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Kindling Revival Fires

MANY who pray for revival seem to expect a sudden opening of the heavens while a veritable deluge of spiritual power and blessing descends upon the church. But it is doubtful if ever a genuine revival came that way. The manifestation of blessing may sometimes be sudden, but invariably there has been long preparation for its coming.

Spring marks a revival in the natural world, but it does not come suddenly. It is due to a changed relation of the earth to the sun. When the sun's rays fall more directly upon its surface then the frost king flees away. The ice and snow gradually disappear; the earth responds to the warmer atmosphere about it; the sap rises until it reaches the uttermost twig in the giant oak; the buds appear; and then the plough-share turns back the soil, and opens the earth to the sun's re-invigorating rays. The seed is cast into the ground, and presently the barren fields are green. As spring advances into summer they become rich with their golden harvest, and the branches of the trees are bowed with the weight of luscious fruit. The birds have long since returned from other climes, and fill the summer air with music, as the flowers with fragrance — and this is revival.

Not unlike the coming of spring is the advent of revival in the spiritual world. In that realm, too, a new relation to Heaven must be established. The ice must be dissolved, the trees must be pruned, the fallow ground must be broken up, the seed must be sown — only then can real revival come. And just as surely as the fields of the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, shall want the golden wealth of harvest, so surely will the religious sluggard — whether church or individual, wait in vain for spiritual blessing.

It may be well to think of one or two biblical revivals, and consider how they were brought about. One of the outstanding revivals of Old Testament times was that which marked the climax of Elijah's prophetic ministry, when the fire came down from Heaven, and but a short time afterwards the skies were black with clouds, and there was a sound of abundance of rain.

But did that revival come suddenly? We have the warrant both of the New Testament and of the Old for believing that before Elijah prayed for revival he prayed

for greater dearth and deeper want. He prayed *that it might not rain* for three and a half years. Elijah sought the discipline of Heaven upon a rebellious people; and shared the privations of that discipline in no small measure himself. How almost unendurable to him, as to others, must the brazen skies of those three and a half years have been! How weary must he have become of the scorched and barren fields, and of the gaping earth as it opened its parched lips in mute appeal for rain from Heaven! How his bravely righteous soul must have suffered at the forced necessity for hiding from the murderous Ahab until the time appointed! What a fearful price this loyal prophet paid through the three and a half years of patient waiting for revival!

And is revival less easily promoted now than then? Can the hearts of men, without discipline or privation, suddenly be made tender? Are there no Ahabs and no Jezebels to be taken into account when we pray, "O Lord, revive thy work"? And can the three and a half years of persevering, self-sacrificing, faith, be condensed into a week of prayer in January? or a few special services conducted by a visiting preacher at some other season of the year? Is God so fickle that, having withheld His blessing from a people out of fellowship with Him, He can suddenly be induced to open the windows of heaven by a few pious phrases, or a few minutes of superficial religious zeal? Are there no inexorable laws of the spiritual realm? Can the sun be tempted out of its orbit? or can a mutual relation between earth and sun, which produces the frost of mid-winter, be ignored? And without such change of relationship, can a religious December be converted into a summer day in June? Can churches, crippled and almost paralyzed with the cancer of worldliness and unbelief, be transformed in a moment into the picture of one in buoyant health and prepared as a bride for the bridegroom? Is the preaching that produces revival like a physician's phial of morphia, an opiate to ease the pain that follows disobedience? Or is it to be like the surgeon's knife, sharper than any two-edged sword?

Can the garden of the Lord do without the plough-share, or the pruning knife, and yet be ready in abounding beauty and fruitfulness for the Beloved to come into

His garden and eat His pleasant fruits? Is it of any avail for the South wind to blow, without the awakening of the wind from the North? Is there no cross in our religion, or is it only objective? May we have revival by merely believing that Christ was crucified for us, while refusing to be crucified with Him?

Who is willing to face three and a half years of obscurity, of privation, of loneliness, of oblivion, of obloquy, of ignominy, of hiding away from Ahab?

Nor is this all. For a day of action must inevitably follow. The time will come when the preacher must show himself to Ahab, and lay the responsibility for a nation's bankruptcy upon the conscience of a wicked leader. The time must come when the real troublemakers of Israel must be identified. It is necessary to cast up the highway, and gather out the stones, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make straight in the desert a highway for our God. For this phase of revival, courage, faithfulness, unswerving devotion to duty, are indispensable.

Nor need we ever expect the fire to fall from Heaven while there is no sacrifice upon which the fire may fall, and no altar upon which the sacrifice may be laid. In many a life, in many a home, in many a church, the broken altar must needs be repaired, and the wood must be put upon the altar, and the sacrifice upon the wood. The bullocks must, for a while, be harnessed to the plough, but their ultimate place is on the altar. Not until then is the time to pray.

Nor is it fitting that the prophets of Jehovah should be content to the end of time silently to submit to the insolence of the prophets of Baal. A minister must sometimes magnify his office in the name of the Lord, and by the conviction of a conquering faith, dare to challenge the world, the flesh and the devil; and to put God to the proof. When this is done, and the miracle is ensured by trenches full of water that compel supernatural intervention, then, let us repeat, it is time to pray.

And when for three and a half years a man or a people have prayed with every faculty of the mind, with every emotion of the soul, with every drop of blood of the body, and now at last the altar is erected and the sacrifice awaiting the fire, a very brief prayer will suffice in that day! And then the fire will come! And then the prophets of Baal must be slain, and all that is false and ignoble and ungodlike, must be put to the sword. Only then will the brazen skies be draped with clouds and a merciful Heaven will stoop to quench the thirst of those who thirst for God even as the hart panteth after the water brooks.

All of which, being translated, means what? That whoever will sincerely pray, "O Lord, revive thy work", must resolve to accept Heaven's stipulations, and face Elijah's three and a half years. Is it a pastor who reads these words? We venture to say that we ought all of us thus to pray, to determine to face our difficulties, and to continue to wait upon God, and to trust Him to lead us to the brook Cherith or to the house in Zarephath, until God's hour shall strike for the discovery and removal of Ahab and Jezebel and their prophets of Baal.

Why, brother pastor, leave the church you have in the hope of finding a better one? Seek revival where you are. It were wiser to bear the ills you have than fly to others that you know not of. Probably the altar will have to be restored wherever you go—why not rebuild it where you

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Editor

T. T. SHIELDS

Associate Editors

MR. LESLIE K. TARR, B.A. (Man.)

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

S.S. Lesson and Exchanges

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

Address Correspondence:

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada

Telephone WAInut 1-7415

Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada

are? The terms of revival must be fulfilled no matter what your situation — why not determine that they shall be fulfilled where you are?

Again may we suggest that it would be difficult to find a pastor anywhere whose situation is more difficult than that of the Tishbite, or who personally is more lonely and isolated, than was Elijah. If God used one man then He can use one man now; and through one man's devotion, blessing may come to multitudes.

In the end of the chapter Elijah will not be alone. Others will herald the coming of the revival showers, and in the enjoyment of their refreshing Elijah may be all but forgotten, and may seemingly have but little share. But what boots it? Some day he will stand on the mount with his Master: A cup of cold water shall not go unrewarded, and whoever will build for that day of trial, gold, silver, and precious stones, shall receive a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.

LETTERS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

During the past week many letters have been received in the GOSPEL WITNESS office. We are always pleased to see that the mailman is well-loaded down with mail! Especially have we been gratified to see that numbers of new subscriptions have been sent in and that our readers have captured the spirit of optimism and enthusiasm which will make 1955 the best year on record. As each day passes, we are more confident that our goal of 2,000 new subscriptions for the year will be exceeded. Continue to do your part!—L.K.T.

Downward in breakage, in crushing, in grinding, in making into dust, we must go, for this is the way to be made strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. The death of self is the life of grace.

—C. H. SPURGEON

The Election of a New Pope

Ostentation and Great Claims on a False Premise — Possible For One Cardinal to Make the Election

By DR. J. B. ROWELL, Victoria, B.C.

THE election of a new Pope is an event of great importance. To choose the man who is to wear the papal tiara, the three crowns of the popedom, must be so considered.

With the recent reports from the Vatican, telling of the possible early demise of the present Pope, and the press giving frequent bulletins concerning his fluctuating health, the impression given is that there must soon come the election of a new Pope.

Blasphemous Titles

The Roman Church has published the titles claimed for her Popes. These are given by the Roman priest, the Rev. J. Balmes, in his book, "European Civilization", who gives as his authority, St. Francis de Sales. The reader is urged to ponder the implications of these titles as given to mortal man. The following are some of them: "Most Holy Bishop of the Catholic Church"; "Most Blessed Lord"; "Chief of the Church in the World"; "Vicar of Jesus Christ"; "The Sovereign Pontiff"; "Abraham by the Patriarchate"; "Melchisedech by ordination"; "Moses by authority"; "Samuel by jurisdiction"; "Peter by power"; "Christ by unction"; "The Supreme See which cannot be judged by any other." (p. 423).

These assumed titles, blasphemously claimed, give a pretended importance to the popedom and consequently to the election of a new pope.

If the diagnosis of the doctors, and reports from the Vatican, be correct, then, in the near future, some fifty or more Cardinals will be writing on their ballots, "Eli go in summum Pontificem reverendissimum dominum meum cardinalem . . ."; "I choose as sovereign pontiff the very reverend Cardinal . . .", giving the name of his choice.

The Manner of Electing a Pope

The manner of electing popes has varied through the years. The Roman Church, in her Ecclesiastical Law, says:

"We ask, What persons have, at various times, exercised the power to elect the Sovereign Pontiff? We reply: 1, At first—i.e. from the time of St. Peter to Pope St. Sylvester I—the right to elect the Roman Pontiff was vested in the Senate of the Church of the City of Rome. This Senate, which was instituted by St. Peter himself, was composed of twenty-four priests and deacons." ("Elements of Ecclesiastical Law," by Rev. S. B. Smith, B.D.; formerly Professor of Canon Law; 9th Editn.; Benziger Bros.; p. 145).

To say that a Senate of twenty-four priests and deacons was instituted by Peter himself is without any shadow of proof whatsoever. However, lack of proof does not bother the Roman Church; she just states it, and expects it to be believed.

The same authority goes on to say that, later, "the entire Roman clergy and people were also admitted to the election of the Pontiff;" and then, for some 300 years, temporal rulers shared in such elections. He concludes by adding, "Finally Pope Alexander III. (ann. 1178) reserved the right of electing the Pontiff exclusively to the cardinals."

This reveals something of the exclusive policy of the Roman Church in gradually narrowing down the powers and privileges of election of a new pope to a few, the cardinals, the so-called Princes of the Church.

Civil Powers Excluded

Once it was a custom "that no Pontiff should be acknowledged as such" without the confirmation of the civil powers. The "Civil Veto" was denounced by Pope Pius X, in 1904, where he claimed "absolute freedom, by the removal of all extraneous interference." The conclusion to his statement, reads:

"Finally, we vehemently exhort, in the same words as those used by our predecessors that in the election of the pontiff, they pay no attention whatever to the appeals of secular princes or other worldly considerations." (Larned)

Election Could Be Made By One Cardinal

In the Roman Church, the people have no say, the priests have no say, and the bishops have no say, since election to the popedom is within the limits of the cardinalate. Roman Ecclesiastical Law states the possibility of just one cardinal electing a Pope, who would then reign over her millions of members. Imagine one man being able to elect another man to an office, giving him the designation "Our Most Holy Lord" (*Sanctissimus Dominus noster; Can. et Decret. Concil. Trid.*), "Christ by unction," and for the millions of the Roman Church to have no voice at all in such election. Here is the authority for the possibility of one cardinal electing a pope, as given in "Elements of Ecclesiastical Law", quoted above:

"If in the course of the election, a considerable number of the cardinals should withdraw from the conclave, REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION, the RIGHT OF ELECTING THE PONTIFF would devolve on the remaining cardinals, even though but two; nay, EVEN IN CASE BUT ONE WERE LEFT." (ut supra, p. 147).

Italians Favored

The Roman Church has laws and regulations worded to satisfy her people, but so planned that the people have no say in the governmental affairs of their church. Canon Law affirms that nationality does not enter, as a consideration, into the election. Is it not strange, then, that none but Italians have been elected to the popedom for the past long period of more than four hundred years, that is, since Adrian VI? This is pointed out in a Romanist publication, giving information drawn from "*Le Vatican et le Monde*" by London and Pichon, where we read:

"Nationality, according to the canon law, plays no part. In the Middle Ages there were French, German, and British popes, as well as Italian, but the Renaissance established THE ITALIAN TRADITION, and after the election of the Dutchman Adrian VI in 1522 THIS TRADITION HAS NOT BEEN BROKEN."

("The Vatican Yesterday - Today - Tomorrow" by George Seldes, p. 94).

A Pope Cannot Elect His Successor

The latest report, through the "Central Press Cana-

dian", states Cardinal Montini, archbishop of Milan, is believed to be the Pope's choice as a successor in the event of his death. Cardinal Montini recently received his red hat at the Vatican." ("Daily Colonist," Victoria, B.C., Dec. 23, 1954). However, the Ecclesiastical Law of the Roman Church deals with this point in a definite manner:

"329. Q. Can the Pape elect his successor? A. The Pope is prohibited from electing his successor, not only by ecclesiastical but also by divine and natural law; and SUCH ELECTION WOULD BE NULL AND VOID. Hence the Sovereign Pontiff could not, even with the consent of the cardinals validly issue a constitution authorizing a Pope to elect or appoint his successor."

("Elements of Eccl. Law", as above, vol. I, p. 146)

Of course, it is supposed, a Pope could give a strong enough suggestion as to who his choice might be, and this could possibly influence the cardinal electors. It could be, that a cardinal appointed to the United States of America might be chosen, so as to appeal to the Western Hemisphere, on which sphere the Roman Church is focusing attention.

When a Pope Dies

When a pope dies, the body is borne, as is stated by George Seldes, to St. Peter's, and placed in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, while Noble Guards stand at each corner with drawn swords. The flags of the official buildings are at half mast. In the midst of all the pomp, the corpse is dressed in red chasuble embroidered with gold, red slippers, and red gloves, a white *pallium* with black cross, and a golden mitre. The body is placed in a triple coffin, cyprus, lead, and elm. An elegy is read "in tender and magnificent Latin, recounting the principal acts of the pontificate, and this parchment is placed at the feet of the pope."

Cardinals Summoned to the Conclave

Provisions and directions regarding the election of a new pope are made by ecclesiastical law, which states:

"Immediately upon the death of a Pope the cardinals are to be convoked; all must be summoned, even those who are absent, excommunicated, suspended, or interdicted; also cardinals but recently created, though not yet invested with the insignia of the cardinalate. The cardinals present must ordinarily wait ten days for the arrival of those who are absent." (ut supra, p. 146).

Cardinals in Conclave

This begins with "the mass of the Holy Spirit", in either the Sistine or the Pauline Chapel, when all cardinals must participate. Later the cardinals enter the conclave in procession, dressed in violet. "They sit on their thrones aligned to the right and left of the choir, each throne covered by a baldachin, emblem of sovereignty." Once the cardinals enter the conclave, they are not at liberty to leave it before the election is over.

There have been three forms of election, but the method usually adopted is by *scrutiny*, (from the Latin, *scrutari*, to examine). Each of the voters registers his vote by ballot, which, for the election of a pope, must be by sealed ballot. Before the voting, three cardinals are appointed to act as scrutineers. "The candidate who receives the votes of two thirds of all the cardinals present in the conclave is canonically Pope."

Each cardinal writes the name of his candidate on the ballot, which is folded, sealed, and deposited by the voter himself in a chalice placed on the altar for that purpose.

The scrutineers superintend the voting. When all votes have been cast, the results are announced. After the chalice has been shaken to mix the ballot papers, the first scrutineer takes one of the votes out of the chalice, and simply looks at or ascertains the name of the candidate voted for; he then hands the ballot to the second scrutineer, who likewise, having merely seen the name on it, passes it to the third scrutineer, by whom the name is audibly announced to the cardinals. In this manner all the ballots are announced one by one. If no cardinal receives the requisite two-thirds vote, they continue to ballot until some candidate receives two thirds of all the votes. By receiving two-thirds, the successful candidate is, by this fact, canonically elected Pope. The coronation of a pope does not invest him with authority, because that is his, according to Roman ecclesiastical law, from the moment of the election. (See "Elements of Eccles. Law").

The successful candidate is then asked if he will accept the dignity. Upon its acceptance, the other cardinals lower the emblems of their sovereignty, the baldachins which have crowned them. The new pope then gives the name by which he desires to be known. Following this, the pope returns to the Sistine Chapel for the first obedience of the cardinals, who render unto him their homage as the new "Vicar of Christ on earth".

The Pope Announced

In the words of George Seldes, "Outside, in Saint Peter's Square, the mob has waited patiently. Suddenly it sees a tall cross of sparkling gold advancing on the loggia with a prelate in violet, the head of the order of cardinal deacons, behind it. He stretches out his hands and silence follows. "I announce a great joy; we have a pope, the most eminent and most reverend Lord . . ." He then pauses before announcing the name of the cardinal. The mob shouts, "Evviva il papa." Silence is restored and the cardinal-deacon continues, 'Who has taken the name of . . .' The former cardinal appears IN THE SOVEREIGN MAJESTY OF THE PONTIFICATE, bearing his new power without fear of being crushed by it." ("The Vatican" etc., p. 96).

What blasphemous titles are these! Given to one who professes to be the representative of the Meek and Lowly Jesus, Who is our Saviour and TRUE LORD; and yet this one, the Pope, claims to be "THE MOST EMINENT AND THE MOST REVEREND LORD," and "THE SOVEREIGN MAJESTY OF THE PONTIFICATE." No wonder the Apostle Peter, who termed himself "an elder", warned all others, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." (I Peter 5:1-4).

Ostentation Based on a False Premise

The ostentation in the election of popes has been based on the false statement already quoted, viz. "the right to elect the Roman Pontiff was vested in the Senate of the Church of the City of Rome. This Senate, which was instituted by St. Peter himself, was composed of twenty-four priests and deacons." ("Elements of Eccl. Law" as above.) There is not a shred of Scripture or history to prove this, and yet the Roman Church deceives her people into believing it. She builds on a lie, and demands the faith of misguided men and women.

Apostolic Succession and Wicked Popes

The Knights of Columbus, in trying to explain why

millions call the Pope "Holy Father", acknowledge, "We find the answer, of course, not necessarily in the holiness of the man himself, but in his Christ-given office." (See *Macleam's Magazine*, March 1, 1949). The Roman Church has found it necessary to state this somewhat frequently, since the vile living and utter wickedness of a number of the popes is a matter of history. The Bishops of the Council of Constance made this pronouncement regarding Pope John XXIII, "From the time of his youth he hath evermore been a man of ill disposition, unshamefaced, unchaste, dishonest," etc. (*Art. contr. John xxiii. in Concil. Constant., etc.*).

Such outstanding historians and writers of the Roman Church as Labbe and Cossart, who were Jesuits; Platina, once Vatican librarian; Du Pin, and others tell the awful story of the depravity of many of the popes, who were supposed to be the successors of Peter, and through whom apostolic succession is said to have come down to modern popes. These wicked popes include Sergius III, A.D. 904; Pope John X, 915; John XII, 956; Boniface VII, 974; John XIV, 984; Benedict IX, 1033; Alexander VI, 1492; Leo X, in 1513; and many more.

Wicked He May Be, But Still He Is Pope

Even though acknowledging that popes have been wicked, licentious and vile, as Romish historians do, the Roman church claims that her apostolic succession flows through this corrupted stream. In a Romish publication, issued by Benziger Brothers, "Printers to the Holy Apostolic See", and "With the Imprimatur of the Most Rev. Archbishop of New York—John M. Farlay," this statement is made:

"When Christ instituted the Papacy . . . He left it possible even for the Head of His Church to fall into sin, and to dishonor the sublime office . . . If a reigning Pope be a sinful man, the Papacy remains the same: a divine institution." (See "The Glories and Triumphs of the Catholic Church," p. 50).

Since this work, carrying the *Nihil Obstat* of the Roman Church, says: "If the reigning Pope be a sinful man," and many of them have been; and since Cardinal Baronius classified the wicked popes as "many monsters horrible to behold," what kind of a church is this Roman church which dares to call such men by the exalted term, "Vicars of Christ", which glorious title belongs to one only, and that one The Holy Spirit of God?

From such blasphemy, and such intrusion of erring mortals into the Office of the Holy Spirit, may the Lord deliver us.

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By DR. T. T. SHIELDS

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THE PAST WEEK IN JARVIS STREET

Usually we tell our readers of the work of the Lord's Day in Jarvis Street. For the sake of variation, we shall mention the meetings of the past week. On Tuesday the Bible School teachers and workers gathered for the weekly conference. Nearly one hundred gathered to consider a forward program for the school. Mr. Samuel Tulloch, who will graduate from the Seminary this year, has accepted an invitation to do the work of Bible School worker and church visitor. This appointment, together with an obvious air of expectancy on the part of the workers, makes us think that this year will be the greatest in the history of a great Bible School.

On Thursday night at 8 o'clock Greenway Chapel was the scene of the regular Thursday night lecture. Since the lecture is included in this issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS, we will make no comment but simply let the lecture speak for itself. We will say that anyone who is in the vicinity of Toronto and is free on Thursday night should avail themselves of the opportunity of attending this meeting.

From all reports, we have concluded that the Saturday night prayer meeting was a high point in the week. Good numbers attended and a fine spirit was evident.

The attendance at Bible School was above that of one year ago. The preachers on the Lord's Day were Mr. Slade and Mr. Cole. In the morning Mr. Slade made a strong appeal to those who had lost communion with the Lord. Six responded to the invitation — three for salvation, two for baptism and one for membership. In the evening Mr. Cole preached on "The Trophies of Grace".

The whole week was one for which the people of God are thankful.

—L.K.T.

WE ARE STILL WAITING!

In THE GOSPEL WITNESS of December 30, 1954, we challenged the Editor or correspondent of the Roman Catholic paper, *The Ensign*, to prove the truth of a statement that appeared on the front page of their journal. The Victoria correspondent, Mr. Tony Dickason, had written the following about the B.C. separate school question, "Agitation is mounting in this capital (i.e., Victoria), even among some non-Catholic groups, to obtain relief from the 'double taxation' Catholic parents must now pay for education of their children in B.C."

We sent a marked copy of that issue of the paper to both *The Ensign* and their Victoria correspondent. Before us we have the post office receipt indicating that they were registered on December 30, 1954, under number 206 and 207. Therefore these men have had THE GOSPEL WITNESS in their hands for nearly two weeks but still we have received no reply.

Perhaps a reply may yet come but we think not! We venture to say that those who have sought to foist their educational system upon B.C. are the Archbishop of Vancouver, his fellow Bishops and priests, and perhaps the Knights of Columbus. By no conceivable stretch of the imagination can these be described as "non Catholic groups". Any Protestants, if there are any, who support such a move should be ashamed of themselves.

If *The Ensign* sends no reply, we can only conclude that the paper is guilty of shaping news to suit its own ends. Such procedure on the part of secular journals is in bad taste; if followed by religious journals, it is contemptible. Perhaps we are judging prematurely; but we are still waiting for that reply!

—L.K.T.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

Snatching Sinners From the City of Destruction

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, September 4th, 1927

(Stenographically Reported)

(This sermon is taken from our files of hitherto unprinted sermons, and is printed verbatim as delivered. Dr. Shields has had no opportunity either to see or revise it since its delivery).

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, 'Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.'

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."—Genesis 19:15, 16.

THE Apostle Paul enjoined his son Timothy to "preach the word", to be "instant in season, out of season". He himself declared that when he went to Corinth he was determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He said also, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." When the Pharisees murmured at our Lord because He received sinners and ate with them, He announced the purpose of His coming into the world by saying, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." That ought to be the subject of every sermon, the object of every preacher's ministry. It is for this the church is left in the world, that we should go into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature.

We observed in our lesson this morning that the Old Testament is full of the gospel, that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." And here in this story of the destruction of the wicked cities of the plain we have a striking illustration of the great principles which underlie the operation of the church's ministry. Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire". You are familiar with the story, how three men came to Abraham's tent as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. It was summertime — but Abraham was about his Master's business even in the summertime. The Lord renewed His promise to Abraham, and then ere He departed told him the object of His visit, that He had come down to see whether these wicked cities had done "altogether according to the cry of it". He was going down into Sodom to conduct a personal investigation into the conditions of the city, and He would know whether they had done "altogether according to the cry of it". Then you remember Abraham prayed, prayed that for the sake of the righteous even the wicked might be spared, and the angels came to Sodom, and here we have an account of how they brought Lot and his daughters out of the city. It is a fine example, a fine illustration of personal evangelism.

I desire this morning to speak of the missionaries, of their message, and of their methods.

I.

WHO WERE THESE MISSIONERS WHO WENT TO SODOM TO DECLARE TO THE PEOPLE THEIR DANGER, AND TO BRING LOT

AND HIS FAMILY OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE OVERTHROW? They were not men, they were angels from heaven; and they did not think it to be beneath their dignity to engage in the business of rescuing Lot and his family from peril. There are a good many people who are so dignified that they are unable to do anything for the Lord. I think it is a trick of the devil to get even true believers sometimes so confined with their conventionalism that they have no freedom to obey the voice of the Spirit, or to do that thing which God requires of them. There are some churches that pride themselves upon the quality of their membership — by which they do not mean their spiritual quality; they measure them rather by the size of their purses, and by the character of the neighbourhood in which they live.

There are a good many very orthodox people whose orthodoxy is so dignified that it is of no value to anybody. I remember my late friend, Dr. A. C. Dixon, who has gone home to glory, telling me this story. When he was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Baltimore — I think it was the First Church, one of the churches in Baltimore at any rate — he went out to preach the gospel on the street. Gathering a company of people with him, he went down to one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city and took up his stand outside of one of the saloons to preach. The deacons of the church heard of it — they did not go with him, but they heard of it! Very shortly afterward, kindly but diplomatically, they said to him, "We do not like this new move of yours." "What new move do you not like?" Dr. Dixon enquired. "This going slumming, carrying the gospel down into the poor districts of the city. You are the pastor of this church, you are our representative; and of course wherever you go, this church goes; and all you do reflects upon this church." "But," said he "brethren, what objection have you to that?" "Well," they replied, "we think it is rather beneath the dignity of the pastor of the First Baptist Church, of Baltimore, to engage in that kind of evangelism!" Dr. Dixon replied, "I should be sorry, brethren, to drag your dignity into the dust; but the fact is I have never thought very much about dignity. I tell you what I will do, I will consult the Book about it. You know I am always guided by what the Scriptures teach, and if I find that the Scriptures teach it is beneath the dignity of a preacher to preach the gospel on the streets, I will not do it. I will find out how

dignified I ought to be." A short time afterward he called the brethren together and said, "I am now able to give you an answer to your objection to my preaching in the poor districts. If I recall our previous conversation rightly, you objected because it was not dignified." The deacons explained that they thought the standards of the church should be maintained, and that his going and preaching in the poor districts would reflect upon the church! "Well," said Dr. Dixon, "I have looked into the Book, and find this is what the Bible says about dignity: 'Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place'; and I have decided, brethren, that I am not anxious to be dignified, because the more dignified I am, the bigger fool I become, so I am going on preaching the gospel on the street." There are a great many people so dignified that they cannot stoop to do the particular work that God has given them to do. Here you find angels of the glory going down to Sodom to deal with Lot and his family.

Then once more: they exercised their ministry in a very low part of the city — it was all low, in fact — among a lot of wicked folk. They were far from being respectable by any standard by which they might be judged. But even the angels who veil their faces in the presence of the Holy One actually went down into the midst of Sodom to preach the gospel, and to seek to bring those who were in danger out into a place of safety.

I know of one church that boasts they have not a single undesirable in their membership — and I have heard it said of Jarvis Street again and again that now we have nothing but the "riff-raff" here. I tell you this, that in the day that any church neglects the poor and the outcast, in that day they part company with the presence of the Lord: "Ye have the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good." George Whitefield used to say that the Lord Jesus would welcome even the devil's outcasts, that when a man had become so bad that even the devil was ashamed of him, and could use him no more because his sin was so flagrant, that even then the Lord Jesus in His mercy would save him. And I want to urge upon you members of Jarvis Street that you follow the example of those angels, and go out into the worst part of the city. If you know of any big, flagrant, sinner who is so bad that everybody despairs of his being saved, then go after him for the Lord, and see if God has not chosen him for His saving grace.

Compare the average church with the ideal of God. People come to service in their luxurious motor cars, sit in their comfortable pews, and pass judgment on the sermon, upon the choir, the ushers, and everything else; and then sweep out proudly when the benediction is pronounced, and do nothing until the next Sunday when they again condescendingly come to the house of the Lord. The average church of to-day is a million miles removed from the standards of the New Testament. That is not what the church is for, the church is not a mutual admiration: it is to go out after lost men.

That is what I fear for this church. An idle orthodoxy, an orthodoxy that is not everlastingly preaching the gospel is a dishonour to God. There is just one thing worse than Modernism, and that is an unspiritual orthodoxy, an orthodoxy of the head that boasts of its soundness, and is nothing else than sound. These men — "men" they are called, and "angels" — went even to Sodom, a city that was so vile, so unspeakably vile, that there was nothing that God Himself could do for it but just burn it up as

a sanitary measure to cleanse the earth of its presence, and yet into that den of iniquity, into that place that was a bit of hell on earth, the very angels went to save sinners.

And we have a still higher Example than that: our Lord Jesus Himself did the same thing. And you remember the Pharisees. Simon is a typical church member! He would do for a deacon in some churches, so precise, so good, so pious! He made a supper, and thought he was condescending somewhat when he invited the Lord Jesus to have dinner with him. He invited Christ just as some people invite the preacher, so that they may inspect him a little more closely: "If I can only get him into my house, to sit at my table, I shall be able to judge whether he is a real prophet or not"! Then you remember how the poor woman of the street came in, and how she anointed Him with ointment, how she bathed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Women could not do that nowadays! But this woman did, and the Pharisees said, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on . . . I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet." My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment — you omitted the ordinary courtesies of life; but this woman is a more perfect lady than you are a gentleman. I know who she is, and I came to save just such people as she." And He saved her, and forgave all her sin.

The same thing would happen in the average church to-day. If some such poor creature would walk down the aisle and sit in the front seat, there would be a great host of people saying, "Be careful, Pastor. Do you know what kind of woman that is?" Some of them profess to believe that the grace of God can save people — and we do not believe it at all, we do not expect great sinners to be saved out of Sodom. But the angels did, and the Lord Himself did — and He does, and He stands ready to-day to use any church, and any individual, who will go out in His name trying to bring people to Christ.

The angels were not above personal visitation. I know a great many young men who want to preach, who want to be ministers, they think they are specially called to preach, they want to have a great congregation. Well, my young friend, if you are fit to talk to a large congregation, you are fit to talk to one or two. You go out and do the thing that is nearest to you. "I am not very good at that, I cannot do personal visitation, but I could preach" — no you could not. The Lord Himself dealt with one or two, was willing to deal with one at a time. The angels actually called at the house of Lot: they did not have a big congregation, they went to save these particular people. And if we are going to be really useful for the Lord, we shall have to carry the gospel message from door to door, that is what we shall have to do.

We were afflicted a little while ago by a great convention of Russellites. One thing must be said for them, that they are most industrious — thirty-five hundred of them going out with carloads of literature, and going into every house; and from several quarters I have been

informed that they are busy even now on Sundays, on the Lord's Day, going from house to house selling books. We can learn from them the possibilities, and if the enemy carry the poison, then we ought to be always at it carrying the gospel of God's grace.

What could not this church accomplish if every solitary member would bestir himself or herself and go out like the angels and find the people who need salvation? Do not wait for the multitude, be content to find one or two. The angels made a long journey to make their call. I hear a good many people praying after this fashion, "Lord, help us to bear witness to those with whom we come in contact." Did you never hear that phrase — "those with whom we come in contact"? I should like to impress that on your minds: if the Lord Jesus was interested only in those "with whom He came in contact", He never would have come at all. He came from heaven to earth to "come in contact". The angels went out of their way to visit Lot's house. We should bear our testimony to the people in our homes, in the office, or wherever we are, but we should go to people as well. It is for us to receive a direct divine communication from Heaven, and, if need be, go across the city — or across the country, after those who need salvation. There may be some young people here whom God would call for China, India, or Africa, and yet you are saying, "There are plenty of people roundabout me to whom I can speak" — that may be, but you find out what God would have you do, and if you take a journey around the world, even then you will not go as far as the Lord Jesus went when He came "to seek and to save that which was lost".

I heard of a man who was deeply concerned about a business associate, and he went all the way to New York for no other purpose than to preach the gospel to him. Just as these men had a communication from God, a commission from Heaven, and went directly to their goal, so I believe the Lord will direct those who are willing to be directed by Him. Will you do it? Will you do it this afternoon? Do not wait to apply this teaching to-morrow, but go into the presence of the Lord and ask Him if there is somebody in this city whom He would have you bring to Christ to-day; and perhaps there will come to your mind somebody who lives at the far end of the city. "That is a long way. I will go some other time" — no, wherever He sends you, you go, as did these angels.

Is it beneath your dignity? How many of us are actually engaged in this business of personally endeavouring to win people to Christ? Is it not a fact that in the Sunday School you have been withdrawing your hand from things at this particular time? Is it not a fact that some of our class officers are not as zealous in the work as they once were? Is it not true that some of you teachers have been less zealous than formerly? Is it not a fact that some of our class members have not been on fire for God as they once were? You pray for a revival in your own heart, but you will get it when you go out and do that neglected duty, whatever it is, that thing which the Lord has told you to do, and you have not done it. I do not believe there is any use of your praying for a revival until you go back and do what God has asked you to do. Then you will have joy in the Lord; then He will restore unto you the joy of your salvation.

The angels are still engaged in this same business. What a great thing to have the company of angels! And listen, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers

a flame of fire"; "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" A myriad angels wait to co-operate with us in this business of saving souls. You can have a supper, and I do not think the angels are particularly interested; you may have some recreational programme as so many churches have to-day, and you will not get the help of the angels; but if you go before God with this Book and say, "Lord, I want to carry Thy gospel to somebody, teach me how to do it, guide me where I shall go," just as surely as you set out on that errand God will give His angels charge concerning you. You remember when Eleazer was sent to get a bride for Isaac — there are some people who use that story to illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit. This is an erroneous view, for Eleazer was unable to persuade her to come down. This is what Abraham said, "The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." And when Eleazer went to deliver his master's message to the woman, the angel of God guided him every step of the way, and prepared Rebecca to respond to his message.

And if we will go out about this business we shall find we shall have the angels with us. In our visitation work a little while ago we tried to send an experienced worker with someone else who had not had experience. But what experience has anyone of us had? It is our business to go and preach the gospel to unsaved men, and the angels have had a lot of experience in that business, and if we will but go, and God sends us, we shall have an experienced Visitor with us—One who will smooth out the path for us.

I hear some young man say, "I do not think I could be a pastor, but I could be an evangelist" — and they think evangelists are only to call people to Jesus Christ. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Do not run away with the idea that it is an easy thing to be an evangelist; whether you do the work personally or publicly, an evangelist is not less than a pastor but something more. He must proclaim the old gospel, he must give the people something to believe. If there are young men here this morning who have not settled upon what your life's work will be, let me enter a plea with you for the gospel ministry; that which occupies the hearts and hands of angels may well engage your attention.

I remember some years ago a young fellow came to me who had just graduated from high school. "What are you going to do?" I asked him. "I do not know. I am unsettled. My teachers tell me that I have made a remarkable standing at school; I have come out at the top, and they tell me I have a great career before me, that my future is full of promise. You know me, I am a Christian, a member of the church, and I should like to ask you if you thought the gospel ministry would afford opportunity for the exercise of such talents as I possess". I told him I thought it would! That which occupied angels, and which filled, may I reverently say, the very hands of the Son of God Himself, is not beneath your dignity. If you carry the gospel message anywhere, you will find you will need more than human power if you are

going to be effective. I have often used the illustration, but let me repeat it: the devil disputed with the archangel about the body of Moses. They were contending for the possession of the body of Moses, an archangel and the devil, and the archangel "durst not bring against him a railing accusation", but appealed to Heaven and said, "The Lord rebuke thee." He called down the mighty power of God to defeat the devil when he wanted to take possession of a mere body; and I tell you the devil was never so anxious to possess himself of the body of Moses, or anybody else's body, as he is to possess the soul of the humblest man or woman, boy or girl in Toronto; and when you go out on the business of trying to bring men to Christ, you need all the power of God to help you.

Yes, you can preach pretty essays, Mr. Preacher, and you can have the dear ladies say, "What a lovely pastor we have! How eloquent he is!" — you can get lots of that sort of thing without anything of the Spirit of God; but if you are going to be used of God to pluck brands from the burning, to lead souls out of darkness into light, whether in the pulpit or privately, there is but one Power that will give you the mastery over Satan, and that is the power of God Himself.

And here let me say to you church members, we need to pray more than ever. This church will have power as a church to do this business in which the angels were engaged only as we pray, only as we have the might of the Spirit to rebuke the devil, and set the prisoner free. Shall we go back then to our task of seeking to bring men to Christ?

II.

WHAT WAS THEIR MESSAGE? They spoke about the iniquity of the city. They dared to speak of sin. And they did not speak of sin as a little ailment for which men were not responsible; but as an offence against God. And we need to sound that note. We all need a deeper—yes, those of us who are Christians — a deeper conviction of sin, a fuller realization of the heinousness of sin; we need to recognize that men are in sin and in need of the mighty power of God, that they may be saved therefrom. The angels spoke of iniquity as something that would consume, that would destroy people. I am not so much afraid of Russellism as such, although it is bad enough in that character; but that deadly doctrine has permeated all our churches, and people no longer believe that sin is a spark of hell, and is able to destroy people. That evolutionary doctrine has corrupted people's thinking, and they believe sin is something that they can crowd out of their lives by and by. We need to get back to the biblical conception of sin, and remember that wherever it is, hell is: I am not concerned, and never have been, about the question whether there are literal flames of fire. It looks to me as though it were to be interpreted literally; but if it is not, it is something that burns and torments and destroys; it is a figure of death, of awful suffering. That is what the Scripture says sin will do, it will destroy the most magnificent temple.

I have a great many people who come to me to tell me about sickness in their families, but that is not the hard part: it is when people come to tell of what sin is doing, of the ruin it is effecting everywhere, that is the sad thing; there is nothing but divine grace that can save people from that. I wonder if there are some here this morning who need especially that message? These angels came and said, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee,

neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

And the message was delivered to a professed servant of God. The angels went to Lot. What was Lot doing in Sodom? Do not make any mistake, Lot was not a partaker of the iniquity of the city, for we read in the New Testament that Lot "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds". It was a marvel of grace that he was spared from the iniquity of the city, but he was in the midst of it. Why was he in it? You know that he parted company from Abraham, and he "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere" — and Lot went to Sodom. "I am sorry, very sorry, but for business reasons I went, purely for business reasons." Lot went there because it was going to profit him in temporal and material things; he shut his eyes to the moral and spiritual conditions, and went into a veritable cesspool of iniquity, because he thought he could make money there.

And that is the trouble with Christian people to-day. They are like Lot when it comes to the dollars and cents. They say, "I can trust God for my soul's salvation, but here is a source of revenue. I do not want to go to Sodom, I do not want to have anything to do with Sodom; but I have to have something to eat and wear" — and they pitch their tent toward Sodom. It is almost impossible for a minister of the gospel to faithfully apply the principles of religion to a well-to-do congregation to-day without cutting a man's business all to pieces. He may not be engaged in any illegitimate business himself, but he may have stock in one. Years ago in this church I used the movies as an illustration. I had been down at our Parliament Street Branch, and I told my congregation of having talked to a company of little girls whom I had asked whether or not they went to the movies. I pointed to a little girl and said, "What did you see last week?" "I saw a man murder a woman." I said to the people, "Is that the kind of thing to feed children on? Is that the kind of thing to give our young people?" When I sat down, one of the deacons of the church got up and said, "I do not believe in knocking everything. I do not believe we should knock such things. Even the movies is a fine institution." I did not know why he said it, but some other brother said to me afterward, "So Brother So-and-So has stock in the movie business, has he?" I do not know whether you people have much to invest, but do not invest in Sodom, for if you come out at all, you will leave behind something that money cannot compensate you for.

There is our difficulty to-day: people are so immersed in the things of the world, so entangled in the things of Sodom, that they have become useless in the service of God. Abraham was outside of Sodom, and Abraham could pray; Lot was in Sodom, and Lot did not know how to pray. How many people there are who think of their material interests before everything else: "We have to have clothes and food for the children, and education" — and they pitch their tent toward Sodom, and subject their children to influences which will destroy them. The last thing some people think of when choosing a place of domicile is the religious opportunities which obtain. They never stop to ask, Is there a place to worship? But if the place is "well watered" they think that is the paramount consideration. Some of you people are planning to move in the near future. Find out where you

are going before you go, and be careful lest you perish in the destruction that awaits those who sin against God.

Their message was a very solemn and sober one. The angels said to Lot, "Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness", and judgment shall overtake the doers of iniquity; and the one way of salvation is to come out of Sodom.

The angels did not promise salvation in Sodom: Lot had to get out of Sodom: We are not saved by works, we are saved by grace; but the only evidence, the only proof, that we have salvation is that we have works. That is the message, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins". The only church that will accomplish anything in the service of God is a church which, as an organization, is separated from all worldly influences. We need not be concerned about the standards of the world, we need not trouble ourselves what worldly men may say of us: the one thing for which we must be concerned is that we stay true to God.

III.

ONE WORD ABOUT THEIR METHODS. How did they do it? We read here that they began in the morning, early, "when the morning arose", they wanted to have a good long day before them. I want to enter a plea for down-right hard work. I heard a professor, a very orthodox professor, say a few years ago that the greatest enemy of the Christian church was the love of comfort. "Do not spiritualize it," he said, "I mean what I say, just sheer love of comfort. We have come to a day when the people of God will not inconvenience themselves to do His service. They must have every kind of luxury, or they will not do anything at all." Early in the morning these angels bestirred themselves, they began when the morning arose, at break of day, that they might have all the day before them. There are a great many people afraid of working themselves to death. I have been a minister for a good many years, and I have never heard of anyone's working himself to death in the Lord's service yet. I have heard of a good many people dying for want of work! but I never have known a church member working too hard yet.

The trouble with us in Jarvis Street is not that we work too hard, but that we do not work hard enough. I told the friends in the prayer meeting last night that I had had a letter from Dr. Stockley, written in a jocular mood. He said he had had an anonymous letter from Canada expressing the writer's regret that he was coming to the Seminary, saying that Dr. Shields would work him to death! It is a good thing to have such a reputation. I do not think there is any danger of my working anybody to death. You look pretty healthy after my doing the best I could with you — no one has died yet! Our Lord worked until He was weary, "Being wearied with his journey" — and then He went on working. Let us work on then, everybody at it, and always at it; and if you do work yourself to death you will get to glory all the sooner!

"The angels hastened Lot." They ought to have had a lesson in diplomacy, they ought to have had something

said to them! "Be careful!" There are some people who think the angels do not know half as much about that as they do, they flatter themselves that they are themselves the last word in diplomacy, they know exactly how to do it. They say, "Keep your hands off, I know exactly how to do it." Some mother comes to me and says, "I wish you would have a word with our John — but be very careful. If you are going to win him, you will have to do so-and-so"! When I give an invitation, somebody walks around this church and speaks a word to somebody, and that man goes out mad. Then somebody goes among the members and says, "I wish Mr. So and So would not do that." I have heard some people speak like that about a certain brother in this church. Ask God to paralyze your tongue before you judge a man who is doing the Lord's business. Go out and do it yourself, go out and do the work. When you are as zealous in God's service, that will be time enough for you to complain. The angels "hastened Lot" because they knew the danger of the hour, and they urged him to come out; and because he did not come that way, they laid hold of him, they actually laid hold of him, and of his wife and his two daughters, and they brought him forth and set him without the city. They took him out of the city. If you are over-zealous, the Lord will forgive you.

I am going to lay this matter upon your heart and conscience, I want to bring you to your knees this morning. Let us see to it that we do God's business, urging people by every legitimate means to come to Christ. And God will use our testimony. "They brought him forth, and set him without the city." You who are Christians, take that word this morning and bring people out of the city. Go and speak a word for Christ this morning.

We are going to sing a verse or two of a hymn, and give you a chance. There may be some backslider here this morning, and you would like to come back; there may be some who are trusting Christ, and who have never been baptized, and you would like to obey Him; some of you are trusting Christ and you have never confessed Him, will you come as we sing,

"I can hear the Saviour calling,
I can hear the Saviour calling,
I can hear the Saviour calling,
"Take thy cross and follow me."

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"PLAINNESS OF SPEECH"

PLAIN, blunt expression is becoming a rarity. Gone are the days when men expressed, in clear, unvarnished words, their thoughts upon any subject. Apparently it is now thought to be the better part of wisdom to speak in an obscure and misty manner so that no one will be able to take the utterance to task. Especially is this to be regretted in religious circles. We would prefer the days when men were men, declaring their thoughts and boldly defending their beliefs. Evidently most religionists concur with the judgment of Talleyrand who cynically declared that "speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts".

Modernists

Of late years the modernists have ceased to speak plainly. Once modernists, such as Harry Emerson Fosdick, did not hesitate to attack the faith in words that anyone could understand. They bluntly denied the inspiration of Scripture, the Virgin birth, the resurrection, the fact of the new birth, the existence of heaven and hell. The successors of Dr. Fosdick are not so plain-spoken but choose rather to express their denials in veiled terms so that the unsuspecting and "over-charitable" are misled into thinking that these smooth-talking heretics are as orthodox as anyone would desire. If the cowards would speak what they believed there would be less delusion. Paul describes such glib-talkers as those whose speech is "with enticing words". (1 Cor. 2:4) and their speeches he calls "fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18).

In Montreal we once heard Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary. No one could ever forget his meticulous speech, studied expression and veiled language. Whereas a believer would openly and simply declare that he believed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was an historical event, this learned professor declared that it was a "supra-historical" event! My, how fine that sounds! How much more refined than the blunt, old-fashioned way of stating that one believes that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. In reality, however, this is a denial of the historical resurrection of Christ! When we left the lecture hall one fellow student commented to the writer, "Thank God, my Master spoke so that the common people heard Him gladly."

Under the guise of specious language and empty, orthodox terminology, hundreds of ministers in our land are attacking the faith. Cowards! be brave enough to carry on your attack in the open. Speak in plain language declaring what you believe. We may not then admire your beliefs but we will at least respect your manliness. At present, we can do neither.

Ecumenicalists

On the religious horizon has arisen another species commonly known as the ecumenicalists. These are associated with the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Their specialty, too, is misty language. In one audience they declare that there is no intention of making a great super church. In another, they declare that the great aim of the ecumenical movement is to make one church. In a mixed assembly a liberal dose of both prescriptions is given in the hope that the whole effect will be to benumb the minds of the hearers.

A fine example of this was provided at the recent meet-

ing of the Canadian Council of Churches. At that time the secretary, Dr. W. J. Gallagher declared, "It is not the function of the Canadian Council of Churches as I understand it is to devise or promote ways of church union, but it is our function to keep this paradox before the churches, and keep asking them whether they really can be satisfied with the present situation as being in accord with Christ's will for His church." Probably Byron was thinking of such speeches when he wrote —

"His speech was a fair sample on the whole,

Of rhetoric, which the learn'd call 'rigmorole'."

If these World Council men want one big church of Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Greek Orthodox, evangelicals, modernists and Communists let them bluntly say so. All we ask is a return to plain speech on the part of those who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple".

Evangelicals

How important it is that evangelical ministers use plain speech in preaching the glorious gospel. Some preachers have a rule, as fixed as the law of the Medes and the Persians, that if they have the choice of an archaic, polysyllabism or a commonly understood word, they will always choose the former. Apparently they feel that this is an indication of great learning. Not so! for the very essence of true profundity is simplicity of expression.

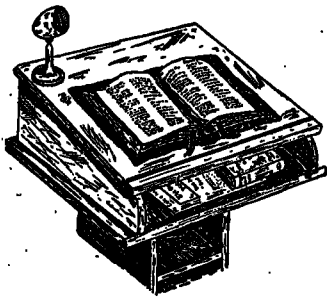
The true servant of Christ will know that he cannot demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save if at the same time he is endeavouring to convince the hearers that the preacher is clever. Men of Wesley's day did not regard him as an intellectual (although he was) but rather remembered him as the earnest preacher of the gospel. Oh, for more such plain speech with its accompanying results!

The primary need of the world is not preachers who can hide the cross beneath lovely bouquets of linguistic roses; the crying need is for preachers who will plainly declare the good news from heaven. Paul rejoiced in telling the Corinthians — "But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge: but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things."

Soul Winners

Yea, this is a good rule for all in the Lord's work. If we seek souls, then let us do so in "great plainness of speech". There is no need to philosophize when you tell a man that he is a sinner and that the Lord Jesus Christ can save his soul. Once in the year 1855 a Sunday School teacher in Boston timidly went into a store and spoke to a clerk about his soul. In later years he described that appeal as "weak" but it was plain for the unlettered clerk understood, was saved and became a mighty power in the hand of God. The clerk's name was D. L. Moody. He could not have understood learned arguments but plain speech, anointed by the power of the Holy Ghost touched his soul.

In rugged, plain speech, there is a beauty and a power which cannot be approached by the most ornate language. You may desire oratorical powers but they are denied you; right at hand God has given you a more powerful weapon, if it is consecrated to Him — it is the weapon of plain, sound speech, seasoned with grace.—L.K.T.



English Bible Course

Twelfth Lecture in the English Bible Course

TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY

By Rev. C. D. Cole

Thursday, January 6th, 1955

THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE

Romans 8

The theme of the eighth chapter of Romans is the triumph of grace in the eternal security and the ultimate glorification of the believer in Christ Jesus. Practically everybody who deals with this chapter points out that the chapter begins with "no condemnation", and ends with "no separation". And if there is no condemnation in Christ, and no separation from the love of Christ, then it follows unalterably and inevitably that the believer is eternally safe, and on his way to a glorious destiny.

In the closing verses of the seventh chapter Paul is dealing with indwelling sin; he is reckoning with the sinful nature that remains in him, and from which he craves to be delivered, crying out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then he thanks God that victory will come through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I.

The Believer's Position: In Christ

The apostle then returns to the present, and says: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is indwelling sin, but no condemnation. Justification is a present and eternal blessing, but complete sanctification in the sense of glorification is still in the future for everybody as long as he lives in this world. *In verses one to eleven we have the believer's position: HE IS IN CHRIST JESUS.* And his position in Christ is what makes him safe. It is not his character or his conduct that makes him safe; it is the safety of justification, not the safety of sanctification. The first born in Egypt, on that fateful night when the angel of death passed through the land from the length to the breadth, was safe only because he was sheltered behind the blood. And the one and only thing that makes anybody safe is to be behind the blood of Jesus Christ, our Passover, sacrificed for us.

Free From the Law of Sin and Death

Verse two tells us why there is no condemnation. In Christ Jesus the believer is free from the law of sin and death, that is, from the moral law that pronounces death for violation. This deliverance from the law of sin and death came by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Now law in this sentence, is used, not in the sense of the moral law, but in the sense of power; it refers to the power of the gospel in the hands of the Holy Spirit by which we became believers. It is judicial life in Christ applied by the Holy Spirit. There is no con-

demnation because the Holy Spirit has brought us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Judge Becomes the Father

Now verses three and four tell us what the law could not do, and what God did through His Son. The law could not justify the sinner because his corrupt nature would not enable him to keep the law. The law will justify the good man, but it can do nothing but condemn the sinner. There is no fault with the law; the fault is with the corrupt nature that every person has. It is the function of law to justify the good and to condemn the wicked. But the problem is how to save a sinner. The problem in salvation is to justify the wicked man, the bad man. What the law could not do God did by sending His Son. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Notice the accuracy of Scripture. It is not said that He sent Him in the likeness of flesh, for Jesus Christ had a human nature. Nor is it said that He sent Him in sinful flesh, but "in the likeness of sinful flesh". The Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, had everything about human nature except sin. In this sinless human nature God condemned sin, that is, He punished sin in the flesh, in human nature. And it was fitting that sin should be punished in human nature in the flesh since it was committed by men in the flesh, by men of human nature. And all this was done that sinners might have the righteousness that the law of God demands. Christ took our sins that we might have His righteousness. God the Father was acting as a Judge against His Son that He might become the Father of His enemies. The Father condemns the Son of His love that He might absolve in righteousness the children of wrath.

The Way of the Spirit and the Way of the Flesh

Verses five to eleven explain how we got into Christ, and the results of being in the Lord Jesus Christ. To walk after the Spirit does not refer to moral conduct, in my judgment, but to the way one expects to be accepted with God. There are two ways of acceptance with God proposed — the human way and the Divine way, the way of the flesh, of corrupt human nature, and the way of the Holy Spirit. Now the believer has been brought to faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit, and does not expect to be made perfect by the flesh. He continues as he began, having no confidence in the flesh. To walk according to the flesh, Paul says, is to mind the things of the flesh. The mind here stands for the understanding and the affections, and the flesh stands for sinful human nature, or the natural man to whom the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness. So to mind the things of the flesh is to remain in ignorance of the true way of acceptance with God; to mind the way of the flesh is to follow the flesh's way of salvation. Paul says to be carnally minded is death. To the natural man with the carnal mind, and only the carnal mind, the way of acceptance with God is by works of law, by doing something for God. And such a way ends in death. It is the Spirit-born man who sees that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. To be saved by works the mind would have to be subject to the law of God. But the carnal mind, Paul says, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Therefore, there can be no salvation by keeping the law. The man in the flesh, that is, in his natural strength, cannot please God. So to be saved by doing something would imply that the sinner can and must do something to

please God. This precludes any possibility of being saved by works, for the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God; it is incurably rebellious, and cannot even be improved.

Paul is still dealing with the believer's position in Christ. His standing is not in the flesh, not after the flesh; his standing is in the Spirit, and after the way of the Spirit. And since his standing is in the Spirit he has the Spirit of God in him. Those in Christ have the Spirit of Christ within them, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Redemption of the Body Delayed

Now the apostle tells us that the Holy Spirit in the believer does not effect any change in the body. The body has been invaded by sin, and it is mortal. The body is still dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. However, the body is not left out of the plan of redemption. Jesus Christ died for our bodies as truly as He died for our souls, or spirits, but the redemption of the body is delayed, so that for the present the indwelling Holy Spirit makes no change in the body. Here is the gospel for the body: it will be raised in a future resurrection. The body will not be left to rot forever in the grave. There is a gospel for these human bodies. But the redemption of the body must await the second coming of Jesus Christ. The physical healing in the atonement, and there is physical healing in the atonement, does not keep the body from being sick, it does not prevent the body from dying, but it brings the body out of the grave. That is the physical healing that is in the atonement. That is what the death of Jesus Christ will certainly accomplish for the human body. The Divine healing that is so popular in our day, and so widely preached, indicts every sick and dying Christian with a loss of faith, and ignores what the Scripture says about the redemption of the body. Verse twenty-three in this eighth chapter specifically says that the redemption of the body is a future redemption. So much for the believer's position in Jesus Christ.

II.

The Believer's Responsibility

Verse twelve gives a new section, and emphasizes the believer's responsibility, and shows the power of the Holy Spirit in his life. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." This refers to moral conduct and every-day living. Paul thus guards the doctrine of justification by faith against any charge that it gives license to sin. And that is the indictment that multitudes bring against the doctrine of justification by faith without works of any kind. But Paul carefully guards against such a charge. Now he says that the believer is in debt, but that he does not owe the flesh anything. "We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." We owe the flesh nothing. Our fleshly nature, the carnal nature, has done nothing for our salvation. It was the Holy Spirit Who took of the things of Christ and showed them unto us. So Paul neither confounds justification and sanctification, neither does he divorce them. Where there is justification in reality it will be followed by practical and progressive sanctification. Saving faith is not a dead faith, it is a faith that works, and it works by law.

The Justified Believer — A Debtor

Now Paul says that the sinner, justified freely by grace, is in debt. But he owes nothing to the flesh, or to his old corrupt nature. This proves, my friends, that the sinful nature has not been eradicated from the believer's life; he still has to face it. But he does not owe it anything. The mind of the flesh did nothing but lead us astray, until the Holy Spirit took over and opened our eyes to the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two kinds of indebtedness. There is a miserable indebtedness when there are no funds with which to meet it. I have had some experience with that sort of indebtedness in more ways than one. This was our condition under law. We were in debt with nothing to pay, with no coin of righteousness at hand. But there is also a happy indebtedness — the debt of gratitude, the debt we gladly own, and gladly pay by the power of the Holy Spirit. You know all the debts of love and gratitude we pay are gladly paid. So there is a vast difference between a sinner under law trying to pay his sin debt, and a believer under grace, in Christ, out of gratitude and love paying in the energy of the Holy Spirit the debt of gratitude to Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit — The Power for Holiness

Then Paul makes it rather clear that the Holy Spirit is the only power for holiness, for "the flesh profiteth nothing". And the flesh that is in the believer profits no more after he was saved than it did before he was saved. The flesh in nobody profits anything. So he says to live after the flesh is to die. Our corrupt nature would lead us to utter ruin if the Holy Spirit did not indwell us. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the sinful deeds of the body are mortified, or put to death. The true sons of God are led by the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit in us is not the author of bondage under law, but He is the Spirit of adoption by which we are enabled to cry Abba, Father. The Holy Spirit enables the believer to express that filial feeling toward God as his Father. These two words "Abba, Father," are the two names of God as He is related to the children of God. Abba is the Hebrew, or Aramaic, the mother tongue of the Hebrews, for father. And the Greek word which is translated into the English "father" is the foreign word that the Hebrews used for the word "father". And both these words are found in only three places in the New Testament, here and in two other places. The two words were used by our blessed Saviour in dark Gethsemane. Mark 14:36, reads: "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." Then in Galatians 4:6, the apostle says: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Somebody has remarked that the word "Abba" is for baby lips, and that the other word "Father" is for the lips of the more mature or advanced Christians.

The Co-Witnesses

The Holy Spirit communicates this filial feeling toward God as our Father, and He also bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Our spirit witnesses on the basis of faith in what God says about Christ and our relation in Him; our spirit witnesses that we are the children of God on that basis, and the Holy Spirit gives a joint testimony. The Holy Spirit co-witnesses

with our spirit that we are the children of God. Because of my faith in what God's Word says about Jesus Christ, and my relation to God through Him, I can say "Abba, Father." And then the Holy Spirit gives His testimony. Now there is mystery here of course, but the Holy Spirit's testimony is given within us, for He has sent His Spirit into our hearts, saying "Abba, Father," a joint testimony. It is the Holy Spirit in us that explains our filial feeling toward God as our Father. While under the law, while a sinner working to be saved, we had no such filial feeling; we had a sense of dread, and fear, and terror. But under grace the believer has life and peace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joint Heirs

Now the believer is an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. This filial feeling belongs to children, and children are heirs. If we are children, says the apostle, then we are heirs, and we are joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. In all lands children are heirs of their parents. But there is a difference here between Jewish and Roman law. Under Jewish law the first-born received a double portion of the inheritance, and if there were adopted children they were excluded entirely from the inheritance. But under Roman law the adopted child shared equally with the first-born and any other children in the home. God's adoption follows the pattern of the Roman law, so that the believer in Jesus Christ, though an adopted son, is a joint-heir with the elder Brother, and what the Father has for the elder Brother He has for His adopted child. Someone has remarked that God was so well pleased with His only begotten Son that He determined to make every other son just like Him. That is the destiny of believers in Jesus Christ. Glory is the destiny of all of God's children. Christ will give rewards for faithful service, but that is not before us here in the eighth chapter of Romans. The point is that believers in Jesus Christ are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Present Suffering

Then the apostle goes on to talk about some suffering: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." The path to Glory is the path of pain. That is inevitable. Paul draws a contrast between present suffering and future glory. The believer has sufferings and troubles common with other men, but the believer has troubles that other men do not have. The believer suffers from the chastening hand of his heavenly Father, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The believer suffers, as Paul did, from the corrupt nature that remains within him from which he craves to be delivered. But Paul says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." I can think of Paul saying to Tertius, "I want to ponder a few minutes; you lay down your pen and rest a while." Paul thinks about this present suffering and future glory. He does some calculating; as it were, he puts down items of suffering in one column, and the items of glory in the other column, and then when he sums them up he exclaims: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He says there is no comparison between the two. This verse was unfinished on the lips of Calvin as he departed this life in 1564.

The Groaning Creation

Now Paul talks about an expectant and groaning creation. He says an expectant and groaning creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. This leads us into another field, but Paul introduces it here in the eighth of Romans. The fall of man has brought ruin everywhere. Sin has invaded the whole creation. Why the heavens are not clean in His sight! And sin originated in the heavens of Glory. But there is to be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The whole creation of animate and inanimate things is in a state of suffering and degradation. We are groaning creatures in a groaning creation. The ground was cursed for man's sake. The ground produces noxious weeds, and there are large areas of territory that are utterly barren and unproductive. A good many years ago Brother MacDonald, pastor emeritus of my church, and I were driving across the State of Florida. We were driving through the interior of a certain section, and on either side of the highway there was scarcely any vegetation at all — no tall stately palms, nothing like a royal palm, no vegetation, nothing for miles and miles but just scrub palmettos growing a foot or two high, but with tremendous roots. As we drove along Brother MacDonald said: "Brother Cole do you know why this land was put here?" Of course I could not answer the question; I can never answer any question. I said, "Well no." And he said, "Why it is very simple; it was put here to keep from having a hole in the ground." This is a groaning creation; everything is in a state of degradation, and we are here groaning with this groaning creation, though we have the firstfruits of the Spirit.

You know the state of creation seems to be inconsistent with the government of an all-powerful and all-wise and good God. And the proud sceptic is completely baffled as he studies this existing creation. Hume speaks the language of every reflecting infidel when he says, "The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment, appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny of this subject of a degraded and groaning creation." But the Bible alone dispels the darkness, and unveils the mystery of a groaning creation. It has been subjected to degradation because of man's sin.

Creation in a State of Hope

But creation is in a state of hope. I do not mean this to be taken to mean that plant life and animal life are to be resurrected in the future glory, but it simply means that there will be no groaning creation when the heavens and the earth are renovated. This groaning creation does not share in grace with us, but it will share in glory with the sons of God. So the believer himself shares with the groaning creation while waiting for Glory. He has the firstfruits of the Spirit, which is a pledge and a guarantee of full deliverance, but the great part of our inheritance this very hour is laid up for us in Heaven. The believer's present with respect to Glory is one of hope. We are saved in hope, not by hope. We are in hope, in a state of hope, as concerning our ultimate glorification and complete salvation.

"Christ is coming! let creation
From her groans and travail cease;
Let the glorious proclamation
Hope restore and faith increase:

Christ is coming!
Come, Thou blessed Prince of Peace."

And when He comes our salvation will be completed, and the groaning creation will be delivered, and the new heavens and the new earth will be ours.

The Spirit of Adoption

The believer has already been adopted, and has the spirit of adoption, by which he cries, "Abba, Father," but he has not yet been manifested as a son. John said, "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." Among the Romans adoption was two-fold: privately and publicly. When a Roman father decided to adopt a child that was not his own there was nothing public about it, no public ceremony; it was all done privately and quietly. He would go to the proper authorities and fill out the necessary papers, and take the child home with him. Then later on there would be a public ceremony in which this adoption was made public. Our adoption is something like that. We are adopted now as the sons of God, but there has been no public ceremony about it, and the world does not know anything about it; we have not been manifested yet as the sons of God. But, blessed be God, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes we will then be manifested as the sons of God before the whole creation.

Another blessed thought is that the believer has the help of the Holy Spirit while he is waiting for Glory. We have His help in prayer, we have His help in guidance and leadership. And who does not realize the need of help in these two things? We cannot always go to the Bible to decide what to do, or what course to follow. We can with reference to things moral, but there are many things that we cannot consult the Bible about when we have to make decisions. But the Holy Spirit is in us to lead us and to guide us. And how we need Him to help us in prayer! He helps our infirmities in the matter of prayer. I sometimes think maybe we never do much praying until we pray with groanings that cannot be uttered. But here is consolation for us: God in Heaven understands the mind of the Spirit, and when the Spirit helps our infirmities in prayer, making groanings for us and in us that cannot be uttered, our Father understands it. After all, He listens to the heart, and not to the lips, when we pray.

III.

The Believer's Assurance

We are just now getting to the grandest part of this Epistle. *Verses twenty-eight to thirty-nine give us the believer's assurance.* The believer is assured of Glory; first, because Providence is working for his good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It requires a mighty God to make everything that happens to us work for our good. It is a glorious God Who can take all the experiences of our lives and weave them into a glorious garment of good. Notice, it is not said that everything works for our good, but everything works together. That is co-operation. You are sick, you go to your physician, he prescribes; you take the prescription to your druggist, and he compounds it. That prescription may call for some ingredi-

ent that is very poisonous, which, if taken alone, would be fatal, but the druggist compounds these ingredients. He pours a little out of this vial, and a little out of another vial, and so forth, and then works them together, and all these ingredients working together effect a cure.

When I watch an artist working on a picture I am sure it is going to be a mess. He daubs paint here and there on the canvas, and I look at the picture and am sure it is going to be a failure. But when it is finished it looks pretty good. It is the same way with a sculptor: If we do not understand the work of a sculptor, as he takes a rough piece of marble or of stone and begins to chisel and chisel, it will look to us like he makes a lot of useless licks on that piece of marble. But he knows the art, and when it is finished there is the beautiful statue. There are other illustrations we can think of. A preacher once went in a blacksmith's shop and he saw the skilled blacksmith and his helper at work. The skilled smith had a little hammer, and they would place a piece of metal on the anvil and the smith would just tap it with the little hammer where he wanted the helper with the big hammer to strike. And co-operating, working together, the work was done. You know I like to think of God with His little hammer telling the devil where to strike with his big hammer. A woman, in the midst of terrible affliction and sorrow, cried out: "Oh, why did God make me like this?" And her neighbour said, "Why He hasn't made you yet; you are just in the process of being made." All things work together for our good, for good to them that love God, and who are the called according to His purpose.

The Five Links of Redemption's Chain

Then assurance is based upon God's eternal purpose for His people. God's eternal purpose for His people is their glorification, and that purpose shall not fail. We have here in these verses five links in the chain of redemption. This chain of five links cannot be broken, because they are the links of God's eternal purpose. *The first link is foreknowledge.* This is not foresight, it is not foreknowledge of acts, it is foreknowledge of persons; it is to foreknow a person with the intention of blessing him. In foreknowledge back in Eternity God set His heart on His people. *The second link is predestination.* "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Those upon whom He set His heart He determined that they would be made like the Lord Jesus Christ. *The third link is the effectual call.* "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." This is the inward and invincible call of the Holy Spirit. This is the call that makes the invitation of the gospel accepted. This is the call of the Holy Spirit through the gospel, causing the gospel of Jesus Christ to be understood and appropriated; it is the call that makes a saint of a sinner; it is the lifegiving call that quickens the dead; it is the light-giving call that brings us from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son of light and liberty.

The fourth link is justification. Faith is the effect of the effectual call, and the cause of justification. We are justified by faith, but our faith was the result of the call of God. *Then the final link in redemption's chain is glorification.* "And whom he justified, them he also glorified." And all of it is put in the past tense; the glorification is in the past tense because the apostle is writing from the standpoint of God's eternal purpose. And what God purposed back in Eternity will just as

surely be accomplished as if it had already been accomplished.

Then another ground of our assurance is God's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. The point is made that if God did not spare His only beloved Son then He will not refuse to give us everything else with His Son. The gift of Jesus Christ carries with it the gift of everything else we will need to glorify us in Heaven. Since He gave His Son for us He will with Him give us all good things. He Who did not withhold His Son will not withhold any good thing from His people.

The Challenge

Then the apostle, filled with this assurance of eternal felicity, begins to fling challenges: "Who shall accuse?" "Who shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Who can condemn those whom God has justified? If God be for us who can be against us? Who is he that condemneth? Will Christ condemn us? No, it is Christ Who died for us, yea rather, that is risen again for us. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And the apostle thinks of all the possible evils to which his people might be exposed — tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, and then he exclaims that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Then he sweeps the universe, and thinks of every possible enemy, and says, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." For the person who makes his calling and election sure he can be assured that there is nothing in the grave of the past, nothing in the perils of the present, and nothing in the womb of the future, that can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 19 First Quarter Lesson 4 January 23, 1955

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

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER

Lesson Text: 2 Kings 5:1-14.

Golden Text: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases."—Psalm 103:3.

I. Naaman and the Captive Maid: verses 1-7.

Naaman, the victorious Syrian general, had been instrumental in bringing deliverance to his people from their enemies. He was rich, famous and courageous, but he was a leper. Unless God should intervene, he would be doomed to a life of isolation and misery, and would die a cruel, creeping death. Sin brings woe and death to all — high and low, rich and poor, great and lowly (Rom. 8:21-23).

God had already made provision to meet the need of Naaman. In the home of Naaman was an Israelite maid, taken captive by the Syrians in one of their raids into the neighbouring land of Palestine (1 Sam. 30:1; 2 Kings 13:20; 24:2). God loved us ere we sinned, and He planned redemption for us from all eternity (Rom. 5:8; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8).

The name of the little maid is not recorded, but her worth may be judged by the fact that she was chosen to wait upon Naaman's wife. She did not rebel against the adverse circumstances of her life (Rom. 8:28, 37), nor was she influenced by her heathen surroundings, or silenced by the formalities of court life (Dan. 1:8). She was not ashamed to

confess her relationship to God (Matt. 10:32; Luke 9:26; Rom. 1:16), or her connection with His prophet (2 Tim. 1:16-18). The maiden remained true to the Lord Whom she had been taught at home to love, revere and obey. Moreover, she loved her captors, and became concerned for them; their need she took to heart, till it became a burden. Then, she did what she could (Mark 14:8). If only we should desire more fervently to be of service to others, the opportunities would soon appear.

The maiden bore testimony to the mighty power of God to save (Mark 5:19; Luke 24:46-48; John 15:26, 27; Acts 1:3). Her simple witness brought hope to those who were in despair. Multitudes who now live in the darkness of death would welcome the message of light and life which every Christian has the privilege of proclaiming (Isa. 52:7; Matt. 28:18-20). Her words had a profound effect, influencing the mighty captain, the King of Israel and the prophet Elisha (1 Cor. 1:27-31).

The King of Syria took matters into his own hand, and he scorned to follow the directions of the captive maid. He followed the customs of diplomacy, sending presents to the King of Israel to win his favour. But there is only one way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The King of Israel, too, misunderstood the message and the manner of its delivery. He viewed the situation with alarm and dismay, fearing that his failure to respond to the demand that he cure Naaman would incur the anger of the Syrian king. But, notwithstanding all the difficulties, the Spirit of the Lord brought about the desired meeting between Naaman and Elisha.

II. Naaman and the Great Prophet: verses 8-14.

The prophet Elisha was not afraid to rebuke the king for his folly (Prov. 22:29), and in doing so he magnified his office as the representative of the Lord. He had faith that God would work a miracle for His glory.

Naaman the Syrian was tested as to his sincerity; only those who seek the Lord with their whole heart shall find Him (Psalm 27:8; 40:16; 119:2; Jer. 29:13). They must be willing to humble themselves and become as little children (Matt. 18:3, 4). Not only was the great captain instructed to go personally to the home of the prophet, but he must also submit to the humiliation of doing his business through a messenger. No attention was paid to his imposing retinue. He, the noted Syrian officer, was to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River.

But Naaman had his own ideas as to how he wished to be delivered from the dread and incurable disease of leprosy, that represents sin in its nature and in its effects. He had planned a spectacular scene, with himself as the centre of attraction, but not the object of ridicule, as he would surely be, if he should go down to the river in the sight of all. Moreover, if he must wash in a river, were not the rivers of his own country superior to those in Israel? Many to-day are tempted by the adversary, Satan, to find fault with God's revealed plan of salvation. If we are to be saved at all, we must be saved in God's own way and time. He is Lord, as well as Saviour.

Naaman's servants saved the situation by their common sense. They took his attention away from the details of the method, and directed his mind to the fact of salvation. To be healed would be a blessing for which he should be willing to endure all hardship (Matt. 16:26).

Naaman went down — literally and metaphorically; he was willing to stoop down and obey the word of the Lord, spoken through the prophet (Matt. 16:24, 25; Luke 14:11). He washed seven times in the Jordan (John 9:7), the washing being symbolic of the washing of regeneration, whereby sins are washed away (Psa. 51:7; Acts 22:16; Tit. 3:5). The ravages of sin were counteracted; he was cleansed and healed (Mark 1:40-42; Luke 17:12-14). His healing illustrates the salvation of the soul from death. It was a miracle, performed by the power of God (Eph. 2:8-10), through the instrumentality of His servant, who had proclaimed the word (1 Cor. 1:21-24), and on condition of faith and obedience on the part of Naaman (Mark 1:15; Rom. 10:9, 10; 1 Pet. 1:22, 23). By grace he was completely renewed and restored.

Suggested Hymns

The whole world was lost.
A ruler once came to Jesus by night.
What can wash away my stain?
Come, every soul, by sin oppressed.
I hear the Saviour say.
Out of my bondage, sorrow and night.