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WHO ARE THE PERSECUTED?

By C. H. SPURGEON

IN THESE silken days men seem able to do anything without troubling their consciences in the least. Bigotry has become so unpopular, that multitudes of religious professors have abandoned all care about principle, lest they should be suspected of intolerance. Nobody now can be accused of straining at gnats; but the swallowing of camels, humps and all, is performed both in public and in private as a common affair; and he who raises any objection is denounced as strait-laced. People look at you with amazement if you suggest that there is such a thing as fixed truth; and they eye you with supreme contempt if you dare to hint that the opposite of truth must be a lie. You must be some old fogey, or antediluvian, or you would never make such an observation. The sooner you are back in Noah's ark the better.

There can be no doubt that, in years gone by, some brethren have drawn the line too tightly, and have provoked men to license by refusing them liberty. We are willing to admit that there may have been too ready a condemnation of brethren who were sound at heart, because they did not exactly correspond in opinion with the dominant section. No doubt true Israelites have been smitten because they could not pronounce "Shibboleth", and bring out the *sh* distinctly. We do not for a moment defend ungenerous censures of good men; neither would we willingly utter them ourselves. But, after all, the evil of bigotry has been cast out at too great an expense, if firm adherence to principle has been thrown out with it. There was no need that it should be so; for a man can surely be at the same time liberal in his judgment of others and firm in his own convictions: but that the grip of principle has been relaxed in favour of the grasp of confederacy is clear to the most casual observer. Where are now the men who would sooner die than betray a grain of the divine treasure of the gospel? Where are the sturdy believers who earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints? A compositor had to set up a text concerning Daniel, of whom we read in the Scriptures that "an excellent spirit was in him"; but the worthy workman misread his copy, and the proof appeared thus—"an excellent *spine* was in him"—by no

means a mischievous mistake when it described one so fearless in following the Lord his God. Could more of such excellent spines be inserted into certain brethren, it would be well; but backbone would render them unfashionable, and lead them into the wars.

Meanwhile, it is worthy of notice that latitudinarian opinions have not increased the amount of brotherly love in the religious world; on the contrary, they have simply changed the course of rancour, and increased its power. We have escaped from the whips of orthodox bigotry to be chastised with the scorpions of heterodox contempt. We have, indeed, leaped from the frying-pan into the fire. Compared with the rule of the Liberal Rationalist, the domination of the Rigid Doctrinalist was gentleness itself. Well may we pray to be saved from the intolerance of liberality, the contemptuous hate which is the outcome of pretended breadth. Modern liberalism has reached the conclusion that the mere existence of evangelical opinions is an accusation of itself, and an infringement of its own prerogatives. All who hold orthodox views are dolts, dunces, persons devoid of culture, and utterly unacquainted with science. What right have these simpletons to form churches or to choose ministers? They ought to contribute to colleges for the education of those who would oppose them, to elect pastors who would abuse them, and to support associations where novel views are ostentatiously paraded. These rights they may have, but none beyond. If they will not exercise these blessed privileges they are bigoted persecutors. This is the best that liberalism has to say of them: Liberalism is more bitter than the old bigotry, more intolerant than the old sectarianism. It will not allow orthodoxy to call anything its own; it would filch from it every house it has built, every pulpit it has raised. It is trying to do this, and if it be hindered in its game, it calls a trust-deed "the dead hand", and whimpers "*intolerance*". Let it whimper! What would the complainants themselves say if their own private inheritances were taken from them because they came to them by the will of a dead man, and were held by deeds to which only departed men were parties? This cant is nothing but an excuse for robbery.

The other day we heard of a person, who whined that he was persecuted, because he could not remain in a church whose doctrines he altogether denied: the "cultured" creature could not see that *he* was the persecutor. What right had he to be there? For our part, we were only too happy to find that there remained yet on the earth a band of religionists who believed something, and could not hold equal fellowship with the truth and its opposite. Of course, the anythingarians echoed the whine of their brother, and soon there followed a general howling that freedom had been violated! Nothing can be more illogical and deceptive than the complaint which is thus raised. It is the old tale of the wolf and the lamb. According to this theory, it is intolerance for men to associate for the maintenance of any doctrines unless they are prepared to admit into their number those who deny those doctrines. This appears to be the case if those teachings happen to be the verities of God; it would be different if they were the opinions of a political party. Clubs of Conservatives are not considered to be persecuting if they exclude Radicals from their membership; but churches of the Lord Jesus Christ are bitterly accused of intolerance if they reject men who deny the fundamentals of the faith.

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians" was a fine cry for Demetrius and the craftsmen; and, nowadays, false teachers of all kinds make equal use of the cry "Charity! Charity!" — meaning thereby *indifference to all truth*, or, at least, unrestricted currency for their own special errors. They claim to enter anywhere. Though they are barely so right as Socinians, they demand a welcome into any and every Christian church, and they claim liberty to promulgate their own dogmas within any fold of believers which they choose to enter. Their more honest forefathers never asked for such privileges, and would have scorned them had they been offered.

We have known cases in which companies of faithful men have, with great sacrifice, built for themselves a house of prayer, and have founded charitable, religious, and educational institutions in connection therewith. Their views of the teaching of our Lord Jesus have been clear and definite, and for many years they have remained a flourishing fellowship. A young fellow, fresh from college, has by accident occupied their pulpit for a Sunday or two, and has preached against the things which were verily believed in the community. He has been told plainly that he was out of place, and he has straightway declared that he was persecuted. If he had entered the Queen's palace and had orated upon Republicanism; or if he had gone to St. Paul's Cathedral, and sold apples; he would have been excluded, as out of his place: but in this case he claimed that he was persecuted because he could not gain the pastorate. To stand up before a congregation, and revile those things which they hold dearer than life, seems to be the natural right of every man of "advanced views"! It is a right which none but idiots will concede, and none but braggarts will claim.

There are persons who raise a hubbub every time a man of novel views is not allowed to intrude upon an assembly of godly people. Shall "the dear young man" be kept back, because his views are rather more enlightened (?) than those of the older school? Is it not intolerance to refuse to hear the gospel belied? We are not slow to answer. Until it can be proven that it is the natural right of hogs to root up our flower-gardens, it will never be proved that it is the right of rationalists

to destroy our churches. Liberty is a matter with two sides. You may do as you like in your own house, but not in mine; you may preach as you please in your own church, but you can have no right to do so in another. The people who assemble to worship in a certain place have some sort of rights, surely; and it is intolerance to them to set over them a teacher who denies all that they hold to be divinely inspired. It is no injustice to tell that gentleman that he is out of place among them. Let him take his opinions anywhere he likes in the open market; nobody denies his liberty of speech; the world is large enough. But if Christian people are so simple as to say that they do not desire to hear him blaspheme their God and his gospel, in the name of justice what right has he to force himself upon them? What right have newspapers to denounce those who will not receive him? What justification is there for his outcry that he is persecuted? Forsooth, he is persecuted by not being allowed to persecute other people!

It is time that those who adhere to the faith of their fathers should speak out. We have desired peace, and have therefore been quiet; we have hoped for the best, and have waited in patience; we have believed in our brethren, and expected to see them return to a better mind. Meanwhile, there has been no forbearance on the other side: respect for the courtesies of brotherhood, and tenderness towards other men's consciences, have failed to restrain our opponents. The truth has been shot at in addresses to fraternal assemblies, in sermons preached for evangelical societies, and in lectures supposed to be delivered in the interests of the gospel. Are we to endure this for ever? If it were only our own persons, or peculiar ideas, that were attacked, reason would that we should bear with it; but when truth, dear as life, is insidiously undermined, we may be found traitors to God and to the souls of men if we do not bear witness by decided steps. Divisions we have had enough of already, and more would be calamitous in the highest degree, and would, in the long run, bring no relief; but plain, honest, outspoken witness-bearing is a more Scriptural line of action; and if it be coupled with a decided withdrawal from fellowship with error, it may in due time work for good. We cannot be expected to meet in professed communion with those who insult our religion; nor to supply pecuniary resources for the propagation of error; nor to erect platforms and furnish audiences for the adversaries of our faith; and we must let it be known that if such things be looked for they will not be forthcoming. In every association of men there must be room for differences of judgment; but there must also be a mutual deference, which forbids that divergences should be ostentatiously paraded. No limitation of free speech can be desired except that which suggests itself to each generous spirit on his own account.

However, the loudness of error gives warning of its existence, and prepares us to deal with it. When the interests of our Lord clash with those of denominations and societies, we need no time for deliberation. The ties of friendship, and the bonds of ecclesiastical union, are as rotten threads compared with the bands of love which unite us to Christ and to his holy gospel.

"For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." (Prov. 3:26).

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

The Bible in Revival

A Sermon by Dr. T. T. Shields

(SEVENTH IN A SERIES ON REVIVALS OF THE BIBLE)

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, December 19th, 1929

(Stenographically Reported)

Luke 24:13-35

I SHALL call your attention to a very familiar scripture: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

We live in a day when the Word of God in many quarters is greatly discounted; when it has become popular, even among people who call themselves religious, to spend time in seeking to show how untrustworthy, in general, the Bible is. In this church we have no trouble on that score, for I am sure those who are attracted by that treatment of the Book would not continue in attendance here. And yet in spite of that, we are all subject to these influences which are everywhere operating; and, in spite of ourselves, unless we exercise care, occasionally there may creep into our minds a question respecting certain portions of the Word of God. It is well, therefore, for our own sakes that we should be established in the truth, and more than ever confirmed in our confidence that the Bible is verily the word of the living God.

But there is another aspect of this: we ought to desire, and endeavour also, to establish other people in the truth that the Bible is God's word. We ought to be able ourselves to answer the objections that are raised to the Book. We ought to have in our own minds some simple working principle which will enable us, wherever we go, among whatsoever people with whom we are associated, to hold our own in insisting on the divine inspiration and consequent infallibility and supreme authority of the Bible as God's word.

Let me remind you therefore of that which you already know, that our Lord Himself during the days of His flesh certified again and again the Old Testament Scriptures; they are stamped with His approval. On this occasion, when He met people by the way, He used the Scriptures as a basis of discussion; and out of the Scriptures He brought even His message to those downcast disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is well for us to remember that. Sometimes we hear of certain men endorsing certain books. If one picks up a magazine he will find often a section of it given to book reviews. In an advertisement of certain books you will find it said that the work is endorsed and recommended by certain men of distinction. Here is a Book that has the very highest possible commendation. In spite of all that the enemy may say about it, our Lord Himself, so far as the Old Testament Scriptures are concerned, has put His imprimatur upon them, and certified them to be the Word of God. And that ought to be for Christians the end of all argument. Let me direct your

attention to two or three things in that connection. I have nothing new to say, but I desire you to think of these principles in order that it may strengthen your confidence in the Bible. It is one thing to hold the inspiration of this Book as a theory, but it is an entirely different thing to study it, and actually to submit to its authority. I get a great many letters — some of them are open letters, and I fear I do not read them very carefully. I have a habit of reading my letters backward! If I get a letter in a strange handwriting I turn to the end of the letter to see who is speaking to me. I want to know the signature first of all. If you were to receive a letter in the handwriting of someone for whose judgment you had great respect, and whose communication was of real importance to you, I do not think you would allow that letter to remain unopened over a period of weeks. I think you would immediately open it, and read it. It is one thing for us to say we believe in the Bible, but how many of us do really receive it every day as a letter bearing the divine signature, that has a message bearing directly upon the life we must live to-day?

I.

LET US SEE HOW THE LORD HIMSELF USED THE BIBLE, for, after all, that is the best proof of His estimate of its value. I suppose that He Who was tempted in all points like as we are, was tempted all the time. I do not believe that the temptation of the wilderness was the only temptation He ever had. The devil left him after that victorious encounter, as it was for our Lord, for a season. But while other temptations are not specifically recorded — unless, indeed, it be the temptation that came to Him through Peter when He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." That may have been some sort of temptation, but I have no doubt that from the very beginning to the end of His life our Lord was subject to temptations like as we are. He was tempted as a child, and tempted all along the pathway of life. But surely that encounter with the devil at the beginning of His public ministry must have been the severest of all temptations. I think that was the great battle between light and darkness, between the Prince of the power of the air. Our Lord was never taken by surprise. He knew that that temptation was coming, and He knew what tremendous issues hung upon the result of that encounter. Surely He knew that the fulfilment of all Scripture, and the execution of the divine plan conceived in the mind of God before the worlds were made, all depended upon His obtaining the victory over the devil on that occasion.

When David went to do battle with Goliath he very carefully selected his weapons, and when Saul put his

brazen armour upon the son of Jesse, David objected; and at last he said, "Oh, I could not go with this. I have not proved it. I have not put this thing to the proof. I could not fight successfully armed after this fashion." He put it off, and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook; and with his well used sling in his hand, he said, "I am at home with this business. I know what I can do with sling and stone. There is no perhaps or peradventure about this. I have put it to the test, and I know what I can do." With the utmost confidence he used that sling, and laid Goliath low.

I am sure that when our Lord Jesus went to meet the devil in the wilderness he was careful to select a weapon that was tried and true. And when Jesus Christ staked everything upon the reliability of the Word of God in that greatest of all battles, He paid, if I may reverently say so, the greatest possible tribute that even God Himself could pay to the Scriptures; for, He said, in effect, even the devil will respect that. There is no power in earth or in hell that can gainsay that which was written. Without argument, again and again, He simply used the Word of God.

What He did, we may safely do. We, too, may depend absolutely upon the Scriptures. I got a letter from one of our dear sisters, Miss Lambourne. She did not mark it, "private", and I do not think it was intended especially to be private; although she did not tell me to pass it on to you. Miss Lambourne is in St. Michael's Hospital, and if the doctors are correct in their estimate, is facing, in the not very distant future, the valley of the shadow. But she said to me in her letter, speaking of the blessing that God has brought to her in this place, that it had always been a matter of regret to her that she had not been able more frequently to testify for the Lord, but she said, "Here in this ward I want to give a testimony for Christ. Before I left my place of employment the Lord helped me to give my testimony there; I told them exactly where I stood in relation to Christ. I wanted to give a testimony in this ward where the patients are nearly all Roman Catholics. I prayed much that God would help me so to do." And then she told me how surprisingly one night the Lord opened the door, and permitted her to give her witness. In the letter she said, "It is wonderful to me how the Lord brings to my mind just at the right time the right scripture, and I have found that when I give them the Word of God it stops all argument." It silences the gainsayer.

How much depended upon that hour when our Lord met with the devil, and when the devil exerted all his might against the Son of God. And yet on that occasion the Lord Jesus depended absolutely upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament. We need not worry about the results, if we are content to do the same thing. I give you that as an example of Christ's own estimate of the worth of the Bible.

Then let me remind you that in His own ministry Christ resorted to what is now sometimes rather contemptuously referred to, as "the cheap and easy proof text method". When He dealt with His critics He referred to the Scripture; He quoted Scripture. He said on one occasion, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the

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Son of God?" Our Lord there staked His argument upon a single word of Scripture.

And there are not wanting several instances in which, I think, He gave clear testimony to the verbal inspiration of Scripture. He referred to Scripture as though every single word of it was the *word* of God. I do not know how you feel about it, but that is my view. You can call it the dictation theory, or any theory you like; but I do not believe that one jot or tittle can be taken from the Word of God without loss. It is the complete word of the Lord. So then, my friends, that is a good way for us to answer our critics too: give them the Scripture.

I would remind you further, that in this instance our Lord certified to the Scriptures — and that this was after His resurrection. There is a theory which was much worked by the critics a few years ago — I think it is almost abandoned now — to the effect that our Lord emptied Himself of His deity, in the sense that in the days of His flesh He subjected Himself to all the limitations of the men of His time. You have to believe something like that if you are going to hold to the loose views of Scripture, because the infallible Christ stands across your path all the time. I have a book on my shelf, the title of which is, "Is Christ Infallible and the Bible true?" If Christ is infallible, the Bible is true. If the Bible is not true, then Christ cannot be infallible. Before you can hold the view that the Bible is defective, you must establish the fallibility of Jesus Christ. Those who did not like openly to declare that Jesus was merely human, worked out what is generally known as the Ken-

osis theory, the idea that He had divested Himself of His infinity, that He had subjected Himself to human limitations; and therefore, when He referred to the book of Jonah, He adopted the view of His contemporaries. Other people of His day believed that; therefore He believed it too! He was shut up to the limitations of His time, and therefore He assumed that the book of Jonah was historically true! But this passage to which I have referred is a rather difficult one, because surely when Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, and was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" in His resurrection power and glory, even had He been human only, by that larger knowledge which must come to one after death and resurrection, and during those forty days in which He "shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs", He again certified to the infallibility and authority of Holy Scripture.

The Kenosis theory breaks down there so far as it applies to the period of His post-resurrection days on earth before He returned to the Father. We have the authority of Jesus Christ after He was risen from the dead, as well as from the beginning of His earthly ministry, for believing that the Holy Scriptures are veritably the word of the Living God. That ought to give us something to rest upon. One does not need to read a hundred books to find out what a hundred professors have had to say about it: the unsupported word of Jesus Himself is worth infinitely more than the testimony of all the scholars of all the ages. For myself, I would stake everything upon the bare word of Jesus Christ. We do not need any corroborative testimony; when He has spoken, it is the last word on any subject at all. So that so far as the Old Testament is concerned, we are on solid ground in receiving it as the very Word of God.

Once more: our Lord on this occasion taught that the Old Testament Scriptures were full of Himself. Moses and all the prophets wrote of Him. The theme of every book, from Genesis to Malachi, is really the Lord Jesus Christ. I was talking to some brethren recently about the Whole Bible Course, and somebody said, "One objection raised to the Whole Bible Course is that it takes so long to get through the Old Testament. We wish the Old Testament and the New Testament could be studied together." Why, my dear friends, that is the only way to study either Testament. No one can study the Old Testament without studying the New, and no one can possibly understand the New Testament who does not believe the Old.

It is amazing to me that so many supposedly orthodox ministers speak of the Old Testament as though it were something rather outworn. I do not believe there is a syllable in the whole Bible that is obsolete. I do not believe there is a word in Genesis that is outworn. We could not dispense with a word of it without suffering an irreparable loss. You cannot understand the New Testament without knowing the Old, how Jesus came as the Mediator of the new covenant. He is the theme of the New Testament. But there is not a page of the New Testament — not a solitary page, I make bold to say — that can be properly understood if it is divorced from the Old, not one. If you would know your New Testament, you must know your Old Testament. The Bible is one Book, and Jesus Christ is in Genesis, and in Exodus, and all the way through.

He Himself said so. He began at Moses and all the prophets, and found in every book of the Bible things concerning Himself. I do not know anything more delightful than to discover Jesus in the Old Testament. It seems to me people must be blind as bats who can read the Old Testament without seeing Him. He is in every historical character. The lives of many of the worthies of the Old Testament are illustrative of the character and ministry of our Lord, and designedly so. The history of God's people journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land was written for our learning, and all the things that are there recorded happened unto them for types. They happened with a view to their teaching value. They did not happen in the sense that there was any accidental occurrence, but these events were divinely ordered in order that the record might parallel the great principles of redemption. Not only is the record of these events inspired, but the events there by inspiration recorded, were first of all providentially arranged. Therefore you have all the types and symbols of the Old Testament. Oh, how rich they are! Talk about books of illustration!

I remember the dear man who was pastor here for twenty-one years, my friend, Dr. Thomas. One Sunday morning I preached from an Old Testament text — and he was always an inspiration to me. I used to say he was equal to a congregation of a thousand any time; his heart responded to the gospel message so beautifully. He came to me the Sunday to which I refer, glowing with enthusiasm, and said, "It was great; but what are you going to do when you get through with all these Old Testament stories? What will you do then?" I said, "Doctor, I shall never live long enough to get through; the Bible is so full of them." Jesus touched the mountain peaks, I have no doubt: Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham; Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, then Moses and Aaron and Joshua; all the judges, and Ruth; then the kings, and the prophets — and He found them all related to Himself.

II.

THAT BEING SO, WE KNOW HOW TO STUDY OUR BIBLES. THE PROPER WAY TO STUDY IS TO LOOK FOR JESUS CHRIST. "Oh but," you say, "I want to find some precept, some principle." Ah yes, but you must relate that precept, that principle, to the Prince Himself. It is only as it is related to Him that it will come to us with power. No matter what portion of the Bible you study, you must get to Christ if you are going to have any spiritual food.

There are some people who are very interested in speculating about the future; they are concerned about the programme in the millennial age. I am inclined to think we can safely wait a while. It is just possible to be engaged with that kind of thing, and to forget our present duties, forget to feed your own souls on Jesus Christ. The big business in studying the Bible is to get to Jesus Christ.

I told you once of an old minister who went to hear a young preacher preach. The young minister went up to the old man after the sermon, and asked him somewhat apologetically if he would mind telling him what he thought of the sermon. The older minister said, "Well, if you want me to be frank with you, I did not think much of it. I do not think it was a good sermon." The young man was surprised. He said, "What was the matter with the sermon?" "There was no Christ in it." "But," he said, "I had to stick to my text, you know, and

Christ was not in my text." "Was He not?" said the old man, "where did you get your text?" "Oh, I got it from the Bible." "Well, there is no text in the Bible that has not Christ in it; He is in every text." And then he said, "Young man, in England from every hamlet, and every village, and every town, and every city, there is a road that leads to London. You can always get from anywhere to London. And from every word of Scripture there is a road that leads to Jesus Christ, to the cross, and to the resurrection; and if you have any difficulty in finding it, just jump over hedges and ditches, but get to Christ anyhow."

We study the Bible to no profit unless we find Christ, and, in the finding of Him, are brought closer to Him. Is that how you study your Bible? Do not say, "I am going to take the Bible to find something to help me this morning." Do not say, "I am going to study my Bible to find something to help me to-night." Rather come to it saying, "I am going to have a little chat with my well-Beloved; I shall find Christ here." And when you have found Him you will find help. But there is no help in abstract principles unrelated to the living Saviour Who is upon the Throne. We must find Jesus in the Book.

I have heard some great preachers preach, and I have heard more who were called great preachers who were a weariness both to the flesh and to the spirit. I have heard men open the Scriptures in such a way, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that my soul has been thrilled. But what would you have given to hear the Lord Jesus for just about five minutes? Would you not like to hear Him talk about Genesis? Would you not like to hear Him tell about the significance of the Babel tower, and of the ark before that? Would you not like to hear Him talk about Abraham who rejoiced to see His day, who saw it, and was glad? It must have been wonderful! I do not wonder that their hearts burned within them. I do not wonder that they said — or felt, perhaps, what they did not say — "The Scriptures were never so wonderful as they were to-day." I would rather have Him for a teacher than anyone I know.

There are some teachers who are too clever to be good teachers. Do you know that? I had one once. I have a very distinct recollection of him. He was a gold medalist, or something else, of the London University. I do not know how many degrees he had; he was a wonderful man. He had specialized in mathematics — a very interesting subject! — and he knew so much that he could tell it all in just about a minute. He would say to the class, "There it is." Well, I suppose it was for him. I used to feel as though I wanted to throw something at him. It was before the days of four-wheel brakes, but I wished very much he had had some kind of brakes. I knew a man who was a professor of Chemistry, and he was what I should call an aeroplane professor. He hopped off, and then he lighted somewhere. He got from this place to that place, but the students did not get there with him. All he would say was, "There is the method; and there is the result." That is all right if you are making a passage yourself, but if you are trying to teach other people how to fly it is a poor business. This man that I remember of my youth was not particularly patient, and I used to be afraid to ask him questions. I heard other boys ask questions, and be called block-heads and dunces, and I don't know what else; and I said to myself, "Well, if that is what I am, I may as

well take it without the label!" I refrained from asking questions.

III.

WHAT A BLESSING IT IS THAT WE HAVE A REAL TEACHER OF THE BIBLE! I was thinking the other day of that word which Jesus spoke, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." That verse seemed to say to me, "Do not be afraid to ask questions." How far removed from us He is in point of knowledge! And yet He condescends to meet us in our ignorance. What a blessing that is! Is it not a blessing that though He has gone to heaven we have the Holy Spirit with us, we have the Author of the Book with us.

Sometimes I have said that when I get to glory I am going to sit down with Moses and talk to him about the first five books. I shall find out how he wrote them, and all about them! And while the Jonah question is already settled so far as I am concerned, still I think I will have a chat with Jonah about it when I get there. Do you not think you will? I should like to talk to the Apostle Paul and John. And yet they were only pens, they were only the instruments; and we actually have with us to-day the divine Author of the Book to explain to us all its hidden mysteries. Oh, that we might become, each for himself or herself, a diligent student of the Bible! Some of you cannot go to the Seminary. That is the best school there is, of course! But its only value is, if it has any, and I think it has, that the greatest of all teachers, the Spirit Himself, presides there. And we may have that Teacher with us all the time. If thus the riches of God's Word are brought to us by the personal ministry of the Spirit of God, so that we come to know the Bible for ourselves, we shall be established in the truth, and nobody will move us. We shall not be "carried about by every wind of doctrine", but we shall be rooted and built up in Him.

Let us avail ourselves of whatever helps, whatever means of grace, may be provided in the providence of God, for He gave some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, and yet I do believe it is the privilege of every individual believer to study the Bible for himself; and in the measure in which God through this holy Book, by the inspiration and illumination of the Holy Spirit, speaks to you and to me every day, in that measure we shall be fruitful and happy in the Lord. May He bless to us our simple meditation this evening!

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

By DR. C. D. COLE

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By Dr. C. D. Cole
October 27th, 1955
THE PINNACLE OF FAITH
Hebrews 11:29-40

IN COMMENDING something to others it is always well if we can have testimonials or examples of the value of what we are commending. The purpose of the Hebrew epistle is to commend the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only and all sufficient Saviour. The writer has already shown that Jesus Christ meets all the qualifications and has performed all the works necessary for a perfect Saviour. And in this eleventh chapter he brings forth examples of faith in a long list of Old Testament believers. Christ has been the object of faith through all the centuries of human existence. Abraham saw his day and all the Old Testament worthies saw the day of Christ and were glad. Moses wrote of Him and those who believed Moses believed on Christ. And when He came to this earth our Lord made belief in Himself the test of believing in Moses. For he says, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." So Christ has always been the object of saving faith. He is the subject of the first gospel text in Genesis three fifteen where we are told that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. In Galatians three eight we are told that the gospel was preached to Abraham. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." And in Galatians three verses sixteen and seventeen; "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Christ is as much the subject of the Old Testament as the New. We find Him written of in the law of Moses, and in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. He himself says, "in the volume of the book it is written of me." And to the Jews He said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Now the covenant of grace was confirmed before of God in Christ to Abraham. And it was ratified in His blood when He died to make reconciliation for iniquity. Peter says that He "was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." The law covenant was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. The law covenant

was given to reveal the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The law was given to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The law was never meant to be the way of life and salvation. The law is good if it is used lawfully and the lawful use of the law is to let it show us how sinful and how helpless we are and then look through its types and shadows to the perfect Saviour who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be reminded again that the value of faith consists altogether in its object and not in faith itself. Faith is not the saviour. Christ is the Saviour. We are saved by faith in Christ not by faith in our faith. Faith may end in shame as well as in glory. Faith may prove a curse as well as a blessing. Faith in a worthless Saviour is a vain faith and so we need to be fixed in the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the object of saving faith. Saving faith is trust in one who is able to save unto the uttermost, that is, unto the end, or completely. And no one is completely saved until he passes the day of judgment and enters into glory. Some fifty years ago there was a teaching quite prevalent in a certain section of the South to the effect that if a professing Christian ever doubted his salvation, that was proof, positive proof that he had never been saved. But this puts salvation in our faith and requires a perfect faith in order to be saved. We have to have a perfect object of our faith and therefore since our faith is imperfect we cannot make our faith the object of faith, Jesus Christ is the one and only perfect Saviour and whatever faith we have, be it much or little, it must repose itself in Him and in Him alone. So in speaking of the heroes of faith we are not praising men but God in Jesus Christ. Christ is the real hero of our faith. We can wish for a stronger faith but not for a stronger Saviour. We can pray for an increase of faith. Who isn't conscious of his need of a greater faith? But no believer ever thinks about praying for a better Saviour. And the way to a strong faith is to be occupied with a great God and a mighty Saviour.

I. EXAMPLES OF FAITH (29-31)

Now in bringing before us the examples of faith the writer selects men from different periods of time beginning with the antediluvians and coming on down to the times of the Maccabees in the inter-Biblical period. In Israel's passage through the Red Sea their deliverance from Egyptian bondage was completed. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." Here we see the importance of a divine revelation as the ground of faith. Here we see faith versus presumption. The children of Israel had faith. The Egyptians had presumption. Israel had the Word of God as the ground of what they believed and what they did. Pursued by the Egyptians the children of Israel were in desperate straits at the Red Sea. Before them was the sea of waters and behind them were the pursuing hosts of Egyptians. They could neither ford the Sea nor fight the Egyptians and all they did was to cry unto God and murmur against Moses. But Moses in faith said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." And he goes on to tell the Israelites that the Lord will fight for them and give them victory. But Moses was just as helpless as the children of Israel were and he continues to cry unto the Lord for help. And the Lord just in the nick of time says to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;

But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." And so by faith in what God said, "They passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." Now the Egyptians presuming to do the same thing were drowned. They had no word from God. They had no promise from God that they could go through the Red Sea as the Israelites had. They were walking by sight. They were presuming that they could do what the Israelites had done, and they were drowned. If God had not spoken to Moses what the children of Israel did would have been consummate folly and nothing but presumption. And the lesson we learn from this is that we must stay close to the Word of God and follow what God says and leave the results with Him. Faith puts the burden of results upon God and gives Him credit for all the results. Somebody has said that Christians in turning everything over to God work drudgery on God. But there can be no drudgery for the Almighty, for one who is never weary. Of all the things that men can do to please God it is to trust Him. Faith pleases God and we find sinners obtaining a good report from God simply because they trusted Him. By faith Israel started into the sea and found it to be dry ground.

THE WALLS OF JERICHO FALL FLAT

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Jericho was the first city to obstruct the progress of the children of Israel after they had crossed the Jordan. Jericho was well fortified and Israel had no weapons adequate for an attack against such a city. But God planned their military strategy. He told them to march around the city once a day for six days and on the following day to march around it seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets and at a given signal the people were to shout and the walls would fall down flat. Now if God hadn't given a revelation about how Jericho was to be taken their plan of attack would have been foolish. But it is never foolish to do what God says. There was no relation of cause and effect between their marching and the falling of the walls. The walls fell down by the word of God's power. He was showing Israel that He could be trusted. After such a marvelous display of power we are apt to wonder that Israel ever doubted God again. But we are no better than they. Faith is not indigenous to the natural man. Faith comes from God. Faith is wrought in the human soul by the Mighty God. And no man left to himself would have faith in God. For the carnal mind is enmity against God and the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. God must work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

RAHAB THE HARLOT ESCAPES

Rahab the harlot was saved by faith when Jericho was taken. She believed what had been reported about what God had done at the Red Sea and to the enemies of the children of Israel. And this woman of a bad name believed that Israel's God was the true God and believing that she believed her city was a doomed city. Therefore, acting on her faith, she received the spies that Joshua sent into the city, protected them and sent them away in peace. Her neighbours had the same report that she had but they believed not and perished in the destruction of the city. James gives Rahab as an example of justification by works. "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by

works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" But the writer of Hebrews ascribes her salvation to her faith. There is no contradiction and yet faith and works are distinct. They are not the same thing but they are closely related. In the field of grace, faith is the root and works are the fruit. In the realm of grace, faith is invisible and works are the visible expression of inward faith. It was by faith she did what she did in receiving the spies and sending them away in peace. She was proving her faith by her works and that is the only way that faith can be shown.

II.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FAITH (32-35a)

And then the writer goes on to say, "And what shall I more say?" Here he seems to be pressed for time as names of men of faith flood his mind. And he says, "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Time was running out on him as he carries us into the gallery filled with the portraits of men of faith and realizes that we cannot linger to look at each individual portrait but must hurry down the line and give only a glance at them. He makes terse references to the accomplishments of faith and leaves the reader to identify the person and the event. And one who is at all acquainted with Hebrew history has no trouble in doing that.

Gideon's faith appears in following God's plan of attack against the Midianites. It was in faith that he reduced his army to a mere handful of three hundred men with no weapons but pitchers and trumpets and lamps.

Barak acted on the revelation which came through Deborah and won victory over Jabin the king of Canaan.

Samson's victories were too many to recount.

Jephthae's victory was over the Ammonites. Jephthae will be remembered as the man who made a rash vow and obstinately kept it. He vowed to the Lord that if he would give him victory over the Ammonites that whatsoever came to meet him first out of the doors of his house he would offer it as a burnt offering to the Lord. And when he returned he was met by his own daughter and he kept his vow and offered her as a burnt sacrifice. Rash vows are to be repented of and not redeemed. A vow that involves one in sin, should not be kept but repented of.

Now in verses thirty-three and thirty-four we have a summary of faith's accomplishments. And we are bound to be impressed with the great variety of things done by faith. The wide diversity of cases proves that there is no human predicament that cannot be trusted to God. God is equal to all the vicissitudes of human experience. In this chapter we see God's stately steppings all down through the corridors of time. We see Him in the death chamber restoring life. We see His sustaining hand in times of famine. We see Him on the battlefield giving victory to His people. We see His guiding hand in the days of darkness and we see His supporting hand in times of weakness and despair. Faith can be bold because God is Almighty. Faith can be simple because God is faithful. Now after verse thirty-two no more names are called but the victories of faith are recorded. The writer is not so much concerned about advertising men as he is of exemplifying faith and showing the value of simple trust in God.

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms:"—this could refer to Gideon's victory over the Midianites, Jephthae's victory over the Ammonites, Samson's over the Philistines and David in his many victories over kings and kingdoms; *"wrought righteousness;"*—of Samuel, and David, and Elijah and Elisha, and Isaiah, and the later prophets this was eminently true—they wrought righteousness; *"obtained promises:"*—many were the promises received by the men of faith; *"stopped the mouths of lions:"*—we think of Samson who in the strength of God slew a lion. We think of Daniel who trusted God in the lions'-den and found the king of beasts to be as harmless as a kitten. *"Quenched the violence of fire;"*—the three Hebrew worthies walked in the blazing furnace of Nebuchadnezzar as though it had been a pleasant meadow and came out without so much as the smell of fire on their garments; *"escaped the edge of the sword:"*—as did David from the sword of Saul and Elijah from Jezebel and Elisha from the hosts of Syrians; *"out of weakness were made strong:"*—as was Samson when he carried off the gates of Gaza, and pushed down the heathen temple and slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. Or as Hezekiah when he was raised up from the sick bed and given a fifteen year lease on life; *"waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens:"*—this perhaps refers to the times of the Maccabees and their victories over the Syrians; *"women received their dead raised to life again:"*—as did the widow of Sarepta whose son was raised by Elijah, and the Shunammite whose son was raised by Elisha.

III.

FAITH IN DEFEAT (35b-38)

And now in the middle of verse thirty-five we reach the very pinnacle of faith: "and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." Here we see faith enduring in the face of seeming defeat. And faith is more remarkable in suffering and in going down in defeat than it is in winning victories. "And others were tortured". Here we see faith waiting for the hope of the resurrection day. "A better resurrection" means a resurrection that was better than the mere restoration to life in the flesh to die again, a better resurrection than the sons of the widows experienced — the resurrection unto glory when Jesus Christ returns to this earth. The martyrs have never had to die. They chose to die. They exercised choice, the wisest choice when they chose to die. They could have lived by renouncing their faith in Christ. It has always been the design of Satan to destroy the souls of men rather than their bodies. Time has always been given Christians to reconsider and recant. Entreaties have been mingled with threats to induce Christians to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. The martyrs chose to die. If they could not have Christ and live, then they would keep Christ and die. Polycarp is a striking example of this. At almost a hundred years of age this blessed man of God was arrested because he was a Christian and on being taken to the place of judgment, some of the magistrates met him and took him into their carriage and pleaded with him as they drove along, to deny Jesus Christ and save his life. But to all their pleas he turned a deaf ear. When they had reached the place of execution the proconsul, with some of the milk of human kindness and out of pity, not wanting to put the aged and venerable man to death, pleaded with him to blaspheme Christ and live, Polycarp said, "Eighty and six years

have I served Him and He has never done me any injury. How shall I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" And when they threatened him it availed nothing. When they threatened him with the lions he said, "Bring them forth". When they threatened him with the fire he reminded them of eternal fire that awaited the ungodly.

SOCIAL OUTCASTS

"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Social outcasts from a world that could not tolerate the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes we wonder how wicked the world can be. They were destitute, bodies famished, but their souls were feeding upon the Bread of Life. Wandering around with no certain dwelling place, but rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Afflicted and tormented but they held on to their faith in Jesus Christ. Oh! it is obvious that faith is not of human production. Faith is one of the most supernatural things in existence. That is why faith even though it may become weak never dies. "Of whom the world was not worthy." Here is the divine reversal of the world's judgment. I think one of the most amazing things in the day of judgment is going to be the manifest reversal by God of all human wisdom and judgment. The world thought these men were not worthy of a place in its society. But God lets us know that it was the other way — that the world was not worthy of such people in its midst.

IV.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH (39-40)

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Here we are introduced to the whole household of faith, to the family of God as a whole. All these heroes of faith were rewarded with commendation from God. They obtained a good report. God testified to their faith that it was pleasing to Him. He had their faith recorded in His own Word but they did not get the promise. What was the promise they did not receive? I am sure that the ultimate reference is to personal perfection in glory. It includes the resurrection body and all the glories that await the second coming of Jesus Christ. It includes that inheritance which is laid up for us in heaven which all the household of God shall receive when Jesus Christ returns. What the writer is doing here is telling us that what God had in view for the Old Testament saints was something that pertained to us, the New Testament saints. If they had received the things hoped for in the fulness of resurrection glory there would have been no New Testament era. The completion of their salvation would have been reached without us of the New Testament era. What he is saying is that the whole household of faith will be perfected together. Our salvation began at different periods of time but the salvation of the family of God will be completed at the same time. And what is true of Old Testament believers is also true of all New Testament believers who have died and gone to be with Christ. All together are awaiting the day of resurrection. And God is still holding back that day while the gospel is being preached and faith is spreading to the millions. All who have died in the Lord are blessed. They are in the presence of Christ and rest from

their labours and know nothing of the sorrows and struggles that are so familiar to us down here. They are better off than we are but their salvation is not yet complete. They still await the redemption of the body. And that's an important aspect of our salvation. Our Lord tells us that we are going to sit down in the coming kingdom with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. All of God's little children will be gathered to the final home at the same time. The Lord Jesus has gone to prepare that home and some day He will come and receive us unto Himself. The family of God is a widely scattered family, separated by sea and land and grave and air. But we'll not be separated forever. God's family is a spiritual family, chosen and redeemed and regenerated; selected by the Father, redeemed by the Son and regenerated by the Spirit so that the triune God is to be praised for our salvation. We'll not always be scattered and separated. One of these days the Lord Jesus Christ will come down from the skies and receive the living and the dead unto Himself and take us into the presence of His Father, saying, "Here am I, and the children which Thou hast given Me."

The first chapter of First Peter is full of the things

hoped for which shall be received when Christ returns. God's people we are told are begotten "unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." And after that he says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And then he gives this exhortation, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"There'll be no dark valley when Jesus comes,
There'll be no dark valley when Jesus comes,
There'll be no dark valley when Jesus comes
To gather His loved ones home.

"There'll be songs of greeting when Jesus comes,
There'll be songs of greeting when Jesus comes;
And a joyful meeting when Jesus comes
To gather His loved ones home.

Unitarianism – Advocate of Intellectual Dishonesty?

THE Unitarian Church or Fellowship is one that professes to be very liberal in its views and urges men to have intellectual honesty in approaching religious questions. Hence the Unitarian rejects the historic Christian faith with its belief in the infallibility of the Word of God, the Deity of Jesus Christ, the sinfulness of man and regeneration through faith in the finished work of Christ. In a free country, it is the privilege of anyone so to believe and we shall ever strive to see that such liberty is guarded.

We have always observed, however, that those who are loudest in their professions of religious liberalism are really bigots of the worst sort. For instance, the Toronto First Unitarian Congregation inserted an ad in the local papers of October 29. The first paragraph of that ad read as follows:

During the summer, the newspapers reported that a minister of one of the large denominations in the United States was tried for heresy. This is a throw-back to the Dark Ages; we are supposed to have outgrown the custom of persecuting men for the religious beliefs they hold. Yet this man was tried and found guilty.

My! Oh my! How sinister this sounds. But, what are the facts? Was this minister persecuted? Anyone who has read the story of the "heresy trial" held by the Lutheran Church in the United States must conclude that the Church was absolutely justified in its procedure. The Lutheran Church has a definite system of belief and forces no one to accept that creed. The Lutheran Church, like any other church, is a voluntary association of those who hold certain truths in common. Those who join that church or become ministers in it thereby signify their acceptance of the foundation beliefs of Lutheranism. If someone is a Unitarian at heart and rejects the truths of the Virgin Birth and the infallibility of Scripture, he should be honest enough to join a Unitarian body or some

equally lax organization. Only intellectual dishonesty or a mistaken notion of liberality could prompt him to join an orthodox church in order to propagate unorthodox teaching.

We have heard entirely too much of the type of nonsense that is contained in the Unitarian ad. Is it the duty of the orthodox churches to embrace those who are dishonest enough to join those bodies with the intention of preaching that which is diametrically opposed to a stated and definite system of belief? Mr. Spurgeon, in an admirable article, "Advanced Thinkers", makes some very pertinent remarks about these "liberal" gentlemen (who are bigots to their own liberality) — "They have occupied positions which could not be reconciled with their beliefs, and have clung to them with all the tenacity with which limpets adhere to rocks. Their testimony has, in some cases, been rendered evidently worthless, from the fact that with all their outcry against orthodoxy, they did their best to eat the bread of orthodox opinions, had they been permitted to do so. Whether this is honest is doubtful; that it is not manly is certain. These gentlemen of culture have certainly adopted peculiar tastes. The misbelievers and unbelievers of former ages withdrew themselves from churches as soon as they found that they could not honestly endorse their fundamental articles, but these abide by the stuff, and great is their indignation at the existence of creeds which render their position morally dubious."

The local Unitarian ad-maker maintains that the Lutheran minister who was found guilty of heresy was the victim of persecution. As we read his specious arguments, we were impressed with the fact that Unitarianism is just as intellectually and spiritually bankrupt as it charges its opponents for the same old, thread-bare arguments were used one hundred years ago by its ancestors. We cannot forbear giving one further short quo-

tation from the article by Spurgeon which was written *over sixty years ago*. Apparently Unitarian and liberals haven't grown so much as they would have us believe — "We would not limit the rights of the lowest ruffian, but if he claims to enter our bed-chamber the case is altered; by his summary expulsion we may injure his highly-cultured feelings and damage his broad views, but we claim his ejection to be advocating, rather than abridging the rights of man. Conscience indeed! What means it in the mouth of a man who attacks the creed of a church and yet persists in continuing in it? He would blush to use the term conscience if he had any, for he is insulating the conscience of all the true members by his impertinent intrusion. Our pity is reserved for the honest people who have the pain and trouble of ejecting the disturber; with the ejected one we have no sympathy; he had no business there, and, had he been a true man, he would not have desired to remain, nor would he even have submitted to do so had he been solicited."

Let honest readers judge who was the *persecuted* party in the recent "heresy trial". Charity forces us to think that the local Unitarian Church, which has discarded the Word of God, was desperate for a Sunday sermon topic and hence submitted this preposterous "persecution" story in haste. Should this be denied then we must conclude that this church is an advocate of a shameful policy of dishonesty which would advise men to vow to defend certain tenets with the express purpose of undermining those beliefs. If this is their conception of liberality, we want none of it!

The second paragraph of this Unitarian ad is equally instructive. In speaking of this "persecuted" preacher, the ad writer seeks to minimize the whole matter as follows:—

His crime was that he had thought about some of the people and stories in the Bible, and had interpreted them in a slightly different way than did the officials of his church.

Now if Unitarians choose to regard such truths as the infallibility of the Word of God and the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ as slight and trivial matters, they may do so; but are they such bigots that they demand that every one else so regard what is precious truth to them. While professing to advocate freedom of thought, these gentlemen are actually *demanding* that everyone else be as lax as they are. This is merely a good example of what Samuel Johnson meant when he referred to the "bigotry of laxness." Let Unitarians and so-called liberals be as loose as they desire but let them respect the right of others to have some convictions. By no stretch of the imagination can the denial of the Virgin Birth be conceived to be a "slightly different" interpretation of the truth of the Virgin Birth!

The Unitarian ad proceeds to declare that:

"to Unitarians, it is inconceivable that a person should be required to accept a viewpoint without being allowed to THINK ABOUT IT."

What Protestant body today *requires* anyone to accept some viewpoint without thinking about it? If the reference is to this same "heresy trial" about which the ad prates, then it is an unfortunate choice of an example. The Lutheran minister was not forced to become a Lutheran but once he did so choose, is it too much to ask that he cease this association when he denied the very truths he had sworn to defend? The more we consider the content of this ad, the more persuaded we are that the Toronto Unitarian Congregation is hard up for

sermon topics and must go to all lengths in order to attract people. Such reasoning as is displayed in their ad is a poor advertisement for genuine intellectual honesty or liberality.

One of the final boasts of this superior church is that:

"there has never been and never could be a heresy trial in a Unitarian congregation."

How true! No one can ever be charged with holding false convictions by a body that boasts of having no convictions! As we said before, it is the privilege of Unitarians to have no convictions but let them respect the rights of others to have some definite beliefs and to act upon those beliefs.

Note: Readers who desire copies of Spurgeon's superb article "Advanced Thinkers", may obtain one by asking for the December 23, 1954, issue of The Gospel Witness.

Let some broadminded person accuse us of distorting the contents of the ad to which we have referred, we print its contents below as it appeared in The Globe and Mail of October 29.

COULD YOU BE ACCUSED OF HERESY?

During the summer, the newspapers reported that a minister of one of the large denominations in the United States was tried for heresy. This is a throw-back to the Dark Ages; we are supposed to have outgrown the custom of persecuting men for the religious beliefs they hold. Yet, this man was tried and found guilty.

His crime was that he had thought about some of the people and stories in the Bible, and had interpreted them in a slightly different way than did the officials of his church.

To people who believe that man was given a mind to use, the idea of a heresy trial is repugnant. To Unitarians, it is inconceivable that a person should be required to accept a viewpoint without being allowed to think about it. There has never been and never could be a heresy trial in a Unitarian congregation. Our faith is built on freedom of inquiry and freedom of belief. We reject all creeds or doctrines or dogmas, for we believe that man's spiritual ideas can grow and change just as much as his ideas about medicine or astronomy. If this freedom appeals to you, we hope you will come to our service tomorrow morning — to think together.

Never mind what *man* thinks of you. I would not give a straw for the opinions of men, as to whether I was safe or no. It is not what man thinks of us that will cover us on the judgment day.

—ROBERT MURRAY MCCHEYNE

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CHAPTER 20

HEAVENLY ANTICIPATIONS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF FALSE CHRISTIANITY

Revelation 17

THE following extract from the preface to our commentary on the thirteenth chapter of Revelation will constitute the best introduction to our present study:

"The whole of Scripture unfolds before us a divine confederacy of good, in the persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who work with one accord for the happiness of the Bride. Now, the book of Revelation undertakes to reveal to us the existence of a Satanic counterfeit of that heavenly community.

"To the Father there corresponds the dragon or Satan, who is at the origin of all evil. To the Son, begotten of the Father, corresponds the first beast rising up out of the sea and to which the dragon will give his power, and his seat, and great authority. To the Holy Spirit, proceeding out of the Father and of the Son, there corresponds the second beast coming up out of the earth, and which, as a 'false prophet', will exercise 'all the power of the first beast before him.' To the Bride, there corresponds Babylon, the mother of harlots, described in the last pages of the book.

"The dragon is therefore an anti-God; the first beast an anti-Christ; the second beast, an anti-Spirit; Babylon, an anti-Bride."

After giving a general survey of the celestial punitive acts represented by the seven plagues, John will now describe in more detail some aspects of the divine judgments. In a logical order, his prophecies will successively throw light on the final destiny of the false Bride, of the false Spirit, of the false Christ, and of the false God.

To describe the judgment of the false Bride, the seventeenth chapter, which will be the object of our present study, is divided into three parts: 1. An Introductory Summary (v. 1-2); 2. A Vision (v. 3-6); 3. An Explanation (v. 7-18).

On account of the complex nature of the prophecy, our exposition will again take the form of a running commentary.

I. INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY CONCERNING THE DESTRUCTION OF FALSE CHRISTIANITY (17:1-2)

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials."

After remaining silent while fulfilling their austere

task, the heavenly executors will now break this threatening silence. The angel's words will refer to a "judgment": John is therefore bidden to look back on ground which has already been covered. The visions of chapter seventeen deal with certain judgments already alluded to in the vial series.

"He talked with me, saying unto me, *Come hither*; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" — that is to say, who has power over the nations — "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

In another passage, one of the seven angels, probably the same, will again speak to the apostle: "*Come hither*, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God . . ." (21:9-11). In both pictures, mention is made of a woman and a city. In the Scriptures, a woman usually symbolizes spiritual things, whereas a city stands for material things. On the one hand, we therefore have the legitimate Bride and Jerusalem; on the other hand, the false bride and Babylon.

Once again, we are here dealing with the essential and most significant fact of the whole of Christian history: the haunting presence of false Christianity side by side with true religion. It is impossible to interpret the past of the people of God, to understand its present characteristics, and to discern its future trend, by ignoring that great fact. The twofold "*Come hither*" of the angel is thus meant for us also, and the momentous teachings of this chapter should engage our whole attention. So much the more that the false church is depicted to us under numerous and impressive features.

It is termed "the great whore". Her love is feigned; she indignantly takes the place of the legitimate Bride; her aim is not one of devotion toward the object of her affection, but, through her betrayals, she seeks to secure favours for herself. If therefore we do not love the Bridegroom with faithful and disinterested hearts, our pretended affection will make us part of the false bride.

After committing fornication with the great ones of the earth, she has exerted her seductive arts over the "inhabitants of the earth". She has therefore offered them a religion of tolerance toward evil. Through her intoxicating influence, she has made them unaware of their guilty position before Jesus Christ. Let us there-

fore be watchful, for our attitude toward the world will reveal our true Christian ideal.

The terrible punishment which will fall upon false Christianity is a fact so certain that, almost two thousand years before our day, John beholds the visions as though the events they describe belonged to the past. This should stimulate both our hopes and our cares.

II. VISION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF FALSE CHRISTIANITY (17:3-6)

Our interpretation of this vision will be greatly facilitated if we go back to the vision of chapter twelve, which depicts to us the true Bride, not under the disguise of a deceptive attire, but in her natural dignity: "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." To this true Bride are given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness. The false church cannot but follow her there, that is, she must accept certain virtues and certain sacrifices without which she could not gain credence among the multitudes. But whereas the true Bride is, like Israel in Sinai, sustained by the providential food of the desert, the false church has to provide for herself through skilful stratagems. To the miraculous wings of a great eagle, she will oppose the challenge of an imposing mount: "a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy." She will also make abundant use of the intelligence of the monster's seven heads and of the power of its ten horns.

The moral condition of the prostitute woman appears in the contrast between the "golden cup", symbol of false outward purity and consecration, and all that fills it: "abominations and filthiness of her fornication." Not only dares she raise that cup of blasphemy, but the facile victories she has won by flattering the low passions of men encourage her to unashamedly display a scandalous mark on her forehead: "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." This name is a "mystery", which seems to indicate that the divine patience toward the woman's provocations is humanly unexplainable. In the same way, the seeming inaction of God before the shed blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus is to us an unfathomable secret.

It is our duty to carefully meditate upon the apostle's confession: "When I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." The example and warnings of his Master could not suffice to secure John from certain doubts concerning the true scope of the Christian conflict. As the newly-born Christianity was still weak and scattered, it was yet difficult to foresee that the Enemy was to mobilize all the powers of the world and those of an artificial "Christendom" to gain full sway over the true people of God. On the other hand, nothing in his time seemed to be able to efficaciously compete with, or counterfeit, the pure original truths of the gospel. Moreover, the divine help had been abundantly promised to the elect, and it seemed inconceivable that, in its onward march, Christianity would meet more than casual and superable obstacles. Finally, could the promise of the Son of God's return not have been used by the Seducer as a means to deceive those who expected it? Hence, in order to avert the dangers of a blind optimism on the part of the last apostolic guide of the elect people, heaven reveals to him the very great danger of false Christianity. History has since then decisively confirmed that miraculous prediction.

III. LIGHTS ON THE DESTRUCTION OF FALSE CHRISTIANITY (17:7-18)

By introducing his explanatory words by the question: "Wherefore didst thou marvel?", the angel calls the apostle's attention to the rational nature of what he is about to say.

1. *In order to properly understand the mystery of the woman, it is first necessary to interpret the mystery of the beast.*

Its origin is the "bottomless pit", sojourn of Satan. Its destiny is twice described in verses 8 and 11: it goes "into perdition"; its punishment is the most dreadful and the most terrible act of justice that the book has thus far predicted. Its history is full of incidents: it "was, and is not, and yet is." Its vitality in the midst of all the dangers will cause them "that dwell on earth" to wonder.

In one of our previous chapters, we saw that the beast was an embodiment of the carnal spirit of the age, of the self-deification of man, of the supreme plot of mankind against its God. The first instruments which will serve the designs of the beast are *seven governmental systems*: seven heads, or seven nations, or seven kings. According to most of the commentators, the first six heads represent Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and imperial Rome. In John's day, the Roman power "is" (v. 10). In connection with it, we remember that the "deadly wound" inflicted upon the sixth head and its miraculous healing (cf. 13:3), symbolizes both the defeat suffered by Satan after the triumph of Jesus Christ over death, and the survival of the Satanic empire. Who will therefore be the seventh king who "is not yet come" (17:10)? Among many hypotheses we shall choose the most plausible one. The seventh head would represent the confederacy of the scattered powers which, since the dismemberment of the Roman empire, are however a prolongation of it, by keeping its customs, its laws, and above all its man-centred religion. And the more the nations will be interdependent, the more there will be a need for organized systems. We had, in the League of Nations, an image of that worldwide confederacy which, because it is the work of man and not of God, "must continue for a short space." Its powerlessness in warding off the catastrophes provoked by the so-called progress of profane civilization, will inevitably bring about the dictatorship of an eighth power. That power will so perfectly incarnate the spirit of the beast that it will make one with it, thus continuing the action of the seven preceding kings: "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven." (17:11).

We here draw near the time of the end: the beast "goeth into perdition"; the power is then entrusted to *ten kings* "which have received no kingdom as yet", and which receive power with the beast for only "one hour".

These ten kings have but one design, "one mind": they "give their power and strength unto the beast" and "make war with the Lamb". All those features emphasize that the main purpose of the new regime will be, not primarily to gain the power or to protect men, but to manifest in the open all the conscious or unconscious hostility of the human heart toward God. A stupendous day will thus come when, all other occupations having ceased, all the evil forces of the world will pit themselves against the Lamb of God, the supreme expression of the grace of

God. The spirit of the anti-Christ will then have reached its climax.

It is therefore comforting to learn here that "the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings" and to read that "they that are with him, called, chosen, and faithful" will also overcome.

2. *In the light of what the angel has just revealed to us concerning the beast, we shall more clearly understand the mystery of the woman.*

"And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

It is true that there are certain common characteristics between the Roman papacy and some of the features of the woman, such as her great wealth and her purple and scarlet attire. But an exclusive identification would not cover the whole teaching of our text. False Christianity is not only represented by papal Rome. Before the appearing of the papacy, and outside of its pale, pseudo-Christianity has also been manifested in many ways: and in every case it has proved perfectly adapted both to the natural heart and to the changing conditions of mankind. The first deviations, the first heresies, the first schisms, then the Roman church, then Greek Orthodoxy; then, the worldly or nationalized Protestantism; then the pseudo-evangelical systems, the impostures; then, the so-called modernism — all those counterfeits of the true Christian spirit are included in the figures of the waters and of the woman. Moreover, apostasy has not always been manifested in a collective way: let us learn here that every member of any evangelical church who would walk according to the flesh, would thereby act in complicity with the prostitute woman.

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

This association of anti-Christianity with Babylon has procured considerable advantages for the kings, instruments of the beast. But the contracts based on interest alone are very precarious. A time will come when all the temporal powers will discover that their association with the false religion costs them more than it yields profit. Then, the riches and privileges accumulated by the apostate Christianity will arouse covetousness. The subjects of the great harlot will then turn themselves against her:

"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire."

Jezebel has met with her punishment. Nothing can alter it for God Himself "hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." In the rigid attitude of the Soviet regime toward religious things, we have an image of the future world-wide schism between religion and the temporal powers, as predicted here.

We must now draw our conclusion from the above considerations. Have we the religion of the world or have we the piety of the elect? In fellowship with our Saviour's sacrifice, we must die to ourselves; and such a death will determine our true position, and will alone insure our eternal security.

For Younger Readers

THE WASP WHICH WENT TO CHURCH

It was a beautiful Sunday morning when an adventurous little wasp left his home in the hollow trunk of a tree, and excitedly flew over the fields. He was at peace with the world, for the warm sunshine made him feel particularly pleased with himself. Here and there he paused to examine tree trunks and plants, but an undeniable urge forced him onward. And then quite suddenly he saw a church. Its lofty steeple pointed heavenward, and everything about the building suggested solidarity and calm. Almost without realizing he was changing the direction of his flight, the wasp veered from his course and approached the house of God. He felt ashamed; he had not been in church for ages! His exhilarating buzzing became less audible as he admitted, "Yes, I have been very wicked. I must alter my ways"; and as determination shone in his eyes, he added, "And I'll start now."

The minister was preaching; his audience was enthralled and captivated by his brilliant oratory: this was a magnificent sermon! Alas, it was soon to be ruined by an unexpected visitor. The well-meaning wasp flew in through the open window, and as he circled the congregation, many eyes followed his flight. The minister frowned! The people should learn to concentrate! The wasp seemed to be looking for a seat. His intentions were sound; he desired to be friendly. After all, this was the house of God, where all people were brethren. Ah! the very place. The young ladies were most attractive. They were youthful and pretty; their dresses were most colourful; and the flowery patterns made him think of green meadows filled with daisies and buttercups. Yes, it would be wonderful to sit beside these girls. The young lady at the end of the seat shuddered, and moved nearer to her companion. Oh! the wasp was down! Good gracious, the thing was crawling along the seat! She clutched her hymnbook, and the minister frowned again. His audience was becoming restless. And the wasp crawled on. *Bang!*

Of course, the girl missed, and the startled wasp hurriedly made off toward the ceiling. What was this? She had tried to kill him; and he only wanted to be friendly. Were all church people hypocrites? He sighed and said, "Certainly not. She was but a child. Forget her, little wasp; and try again. Ah, that granny. Isn't she nice? So quiet and dignified a veritable mother in Israel. Her smile would be a benediction. I'll sit by her." When granny saw him, she nervously placed her back against the wall, and wished she could escape through a non-existent door. The wasp was coming along the seat. Dearie, dearie me! She clutched her umbrella; no, that would be useless. She seized her bag — no, that would be inadequate. Her hymnbook—ah. She prepared to defend her territory, and in blissful ignorance of the reception awaiting him, the wasp crawled nearer. Fortunately he paused, and as he did so the silence of the sanctuary was shattered by the crashing hymnbook. Indeed, the draught lifted him from his feet. Granny's face was flaming, and so also was his own heart as he flew against the ceiling.

Furiously he buzzed around the church. This was maddening; even the minister resented his coming to the

service — and he was supposed to shepherd the flock of God. Buzz, buzz, buzz, went the overworked wings. And then a still small voice seemed to say, "Calm yourself. That old woman belied her appearance. She's old and cantankerous. She's peevish and hard to live with. Forget her, and try the patriarchs of the church. See those deacons sitting together in the front row. What a fine lot of holy gentlemen! They pray like angels, and lead most of the meetings." The wasp calmed down. Yes, he had been somewhat rash. He circled twice over the heads of the benign old men, and then came to land. Horror of horrors! They were striking while he was still in mid-air. One after the other, they almost flung their books at him, and the service was in an uproar. The young people were giggling; the children were openly laughing. Even the minister had placed his hand upon a hymnbook. This was an anti-aircraft unit! Swish, whizz, bang, went the books; and suddenly the little visitor lost his temper. If this were God's house, He could keep it. If these were God's people, He was welcome to them. Bah! Infuriated, he flew through the window; *but he made one mistake.* He blamed the young lady, the old Granny, and especially the deacons; yet all the time, *the cause of the trouble lay in himself!*

The wasp seems to have many cousins! People who spend their time criticizing others generally possess the greatest of all stings!

—Ivor Powell in *Bible Windows*

THE WEEK-END IN JARVIS STREET

The first of the week-end services in historic Jarvis Street Baptist Church is the Thursday evening Lecture in the English Bible Course, delivered so ably by the Dean, Dr. C. D. Cole. This lecture is open to all, and was largely attended last Thursday, many young people, as well as older ones, taking advantage of this opportunity of studying the Scriptures systematically. Saturday night found a large number of the Lord's people gathered in earnest intercession for the work of the Lord here and elsewhere.

The Bible School session on Sunday morning is always a season of instruction, inspiration and blessing to children and adults, especially in Jarvis Street where the scholars remain for the morning preaching service. Last Sunday the Editor, Mr. Leslie K. Tarr, B.A., preached with intense and appropriate earnestness on the solemn theme "Life! Death! Eternity!" Mr. Samuel Pourret conducted the French Language Gospel Service in the afternoon, a service which is greatly appreciated. In the evening Dr. H. C. Slade preached a most convincing sermon on the subject, "Confession of Sin". Congregations were excellent all day and the Lord's presence manifest.

—O.L.C.

JARVIS STREET MINUTE BROADCAST

Listen to the Jarvis Street Bible School announcement over station CFRB on Saturday mornings at 11.29 a.m. Pray that this brief message may capture the attention of many and compel them to come.

—O.L.C.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 19. Fourth Quarter Lesson 7 November 13, 1955

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

SAVED BY GRACE

Lesson Text: Ephesians 2:1-10.

Golden Text: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

—Ephesians 2:8.

Introduction

The city of Ephesus in Asia Minor (called "Asia" in Scripture), situated at the junction of several roads which formed a line of communication between Rome and the East, was an important commercial centre. It was a free city within the Roman Empire, with a Council and an Assembly, being governed by a proconsul (Acts 19:38). The town clerk possessed great authority (Acts 19:35). Being the centre of art and culture, it was also and chiefly famous for the great marble temple of Diana, a temple which was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Between the shrine and the image of the goddess was a treasury, said to be the bank of Asia.

At the beginning of his second missionary journey the Apostle Paul was forbidden by the Spirit from preaching in Asia (Acts 16:6). On his way home to Antioch he visited the city for a short while, during which time it is probable that he founded the church. Aquila and Priscilla were left in charge (Acts 18:19-21). Apollos also was sent to witness there (Acts 18:24-28). Paul returned to Ephesus, this time remaining about two years (Acts 19). On his last voyage to Rome he met the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus, giving them a farewell message (Acts 20:17-38).

Other Christian leaders visited Ephesus; Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3), Tychicus (2 Tim. 4:12), Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:18), and probably John Mark, when he was in Asia (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:3). There is a tradition to the effect that after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the Apostle John made Ephesus his home. He addressed a letter to that church (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-7).

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by Paul from Rome about 64 A.D. during his first imprisonment (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Philippians and Colossians, were probably written about the same time.

Analysis of Ephesians

- I. Introduction 1:1, 2.
- II. The Heavenly Calling of the Church—1:3-3:21.
- III. The Earthly Conduct of the Church—4:1 - 6:20.
- IV. Conclusion—6:21-24.

I. Dead in Sins: verses 1-3.

The doctrinal portion of this Epistle (chapp. 1-3) describe in triumphant language the exalted position of the believer in Christ. We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him, being chosen, called, adopted and redeemed. God reckons that in the person of Christ, our Representative, we have been crucified, buried, raised, exalted and seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1).

But it was not always so with us. The unsaved are described as being like the Gentiles of old—without Christ, aliens, strangers and afar off (verses 11-17; Eph. 4:17, 18). They are lost and dead (Luke 15:24; Col. 2:13), dead in trespasses and sins. When our first parents sinned, God pronounced the judgment of death — physical and spiritual (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22). Physical death is the separation of the body and the spirit, while spiritual death is the separation of the spirit from God. The spirit of man is as the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). That candle was lit as it were by God in Adam and Eve, but was quenched by sin (Prov. 24:20). Now it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to relight that candle (Psa. 18:28). The Holy Spirit alone can bring the soul from death unto life: there must be a spiritual resurrection (John 3:3-7).

The unsaved walk according to the rules and principles which govern this world, rather than those which pertain to the world to come (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 4:19-24; Col. 2:8), and they are energized by Satan, the prince of the power of the air (John 12:31; Eph. 6:12), rather than by the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:13). Such are called children of disobedience (John 8:44), because they refuse to obey the Gospel, and are called children of wrath, since they rest under the wrath of God (Psa. 51:5; John 3:36)). They follow their own desires, rather than the will of God (Gal. 5:16).

II. Quickened in Christ: verses 4-10.

We praise our God for His great mercy toward us (Psa. 103:8-11; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:3); even although our sins deserved eternal death, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-11). In love He sought us when we were far from Him, lost and dead (Luke 15:1-7, 11-24).

When we believe upon Christ as our Saviour, we are accounted as having died with Christ at Calvary (Rom. 6:2, 3). When God raised Christ from the dead, He also raised us from death with Him (Rom. 6:4-10). When Christ ascended in triumph to take His place at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Rom. 10:6-8; Eph. 4:8-10), He was glorified on our behalf. In Him we live "in the heavenlies".

God did all this for us, not alone or chiefly to bring joy and blessing to us, although that is the result of His loving-kindness, but rather that we, as the recipients of His grace, might add to His glory (Eph. 1:6, 14). Angels and other beings in future ages would see exemplified in us the great grace and love of our God to us, that He might be glorified in His saints (Eph. 3:9-11; 2 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 20:4; 21:1-4).

Since all men were under condemnation through sin, it was by the grace of God alone that the plan of redemption was prepared and executed. Though they be undeserving, He extends mercy to those who will trust Him, and He grants them pardon as a free gift. Since all men are guilty before

God, all men are on the same plane, and there is no room for boasting (Rom. 3:27). Had we been saved by our works, some would have claimed superiority, but now, no one has anything to show as ground for boasting. God must have all the glory. He alone can perform the work of regeneration (2 Cor. 5:17); all alike have been created in Christ Jesus on the basis of faith in His shed blood.

Although not saved by good works, we have been saved unto good works. The two doctrines of salvation by the gift of God and rewards according to the merit of man are not contradictory, but complementary. Works have their proper place. Although justified before God by faith, apart from works (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16); we are justified before men by works which prove our faith (Jas. 2:14-26). These truths are illustrated in the New Testament by references to two events in the life of Abraham (Gen. 15:5, 6; Rom. 4:1-4, 13-22; Gen. 22:1-14; Jas. 2:21-26).

Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 7—The Election of Grace	Rom. 11:1-6
Nov. 8—Justifying Grace	Rom. 3:21-31
Nov. 9—Abounding Grace	Rom. 5:12-21
Nov. 10—Sufficient Grace	2 Cor. 12:1-10
Nov. 11—The Heart Established by Grace	Heb. 13:1-9
Nov. 12—Grace and Truth through Christ	John 1:1-17
Nov. 13—Grace in Time of Need	Heb. 4:11-16

Suggested Hymns

Grace, 'tis a charming sound.
Once I was dead in sin.
I was a wandering sheep.
Come, sing my soul!
Beneath the cross of Jesus.
Come, ye sinners!

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