), and for their kindness to Israel were spared from the fate of the Amalekites (Josh. 2:12; 6:22, 23).

The Lord was wise and also merciful when He commanded Saul to put an end to the Amalekites. A holy God could not bless the people, unless the land should be freed from the moral pestilence of which the wickedness of the Amalekites was an outward manifestation. Purity, safety and wholesomeness could not last in an atmosphere which was charged with pollution. To combat evil is the safe and wise course, as well as the kind course. By the law of compensation the Israelites, who had suffered at the hands of the Amalekites, were the ones chosen as the Divine rod to punish the evil-doers.

Saul interpreted the Lord's command according to his own private notions as to what should be done. An officer who tampers with the orders of his superiors is guilty of a serious offence; he has no authority to question or change the commands which he receives. It is his duty to see that they are obeyed. And yet, some Modernistic teachers and preachers alter the message of the Lord, claiming the right to designate which parts of the Bible are authoritative. Not what we think, but what God says, must be our guide.

II. The Rejection of the King: verses 10-15.

God counts partial obedience as absolute disobedience, and therefore; King Saul had not performed the commandment of the Lord. There is no Scriptural warrant for the popular notion that one's good deeds are balanced over against his evil deeds, and that if the good outweighs the evil, God will overlook the sin. God rules over His creatures with justice and equity (Psa. 7:9-11; 89:14; Isa. 11:2-4).

An oft-repeated uncalled-for profession of loyalty might arouse suspicion of disloyalty, since some things are taken for granted, until questioned by unusual circumstances. Saul made a loud profession of obeying the word of the Lord (verses 13, 20), throwing up a smoke-screen, as it were, to cover his sin. But, alas, the innocent sheep gave him away; their bleating was most inconvenient for him. In vain do men seek to hide their sin from the Lord (Numb. 32:23; Prov. 28:13; Isa. 59:12; Gal. 6:7).

It is a cowardly device to blame others for one's sin, and it is also useless (Deut. 24:26; Jer. 31:29, 30; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 14:12). Saul's claim that he feared the people (verse 24), and that the people spared the best of the sheep (verses 15, 21) differs greatly from the Divine record of the incident, which informs us that Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep (verse 9). As a matter of fact, it was not a case of Saul yielding to the wishes of the people, but of the people following the leadership of their king. Of themselves they probably would never have thought of disobeying

the command of God. The responsibilities of leadership are great; we must be careful to assist others to be obedient, rather than disobedient to the Lord.

Saul's next move was to make pious excuses for his conduct; he announced that the animals had been spared for sacrifice unto the Lord. How many crimes have been committed in the name of religion (John 16:2; Acts 26:9)!

The prophet reminded the king that the Lord places emphasis upon inner spiritual motives rather than upon outward ceremonial actions. All the sacrifices and acts of devotion in the world will not take the place of heart obedience (Psa. 51:16, 17; Prov. 21:3; Jer. 7:22, 23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8; Heb. 10:4-10). The rebellious man is like one who practises witchcraft in that both follow the commandments of others instead of God; the rebel obeys his own desires, while those who engage in witchcraft obey the desires of Satan (Deut. 18:9-14; Isa. 8:19, 20). The stubborn man is like the idolater in that both worship another than God; the stubborn man exalts his own will, and the idolater exalts the thing which he has created (Psa. 115:3-5).

The kingdom was rent from Saul because of his sin (1 Kings 11:29-33). He who had rejected the commandment of the Lord was now himself rejected (1 Sam. 13:14; John 8:47; 12:48).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Dec. 6—Jonathan's Victory	1 Sam. 14:1-14
Dec. 7—Saul's Victory	1 Sam. 14:15-23
Dec. 8—Jonathan's Peril	1 Sam. 14:24-32
Dec. 9—Jonathan's Deliverance	1 Sam. 14:33-46
Dec. 10—Saul's Triumph	1 Sam. 14:47-52
Dec. 11—Saul's Rejection	1 Sam. 15:16-23
Dec. 12—Saul's Punishment	1 Sam. 15:24-35

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Oh for a closer walk with God. I lay my sins on Jesus. Blessed be the fountain of blood. Depth of mercy! can there be? Not all the blood of beasts. When the heart made pure.

DRESSING UP FALSEHOODS

How daintily we can throw the altar cloth round about a falsehood. It is perfectly amazing, when the moral light is turned down, how skillfully we can juggle with things. I remember some time ago seeing a very attractive looking Bible, and when I turned to open it I found it was a cash box. Which thing is an allegory of many other things: We can give worldliness a very pious appearance. We can throw a sort of priestly cloak about a deed which goes forth to devour a widow's house. We can be amazingly expert in diluting moral obligation and mixing wine with water! We can betray our Lord with a compromise. Aye, there is a way of selling an article which at the same time sells the Lord. When the moral light burns low, vices begin to parade as virtues, and it may come to be that we are scarcely aware of the delusion.

—J. H. JOWETT.

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