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"Keep Yourselves From Idols"

By W. S. Whitcombe

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."—1 John 5:21.

IT IS surprising to find a warning against idolatry at the close of an epistle addressed to mature believers who had already made great progress in the Christian life. The worship of idols is a gross form of religion that repels not only the enlightened reason of the trained mind but is revolting to the seeking soul that has learned that fundamental principle of all true worship that God is a spirit. To those who have been liberated from the shackles of sin and from the bondage of fear by the redemption that is in Christ, it is not merely illogical and degrading to return to the beggarly elements of the world, it is rebellion against the only true God, a turning from the brightest light of heaven's pure air to the foulest, thickest darkness of the infernal pit. What man in his right senses would think of forsaking the heavenly places in Christ Jesus where the believer dwells to join with the confused, howling mob in the theatre at Ephesus shouting for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"? Who would substitute for the lofty teachings of the Christ the hideous worship of a piece of rock that glorified with a cloak of religion the basest carnal passions? Surely no Christian would be in danger of such outrageous apostasy!

Yet the temptation is nonetheless ever present as the closing admonition of John's Epistle reminds us: "Little children keep yourselves from idols!" The Tempter sought to ensnare our Lord by offering Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" on condition that He should bow down and worship the Evil One. The Apostle Paul found it necessary to warn the Corinthian believers by asking: "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" The besetting sin of God's people under the Old Covenant was polluting themselves with the idols of the surrounding heathen. Outside of Israel the whole ancient world was given over to idolatry; "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Even the keenest minds of Greece in her golden age never wholly

freed themselves from the trammels of polytheism, despite their realization that any rational, scientific explanation of the universe must start out with a denial of gods many in order to affirm the underlying unity that alone can render the office of reason possible and valid: On the mission field to-day, we are told that converts from the darkness and superstitions of paganism are continually subject to the assaults of the lower baser forms of worship which they have given up.

Communism is built upon blatant denial of God, and as such is doomed by the righteous judgment of the living and true One whom it ignorantly blasphemes. We are saddened as we think of the dreadful fate of those enslaved millions who suffer at the hands of such a godless tyranny. How dreadful is the state of those who are without hope and without God in this world! There are hundreds of millions of others who bow down before their idols of wood and stone, and the controlling philosophy that directs the foreign and domestic policy of great modern nations is not Christian but pagan. We may give thanks for the measure in which enlightened leaders have sought to introduce Christian principles in their policies, but the teeming masses of the people lack the spiritual and moral driving force that Christ alone can impart to men and nations.

In lands where Christ is known and His Word preached, are we of all men exempt from the temptation to serve and worship the creature more than the Creator? From the grosser forms of idolatry English-speaking nations are perhaps safe as much by reason of our cultural inheritance and the pervading sense of good taste as by any theological prepossessions, but the basic appeal of idolatry is ever present in our midst. What is idolatry? It is not essentially a low, false idea of God? Lord Macaulay defended himself for giving what he considered to be an exact though somewhat unflattering account of Warren Hastings by the use of an historical illustration: "Paint me as I am," said Oliver Cromwell, while sitting to young Lely, "If you leave out the scars and wrinkles, I will not pay you a shilling." Even in such a trifle,

the great Protector showed both his good sense and his magnanimity."

The Eternal One, the just and holy God, desires that His creatures should have a worthy idea of Him. It is blasphemous to a holy God and degrading to men to think of Him unworthily. It is for that purpose that the Father sent His Son into the world to declare Him, so that those who looked upon the face of the Jesus Christ, who heard His words and saw His power and His grace, could know what God is like. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." This personal knowledge of the true God, this understanding given by Jesus Christ is the only real antidote to idolatry, and it is because He has come that men are now commanded to repent and forsake their lower unworthy conceptions of God which are blotted out by the brightness of the revelation in Christ. The human race has never reasoned itself out of the chains of superstition and moral pollution. Human reason may rid the mind of the devil of ignorance but seven spirits more wicked than the first troop in to claim the house that is garnished and swept but, not occupied by the Gracious Landlord Himself.

Are Christians not guilty of harbouring thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him? At times we are prone to regard Him as an austere Master. Or, like Peter, we unconsciously lecture Him on the proper way, according to our little plans and ideas, of conducting His kingdom: "Be it far from thee, Lord . . ." We limit His power by our unbelief and until He rebukes us as He did His disciples, "O ye of little faith!"

In the verse which has claimed our attention thus far, there would seem to be little doubt but that the Apostle John is speaking of a worship of literal images, but in other passages idolatry is identified with the spiritual sin of covetousness. Why does the New Testament describe covetousness as idolatry? It is, of course, a violation of one of the Ten Commandments, but perhaps it is generally regarded as a somewhat lighter sin than some of the others. Why is it here equated with the heinous sin of idolatry? Covetousness is rapacity or greediness, a disregard for the rights of others, an inordinate desire to satisfy one's own passions. Our word "selfishness" comes very close to giving an accurate idea of it, and William Cowper has given classic expression to the prayer for deliverance from the presumptuous sin:

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

In the days of the early church when Christianity was locked in a death struggle with paganism, men and women were burned alive or cast to the lions because they refused to offer incense to the emperor-god. Uncounted multitudes of humble believers suffered a cruel death rather than deny their Lord. They chose to be condemned as traitors to Rome rather than be counted among those who had denied their Lord. Apostasy, rebellion against the living and true God, is the greatest of all offenses against the light because it does despite to God's Majesty. It is a putting one's own desire, one's own advantage, one's own self, in the place that rightfully belongs

to God. In essence, it is a dethroning of the King of the universe in order to set our own little selves in the place of God. The grosser, hideous forms of idolatry we are spared, but there is a subtler, more attractive form the Tempter assumes until we scarcely realize that it is the voice of the Evil One.

It is possible for God's children to rejoice in His good gifts to them, their powers of mind, the grace of lip, their physical prowess, or the wealth God has graciously bestowed upon them, and, even while meaning to hold them in trust for the Master, to become so attached to the gifts as to forget the Giver. We flatter ourselves that we hold these good things merely as stewards, strictly accountable for their use; but we too often end up by allowing ourselves to act as though we were, absolute owners and proprietors of them. And in so doing we have become guilty of worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator.

There is none of us who can afford to ignore the warning addressed long since to the early believers surrounded on every hand by heathen darkness. The same principle of evil, now arrayed as an angel of light, penetrates through the smallest breach we allow to appear in our wall of defense.

We marvel at the forbearance of God as he withholds His wrath from descending upon the blatant arrogance of atheistic forces that "take counsel against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." We wonder at His longsuffering with the wilful blindness of the heathen who blaspheme His holy name. But let us remember our own sins and failures, let us recall that in lands where men profess and call themselves Christians there is much idolatry, though it does not go under that name. A warning delivered more than a century and a half ago, is quite as appropriate for our day as it was then. Wordsworth, the poet, is not generally thought of as a prophet, but there is a prophetic note in these lines:

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am oppress,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handywork or craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

The only comfort we can find for our own generation in that warning sonnet is that God in His mercy intervened in English history, infusing a new spiritual and moral power through the Evangelical Revival. Even as the great poet wrote, a new force had begun to work deep down in the hearts of humble people from whence it leavened the whole mass of the nation with its elevating, life-giving energy. We give hearty thanks for all who in our day of grace are proclaiming the same Gospel as Whitefield and the Wesleys proclaimed, and that, according to the admission of a sceptical historian, saved England from the horrors of the French Revolution.

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

HOW TO BE SAVED

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Sunday Evening, August 18th, 1922

(Stenographically Reported)

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."—John 1:12, 13.

THE Bible everywhere assumes that there is something wrong with the world. The Bible everywhere takes it for granted that men are by nature out of right relationship to God. The whole purpose of this book is to reveal God's way for man to return to his Maker; to be delivered from the curse of sin, and restored to fellowship with God, and conformed to the likeness of His Son.

I want this evening, as I frequently do on Sunday evening, to discuss the very alphabet of the gospel. I should like to leave every member of this congregation without excuse "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"; and therefore, I must be as plain, as simple, as direct as I possibly can be, and bring you a simple word of direction as to how to be saved. I trust it may not be without profit to those who are already the Lord's children; for it is a good thing, you know, when going on a journey to make absolutely sure that the train you have boarded is going in the right direction.

It would, perhaps, be difficult to find a simpler word than that which I have read to you this evening. It is said of our Lord Jesus that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

I.

SALVATION INVOLVES THE RECEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. Whatever it may mean to receive Jesus, they are the sons of God who have received Him.

What then is involved in receiving Christ? Perhaps it may help us to consider what was involved in His rejection. "He came unto His own"—His kinsmen according to the flesh; His Jewish brethren; the privileged people to whom the divine oracles had been committed—but they did not recognize Him as the Saviour they needed, "and they received Him not". But there were others, who took up an attitude exactly opposite, who received Him. It may help us perhaps to set these two things in contrast; and as we see clearly what was involved in His rejection, we may come to understand something of what His reception implied.

I think the teaching of Scripture is that Jesus was rejected by His own people, first of all *because of His teaching, and because of the implications of His teaching.* He claimed to be a summary of all that God had ever spoken; He claimed to be God's last word to the world; the Divine ultimatum; the last message of the King of kings to His rebellious subjects; that He was, Himself, the embodiment, the exemplification of the truth He

taught; and that His message was the fulfilment of all that the prophets had spoken. He came before men as God's Pattern Man. He came to teach men what they must be in God's sight, if they would be happily and savingly related to Him. He was, Himself, a restoration of the lost standard of Righteousness; and that was the implication of His teaching always. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" There was that about His blameless life and about the testimony of His teaching which brought condemnation to every man who came into His presence. He expounded the spiritual character of God's law; He made it clear that the law of God required something more than an external conformity to His will. He showed clearly that God dealt with the spirits of men; that He took cognizance of the contents of the heart; that He is holy; and that they that dwell with Him must be holy as He is holy. And to those who imagined that they had attained to the righteous requirements of the law, He said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." In other words, Jesus set a standard of life to which the world was a stranger. He brought down from Heaven God's rule of judgment, and He measured men by the Divine Ideal. As you read the story of His teaching you will find that again and again His auditors are filled with anger, because He has penetrated the outward seeming of their lives, and has revealed their inner character, showing how far short they are from what God would have men be. It was because they rejected this divine standard they rejected Him.

It is not enough to ask men merely to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for we must understand something of what is involved in believing. And I venture the assertion that we cannot really receive Jesus while we reject His teaching; while we reject the testimony of His whole life—and the testimony of His life is this: That we are all sinners—every one; that even though we have attained to "the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees," our righteousness must exceed that to the measure of the righteousness of Jesus Himself. And few of us like to hear it; few of us are willing to acknowledge it. But true faith is never possible without repentance. It is never possible for a man really to receive Jesus without understanding that the coming of Jesus into his life means a complete transformation; a revolution; the removal of one master and the setting up of Another; the uncrowning of one king, and the crowning of Another.

And so I must ask first of all this evening, How many of you have taken this first step in the direction of

receiving Jesus Christ? Are you willing to bow to His teaching? Are you willing to accept His revelation of the Divine will respecting our character and conduct? Are we willing to allow our lives to be brought into the white light of His judgment, to be tried by the principles of His teaching? and to acknowledge that we are—every one of us—brought under the condemnation of His law?

There are some here perhaps, who say, "Yes, sir, that is my case exactly, and I do not dispute it." Very well, then, we have made progress.

If you read the record, you will find that His own received Him not—*because they were unwilling to submit to His authority—to His personal authority.* It was at this they marvelled: "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." They came to Him, and said, "By what authority doest Thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?" And when He said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," they said, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God only?" "Who is this who claims authority over us, who comes to us to be our master, not only our teacher; who claims to have the right and authority to loose us from our sins, and to cancel our indebtedness, and to put us right with God?" And they only received Him, who bowed to His authority. And we cannot receive Jesus until we recognize that "all authority is given to Him in heaven and on earth." While you measure Him with other men, you are lacking the clear vision of His true character. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" One said one thing, and another, another. "But whom say ye that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Do you know Who He is? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." Can you submit to that? Are you ready to receive Jesus Christ as the Creator? as the Lord? to submit to His sovereign authority? If so, we have made still further progress. Can you say this: "Yes, He is my Teacher; and He is my Judge; He has convinced me of sin; He is my Lord; He has revealed God to me."

"He came unto his own, and His own received Him not"; and they rejected Him upon the ground of the claims of His Saviourhood. "Even to them that believe on His name." "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "Jesus" means Saviour; and no one can believe on a Saviour, who does not acknowledge his need of salvation. They rejected Him, and brought Him to the cross. And when they saw Him there, they said, "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." They would accept Him without the cross. And there are a great many people who would receive Jesus without the cross. The popular religion is a bloodless religion. There are people here this evening who would be ready to receive Jesus Christ as their Ideal. They love to talk about Him as a carpenter; as the man of Nazareth; as a philosopher; as a great teacher. But no man can possibly receive Jesus until he is ready to receive Him in His character as a Saviour from sin; as a substitute for sinners, dying in our room and stead. So far, can you receive Him?

III.

THE RECEPTION OF JESUS CONFERRED THE PRIVILEGES OF SONSHIP. "To as many as received Him, to them He gave the privilege to become the sons of God." And it is a great privilege to be a son. First of all, it carries with it *the liberty of access to His presence.* It is a great thing to know that the door is open into the Divine Presence, to be assured that neither Peter nor any successor of his, holds the key. Blessed be God! There is no priest but ONE to whom we need come. The servants must knock at the door ere they enter; they must come with deference; they must come only when they are called. But the little child of the family claims the right to come in when he wants to come; and he simply pushes open the door and walks in.

I heard a certain preacher tell a story out of his own experience, a little while ago, of how he had had a crowded week, and Saturday afternoon found him with no preparation made for Sunday; and so he gave orders that he must not be disturbed; that whoever called, they were to be told that the minister was too busy to see them. And, as he said, "I told my household that nothing short of a fire should be permitted to break in upon my privacy." But in the midst of his meditation, he heard some little feet coming up the stairs. Presently, the study door opened, and he saw there his little boy of about four years of age. He said, "Well, what do you want?" "Oh, nussing. I came up to tell you how I love you." "And so," said the preacher, "the sermon and everything else had to be put aside while this little fellow was permitted to come to his father's arms." He was a son, and he claimed the right to push his way into his father's presence at any time.

Ah! It is a priceless privilege to be a son; to know that the law must stand aside when I want to get to God; for Jesus has magnified the law and made it honourable in my behalf. I am no longer under the law, but under grace; and I have the privilege of direct access to the presence of God.

So, if you have received Jesus, as I have been telling you tonight; and if you still have many difficulties; many disappointments; many occasions of stumbling; you have a place where all these things can be rectified, for the Door into the presence of God is wide open! "To as many as received him, to them gave he the privilege of becoming sons."

Then, this carries with it beyond question, *the assurance of the Divine favour.* It is well to know that God has smiled upon us. The prodigal was not sure what his father would say; how he would be received; and prepared, you will remember, his speech for the occasion: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But when the father received him as a son; when he put upon him the best robe, and the ring on his hand, and the shoes on his feet, he knew then that he had been wholly restored to his father's favour — and had nothing more to fear.

My brother, God is no longer your Judge, if you have received Jesus. I never expect to meet God as a Judge. The sins of the believer have been judged at the cross; they have been forever put away. We have become "sons"; and now we rejoice in the favour of God. He will never withdraw His smile from His own.

"My God is reconciled;
His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child;
I can no longer fear;
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And 'Father, Abba Father,' cry."

It involves, of course, as well, the benefits of heirship. For "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

I wonder if I can make plain my thought. I trust we have come to see that our reception is not conditioned upon our good works; that salvation is of grace, and grace alone. Our sins are blotted out for His Name's sake; and yet there are many of us who are still, in principle—though not in words—praying the prayer of that prodigal when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." I have come back, but I should like to be permitted to pay my board; or at least to earn something—and I do not ask for anything more than that which I can earn." But you know the father's answer. It was, in effect: "Son, in this house grace reigns. You are an heir; all that I have is yours; and you may claim it when you will."

Let us remember then that all the way through the Christian life the same principle of grace assures us of an answer to our prayer. Jesus paid it all, — and that means ALL. He has placed in Heaven's bank, a deposit of merit, that will cover your utmost need to all eternity. You are an heir.

I remember hearing my father tell a story years ago, when I was a little boy, of a man who acquired a large estate, in the midst of which there was a great mansion, full of treasures of inestimable worth. And having paid the price, he took his little boy with him, and went to inspect his estate. He had told his son where he was going, and what was the object of the journey. When they drove through the lodge gate, and looked upon the hundreds of acres of beautiful park land, the little boy looked up in his father's face, and said, "Father, is this ours?" "Yes," his father said, "all ours". Presently, they went to the stable, where there were many valuable horses, and as they walked up and down admiring the splendid animals, the little fellow said, "Daddy, are they all ours?" "Yes," his father replied. "All of them, every one of them?" "Yes, they are all ours, every one of them," said his father. "Then may be I can have that one to ride on," said the lad. He was picking out his own. Later they came to the great mansion itself; and as they moved through the magnificent halls, and the father admired that which the product of his own genius had purchased, the little fellow had but one question, always, to ask—"And is this ours too?" To which his father had but one answer: "Yes, it is all ours."

And that is a parable of the Christian life. Becoming sons, the Father takes us by the hand; He leads us by the illumination of His Spirit, and through an understanding of His word into our inheritance in Christ, until we are led to exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." And as wonder after wonder of redeeming grace is revealed to the admiring gaze of the redeemed soul, he simply says, "Father, is this all ours? Every thing ours?" And the answer is, "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "As many as received Him, to them gave He the privilege of becoming the sons of God."

III.

Salvation involves the reception of Jesus Christ, the reception of Jesus confers the privilege of sonship: and

THE PRIVILEGE OF SONSHIP NECESSITATES THE NEW BIRTH. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born"—"born again"; made new creatures, fitted for the inheritance prepared for them in Christ. "Marvel not, that I said unto Thee," said Jesus to Nicodemus, "ye must be born again."

Salvation then does not consist merely in subscribing to a statement of truth; there is that element in it; but there is also the subjective work of the Spirit, making us new creatures in Christ Jesus. How is that new birth accomplished? "Which were born"—"But," says somebody, "I was pretty well born myself, sir. You do not know my father, do you? You do not know my family history? I come of a good, and godly family. All my ancestors were Christian people. I have a great heritage of godly influence behind me. There is good blood in my veins; and do you mean to tell me that I must be born again?" The preacher knows nothing at all about it apart from the Word, and the Scripture saith, "Which were born, *not of blood*". You may have the blood of kings in your veins, but that does not admit you to the presence of the King of kings. For kings and commoners, and all between, in His sight are sinners—every one—and "you must be born again."

"Which were born, not of blood, *nor of the will of the flesh*." Ah, yes, you made up your mind to be a Christian, did you? You made up your mind that you would somehow get into the kingdom. If it is a worthy resolution, if formed by the power of the Spirit of God, and implemented by Him, you are to be congratulated. But let me remind you that we are not born "of the will of the flesh"; and it is not by any resolution that we can make that we find our way into the Kingdom of Heaven. There is something more than the human will operating in the quickening of a soul dead in trespasses and sin; there must be more than "the will of the flesh". I spoke to you this morning about Abraham. Ishmael was born of "the will of the flesh"; but Abraham had to learn that the children of the promise are counted for the seed. There is no salvation in the utmost power of the strongest human will.

"Nor of the will of man." Lest anything might be omitted in this excluding word, God declares that this new birth is not of human power at all, but declares it is "of God". "To as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God," and somehow, and at some time, in the process of receiving Him, and becoming sons, the Spirit of God quickens the soul, and it is born into newness of life. From beginning to end it is God's work, and therefore it is of God's sovereign grace alone.

IV.

And now let me bring you this one word more before I close, of what must necessarily follow from this truth. Receiving Christ; becoming sons; being born of God ASSURES US OF CERTAIN SPECIAL BENEFITS. First of all, *it assures us that we have eternal life*, because the life that is in us is the life of God. We have been quickened by the Spirit of God Himself. "We have been born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." That seed is in us, and we shall live for ever. We are sure of everlasting life, because, and I say it with reverence and in grateful wonder, the life of God is in us!

And then, just this simple word for the babes. I was speaking to one of these brethren baptized this evening only last night on this principle,—and I want to say it to you. This assures us that *God will take care of us during the process of development*, while we are growing up into Christ. Salvation does not promise immediate perfection. Conversion is a birth; it is the beginning of a new life, which is gradually to unfold into perfect beauty. And you know if the baby of the household gets hold of the corner of the tablecloth and pulls everything on the floor, it is a bit distressing, is it not?—notwithstanding, the baby is the king of the household, or queen as the case may be. And no one thinks of excluding the child from the family because he broke some dishes. We have wondered sometimes that these children can stand so much. And, almost equally, at their parents' endurance. I have sometimes thought it would be very interesting if we could attach to their little legs some kind of an indicator to tell us how far they run in a day, and another kind of machine to tell how often they tumble. It seems to be very black to the little fellow when toys are broken, and knees are bruised. He does not think for the moment of father's estate, or of the glorious prospect awaiting his young manhood, but only of the drying of the tears.

And so, as Christians, you will get down in the dust sometimes; you will need your handkerchief; you will be tossed about; you will wonder, possibly, whether you are a child of God or not. The children of God do sometimes lose their assurance; but they do not lose their birthright. I have heard people sneer sometimes at that hymn of John Newton's:—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love my Lord or no,
Am I His, or I am not;"—

but some of us can understand it. Perhaps some of us have been made to walk through deep valleys and dark places in order that we might tell others that even in the darkness we are still God's children, that once received into His family, we are His forevermore.

Therefore, if you young believers have had a difficult time during the past week, I remind you that you are just passing through the experience of your spiritual babyhood; and that the Lord loves you just the same. The little baby is just as much the child of the household, and as dear to the father as the grown-up son, who is in partnership with his father in business. And the humblest saint, the weakest saint of all, is as dear to the heart of God as the stalwart warrior for Christ, who goes forth winning victories in His name.

I am glad that the Lord has described our relationship in this simple metaphor, so that even the children can understand. As children "born of the will of God" we have a place in His heart and home forever, and we shall grow up into Him. And ultimately, *there is the guarantee that we shall be like Christ*. I do not see much prospect of it myself; and I confess I have met a lot of professing Christians, of whom honesty would compel me to say that I am afraid they are not as yet very much like Christ. My only hope for myself and for you is this—that there is a little bit of God in us, the seed which made us to live again—"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

I remember in the old land a man who used to come to my father's church; and, to be perfectly frank, I did

not care much for him. I think he was a good man, and I respect his memory; but he was one of those men who was not particularly attractive to young people. He was foreman over certain works, and part of the concern was some sort of brickyard. At all events, the men employed there had to work out of doors—and many of you who have lived in England know that it rains there occasionally—sometimes, too often. One summer day the men were working away in the yard when a shower came on. They ran for shelter as they were expected to do; but the foreman was looking out of his office to see how long they were going to stay under shelter. They were not particularly anxious to get back to work, as perhaps we should not have been had we had to do the same sort of work. So the old gentleman walked around to see what the men were doing; and as he approached, one of the men, who was a bit of a wag, and who perhaps invented the story, said, "Well, Mr. So-and-So, we have just been discussing a question here; possibly you can enlighten us. We have just been saying that some people say that very pretty babies grow up to be very unattractive old people; while quite ugly or very plain children, in later life, become quite beautiful or handsome, as the case might be. Do you think there is anything in that theory?" The old man was rather taken aback for the moment, but recovering himself he said, "I do not know, men, but there might be something in it." "My! My! then," said the man, "what a pretty baby you must have been!"

Now whatever degree of truth there may be in that theory as applied to the physical life, I know it is true on the one side at least, applied religiously. There is a good deal of "the old man" in some of the Lord's children; indeed, in all of us, in the beginning. And I am bound to admit that some of the babies are rather "plain", aren't they?—not much of Christ in them at the beginning. But, oh, is there anything fuller of inspiration and joy than just to see the Christ-life within emerging, and the man becoming more,—and more,—and more,—and more, like Christ? There is hope for us my friends, that we shall be glorious in His eyes when the work of grace is finished, and "when he shall present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

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The Gospel Witness

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SURPRISING INCONSISTENCY?

Quebec R.C. Newspapers Preach Temperance
But Advertize Liquor

A MEMBER of the legislative assembly of Quebec rose in the provincial house the other day and declared that "he was surprised to see certain newspapers which belonged to the religious authorities preach temperance and at the same time publish liquor advertisements." He also said, "It is good to denounce alcohol, but we must place the responsibility where it ought to be placed."

We are more surprised to read this frank criticism of the clerical press in the "Catholic Province of Quebec", under the aegis of the Union Nationale party, than we are at the inconsistency it mentions. A friend to whom we showed a copy of *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official daily paper of the pope published in the Vatican, was amazed to note pictures of bottles, not of the soft drink variety, in the advertisements in the paper. Being a Protestant, he supposed that the Roman Catholic Church was as strong in its condemnation of the use of intoxicating liquor as the Protestant Churches. But such is not the case. The temperance preached by the priests of Rome is a very easy accommodating sort of virtue that makes but small demands upon those who follow its precepts, and hence they save themselves from the charge of inconsistency when they accept liberal sums of money for the printing of liquor advertisements in their ecclesiastical press. It would be interesting to know how much the Church of Rome receives from the liquor interests for its clerical press, and still more interesting to know how much the liquor industry had contributed to coffers of the Roman Church which has never regarded it with an unfriendly eye.

It is our strong suspicion that the biggest surprise in this matter is in store for the young Quebec member of Parliament who has boldly ventured to criticize the quasi-omnipotent Roman Catholic Hierarchy of Quebec in the provincial legislative assembly. We congratulate him heartily but we are certain that he will soon learn that this sort of frank criticism is the thing that does not lead to political success in Quebec.—W.S.W.

THE INSPIRATION OF COMPANIONSHIP

The soul that knows no hills is sure to be oppressed with the monotony of the road. The inspiration to do little things comes from the presence of big things. It is amazing what dull trifles we can get through when a radiant love is near. A noble companionship glorifies the dingiest road. And what if the Companion be God? Then, surely, "the common round and daily task" have a light thrown upon them from "the beauty of his countenance."

—J. H. JOWETT

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HELPING PROHIBITIONISTS

By Frank Tumpane in *The Globe and Mail*
December 1, 1953

Judge W. T. Robb was considering a report on a Jarvis St. hotel the other day in his capacity as chairman of the Ontario Liquor License Board.

He said he had never seen a report on a hotel as bad as the one before him.

Five infractions of regulations were outlined, including reports of men drunk on the premises, minors being served liquor, and drunken disturbances.

And what happened to the hotel's license?

The Liquor License Board suspended it for three weeks. Three weeks.

And this punishment—slight though it, might seem—was said to be the most severe penalty imposed on any Ontario premises since September.

If this is the worst report Judge Robb has ever seen, then it might seem the penalty might be more commensurate with the offense.

When is the Liquor License Board going to tell proprietors who can't run proper establishments to move over and make way for somebody who can?

The whole system of penalties seems capricious and inequitable. For example, a short while ago the licenses of some establishments were suspended for two weeks for double-serving—that is, two glasses of draught beer were served to a customer at the one time.

That seems a minor matter compared with infractions that include serving of minors, drunken disturbances and permitting drunkenness.

The proprietors of the establishments themselves contribute very little toward a sane policing of their industry and their attitude is short-sighted and could, in the end, ruin them.

There seems to be a complete lack of strong action by the various hotelmen's groups to curb the abuse of licenses. And yet the holders of licenses are enjoying a monopoly in the retail sale of beer and liquor in this province.

Millions of dollars are invested by owners of licensed premises and by the breweries and distilleries which supply them.

And yet if the prohibitionists succeed in increasing restrictions or swaying sentiment to outright prohibition, these investments will be destroyed.

How many times have associations or proprietors appeared before the Liquor License Board to suggest that some person is unfit to hold a license because of the way he is conducting his business and constitutes a threat to other licensees?

But if the proprietors are unable to police their own industry, the prohibitionists will be glad to do it for them. And the prohibitionists are not interested in the adoption of saner drinking habits in Ontario or in improvement of the standard of the establishments.

The prohibitionists are interested in prohibition. And it is to their interest to have licensed premises operated by as many dollar-hungry incompetents as possible. For that type of operation is what swells the prohibition sentiment.

Beer by the glass returned to Ontario in 1934. That is nearly 20 years ago. And the beer parlors still evince no signs of maturity. Liquor by the glass has been with us for five years but, generally speaking, the cocktail lounges are cleaner, more attractive and less troublesome than the dreary, noisy beer parlors.

But from 1916 to 1926, Ontario was legally bone dry. Those were the days of Prohibition.

Some establishments are courting its return—and the Liquor License Board by failing to crack down on them is assisting in the courtship.

UNCONTROLLED LIQUOR BOARDS

The above article on "Helping Prohibitionists" bears evidence that it was not written by a prohibitionist, yet the thesis of its argument is, to all intents and purposes, that the present evil conditions in the hotels and beer rooms on Jarvis Street constitute one of the strongest arguments for a return to prohibition. *The Globe and Mail* has long since completely discarded the hatred of strong drink evinced by its still greater predecessor,

the old *Globe*, which refused to accept liquor advertisements. When a responsible feature writer in such a publication, an avowed anti-prohibitionist, candidly admits that present outrageous conditions in hotels and beer rooms cry aloud for redress and demonstrate the ineffectiveness of present liquor laws and their application, it is high time that advocates of temperance awoke from their lethargy.

The writer in *The Globe and Mail* has not told the half of the truth in his strongly worded article. Policemen on Jarvis Street go two by two; there is scarcely a day passes without a fight outside the taverns on this busy thoroughfare; all the evil underworld trades that accompany the liquor traffic and flourish along with it parade more or less openly in this district. In all our travels in Europe that took us into nine different countries during the past summer, we did not see such drunkenness and vileness as thrust themselves upon the notice of the most casual passerby in this great street whose pavement is one of main traffic arteries of a great city but whose sidewalks have largely been made into gutters to catch the run-off of the by-products of the beer-rooms, wretched men and women whose wrecked bodies and souls are the price they pay to contribute to the fabulous profits of the super-wealthy corporations of brewers and distillers.—W.S.W.

THE CRYSTAL

At midnight, death's and truth's unlocking time,
When far within the spirit's hearing rolls
The great soft rumble of the course of things—
A bulk of silence in a mask of sound,—
When darkness clears our vision that by day
Is sun-blind, and the soul's a ravening owl
For truth and flitteth here and there about
Low-lying woody tracts of time and oft
Is minded for to sit upon a bough,
Dry-dead and sharp, of some long-stricken tree
And muse in that gaunt place,—'twas then my heart,
Deep in the meditative dark, cried out:

"Ye companies of governor-spirits grave,
Bards, and old bringers-down of flaming news
From steep-wall'd heavens, holy malcontents,
Sweet seers, and stellar visionaries, all
That brood upon the skies of poesy,
Full bright ye shine, insuperable stars;
Yet, if a man look hard upon you, none
With total lustre blazeth, no, not one
But hath some heinous freckle of the flesh
Upon his shining cheek, not one but winks
His ray, opaqued with intermittent mist
Of defect; yea, you masters all must ask
Some sweet forgiveness, which we leap to give,
We lovers of you, heavenly-glad to meet
Your largesse so with love, and interplight
Your geniuses with our mortalities.

"Thus unto thee, O sweetest Shakespeare sole,
A hundred hurts a day I do forgive
(*Tis little, but, enchantment! 'tis for thee):
Shall curious quibble; Juliet's prurient pun
In the poor, pale face of Romeo's fancied death;
Cold rant of Richard; Henry's fustian roar
Which frights away that sleep he invokes;
Wronged Valentine's unnatural haste to yield;
Too-silly shifts of maids that mask as men
In faint disguises that could ne'er disguise—
Viola, Julia, Portia, Rosalind;
Fatigues most drear, and needless overtax
Of speech obscure that had 'as lief be plain;
Last I forgive (with more delight, because
'Tis more to do) the labored-lewd discourse
That e'en thy young invention's youngest heir
Besmirched the world with.

"Father Homer, thee,
Thee also I forgive thy sandy wastes
Of prose and catalogue, thy drear harangues
That tease the patience of the centuries,
Thy sleazy scrap of story,—but a rogue's
Rape of a light-o'-love,—too soiled a patch
To broider with the gods.

"Thee, Socrates,
Thou dear and very strong one, I forgive
Thy year-worn cloak, thine iron stringencies
That were but dandy upside-down, thy words
Of truth that, milder spoke, had mainlier wrought.

"So, Buddha, beautiful! I pardon thee
That all the All thou hadst for needy man
Was Nothing, and thy Best of being was
But not to be.

"Worn Dante, I forgive
The implacable hates that in thy horrid hells
Or burn or freeze thy fellows, never loosed
By death, nor time, nor love.

"And I forgive
Thee, Milton, those thy comic-dreadful wars
Where, armed with gross and inconclusive steel,
Immortals smite immortals mortalwise
And will all heaven with folly.

"Also thee,
Brave Æschylus, thee I forgive, for that
Thine eye, by bare bright justice basilisked,
Turned not, nor ever learned to look where Love
Stands shining.

"So, unto thee, Lucretius mine
(For oh, what heart hath loved thee like to this
That's now complaining?), freely I forgive
Thy logic poor, thine error rich, thine earth
Whose graves eat souls and all.

"Yea, all you hearts
Of beauty, and sweet righteous lovers large:
Aurelius fine, oft superfine; mild Saint
A Kempis, overmild; Epictetus,
Whiles low in thought, still with old slavery tinct;
Rapt Behmen, rapt too far; high Swedenborg,
O'ertopping; Langley, that with but a touch
Of art hadst sung Piers Plowman to the top
Of English songs, whereof 'tis dearest, now,
And most Adorable; Caedmon, in the morn
A-calling angels with the cow-herd's call
That late brought up the cattle; Emerson,
Most wise, that yet, in finding Wisdom, lost
Thy Self, sometimes; tense Keats, with angels' nerves
Where men's were better; Tennyson, largest voice
Since Milton, yet some register of wit
Wanting;—all, all, I pardon, ere 'tis asked,
Your more or less, your little mole that marks
You brother and your kinship seals to man.

"But Thee, but Thee, O Sovereign Seer of time,
But Thee, O poets' Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,
But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor write,
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest—
What if or yet, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,—
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?"

—SIDNEY LANIER

EVANGELICAL LESSON TOPICS FOR 1954

Jarvis Street Sunday School is reprinting the schedule for Bible Lessons for 1954 in a handy size and these may be obtained at cost by informing the office of the number required. It is hoped that these cards will be ready within a week or so.

Light From St. Luke for Days of Darkness

A Sermon by Dr. Robert McCaul

Preached on Thursday, October 29th, at the Second Annual Convention of the
Conservative Regular Baptist Association of Canada
in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto

and repeated by request in First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas,
Sunday Evening, November 29th, 1953

"But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them."—Luke 24:29.

WE ARE indebted to Matthew, Mark, and John, for the description of events in the very early morning of our Lord's resurrection. To St. Luke alone we owe our gratitude for his graphic description of the appearance of Jesus during the afternoon and early evening of that day of days. These descriptions have a loveliness of their own, seen as they are in the mellow afterglow with which St. Luke lights up the Judean hills. His story awakens our most pensive mood.

The resurrection splendor requires and has for its background the deep darkness of the great Atonement Day; we may say that it must have been for the followers of Jesus the darkest day that any company of mortals have ever experienced.

The Gloom in Joseph's Garden

We are too far removed from them to comprehend, except in the faintest fashion, how deep must have been their despair, how bewildered their mood in the presence of so stupendous and sudden a catastrophe. In Byron's poem entitled "Darkness" he imagines a world in which the sun has been extinguished, while the stars and planets wander darkling in the Eternal space, rayless and pathless, and the icy Earth swings blind and blackening in the moonless air. Morn came and went, and came and brought no day, and men forgot their passions in the dread of this their desolation. They lived by watch fires — all habitations burned for beacons, volcanoes their only other light. Forests and cities set on fire fell and faded — men sat apart and gorged themselves on gloom, while famine wrote "fiend" upon their foreheads. All was seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless — rivers, lakes, and oceans all stood still — naught stirred within their silent depths. Ships sailorless rotted on the sea without a surge — the waves were dead, the tides were in their graves, the winds withered in the stagnant air, the clouds perished — darkness had no need of aid from them. She was the Universe:

But Byron's picture, dreadful as it is, relates only to the physical universe. Such a day is indeed to come, but our Gospel assures us that for the Christian it ushers in the light of an Eternal day. The desolation and darkness of the disciples must have had a deeper hue, for it seemed to them that the Sun of Righteousness itself had set, and set to rise no more. Note how the Evangelists pile shadow upon shadow until it is a darkness even we can feel in Joseph's garden. What a touch Matthew gives! When all have deserted the place of a skull he leaves us gazing at two forlorn pathetic figures: "And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary seated

over against the sepulchre." Rembrandt, for his subtle ability to make shading convey impressions, has been referred to as "that great Master of Shadows". But let him learn from Matthew's touch — "There was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary seated over against the sepulchre." This we believe was Friday night. What a Saturday it must have been following that great Atonement day! The Universe had "killed the Prince of Life!"

The Blank in the Apostolic Record

We cannot help but wonder where the apostles were, what was their mood, and what they did, on the day following the crucifixion. So far as the record goes we cannot tell what they did. Because of this blank in the story the Latin fathers spoke of this as a "non dies", a no day in the life of the apostles. Do we wonder? Are there not events that temporarily take away all power of action? Days, when the mind is too paralyzed to plan, the soul too stunned to pray, much less can the heart sing. What an irony that this black Saturday is the Sabbath! Will they, can they, go to worship? The soul in bitterness might reply to the suggestion — Worship what? And to think that they had, as devout Jews, been accustomed when in Jerusalem to go up to the temple and chant with the great congregation in the 136th Psalm appointed for that day, which begins with the words:

"Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for his mercy endureth for ever."

And that once inspiring, but now taunting refrain, "His mercy endureth for ever" is repeated twenty-six times. Do you think they had faith enough to repeat that when all their hopes lay buried in the much guarded tomb? Not likely. It would take a faith like that of the dying thief to mention the mercy of God. The likelihood is that they did not sing it, or even go up to the temple at the hour of worship. Nor dare we chide them, remembering the frailty of our own faith when clouds and darkness are around His throne. But how they might, even on that day, have sung it had they been aware of what light and mercy was indeed approaching them even then in the darkness. What a tone of triumph they could have put into that Psalm, how they might have sung it in the very presence of the priests who a few hours before had mocked the Saviour because they believed He could not come down from the cross — had they only known that He Whom His enemies believed could not come down from the cross was about to come forth from the tomb! At this point in the record we pause to reflect that in hours when men seem to be permitted to sin without

restraint, and Christ is being crucified afresh — led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb — when He seems to open not His mouth — be slow to conclude that His cause is defeated.

Oh for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe,

A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without,
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt.

Last at the Cross and First at the Tomb

But if, as has been said, "the constellation of the apostles went into eclipse" on this occasion, it was not so with the women, who must have been groping in a similar darkness. We saw them in the gloaming watching sadly the entombment of the sacred body, and soon we shall see them early at the tomb, meriting the poet's tribute:

Not she with traitorous kiss her Master stung;
Not she denied Him with unholy tongue;
She, when apostles shrank, could danger brave,
Last at the cross, and earliest at the grave!

But between those two periods Luke tells us that having prepared the spices which they intended would be their part in what they must have thought was their last tribute, they nevertheless refrained from visiting the sepulchre where they wanted to be — because it was the Sabbath. St. Luke says: "They returned and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment."

As to the Sabbath observance, the commandment would call them to keep it according to the Jewish custom. The glory of the resurrection had not yet put the Jewish Sabbath into eclipse to fade into the greater light of the Lord's Day. Therefore they felt restrained from going to the tomb. If ever love had a motive for action these women had reason to go beyond the commandment. Yet they did not. Would that their example might be followed by Christians today, so many of whom seem to be conscious of no special obligation relative to keeping one day in seven sacred for rest and worship. Think of the high powered automobiles that go tearing through its boundaries, and the senseless activities with which it is loaded. With these women the din of the world died down with the dawn of the Sabbath, and the day was sacred. Even holy love waited on obedience. In an address heard some months ago in which the preacher mourned the absence of the idea of holiness from Christian circles, he said, "I still like the man who blacks his boots Saturday night."

But the women have much more to teach us about how we should react to our present environment. Though we do not know what the apostles did, or how they comported themselves that Sabbath day, we do know that the women, to whom it must have been equally dark, waited expectantly for the dawn of the first day of the week — not expectant as to any resurrection, the spices in their hands refute that, but to do that which in one sense must have seemed pathetically futile — anoint a dead body. That is serving in some little way when there seems nothing to inspire. And even that which they planned they were not permitted to fulfill.

Does not much of our well intentioned service seem

futile? Are there not days that seem to bring no hope but only a pathetic memory, days when you walk the path of duty surrounded by deep mystery, days when we prepare apparently to no purpose. Costly spices procured and not used — days when you feel like shedding tears, or what is harder, smile when you do not feel like it. But here let us note what precious value the Saviour attaches to service done in such an hour. Little did those devoted hearts know that the spices which they would not use to embalm His body, He would use to embalm their memory as He beheld in them a love stronger than death.

Among the unnumbered blessings that worshippers at Jarvis Street receive is the reverent devotional manner in which the choirs and congregation sing the great hymns in keeping with the sentiments they contain. I still recall one Sunday evening the singing of a hymn, till then almost forgotten, which still lingers as a sanctifying memory:

Come tell me all that ye have said and done,
-Your victories, your sorrows, hopes and fears;
I know how hardly souls are woo'd and won,
My choicest wreaths are always wet with tears.

So, "let me like Mary through the gloom, come with a gift to Thee."

On the Emmaus Road

We turn now to another group — the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. What do they have to teach us for such a day as this? The Master predicted that when the Shepherd was smitten the sheep would be scattered. Some commentators hold that here we see two of the scattered or scattering sheep. But after all they are together, which fact may have meant the difference between a shattered or preserved faith. There is no greater solace in sorrow, nothing better calculated to preserve faith and kindle love and hope, than the communion of saints. Had they remained apart their faith might have failed. In the spiritual journey it is not good for man to be alone. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." That is just what we see on the way to Emmaus. Two souls engaged in the communion of saints — communing and questioning — "talking together of all these things which had happened — their theme the cross, as it had been when the two celestials visited three other followers of Jesus at the Transfiguration — for the subject there was "The decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem." And now the same theme again, though this time it is the meditation of the broken hearted, when lo, Jesus, unlike the world attracted rather than repelled by human tears, joins their company, and broken hearts in a little while become burning hearts as He communes with them by the way.

Meeting the Lord in Church

Just here is the ample justification for every coming together of Christian people in regular church worship or Christian conference. While so engaged we may expect, and often do experience, the sudden coming of the Lord of glory into our company. We come to a service such as this, our minds filled with, and by no means separated from the things of the world, whether they be anxious, care or careless thought. The very act of detachment from the world in coming to church puts us

into the zone where we are most likely to meet the great Head of the Church. The very atmosphere of the sanctuary makes us conscious of being near to the border line of the spirit world. The hymns remind us that

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields
Or walk the golden streets."

The Eternal world begins to wrap us round, until with Jacob we say, "Surely God is in this place, it is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." And suddenly we are with two on the way to Emmaus, and hearts begin to burn with the heavenly fire. If this is not our experience at every service, surely we can all recall times when it has been. If we are regular we will not, like Thomas, be absent when Jesus does thus come in a special way, when truly a day in His courts is better than a thousand. It was an occasion such as this when the Scottish Elder in Ian MacLaren's story told his pastor he had once mortgaged his farm to save the church, and nearly lost it by so doing. But it would have been worth while to have lost seven farms just to have been in the kirk that day.

Evangelism—Earnest or Just Entertaining?

It may be well to note that these Emmaus sojourners were in a deeply serious mood when Jesus joined their company. He seemed to be drawn by their tears. Jesus notices that as they walk they are sad. The Christian gospel is not indeed a melancholy matter. Its first note was, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." But its joy is something different and better than jocularity. Christianity is nothing if it is not serious mindedness. We need Christians today who see in it something more than a perpetual giggle. Much evangelistic effort is ruined by catering to the flippant careless mind that demands entertainment. In fact, evangelism through entertainment seems to be in great vogue. Some Christians who would not care to be seen going to the world for amusement get around that problem by turning their religious program into a kind of burlesque. There is a type of religion, too wide spread, that spurns the milk and meat of the Word for something quite too light to merit the name of gospel at all, and that produces a following too superficial to make any real and solid advance in the Christian faith. The Bishop of London, asked what he thought of early Methodism, commended it highly, and defined it as "Christianity once again in earnest."

Prophetic Preaching

The Master comforted and directed these Emmaus travellers by interpreting to them Old Testament prophecy. We hear much today about the necessity and call for so-called prophetic teaching. Numberless indeed have been the sermons on prophecy in our generation. It had been well if they had followed the model set by the Saviour that day on the Emmaus road. We cannot help wishing, though the Holy Spirit has seen fit not to grant it, that we had the full record of what Jesus said in that connection. We venture it would be in striking contrast to the wild imaginings and senseless speculations that often pass for prophetic preaching. Spurgeon speaks discouragingly of the type of mind that leaps with joy when it thinks it has discovered some figure in con-

temporary life answering to the Number 666 in the Book of Revelation, that explains all the mysteries about the vials, the little horn, and the signs and portents of coming events. In his day the favourite signs were earthquakes, and the Sultan of Turkey was the Antichrist, since Napoleon had proved at first certain, and then disappointing. Today much attention is given to Russia and the Northern Confederacy, which in turn will doubtless give place to some new and equally mistaken obsession. Says Spurgeon, "Insanity seems to run in that groove." He was ever refreshingly cautious, and very generally followed the model for which a strong hint is given in Christ's prophetic sermon that day. Though we do not have the text we have a clear hint of its nature, for Luke tells us that "beginning with Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." That is prophetic preaching — the arranging of all the lamps of prophecy so as to focus them upon the face of Jesus Christ. Of that we need never be afraid, and of its results we need never be ashamed. That is how Jesus seemed to have handled Old Testament prophecies that day.

How to Retain Fellowship with Christ

But let us look at one further light which Luke throws upon an ever present problem for the Christian, and especially in our day.

We saw what attracted Christ to their company, but now after a glorious afternoon with Him, which some one has referred to as seven miles of Bible exposition by the Saviour Himself, they reach their lodging gate, and we read, "He made as though He would have gone further." It is one thing to have passing experiences of Christ; it is quite another thing to keep an unbroken fellowship. We may too easily, and at eternal loss, let Him go at the Emmaus gate, and that again for want of a hospitable attitude toward Him. He is careful not to force Himself upon us. There is a certain sensitiveness in the coming and going of the blessed Paraclete. The invitation must be genuine, sincere, and urgent. Only those who make Him feel they must have Him will have Him. He knows very well when and where He is welcome, and waits for a manifestation of our importunity. No one gets the best from Christ who shows his heart is half with Him and half with the world. He responds best to the earnest appeal, and to the touch of restraining hands. It is in coming into deep fellowship with Him, even as it is in first coming into His kingdom. He suffereth violence and the violent take Him by force. Abraham must press his invitation to the three mysterious visitors to his tent ere they consent to abide. Jacob becomes Israel at the cry, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Said the mysterious Wrestler, "Let me go for the day breaketh." Why at the break of day? Do not our good angels often leave us just then — when day comes with its calls, its duties, its levities, its preoccupations? It is hard to hold the angel in the midst of life's conflicting currents. A score of interests come in to end the wrestling with the angel, and invites him to say, "Let me go for the day breaketh." He might have gone further that night but for Jacob's determination expressed in "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." He might have gone further at the Emmaus gates but for their "Abide with us".

The students at Oberlin noticed that Finney was laying retaining hands on Christ when after presenting

certain petitions at college chapel he closed his prayer with words something like these: "For in these matters for which I have asked, as Thou knowest, O Lord, I am not accustomed to be denied."

May Be Later Than We Think

Did they press this invitation upon the Master for their own sakes only, and should we? Certainly there is a cause. The shadows quickly fall at the end of life's little day. We should be more urgent, though we fear some are less so when the shadows begin to lengthen "across the little landscape of our lives". It is a prayer long overdue for such as have spent most of their day without Him, and who consequently have had the empty but never the burning heart.

Come ere this heart should cold and cast away
Die ere the guest adored she entertain,
Lest eyes that never saw thine earthly day
Should miss thy heavenly reign.

In such an hour as this it might well be true of our world that the day is far spent and the night is at hand — later perhaps than we think. Oh, eternal remorse for the soul that drifts into eternal night because the Saviour was never invited while it is called today!

Were the Emmaus travellers moved to invite Him not only for their own sake but also for His? Darkness falls suddenly in the Holy Land, and there was little safety for a night traveller. Not to invite a wayfarer in at twilight was to the Oriental gross inhospitality.

Alas, we are still in a day when few want Christ. Not many hearts are offering Him shelter; the world does not seem to want Him. Once again he stands in the midst of our brilliant civilization — His own gift to us — and cries, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Once again His locks are wet with the dew of the night — waiting at the door.

Lord what am I,
That with unceasing care
Thou shouldst look after me,
That Thou shouldst wait
Wet with unhealthy dew
Before my gate?

Oh, strange delusion
That I did not greet Thy blest approach,
And oh, to heaven how lost
If my ingratitude's unkindly frost
Has chilled those bleeding wounds
Upon Thy feet.

How oft my guardian angel gently cried,
"Soul, from thy casement look,
And thou shalt see
How He persists to knock
And wait for thee."
And oh, how often to that voice of sorrow,
"Tomorrow we will open," I've replied,
And when the morrow came
I answered still, "Tomorrow."

You may become a Christian this moment by saying to Christ, and saying with a tone which indicates that what is upon the lips first rises in the heart: "Wilt Thou not come in and abide?" Then at the last great Judgment Day He will welcome you with: "I was a stranger and ye took me in."

Grace, like the flower-seed, needs to be sown in spring. The first fifteen years of life, and often the first six, decide the eternal destiny.

"HE THANKED GOD, AND TOOK COURAGE"

By Rev. John Cunningham, Alberta, Canada

"When the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us . . . , whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."—Acts 28:15.

There are times when seemingly trivial things have a great influence upon a man's life. The Apostle Paul was on his way to Rome, the bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he had borne much for His sake along the way. He had been arrested in Jerusalem, and had answered for his faith before the Sanhedrin. The Jews had plotted to take his life and he had escaped just in time. He had stood before three Roman governors, Felix, Festus and Agrippa; and when he made his appeal to Caesar he started on the long journey to Rome. Then there was the shipwreck that had stranded him and his company on the lonely island of Melita for three months, and taking ship again he continued the journey to Rome. Surely here is a spiritual giant, a hardened soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Word of his coming to Rome had been received of the church there and the brethren set out to meet him, going as far as the Three Taverns. But it touched the apostle's heart deeply when he saw them, and "he thanked God, and took courage."

This is not the only passage that indicates how greatly the apostle Paul valued the friendship and fellowship of the brethren. A few brief quotations from his second epistle to Timothy will show the same. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me," he wrote Timothy. "Demas hath forsaken me," he continued. "Only Luke is with me." "Take Mark, and bring him with thee." "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." "Do thy diligence to come before winter." How Paul yearned in his prison for Timothy's company and fellowship! Great man that he was he needed the fellowship of the brethren.

There seems to be some who are quite independent of, and even indifferent to, the friendship of others, lonely men who never crave the company of others. But Paul was not one of them. The fellowship of the brethren, of true kindred minds, was refreshing to his soul. And the sight of these who had come from Rome to meet him on his way touched his heart. "He thanked God, and took courage."

And most of us are like him. The fellowship of the saints is most precious to our souls, and God has provided for this fellowship for which we yearn in the church. The church is not made up of isolated members, each living unto himself and going his own way in life. The church is the congregation of the Lord's people; it is the assembly of the saints in one place where soul touches soul and spirit communes with spirit.

Do we then appreciate the church as we ought? When Paul saw this company of the brethren coming to meet him "he thanked God". Have you ever thanked God for the church? Is there any longing in your soul for the congregation of the Lord's people? Does your heart beat a little faster as the day approaches that calls the church together for worship and prayer, for meditation and service? Is there ever a feeling of deep disappointment when circumstances keep you from assembling with those whom you love in the church? As you join those each Lord's Day that make their way to the church, do you

ever lift your heart in thanksgiving to God? Paul did. "He thanked God, and took courage."

He took courage. Paul not only found satisfaction of soul at the sight of these brethren who came to meet him, he found encouragement in it, too. Was he afraid to go to Rome? We cannot think so, but surely there must have been some apprehension in his heart as he journeyed on. But mighty man of God that he was, he found a source of strength at the sight of these brethren who had come to meet him on the way.

There are two thoughts that are suggested in these things. First of all, we need the fellowship of the Lord's people to comfort and strengthen us. No man can willfully absent himself from the church without being the poorer for it. There is no tonic to the soul like the fellowship of the church. Do you think that you are strong enough to do without it? Poor soul that you are! Pity the man who does not take heart in the fellowship of the saints in the church! For often our souls have been blessed at the very sight of the saints. Have you not found it so? Have you never come to the church lonely and discouraged, only to leave with a renewed mind and a light heart? Who of us has not felt it!

There is this further suggested. We come to church not only for the comfort that it brings to our own hearts, but also for the comfort we might impart to others. And we never know how far our influence goes. They who made their way to meet Paul probably never thought what it might mean to him. They were anxious to meet this great man of God, but "he thanked God, and took courage." So it is often the simple things in life, the things that we least suspect, that have the greatest influence upon the lives of others. It is not without reason that James wrote, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. A call to the hospital room on a suffering, lonely heart, a visit in the home where troubles abound, a word spoken by the way to a discouraged soul—you never know what it might mean. Perhaps some one will thank God for it and take courage. And if you do anything to make the burdens of life lighter for the heavy heart, if your fellowship helps another along the rugged pathway of life, you have not lived in vain. And what is more, it never escapes the watchful eye of your Father in heaven. In its own time it will bring its reward. "And the King shall answer unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Vice is first pleasing; then easy; then delightful; then frequent; then habitual; then confirmed; then the man is impenitent; then he is obstinate; then he resolves never to repent; and then he is damned. —JEREMY TAYLOR

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The Gospel Witness

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2 - Canada

"KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS"

(Continued from page 2)

Surely we ought, as never before, to pray and to live and to preach in such a way as to call down upon this needy world the revival blessings we long to see. In a recent speech to the British house, Sir Winston Churchill reviewed foreign policy, closing with these solemn words: "We are all nations standing at this hour in human history before the portals of supreme catastrophe or of measureless reward. My faith is that in God's mercy we shall choose aright." The British Prime Minister is not given to making theological disquisitions, but the very gravity of the present situation apparently forced this acknowledgement from him of our utter dependence upon God's mercy. Our nation, our Commonwealth, our race, our world in the face of such a crisis, ought to turn from their idols and to serve the living and true God. And we who name the name of Christ must find in the present state of affairs a fresh reason for obeying the warning addressed by the Apostle of love to his little children, "Keep yourselves from idols."

FOR YOUNGER READERS

Saved From a Lion

The Rev. Dr. Moffat, from England, was a missionary in South Africa for fifty years. His son, born and brought up in that country, took his father's place in trying to make Jesus known as a Saviour to the natives of that part of Africa. This missionary, Rev. John Moffat, tells this story of a native lad who had attended the services held by the missionary.

This lad was engaged once with some of his companions in hunting. They were in the full and eager pursuit of some animal, when suddenly, and unexpectedly, this lad found himself face to face with a lion, and almost touching him. His black face seemed as if it would turn white with fear. His companions were almost as much frightened as himself. They were a little further off, and saw his danger, but were unable to help him. In that awful moment the poor boy thought of Jesus, the Mighty Saviour, of Whom he had so often heard the missionary speak. In his danger and distress, he cried out, in hearing of his companions — "O, Jesus! save me now, and I will serve Thee for ever."

Soon after he had offered this prayer, the lion turned round, and walked quietly off, without touching the boy. He never forgot that hour. Wherever he went, the thought followed him, "Jesus saved me from the lion." He thought of another lion, spoken of in the Bible, not to be seen with our bodily eyes, even Satan, who "walketh about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Then he prayed earnestly to the Lord Jesus to deliver him from this lion, too. The Lord Jesus heard his prayer, and he became an earnest Christian.

And our Saviour has the same power to save in this country that He has in Africa.

—From *The Light of the World*, by Dr. Richard Newton.

CHRIST ON A THRONE OF GRACE

Christ is on a throne of grace. Our case is brought before him. The question is asked: "Is there any good about this man?" The law answers, "None." Nevertheless Christ hands over our pardon, and asks us to take it. Oh! The height and depth, the length and breadth of His mercy!

—TALMAGE

THE BIBLE

NO GREATER moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman; it was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened to their force and beauty, kindled a startling enthusiasm. When Bishop Bonner set up the first six Bibles in St. Paul's "many well-disposed people used much to resort to the hearing thereof, especially when they could get any that had an audible voice to read to the . . . One John Porter used sometimes to be occupied in that goodly exercise, to the edifying of himself as well as others. This Porter was a fresh young man and of a big stature; and great multitudes would resort thither to hear him, because he could read well and had an audible voice." The popularity of the Bible was owing to other causes besides that of religion. The whole prose literature of England, save the forgotten tracts of Wyclif, has grown up since the translation of the Scriptures by Tyndall and Coverdale. No history, no romance, no poetry, save the little-known verse of Chaucer, existed for any practical purpose in the English tongue when the Bible was ordered to be set up in churches. Sunday after Sunday, day after day, the crowds that gathered round Bonner's Bibles in the nave of St. Paul's or the family group that hung on the words of the Geneva Bible in the devotional exercises at home, were leavened with a new literature. Legends and annals, war song and psalm, State-rolls and biographies, the mighty voices of prophets, the parables of Evangelists, stories of mission journeys, or perils by the sea and among the heathen, philosophic arguments, apocalyptic visions, all were flung broadcast over minds unoccupied for the most part by any rival learning. The disclosure of the stores of Greek literature had wrought the revolution of the Renaissance. The disclosure of the older mass of Hebrew literature wrought the revolution of the Reformation. But the one revolution was far deeper and wider in its effects than the other. No version could transfer to another tongue the peculiar charm of language which gave their value to the authors of Greece and Rome. Classical letters, therefore, remained in the possession of the learned, that is of the few; and among these, with the exception of Colet and More, or of the pendants who revived a Pagan worship in the gardens of the Florentine Academy, their direct influence was purely intellectual. But the tongue of the Hebrew, the idiom of Hellenistic Greek, lent themselves with a curious felicity to the purposes of translation. As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue. Its perpetual use made it from the instant of its appearance the standard of our language. But for the moment its literary effect was less than its social. The power of the book over the mass of Englishmen showed itself in a thousand superficial ways, and in none more conspicuously than in the influence it exerted on ordinary speech. It formed, we must repeat, the whole literature which was practically accessible to ordinary Englishmen; and when we recall the number of common phrases which we owe to great authors, the bits of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dickens, or ordinary talk, we shall better understand the strange mosaic of Biblical words and phrases which col-

oured English talk two hundred years ago. The mass of picturesque allusion and illustration which we borrow from a thousand books, our fathers were forced to borrow from one; and the borrowing was the easier and the more natural that the range of the Hebrew literature fitted it for the expression of every phase of feeling. When Spencer poured forth his warmest love-notes in the "Epithalamion", he adopted the very words of the Psalmist, as he bade the gates open for the entrance of his bride. When Cromwell saw the mists break over the hills of Dunbar, he hailed the sun burst with the cry of David: "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered. Like as the sun riseth, so shalt thou drive them away!" Even to common minds this familiarity with grand poetic imagery in prophet and apocalypse gave a loftiness and ardour of expression, that with all its tendency to exaggeration and bombast we may prefer to the slipshod vulgarisms of the shopkeeper of to-day.

But far greater than its effect on literature or social phrase was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits: but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice, and mercy, and truth, who spoke from the book which she had again opened for her people. The whole moral effect which is produced now-a-days by the religious newspaper, the tract, the essay, the lecture, the missionary report, the sermon, was then produced by the Bible alone. And its effect in this way, however dispassionately we examine it, was simply amazing. The whole temper of the nation was changed. A new conception of life and of men superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class. Literature reflected the general tendency of the time; and the dumpy little quartos of controversy and piety, which still crowd our older libraries, drove before them the classical translations and Italian novelettes of the age of Elizabeth. "Theology rules there" said Grotius of England, only ten years after the Queen's death; and when Casaubon, the last of the great scholars of the sixteenth century, was invited to England by King James, he found both King and people indifferent to letters. "There is a great abundance of theologians in England," he says to a friend; "all point their studies in that direction." The study of the country gentleman pointed towards theology as much as that of the scholar. As soon as Colonel Hutchinson "had improved his natural understanding with the acquisition of learning, the first studies he exercised himself in were the principles of religion." The whole nation became, in fact, a Church. The great problems of life and death, whose "obstinate questionings" found no answer in the higher minds of Shakespeare's day, pressed for an answer from the men who followed him.

—JOHN RICHARD GREEN,
*A Short History of the
English People.*

THE BELL-ROPE OF HEAVEN

Prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give an occasional pluck at the rope; but he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly, and pulls continually, with all his might.

—SPURGEON

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 17 Fourth Quarter Lesson 12 December 20, 1953

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

DAVID ANOINTED TO BE KING

Lesson Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Golden Text: "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."—1 Samuel 16:7.

I. The Commission Given: verses 1-3

The failure of King Saul must have been the cause of keen disappointment to Samuel. From the day that Samuel performed the difficult task of announcing the final rejection of the disobedient king, the two never saw one another on earth (1 Sam. 15:35). We are not told the reason for this separation, but the fact emphasizes the finality and completeness of Saul's rejection. It must not be argued, however, that the aged prophet had lost interest in the king. He never ceased to mourn because of Saul's sin and its inevitable consequences, and he doubtless continued his ministry of intercession (1 Sam. 12:23). Love is one of the indispensable qualities in the character of a servant of the Lord (John 21:16). As our Saviour grieved over the sins of men (Luke 13:34, 35; 19:41-44), so must we bear upon our hearts their burden, and tenderly seek to restore them to fellowship with the Lord, while dealing strongly with their sins (Jude 20-23).

There is a time to mourn, and there is a time not to mourn (Exod. 14:15; Eccl. 3:1-4). The prophet Samuel was told to mourn no longer over the tragic failure of Saul, but to arise and anoint the new king, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). Saul represented the people's choice, but David was the Lord's choice and would live for His glory. The Gospel is a message of hope, the good tidings of a new beginning (Rom. 8:24; 2 Cor. 5:17).

The Lord has regard for the weakness of His children; He remembers that we are but dust (Psa. 103:13, 14). To protect Samuel from the jealous wrath of the king, He provided an occasion for a sacrifice which would conceal the real purpose of the prophet's visit to the home of Jesse. It was not yet the Lord's time to make a public announcement concerning the new king.

The fact that the Lord did not reveal to Samuel the name of the king whom He had chosen illustrates the truth that He leads His children one step at a time (Gen. 22:1; Isa. 30:11; Heb. 11:8). He gives us sufficient light for faith to rely upon, but not sufficient for boldness to presume (Psa. 97:11; 1 Cor. 13:12). He bears the responsibility for our lives, and if we will put our cause into His hands, He will wisely lead, for He is all-powerful, all-wise and all-loving.

II. The Commission Performed: verses 4-13

Possibly the elders had heard of Samuel's severity toward the wicked King Agag (1 Sam. 15:32, 33), and so they trembled at the coming of the prophet. A wholesome fear of the Lord is sadly lacking these days in many quarters (Psa. 19:9; 34:11; Prov. 1:7, 29; 24:21; Rom. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:17).

It was natural for Samuel to conclude that Jesse's eldest son Eliab, tall, dignified and regal in appearance, was to be the king (Psa. 147:10, 11). But God's standards are far different from human standards (1 Chron. 28:9; Psa. 7:9; Isa. 55:8, 9). In the eyes of the Lord the truly great are those who are great in soul.

David, the man of God's choice, was the youngest son of Jesse and a shepherd (Psa. 78:70, 71). He was a mere lad at this time, and seemingly lightly regarded by the family, since he had not been summoned to attend the sacrifice (1 Cor. 1:27-29). His training as a shepherd had developed his physique (1 Sam. 17:34, 36); he stood before Samuel in the vigour of youth, fair to look upon (1 Sam. 17:42). Tending the flocks by night gave him opportunities for meditation and worship (Psa. 8:3; 104:1-3, 34; 143:5). The Lord knows where to find leaders for His people (Judg. 6:11-16). Although but a youth, David knew what it meant to have the hand of the Lord laid upon him. Parents, teachers and workers should continually pray that the Lord may choose

for His service some of the boys, girls and young people under their care (Matt. 9:37, 38).

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from the day on which he was anointed with oil, the symbol in the Scriptures of the Holy Spirit (Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam. 10:6-10; Zech. 4:2-6). Thus was David divinely prepared for his holy office. No one should presume to enter the service of the Lord who has not been endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:49; John 21:21-23; Acts 1:8), for the service performed in the energy of the flesh will not avail before God (John 15:4, 5; 1 Cor. 3:11-15).

In the Providence of God the rejected king and the anointed king were brought together (verse 23). Saul loved the young harpist with a love which later turned to bitter jealousy and hatred, when he saw himself supplanted in the esteem of the people (1 Sam. 18:6-12, 29). David, on the other hand, regarded Saul, the Lord's anointed, with awe and respect (1 Sam. 24:1-12; 26:1-12; 2 Sam. 1:12-16). In his poem "Saul" the poet Robert Browning depicts the prayer of David that the Lord would bring solace and strength to the troubled spirit of the king, whom he loved with all tenderness:

"See the King—I would help him, but cannot, the wishes fall through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!

"O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me, Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Dec. 14—David and Saul 1 Sam. 16:14-23.
- Dec. 15—The Anointing of a Prophet 1 Kings 19.
- Dec. 16—The Anointing of a Priest Lev. 8:30-36.
- Dec. 17—David Sings of the Shepherd of Israel Psa. 78:56-72.
- Dec. 18—David Contemplates the Heavens Psa. 19.
- Dec. 19—David Sings of the Good Shepherd Psa. 23.
- Dec. 20—David Sings of the Great King Psa. 45.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

He leadeth me! Oh, blessed thought! Jesus is our Shepherd. Precious promise God hath given. Like a shepherd, tender. God moves in a mysterious way. Tenderly guide us.

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How to Say

Merry Christmas

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