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## A Psalm for New Year's Eve

A Friend stands at the door;  
In either tight-closed hand  
Hiding rich gifts, three hundred and three score;  
Waiting to strew them daily o'er the land  
Even as seed the sower,  
Each drops he, treads it in and passes by:  
It cannot be made fruitful till it die.

O good New Year, we clasp  
This warm shut hand of thine,  
Losing forever, with half sigh, half grasp,  
That which from ours falls like dead fingers'  
twine:  
Ay, whether fierce its grasp  
Has been, or gentle, having been, we know  
That it was blessed: let the old year go.

O New Year, teach us faith!  
The road of life is hard:  
When our feet bleed and scourging winds us  
scathe,  
Point thou to him whose visage was more marred  
Than any man's: who saith,  
"Make straight paths for your feet", and to the  
opprest,  
"Come ye to me, and I will give you rest."

Yet hang some lamp-like hope  
Above this unknown way,  
Kind year, to give our spirits freer scope  
And our hands strength to work while it is day,  
But if that way must slope  
Tombward, oh, bring before our fading eyes  
The lamp of life, the hope that never dies.

Comfort our souls with love, —  
Love of all human kind;  
Love special, close, in which like sheltered dove  
Each weary heart its own safe next may find;  
And love that turns above  
Adoringly; contented to resign  
All loves, if need be, for the love divine.

Friend, come thou like a friend,  
And whether bright thy face,  
Or dim with clouds we cannot comprehend,  
We'll hold out patient hands, each in his place,  
And trust thee to the end,  
Knowing thou ledest onwards to those spheres  
Where there are neither days nor months nor  
years.

—The Author of "John Halifax, Gentleman" 1855

## AT THE TURN OF THE YEAR

Janus, an ancient Italian deity, was seen to preside over the year and his own special month was January. He is represented in statues with two heads facing opposite ways, suggestive perhaps of vigilance, looking both before and behind.

At the turn of the year we would do well to look backwards and forwards. We must heed the exhortation to "look unto the rock whence ye are hewn" (Isa. 51:1) and also "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13) we must press toward the mark.

Looking backwards is encouraged by divinely appointed memorials. From the bed of the River Jordan twelve stones were set up as a symbol of the miraculous entry into the land of promise. Again we see the Lord's Supper as a memorial. The cross must be kept before us and the bread and wine effectively assist in this great purpose. In our private experiences there are also land marks of unusual manifestations of grace. The God of all comfort, the Saviour from sin, and the quickening Spirit then drew near. Knowing our God from the past we are prepared to glorify Him in the future. However, there is a solemn thought which impinges upon our minds. The past goes with us. We cannot escape its influence. Marley's ghost dragged the chain forged in life of "cash boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel." The habits formed yesterday are with us today; the past indulgences of the flesh leave present weakness in our physical and moral constitution. Yes, let us look back over 1956 and learn to read its lessons and its warnings.

Looking forward is essential for disciples of the One "who for the joy which was set before Him endured the cross . . ." (Heb. 12:3). The one who aims at nothing invariably hits it, but contrariwise the earnest purposefulness of a consecrated Christian ever should be apparent. We need both a near and a distant goal but both of course must be in line. A near goal of attainable reach is able to attract our whole interest and immediate attention. A distant goal prevents the disillusion and frustration which come from pursuing an inadequate goal. Let us cast off certain pet impediments. Let us pray and work for conversion and edification of certain specified individuals. However, beyond this the goal is the glory of Christ and ourselves with our spiritual offspring in His image.

Yes, "dipping into the future as far as eye can see" will be all the more significant as a result of our dipping into the past. But as the past has escaped, let us now seize the present and seek to actualize some of our earnest hopes. In the words of Longfellow: "look not mournfully to the past — it comes not back again; wisely improve the present — it is thine; go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a manly heart."

G. A. ADAMS

### Jarvis Street Services

The services in Jarvis Street Church during the Christmas season reached their culmination in the great New Year's morning service of prayer and testimony. A fuller account will be given next week.

## The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

FOUNDER AND FIRST EDITOR—Dr. T. T. Shields  
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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16

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### JARVIS STREET CHURCH CALENDAR

#### SUNDAY

- 9.45 Bible School for everybody, from grandfather to the baby.
- 11.00 Morning Service.
- 4.30 Afternoon Class.
- 6.55 Young People's Bible Fellowship Hour.
- 6.00 Prayer Service in Greenway Chapel.
- 7.00 Regular evening service.

#### TUESDAY

- 8.00 Departmental Conferences of the Bible School, followed by the teaching of the lesson at 8.45.

#### THURSDAY

- 2.30 Senior Dorcas Sewing Meeting.
- 6.30 Junior Dorcas Sewing Meeting.
- 8.00 Bible Lecture by Dr. H. C. Slade.

#### FRIDAY

- 7.00 and 8.15—Junior and Senior choir practices.
- 7.00 Friday Night Round-Up for boys and girls.

#### SATURDAY

- 8.00 Great Weekly Prayer Service in Greenway Hall.

### "ALL THAT WILL LIVE GODLY"

The nearer a man lives to Christ, and the more truth he has, the more bitter and vile will be the things that are said against him by the enemies of God.

—D. L. MOODY

# The Jarvis Street Pulpit

## The Beginning of a New Life

A Sermon by Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Massey Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 1st, 1939

(Stenographically Reported)

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."—Exodus 12:2.

IT IS thus the divine instructions for the preparation of the Passover and the observance of the Passover feast begins. God had arisen for the deliverance of His people out of the hand of Pharaoh. Plague after plague had been visited upon the Egyptians, until at last Moses had left the presence of the king, saying, "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." Then God communicated His purposes to Moses, that He would go through the land, and that the firstborn of man and of beast would be slain. He gave direction for the taking of a lamb, a lamb for a family, the slaying of the lamb, the sprinkling of its blood upon the lintel and the doorposts. Having instructed them how to eat the Passover, with bitter herbs, gathering the whole family under the shelter of the blood, He had promised, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

This Passover had taken place, not in the first month of the year, but in the tenth month; but the Lord said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

The New Testament institutes a comparison between the Passover and the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, and says that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." He was the fulfilment of that which was symbolized in the offering of the paschal lamb. The blood of the Passover was a type and symbol of the blood of the Lamb of God "that taketh away the sin of the world."

The Passover feast became also a symbol and prophecy of the Lord's suffering; for, as the Passover feast was instituted to keep in remembrance God's passing over His people in the land of Egypt, so the feast of the Supper was instituted that we might keep in everlasting remembrance our indebtedness to the Lamb of God. We are enjoined to take the bread and to drink the wine, and to do so in remembrance of Him.

That act of divine grace represented by the Passover—judgment to the enemy of God and grace to His people—represented to the children of Israel the beginning of a new life; just as our acceptance of the work of Christ in our behalf introduces us to a new life. This is the first Sunday evening of a new year. We are this evening to observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and I would remind you that it symbolically represents that act of dying grace which has given us all another chance, and made it possible for poor sinners who had all but reached the end of the year, to begin the year again. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

In another way, but by the application of the same principle, I say to you what I said this morning, the only way

by which we may be assured of a year that is new, and a year that is really and abidingly happy, is to begin the year with God, and to leave it with Him.

Let us see what this story has to teach us, which can be of value to us.

### I.

First, and very simply, *the marvellous grace of our God*, infinite as He is infinite in all the qualities of His being, *has made it possible for poor ruined humanity to have another chance.* In Adam all died: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The ruin was complete. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." So successful was the human revolution, man's rebellion against God, that Satan is described as "the god of this world". The vast majority of people are in his train, doing his will. That way lies ruin for them, by any true estimate, and for eternity.

What is the gospel? Just this, that God in sovereign mercy has interposed. He has come to give the world another chance, to give every man and woman the opportunity to make a new beginning, with Him. The Second Adam was the Lord from heaven. Born once, we are "born of the flesh"; and that which is born of the flesh is flesh—and it is a pretty bad thing, I tell you. God has made it possible for us to be born again by a spiritual birth. The old man, having spoiled his record, and brought himself and his deeds under the condemnation of God, God has made it possible for us to have a new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The old creation having been corrupted by sin, God has made it possible for us every one to come to Christ; and, being in Him, to become a new creation.

The heart of this scheme of redemption, is, as you know, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Laugh at it as you may, the dynamic of the gospel is the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is that which makes possible our beginning over again with God. And so this word from Moses to the people of Israel, giving them a new beginning, a new year, was a new disclosure of the love of God to them.

### II.

*How dark the life of these Hebrews in Egypt was! How full of bitterness they must have been! They "groaned by reason of their bondage". They were about as badly off in Egypt as the Jews are in Germany to-day. They must surely, like Job, have cursed the day that they were born; and wondered at the Providence that had permitted*

them to come into so cruel a world. They lived under the whips of the task-master, and it seemed as though there was no one who cared. When Moses first of all intervened, it seemed as though things got worse for them instead of better. They actually said to Moses and Aaron, "Leave us alone. It was bad enough before, but now it is worse. Leave us alone, that we may die under their whips. Do not bother us, for since you have undertaken our case, our lot has been far worse than it ever was before."

What a revelation of God there was in the story which Moses brought to them, when he came to them and said, "God has taken account of your sad lot, and now He is going to arise for your deliverance. He has instructed me to make provision for your individual and family salvation." He told them the story of how they were to draw a lamb out of the flock, how the father of the family was to gather his children under the family roof-tree, then kill the lamb, and sprinkle the blood. Then he said, "Stay there thus sheltered. God shall come into the land of Egypt, but you will be safe. When He sees the blood, He will pass over you."

Was there ever a day in the world's history when the world needed more the message of the love of God than it does to-day? *What a gloomy world it is! How full of iniquity!* "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." We were accustomed to apply such scriptures to uncivilized portions of the world, but now you may include all of Europe, and Asia too — and I think America as well. There is cruelty enough here. Human life is full of bitterness. It is not alone in Austria and Germany that people are cutting short their own lives. I have had people tell me that life had become unendurable, that they could not stand another week of it.

It is hard to get people to care, very hard to touch people's consciences in our day, to awaken any sort of charitable instinct. People are becoming hardened by their constant view of increasing trouble, until there seems danger of the whole race becoming callous. Yet it remains true, if only men could see it, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son", to give to whoever will believe in Him a way out, the opportunity for a new life, to be lived by a new power.

### III.

It was to be "the beginning of months" in a very real sense, for it was a *new thing to these oppressed people, when they were made to recognize that after all, God was not so unheeding*, but that He had actually stooped to take account of their needs, and had arisen for their deliverance. It was to be the *beginning, too, of their understanding of the true nature of their fundamental sin*. The blood must have spoken eloquently to them. Something has happened that can only be purged by blood.

What is it? What is this thing that we call sin? An infirmity of the flesh? Morally, one of the vestigial remains in the evolutionary process? Just what is left from our emergence from the brute creation? It is too bad we are not better, but then, what can you expect? It is human to err, and in our day men have almost lost the sense of sin as an offence against God. But the blood, my dear friends, not only speaks to God for us, but it speaks to us for God. When that principle is kept before people, that there is that in every human life which can not be condoned, which cannot be passed over, a sin which must be expiated, something that has merited death, and that

can be atoned for only by death; then we shall have a new understanding of the true nature of these evils against which we do battle. Say what you will against the evangelical position, there is nothing like the preaching of the Cross to make men feel that they are sinners. That is what we need to-day, something to awaken people, individually, and in our collective and public capacity; some sense of moral indignation, some recognition of the enormity of the offence which men commit against God, so terrible that nothing but blood can atone for it.

How the sight of the blood must have solemnized every father among the people of Israel — and of the children too when they learned that there was only one thing that could prevent the stroke of divine judgment, the blood. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

*When we can put the significance of the Cross into our religion, and preach the Cross, we shall have a new day in every department of life.* I saw the plan of a church to-day, with a chancel, and on the chancel a cross; and on either side of it, a candle — a lot of money spent to provide a church with a new chancel. I thought of a subject that I think I will preach from: Why the new Jarvis Street Church shall have neither chancel nor altar. Why? Because men must offer their own offering. It is a bit of Romanism, the sacrifice of the Mass.

The Supper we shall observe presently is only an ordinance; it is only bread and wine; it only commemorates something that is already done. The blood has been shed. This is the beginning of a new life to those who believe it. Our duty is not to offer the sacrifice, but to proclaim it. Hence, as I said to you some weeks ago, not the altar but the pulpit from which the gospel is proclaimed, shall be the central thing in evangelical churches.

It was *the beginning of their emancipation* from the thralldom of a cruel tyrant. What a terrible thing it was to be under the heel of Pharaoh, to be at the mercy of a man who knew no mercy, whose lives had no value in his sight. The Lord said, "I am going to take you out from under the hand of Pharaoh, and you will feel his strong hand no more. I will bring you out by an outstretched arm, and you shall have a great deliverance."

What a tyrant sin is! Sometimes I think I ought to tell more than I do. So many have come to me, apparently respectable men, who have confessed they are bound hand and foot, particularly with this drink business, under the heel of a tyrant; no human deliverance from its thralldom. There is power in the blood of Jesus Christ:

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free;  
His blood can make the foulest clean,  
His blood avails for me."

When a man finds that the shackles are gone, and that God, by His grace, has set Him free to do His holy will, he will understand the spiritual principle of this verse, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." The prison doors swing wide. You are made a free man. I wonder is there anyone so bound here this evening? I recommend to you the salvation that is in Christ, symbolically represented by the elements of this ordinance, the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other solvent for the world's problems.

## IV.

They were delivered from a fruitless toil. I think work is one of the greatest of all blessings. It is a great mistake to suppose that labour is the result of sin. Jesus Christ said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Every mortal man and woman ought to have something somewhat aristocrat Englishman who came to America? He came from my country, so I can tell it! Someone asked to do. I do not know whether you have heard of the him how he liked Canada, and he replied, "It is a very nice country. There are some very fine people here, but I do not feel quite at home." "And why not," he was asked. "Because you have no gentlemen here." "Oh," said the Canadian, "I think we have. We try to be polite and courteous, and to behave in a gentlemanly manner." "I have no fault to find with your manners. That is not what I mean when I speak of a gentleman." "Then what do you mean?" "I mean a man who has nothing to do, who is independent, who does not work." "You are mistaken. We have plenty of gentlemen in this country of that sort — only we call them by another name." "You do?" "Yes; we call them tramps here."

It was well said. Perhaps it is only a newspaper story, for after all, what a blessing it is to have work! Plenty to do. It is one of the greatest blessings of life. I am sure there are tens of thousands of men in this country to-day who long and pray for work, for the blessing of work, who would rather have work than anything in life. One of the sad things of the present day is that young people are growing up without ever having had a chance to work. It is utterly demoralizing.

But there is a kind of work that is terribly galling — to work from morning until night without reward. Just to become a serf, and slave; to be always at it, and never getting it done; to have no reward whatever. Such was the labour of these people. They were not paid: they were just made to work.

Our Lord Jesus came to give us rest from fruitless toil. How many there are who labour to save themselves. — always working, working, working, and it is never done! They are never any nearer home. Heart and conscience find no surcease from anxiety or from toil. They are always at it. "He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." They were to be delivered into a new life. Not a life of idleness, but a life in which they would reap some reward for their toil. We are not saved by our works, but we are not saved without them either. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." You are not saved because of your works, but if you have no good works I seriously doubt whether you are saved. The man who is really saved will work, not for salvation, but because he is already saved. He becomes a servant of God, and he works for a very definite reward. When Jesus Christ comes to reward His servants, He will reward every man "according to his works".

Let this be a year of work. Let us give every flying moment something to keep in store! Let us be like our Master, going about doing good! Let every day see something accomplished for God and for our fellows, especially that our witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ may be clear, that others may find also the beginning of a new life.

## V.

And so, dear friends, as this Passover feast was observed, they began their march to a new land, even to a land of promise. They were commanded, "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: for it is the Lord's passover." They were to be ready to march, for as soon as the death angel passed over, the gates of Egypt would swing wide, and the children of Israel were to march out to another land. And they did. By and by they marched down through the miraculously created valley of sea, and out into the wilderness beyond, with their faces set toward a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey.

So ought we to have our faces set toward the New Jerusalem. I say it to you again this evening, Do not be afraid of what people say about the way you live; your habits of life. You do not belong here; your citizenship is in another country. We are just a colony here, and we ought to behave differently. You have seen people who have come from a foreign country, the women with their handkerchiefs over their heads instead of hats. Not a bad idea! They are just as attractive as some of the hats! However, there are people who look upon those who exhibit the customs of their own land, and find it peculiar. It is not peculiar: it is their way of living. We are citizens of the New Jerusalem. People who will "follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth" will be peculiar. We shall be different from other people. The Israelites were when they went out from Egypt. They were going to another land.

I was going along one of your main streets the other day, and in the shop windows I saw large displays of women's summer dresses — in the wintertime. For a moment I said to myself, What on earth do they think they are doing? Does he think women will buy their summer dresses so long in advance? I recovered myself and said, No! He knows better than that. Those clothes are for people who are going to spend the winter in Florida. You would think, if you saw people buying summer clothes now, that they were somewhat queer; but if they are going to a summer land, that is what they need.

I want a robe of righteousness. People do not like it here, but I like it. I want it, because I am going where that is the only kind of robe you can wear. We had better get ready for that land of promise, begin life over again, live as those who seek a country, and who declare plainly that they do so.

That is a text from which I shall preach some day. That is what we ought to be doing, declaring "plainly that we seek a country", so that everyone will know that we have begun a new year by setting our faces toward a new land, and a new life, under a new King, subject to new laws, with new delights, with new pleasures, with new prospects. God make us wise unto salvation!

As for you who come to the Table of the Lord this evening, and take this bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Him, let it be to us what the Passover feast was to the Hebrews in Egypt! Let it proclaim to us that this is the beginning of months, that we lay hold upon new resources, and as new men acquire a new stature, a new and a more complete conformity to the image and likeness of Christ!

## NUMBERING THE YEARS

By Dr. T. T. Shields

**T**HE Psalmist prayed, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

When the pockets of a spendthrift are full, and he has no consciousness of limitation, he spends his money freely. We remember seeing and hearing a drunken man in a London restaurant during the First War. He was a soldier on a ten-day leave in London. Already he had imbibed, not wisely, but too well; and he was in a particularly happy and jolly mood. He sat at a table alone, with a knife in his right hand, and a fork in his left. He had ordered his meal; and as he waited for it to be served, he talked aloud for the entertainment of everyone in the room. We recall his rapping the table with knife and fork, in perpendicular position, laughing aloud, and saying, "Think of it, friends! I have got eighty pounds to spend. Think of it! Eighty pounds, and only ten days to spend it!"

How foolish he was! There is little doubt that he would find plenty of people to help him spend his money. But in some such mood people begin a New Year, as though they had three hundred and sixty-five days to spend, even to throw away, as though there were no limitation of Time in human life.

At a garage one day we heard a man call an attractive little dog, "CAVU". We inquired, "Where in the world did you get that name?" The garage man said, "He is not my dog. His owner is an aviator, and he is away on war service. He gave the dog that name." We said, "Where did he get it?" He replied, "It is an aviation signal. It means, 'Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited'."

One might suppose, to observe the life of some people that they had named every day, "CAVU". But when the spendthrift gets down to his last dollar, he begins to count his pennies, and to see him spend them then, one might imagine that he had suddenly become a miser.

Oh, how soon the day's end is reached, when not half the day's work is done! How the hours have fled, until the sun drops down, and night comes, "when no man can work"! How foolish we are thus to squander Time! It is reported of Napoleon, whether apocryphally or not, we do not know, that as he saw the sun westering at Waterloo, apostrophizing the orb of day, he exclaimed, "What would I not give, O Sun, for the power of Joshua, to retard thy march but one short hour!" But the sun went down and Napoleon's hopes died in the darkness.

We have all wished that we could prolong the day, especially when we have made but little profitable use of its sunlit hours:

"Procrastination is the thief of time;  
Year after year it steals, till all are fled  
And to the mercies of a moment leaves  
The vast concerns of an eternal scene."

The proper time to begin economizing Time is at the sunrise. Why should we leave so many things we want to say and do, as we write our postcards, with a few lines in the first half of it, and then attempt to crowd a small volume into what remains?

"Time is eternity;  
Pregnant with all eternity can give;

Pregnant with all that makes archangels smile,  
Who murders Time, he crushes in the birth  
A power ethereal, only not adorn'd."

Let us remember that He Who is our Saviour is also our Example; and though His life stretched from everlasting to everlasting, though He was made "after the power of an endless life", throughout the days of His flesh not a moment was wasted. Though "the Ancient of Days", He wrought as One Whose days were numbered. Said He, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." His final cry, ere He gave up the ghost, was a triumphant challenge to earth and hell, whose powers had sought to thwart Him in His sovereign purpose. But it was also a declaration of the triumph of a resolute spirit, over all the down-dragging and retarding pulls of the flesh. The day was done, but so was His work, and He cried, "It is finished!"

Oh that we could "give every flying minute something to keep in store"! As Oliver Wendel Holmes says:

"Old Time, in whose banks we deposit our notes,  
Is a miser, who always wants guineas for groats;  
He keeps all his customers still in arrears,  
By lending them minutes, and charging them years."

There is but one way to "number our days" so as to apply them unto wisdom, and that is to make every day the Lord's Day, and every hour the Lord's Hour, and seek to live as one who would, as nearly as possible, spend one's life-doing the will of God from the heart.

### THE FATHER'S HOUSE

Be not discouraged to go from this country to another part of the Lord's earth: "The earth is His, and the fulness thereof". This is the Lord's lower house; while we are lodged here, we have no assurance to live ever in one chamber, but must be content to remove from one corner of our Lord's nether house to another, resting in hope that, when we come up to the Lord's upper city, "Jerusalem that is above", we shall remove no more, because then we shall be at home. And go wheresoever ye will, if your Lord go with you, ye are at home; and your lodging is ever taken before night, so long as He who is Israel's dwelling-house is your home (Psa. xc. 1).

—JOHN RUTHERFORD

### SECURITY

Inasmuch as our life and death are in His hand, He will preserve us by His might that not an hair will be plucked out of our heads without His leave. Believers, therefore, ought to feel assured into whatever hands they may fall that God is not divested of the guardianship which He exercises over their persons. Were such a persuasion well imprinted on our hearts, we should be delivered from the greater part of the doubts and perplexities which torment us and obstruct us in our duty.

—JOHN CALVIN

Even a dog barks when his master is attacked; should not I raise my voice when the majesty of God is attacked?

—JOHN CALVIN

# The Immutability of God

By Rev. C. H. Spurgeon

Sermon delivered on Sunday morning, January 7, 1855, at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, England

"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

—Malachi iii. 6.

IT HAS been said by some one that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel

"Great God, how infinite art thou,  
What worthless worms are we!"

But while the subject *humbles* the mind it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well nigh unutterable names; he may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus, and all kinds of extinct animals; he may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does, but after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it — that is *the immutability of the*

*glorious Jehovah*. "I am," says my text, "Jehovah" (for so it should be translated) "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There are three things this morning. First of all, *an unchanging God*; secondly, *the persons who derive benefit from this glorious attribute*, "the sons of Jacob;" and thirdly, *the benefit they so derive*, they "are not consumed." We address ourselves to these points.

## I.

First of all, we have set before us the doctrine of THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD. "I am God, I change not." Here I shall attempt to expound, or rather to enlarge the thought, and then afterwards to bring a few arguments to prove its truth.

1. I shall offer some exposition of my text, by first saying, that God is Jehovah, and he changes not *in his essence*. We cannot tell you what Godhead is. We do not know what substance that is which we call God. It is an existence, it is a being; but what that is, we know not. However, whatever it is, we call it his essence, and that essence never changes. The substance of mortal things is ever changing. The mountains with their snow white crowns doff their old diadems in summer, in rivers trickling down their sides, while the storm cloud gives them another coronation; the ocean, with its mighty floods, loses its water, when the sunbeams kiss the waves, and snatch them in mists to heaven; even the sun himself requires fresh fuel from the hand of the Infinite Almighty, to replenish his ever-burning furnace. All creatures change. Man, especially as to his body, is always undergoing revolution. Very probably there is not a single particle in my body which was in it a few years ago. This frame has been worn away by activity, its atoms have been removed by friction, fresh particles of matter have in the meantime constantly accrued to my body, and so it has been replenished; but its substance is altered. The fabric of which this world is made is ever passing away; like a stream of water, drops are running away and others are following after, keeping the river still full, but always changing in its elements. But God is perpetually the same. He is not composed of any substance or material, but is spirit — pure, essential, and ethereal spirit — and therefore he is immutable. He remains everlastingly the same. There are no furrows on his eternal brow. No age hath palsied him; no years have marked him with the mementoes of their flight; he sees ages pass, but with him it is ever *now*. He is the great I AM — the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, his essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood. When Christ in past years did gird himself with mortal clay, the essence of his divinity was not changed; flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh, by a real actual change of nature; the two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same. It was the same when he was a babe in

the manger, as it was when he stretched the curtains of heaven; it was the same God that hung upon the cross; and whose blood flowed down in a purple river, the self-same God that holds the world upon his everlasting shoulders, and bears in his hands the keys of death and hell. He never has been changed in his essence, not even by his incarnation; he remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change.

2. He changes not *in his attributes*. Whatever the attributes of God were of old, that they are now; and of each of them we may sing "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." Was he *powerful*? Was he the mighty God when he spake the world out of the womb of non-existence? Was he the Omnipotent when he piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, he was powerful then, and his arm is unpalsied now; he is the same giant in his might; the sap of his nourishment is undried, and the strength of his soul stands the same for ever. Was he wise when he constituted this mighty globe, when he laid the foundations of the universe? Had he *wisdom* when he planned the way of our salvation, and when from all eternity he marked out his awful plans? Yes, and he is wise now; he is not less skilful, he has not less knowledge; his eye which seeth all things is undimmed; his ear which heareth all the cries, sighs, sobs, and groans of his people is not rendered heavy by the years which he hath heard their prayers. He is unchanged in his *wisdom*; he knows as much now as ever, neither more nor less; he has the same consummate skill, and the same infinite forecastings. He is unchanged, blessed be his name, in his *justice*. Just and holy was he in the past; just and holy is he now. He is unchanged in his *truth*; he has promised, and he brings it to pass; he hath said it, and it shall be done. He varies not in the *goodness*, and generosity and benevolence of his nature. He is not become an Almighty tyrant, whereas he was once an Almighty Father; but his strong love stands like a granite rock, unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be his dear name, he is unchanged in his *love*. When he first wrote the covenant, how full his heart was with affection to his people. He knew that his Son must die to ratify the articles of that agreement. He knew right well that he must rend his best beloved from his bowels, and send him down to earth to bleed and die. He did not hesitate to sign that mighty covenant; nor did he shun its fulfilment. He loves as much now as he did then; and when suns shall cease to shine, and moons to show their feeble light, he still shall love on for ever and for ever. Take any one attribute of God, and I will write *semper idem* on it (always the same). Take any one thing you can say of God now, and it may be said not only in the dark past, but in the bright future it shall always remain the same: "I am Jehovah, I change not."

3. Then again, God changes not in his *plans*. That man began to build, but was not able to finish, and therefore he changed his plan, as every wise man would do in such a case: he built upon a smaller foundation and commenced again. But has it ever been said that God began to build but was not able to finish? Nay. When he hath boundless stores at his command, and when his own right hand would create worlds as numerous as drops of morning dew, shall he ever stay because he has not power? and reverse, or alter, or disarrange, his plan, because he cannot carry it out? "But," say some, "perhaps God never

had a plan." Do you think God is more foolish than yourself then, sir? Do you go to work without a plan? "No," say you; "I have always a scheme." So has God. Every man has his plan, and God has a plan too. God is a master-mind; he arranged everything in his gigantic intellect long before he did it; and once having settled it, mark you, he never alters it. "This shall be done," saith he; and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. "This is my purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is my decree," saith he, promulgate it, angels; rend it down from the gate of heaven, ye devils; but ye cannot alter the decree; it shall be done. God altereth not his plans; why should he? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform his pleasure. Why should he? He is the All-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should he? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before his plan is accomplished. Why should he change? Ye worthless atoms of existence, ephemera of the day! ye creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence! ye may change *your* plans, but he shall never, never change *his*. Then has he told me that his plan is to save me? If so, I am safe.

"My name from the palms of his hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impress'd on his heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible grace."

4. Yet again, God is unchanging in his *promises*. Ah! we love to speak about the sweet promises of God; but if we could ever suppose that one of them could be changed, we would not talk anything more about them. If I thought that the notes of the Bank of England could not be cashed next week, I should decline to take them; and if I thought that God's promises would never be fulfilled — if I thought that God would see it right to alter some word in his promises — farewell Scriptures! I want immutable things: and I find that I have immutable promises when I turn to the Bible: for, "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie," he hath signed, confirmed, and sealed every promise of his. The gospel is not "yea and nay," it is not promising today, and denying to-morrow; but the gospel is "yea, yea," to the glory of God. Believer! there was a delightful promise which you had yesterday; and this morning when you turned to the Bible the promise was not sweet. Do you know why? Do you think the promise had changed? Ah, no! *You* changed; that is where the matter lies. You had been eating some of the grapes of Sodom, and your mouth was thereby put out of taste, and you could not detect the sweetness. But there was the same honey there, depend upon it, the same preciousness. "Oh!" says one child of God, "I had built my house firmly once upon some stable promises; there came a wind, and I said, O Lord, I am cast down, and I shall be lost." Oh! the promises were not cast down; the foundations were not removed; it was your little "wood, hay, stubble," hut, that you had been building. It was that which fell down. You have been shaken *on* the rock, not the rock *under* you. But let me tell you what is the best way of living in the world. I have heard that a gentleman said to a negro, "I can't think how it is you are always so happy in the Lord, and I am often downcast." "Why, Massa," said he, "I throw myself flat down on the promise — there I lie; you stand on your promise — you have a little to do with it, and down you go when the wind comes, and then you



cry, 'Oh! I am down'; whereas I go flat on the promise at once, and that is why I fear no fall." Then let us always say, "Lord, there is the promise; it is thy business to fulfil it." Down I go on the promise flat! no standing up for me. That is where you should go — prostrate on the promise; and remember, every promise is a rock, an unchanging thing. Therefore, at his feet cast yourself, and rest there for ever.

5. But now comes one jarring note to spoil the theme. To some of you God is unchanging in his *threatenings*. If every promise stands fast, and every oath of the covenant is fulfilled, hark thee, sinner! — mark the word — hear the death-knell of thy carnal hopes; see the funeral of thy fleshly trustings. Every threatening of God, as well as every promise shall be fulfilled. Talk of decrees! I will tell you of a decree: "He that believeth not shall be damned." That is a decree, and a statute that can never change. Be as good as you please, be as moral as you can, be as honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you may, — there stands the unchangeable threatening; "He that believeth not shall be damned." What sayest thou to that, moralist? Oh, thou wishest thou couldst alter it, and say, "He that does not live a holy life shall be damned." That will be true; but it does not say so. It says, "He that believeth not." Here is the stone of stumbling, and the rock of offence; but you cannot alter it. You must believe or be damned, saith the Bible; and mark, that threat of God is as unchangeable as God himself. And when a thousand years of hell's torments shall have passed away, you shall look on high, and see written in burning letters of fire, "He that believeth not shall be damned." "But, Lord, I am damned." Nevertheless it says "*shall be*" still. And when a million ages have rolled away, and you turn up your eye and still read "SHALL BE DAMNED", unchanged, unaltered. And when you shall have thought that eternity must have spun out its last thread — that every particle of that which we call eternity, must have run out, you shall still see it written up there, "SHALL BE DAMNED." O terrific thought! How dare I utter it? But I must. Ye must be warned, sirs, "lest ye also come into this place of torment." Ye must be told rough things; for if God's gospel is not a rough thing, the law is a rough thing; Mount Sinai is a rough thing. Woe unto the watchman that warns not the ungodly! God is unchanging in his threatenings. Beware, O sinner, for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

6. We must just hint at one thought before we pass away, and that is — God is unchanging *in the objects of his love* — not only in his love, but in the *objects* of it.

"If ever it should come to pass,  
That sheep of Christ might fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall a thousand times a day."

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be, and then there is no gospel promise true; but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once, when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then he will love me for ever.

"Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

The objects of everlasting love never change. Those whom

God hath called, he will justify; whom he has justified, he will sanctify; and whom he sanctifies, he will glorify.

## II.

Now secondly, let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. "I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Now, who are "the sons of Jacob," who can rejoice in an immutable God?

1. First, they are the *sons of God's election*; for it is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, the children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil." It was written, "The elder shall serve the younger." "The sons of Jacob"

"Are the sons of God's election,  
Who through sovereign grace believe;  
By eternal destination  
Grace and glory they receive."

God's elect are here meant by "the sons of Jacob," — those whom he foreknew and fore-ordained to everlasting salvation:

2. By "the sons of Jacob" are meant, in the second place, *persons who enjoy peculiar rights and titles*. Jacob, you know, had no rights by birth; but he soon acquired them. He changed a mess of pottage with his brother Esau, and thus gained the birthright. I do not justify Esau, the means; but he did also obtain the blessing, and so acquired peculiar rights. By "the sons of Jacob" here, are meant persons who have peculiar rights and titles. Unto them that believe, he hath given the right and power to become sons of God. They have an interest in the blood of Christ; they have a right to "enter in through the gates into the city;" they have a title to eternal honours; they have a promise to everlasting glory; they have a right to call themselves sons of God. Oh! there are peculiar rights and privileges belonging to the "sons of Jacob".

3. But, then next, these "sons of Jacob" were *men of peculiar manifestations*. Jacob had had peculiar manifestations from his God, and thus he was highly honoured. Once at night-time he lay down and slept; he had the hedges for his curtains, the sky for his canopy, a stone for a pillow, and the earth for his bed. Oh! then he had had a peculiar manifestation. There was a ladder, and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He thus had a manifestation of Christ Jesus, as the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, up and down which angels came to bring us mercies. Then what a manifestation there was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him; and again at Peniel, when he wrestled with God, and saw him face to face. Those were peculiar manifestations; and this passage refers to those who, like Jacob, have had peculiar manifestations.

Now, then, how many of you have had personal manifestations? "Oh!" you say, "that is enthusiasm; that is fanaticism." Well, it is a blessed enthusiasm, too, for the sons of Jacob have had peculiar manifestations. They have talked with God as a man talketh with his friend; they have whispered in the ear of Jehovah; Christ hath been with them to sup with them, and they with Christ; and the Holy Spirit hath shone into their souls with such a mighty radiance, that they could not doubt about special manifestations. The "sons of Jacob" are the men, who enjoy these manifestations.

4. Then again, they are *men of peculiar trials*. Ah! poor Jacob! I should not choose Jacob's lot if I had not the prospect of Jacob's blessing; for a hard lot his was. He had to run away from his father's house to Laban's; and then that surly old Laban cheated him all the years he was there — cheated him of his wife, cheated him in wages, cheated him in his flocks, and cheated him all through the story. By-and-bye he had to run away from Laban, who pursued him and overtook him. Next came Esau with four hundred men to cut him up root and branch. Then there was a season of prayer, and afterwards he wrestled, and had to go all his life with his thigh out of joint. But a little further on, Rachel, his dear beloved, died. Then his daughter Dinah is led astray, and the sons murder the Shechemites. Anon there is dear Joseph sold into Egypt, and a famine comes. Then Reuben goes up to his couch and pollutes it; Judah commits incest with his own daughter-in-law; and all his sons become a plague to him. At last Benjamin is taken away, and the old man, almost brokenhearted, cries, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." Never was man more tried than Jacob all through the one sin of cheating his brother. All through his life God chastised him. But I believe there are many who can sympathize with dear old Jacob. They had had to pass through trials very much like his. Well, cross-bearers! God says, "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Poor tried souls! ye are not consumed because of the unchanging nature of your God. Now do not get fretting, and say, with the self-conceit of misery, "I am the man who hath seen affliction." Why the "Man of Sorrows" was afflicted more than you; Jesus was indeed a mourner. You only see the skirts of the garments of affliction. You never have trials like his. You do not understand what troubles mean; you have hardly sipped the cup of trouble; you have only had a drop or two, but Jesus drunk the dregs. Fear not, saith God, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob," men of peculiar trials, "are not consumed."

5. Then one more thought about who are the "sons of Jacob", for I should like you to find out whether you are "sons of Jacob", yourselves. They are *men of peculiar character*; for though there were some things about Jacob's character which we cannot commend, there are one or two things which God commends. There was Jacob's faith, by which Jacob had his name written amongst the mighty worthies who obtained not the promises on earth, but shall obtain them in heaven. Are you men of faith, beloved? Do you know what it is to walk by faith, to live by faith, to get your temporary food by faith, to live on spiritual manna — all by faith? Is faith the rule of your life? If so, you are the "sons of Jacob".

Then Jacob was a man of prayer — a man who wrestled, and groaned, and prayed. There is a man up yonder who never prayed this morning, before coming up to the house of God. Ah! you poor heathen, don't you pray? No! he says, "I never thought of such a thing; for years I have not prayed." Well, I hope you may before you die. Live and die without prayer, and you will pray long enough when you get to hell. There is a woman: she did not pray this morning; she was so busy sending her children to the Sunday-school, she had not time to pray. No time to pray? Had you time to dress? There is a time for every purpose under heaven, and if you had purposed to pray, you would have prayed. Sons of God cannot live without prayer. They are wrestling Jacobs.

They are men in whom the Holy Ghost so works, that they can no more live without prayer than I can live without breathing. They must pray. Sirs, mark you, if you are living without prayer, you are living without Christ; and dying like that, your portion will be in the lake which burneth with fire. God redeem you, God rescue you from such a lot! But you who are "the sons of Jacob", take comfort, for God is immutable.

### III.

Thirdly, I can say only a word about the other point—**THE BENEFIT WHICH THESE "SONS OF JACOB" RECEIVE FROM AN UNCHANGING GOD.** "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Consumed?" How? how can man be consumed? Why, there are two ways. *We might have been consumed in hell.* If God had been a changing God, the "sons of Jacob" here this morning, might have been consumed in hell; but for God's unchanging love I should have been a faggot in the fire. But there is a way of being consumed in this world; there is such a thing as being condemned before you die — "condemned already"; there is such a thing as being alive, and yet being absolutely dead. We might have been left to our own devices; and then where should we have been now? Revelling with the drunkard, blaspheming Almighty God. Oh? had he left you, dearly beloved, had he been a changing God, ye had been amongst the filthiest of the filthy, and the vilest of the vile. Cannot you remember in your life, seasons similar to those I have felt? I have gone right to the edge of sin; some strong temptation has taken hold of both my arms, so that I could not wrestle with it. I have been pushed along, dragged as by an awful satanic power to the very edge of some horrid precipice. I have looked down, down, down, and seen my portion; I quivered on the brink of ruin. I have been horrified, as, with my hair upright, I have thought of the sin I was about to commit, the horrible pit into which I was about to fall. A strong arm hath saved me. I have started back and cried, 'O God! could I have gone so near sin, and yet come back again? Could I have walked right up to the furnace and not fallen down, like Nebuchadnezzar's strong men, devoured by the very heat? Oh! is it possible I should be here this morning, when I think of the sins I have committed, and the crimes which have crossed my wicked imagination? Yes, I am here, unconsumed, because the Lord changes-not. Oh! if he had changed, we should have been consumed in a dozen ways; if the Lord had changed, you and I should have been consumed by ourselves; for after all, Mr. Self is the worst enemy a Christian has. We should have proved suicides to our own souls; we should have mixed the cup of poison for our own spirits, if the Lord had not been an unchanging God, and dashed the cup out of our hands when we were about to drink it.

Then *we should have been consumed by God himself* if he had not been a changeless God. We call God a Father; but there is not a father in this world who would not have killed all his children long ago, so provoked would he have been with them, if he had been half as much troubled as God has been with his family. He has the most troublesome family in the whole world — unbelieving, ungrateful, disobedient, forgetful, rebellious, wandering, murmuring, and stiffnecked. Well it is that he is longsuffering or else he would have taken not only the rod, but the sword to some of us long ago. But there was nothing in us to love at first, so there cannot be less now.

John Newton used to tell a whimsical story, and laugh at it too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of Election. "Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else he would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case, and true in respect to most of God's people; for there is little to love in them after they are born, that if he had not loved them before then, he would have seen no reason to choose them after; but since he loved them without works, he loves them without works still; since their good works did not win his affection, bad works cannot sever that affection; since their righteousness did not bind his love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links. He loved them out of pure sovereign grace, and he will love them still. But we should have been consumed by the devil, and by our enemies—consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials, and in a hundred other ways, if God had ever changed.

Well, now, time fails us, and I can say but little. I have only just cursorily touched on the text. I now hand it to you. May the Lord help you "sons of Jacob" to take home this portion of meat; digest it well, and feed upon it. May the Holy Ghost sweetly apply the glorious things that are written! And may you have "a feast of fat things of wines on the lees well refined!" Remember God is the same, whatever is removed. Your friends may be disaffected, your ministers may be taken away, every thing may change; but God does not. Your Brethren may change and cast out your name as vile: but God will love you still. Let your station in life change, and your property be gone; let your whole life be shaken, and you become weak and sickly; let everything flee away—there is one place where change cannot put his finger: there is one name about which mutability can never be written; there is one heart never can alter; that heart is God's—that name Love.

"Trust him he will ne'er deceive you.  
Though you hardly of him deem;  
He will never, never leave you,  
Nor will let you quite leave him."

#### SALVATION FROM SIN

As certain as we are lost in sin, so certain can Christ save us from our sins. He will save us if we will let Him. A story is told of Rowland Hill, the great preacher. Lady Ann Erskine was passing by in her carriage, and she asked her coachman who that was that was drawing such a large assembly. He replied that it was Rowland Hill. "I have heard a good deal about him," she said, "drive up near the crowd." Mr. Hill soon saw her, and saw that she belonged to the aristocracy. He stopped all at once in the middle of his discourse and said, "My friends, I have something for sale." This astonished his hearers. "Yes, I have something for sale; it is the soul of Lady Ann Erskine. Is there any one here who will bid for her soul? Ah, do I hear a bid? Who bids? Satan bids. Satan, what will you give for her soul? 'I will give riches, honor, and pleasure.' But stop; do I hear another bid? Yes, Jesus Christ bids. Jesus, what will you give for her soul? 'I will give eternal life.' Lady Ann Erskine, you have heard the two bids, which will you take?" And Lady Ann fell on her knees, and cried out, "I will have Jesus." So may it be with you.

—MOODY

#### HE DIED — BUT LIVES!

I hear the words of love,  
I gaze upon the blood;  
I see the mighty sacrifice,  
And I have peace with God.  
'Tis everlasting peace,  
Sure as Jehovah's name;  
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne,  
For evermore the same.

The clouds may go and come,  
And storms may sweep my sky,  
This blood-sealed friendship changes not.  
The cross is ever nigh.  
My love is oftentimes low,  
My joy still ebbs and flows;  
But peace with Him remains the same.  
No change Jehovah knows.

That which can shake the cross  
May shake the peace it gave,  
Which tells me Christ has never died.  
Or never left the grave.  
Till then my peace is sure,  
It will not, cannot yield;  
Jesus, I know, has died and lives;  
On this firm rock I build.

I change, He changes not,  
The Christ can never die;  
His love, not mine, the resting-place.  
His truth, not mine, the tie.  
The cross still stands unchanged,  
Though heaven is now His home:  
The mighty stone is rolled away,  
But yonder is His tomb.

And yonder is my peace,  
The grave of all my woes;  
I know the Son of God has come,  
I know He died and rose.  
I know He liveth now  
At God's right hand above;  
I know the throne on which He sits,  
I know His truth and love.

—HORATIUS BONAR

#### REMEMBER THE SEMINARY IN YOUR WILL

We suggest that our friends should remember Toronto Baptist Seminary in their wills. The proper form for this is: "I give, devise and bequeath the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ to Toronto Baptist Seminary, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, Canada, associated with Jarvis St. Baptist Church." We are laying foundations for the future, and we are determined to make it as impossible as it is within human power to do, that not one dollar given to Toronto Baptist Seminary shall be used for anything but the propagation of the gospel. No amount would be too large, and certainly no amount would be too small. We earnestly solicit the gifts of those who believe in ministerial and missionary education.

# Christ's Moral Authority in a Lawless Age

By Rev. W. Ridley Chesterton

*(This message was first delivered to a group of ministers in 1920, but the truth is applicable to our own day. O.L.C.)*

**A**WAY on the tiny island of Patmos, lying silent in the sea, far off from the stir and throb of life, there was given to one deep-seeing soul to look into the Book of Human History, and read "the things that were to come to pass". The seals that no man could loose were broken. The pages that no man could turn were opened. The startling drama of the ages to come was unfolded to his view. As he sat gazing into the silent sea there passed by, in striking symbol, the vision of life's struggle and tragedy moving on to its destiny. The sea became a surging sea of human life; a sound of many voices.

**THE VISION OF OUR AGE.**—The startling fitness of part of the vision to our own age arrested me the other day. The graphic figures, the striking symbols, the suggestive sequence seemed the poetic garment for our day.

The seer gazing into the open Book beholds a rider with a great sword on a fiery Red horse; the cruel banisher of peace from the earth. He turns the page to find the peaceless earth ridden by one whose horse is Black, and in whose gaunt hands are the scales of want, and famine, and starvation. Again the seals of a new page are broken, and behold! a Pale horse, "its rider's name was death, and hell came close behind," and before the bottom of that page is reached it is full of terrible and tragic things: the fiery horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of death are joined by "the wild beasts of the earth," and they trample, tear and destroy human life.

What a vision! An age smitten by war; by famine; by death; by wild violence. This is the age in which we live: stricken by war; ravaged by famine; racked by death, and torn by lawlessness. Everywhere, at home and abroad, and in every realm of life, is the spirit of revolt and disorder manifested. We seem to be witnessing a volcanic eruption in human history. Life has suddenly burst from its deeps; broken through its crust of custom and convention; and poured forth its lava of passion and destruction on the civilization that has so long restrained it; burying, alas! in red ruin much that is innocent and dear.

That lawlessness presents the problem of our age. In facing it, however, one other thing must be kept steadily in mind. Not all that appears to be lawlessness is such. There is a lawlessness that is a transition from the false to the true; a disorder that is a search for the true order. The iconoclast may be a Cromwell: no lawless man he. Says Carlyle in his "Hero Worship": "It is a tragical position for a true man to work in revolutions. He seems an anarchist; and indeed a painful element of anarchy does encumber him at every step; him to whose soul anarchy is hateful. He is the Missionary of Order. It is tragical for him to be engaged in breaking and down-pulling — doubly tragical."

In our disordered and distracted world not every lawless symptom must be regarded as a product of wild passion. The tragedy of the true man "who seems an

anarchist" is here also. We live in an age when two streams out of the heart of man have rushed together—the stream of moral progress; of a true liberty, breaking down the narrowing banks of despotism and oppression; and the stream of immoral passion, of a false license, tearing down the restraining clams of law and authority—and the boat of our modern world caught between the two is tossing desperately.

We should face the issue with fear and despair but for our confidence in Him who, long ago, tossed in His boat on the storm-lashed lake, commanded the winds and the waves to obey Him.

"There's a hand on the rudder that will not flinch:

There's no fear on the Pilot's face:

As He guides the world like a boat in a storm,  
Through the rocking seas of space."

**THE LAWLESSNESS OF THE AGE.**—The lawlessness that troubles us is not the disorder that is struggling toward a nobler order; not the lawlessness that breaks one authority because it is moving on to a greater. It is the lawlessness that knows no law; that wants no law; that acknowledges no law save its own lawless desires. In Dr. Martineau's fine sermon on "The free man of Christ," he says, "There are two governing ideas that may be said to rule the actions of mankind, and share between them the dominion of all human souls: the idea of pleasure and pain, and the idea of the noble and ignoble. Everyone, in every deed, follows either what he enjoys, or what he reveres. Now he and he only is free who implicitly submits to that which he deeply venerates; . . . and they are all slaves who either have nothing which they revere, or having it, insult its authority and trample it under foot." It is this lawlessness which reveres nothing, and bows to no authority, which troubles us, and which we tremble to see so legibly written on the features of our age. We realize that we are faced with the possibility of a society who have no authorities — no God, no spiritual life, no belief, in the eternal sanctions of morality, no hopes beyond the grave. Without law; any law. "Who are ready to grasp all the enjoyments of these earthly things at all costs, and who are able, once emancipated from the great control of moral sanctions to make human life a hell" (Dr. R. F. Horton).

**THE PROBLEM: A PROBLEM OF RELIGION.**—Now what is the relationship of this lawless state to us Christian ministers and teachers? What has it to do with the Christian church? Everything. The trouble is a deeper one than governments can solve. The malady of the age requires a greater physician than the Prime Minister, or any prime minister. The cancer of disorder which has travelled with such rapidity through the body of the nation has its roots in those vital parts from which no human surgeon can extract them. There is no cure for the lawlessness of our age excepting in the Lord of all the ages. Our mistake in the past, and one we are terribly in danger of repeating, has been that of thinking we can restrain human nature by human sanctions. We have thought lawlessness purely a matter for law, and it is really a matter for grace. This world conflict and

confusion was made possible because the religion at the back of our European life has been inadequate. Our authorities have broken down, because they were not the right authorities; not strong enough to curb and conquer the stirred passions of man; not strong enough to command a disciplined obedience, or secure a righteous order. One of the largest rivers in the world is known as "China's sorrow." For nearly a thousand miles of its course it leaves its granite and limestone gorges, and flows between banks low and friable. With the floods of spring the banks sink away, and thousands of square miles of the country are laid waste. The torrents are unrestrained through lack of binding power in their banks. Which things are a parable. The granite and limestone gorges of the Puritans, whose sanctions found their foundations in the sovereignty of God, have made way for banks the span of a man, and their strength is the strength of a materialistic civilization. The sorrow of our age is the friableness of our banks.

As long as life was placid and undisturbed, save on its surface, they were enough. But when the torrents poured down their swollen currents of passion, they were swept away on the huge river, unrestrained, rushed on to devastation.

**THE EVIL IN MAN'S HEART.**—We have built our banks badly, and we built badly largely because we had so faulty an estimate of the currents. The sweep of the torrents, the mighty sweep of the awful torrents from man's heart during the last six years, has surprised us. Our doctrine of human nature led us all astray. We persisted in skimming the surface instead of plumbing the deeps. In his latest book, "A Spiritual Pilgrimage," Rev. R. J. Campbell sorrowfully admits that his view of the nature of sin tended "to make men think lightly of it. By speaking of it as the remains of the ape and tiger qualities in our ascending humanity, we belittle its tragedy, its terribleness, its ever-present menace." A suggestive confession! Our modern estimate of human nature has been far away from the judgment of our Lord when He declared that men loved darkness rather than light; that they lacked conscience; that they put lust in place of love; that beneath custom, culture, and civilization was corruption. "Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies." "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, hatred, strife, murders, and such like." What a remarkable commentary the world has been, and still is, on these words. In what pages of blood we have been reading them. Our war literature has been restating it. "So humanity was still as beast-like as twenty centuries ago," writes Phillip Gibbs, as he follows the trail of blood and carnage.

Yet we were half ashamed of these words before the war; half apologetic in uttering them. We were not fond of the doctrine of human depravity. We believed we could have righteousness without redemption; that we could have the super-man without regeneration. Men talked of the tiger being gradually eliminated from mankind, and the angel evolved by a process of religious culture. Evil was good in the making. Sin was a shadow where the light ought to be. We were all moving, more or less rapidly, toward that "far-off divine event". It was a rude shock to many foolish dreams to discover that culture could curse; that civilization could burst into hell; that mankind had a devil — seven devils; that beneath culture, science and religion could be found still the base

human heart, desperately corrupt, desperately cruel, "desperately wicked".

History is a great sifter between truth and error. Renan said that the work of the 20th Century would be to take out of the waste-paper basket a multitude of excellent-ideas that the 19th Century had heedlessly thrown into it, and the last few years have forced us to restore some truths we imagined we had outgrown. The war has destroyed many things, but it has restored the doctrine of sin. Lawlessness is not on the surface of man's nature. It is in the deeps. With all his conquests he has not conquered his own heart.

**MAN MUST HAVE A MASTER.**—And because we have failed to plumb the deeps we have failed to find the kind of sanctions human nature needs. We have failed to find for man his Master; the Authority before which he must bow.

"Find your king," says Thomas Carlyle, "raise him to the supreme place and loyally reverence him, and you have a perfect government." That is what we have not found for the masses of men. They have "no king but Caesar," and Caesar is not enough. "We have no king," cries one of these old Hebrew prophets, as he looks on his lawless age. "We have no king because we feared not the Lord." And Hosea's words might be uttered by many a modern prophet, in many a country of the world.

What we have to find for man is a King; a Lord of the heart, and will, and conscience; a Master of the fierce, unruly, volcanic deeps. The only King is He who is "able to save to the uttermost"; the uttermost deeps of our nature, as well as the uttermost range of our days. There is a "divine right of kings", but it belongs to the King whom God hath set upon His holy hill.

It cannot be said that we have raised Him to the "supreme place", either in our civilization, or our religious life. The "supreme place"! We have given Him half a throne, if as much as that. We have spoken of Him as the "flower of the race," rather than the "Lord of the race". To declare that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," has been to stamp oneself as narrow and intolerant. Yet there is "none other name". It is not an optional choice. It is not Christ or some other. It is Christ or chaos. Jesus Christ has come into His own, as He always does when the world hovers on the brink of hell. Paul was not indulging in poetic fancy, but in plain fact, when he wrote to the Colossians, "By Him all things hold together" — all things — "thrones, dominions, principedoms, powers." There is one Government for which the world waits. "Unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon His shoulder." That is the King we have to raise to the supreme place.

"If we would build anew, and build to stay,  
We must find God again, and go His way."

**THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST.**—If these things be true, how does it affect us as Christian ministers and teachers? Is it not part of our work to secure the establishment of this very Authority in the hearts of men? Are we quite free from blame? Has there been any note absent; any emphasis wanting in the life and witness of the Church?

In the Preface of Mr. Fullerton's delightful little book, "Life's Dusty Way," he tells how, in China, on road journeys, starting by starlight, many a time they had to

search with lighted candle for the marks of those who had gone before them, that the path through the loose and shifting soil might become clear. A search with our candle for the footprints of the Apostolic Church would re-discover for us the pathway of the Lordship of Christ.

The footprint is very plain. You will find it in the first Christian sermon, "God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, Lord." It is the notable emphasis of the Acts of the Apostles. He is Sovereign; Lord. The early Christians "turned the world upside down" by preaching "Another King, one Jesus." Open your Epistles; what is the name found most frequently there? Saviour? No. "Lord." Paul's writings are haunted by the word. In the concordance there are whole columns of it.

Is the emphasis wanting to-day? Is our vocabulary as full as it should be of that word "Lord"? Are we claiming for Him the right to rule; the right to an unquestioning submission? The gospel for an age of lawlessness is the apostolic gospel. "God has made this same Jesus, Lord."

**DEEPENING OUR CONCEPTION OF CONVERSION.**—Allow me to make two simple applications. The Apostolic emphasis on the Lordship of Christ would deepen our conception of conversion. We should make a bigger demand on the soul in the initial act of faith. If I have been correct in my diagnosis, man's trouble is deep down in the heart and will, and the remedy must be equally as deep. It is suggestive that the element of revolt, rebellion, disorder, enters into many of both the Hebrew and Greek words for sin. The element of authority must enter into our conception of salvation. Sin is lawlessness, and salvation must mean surrender. We have to win, not an assent merely, but an allegiance. Our preaching is to reach not only the intelligence and the emotions, but the will. The Saviour must become the Sovereign. Not patronage, but submission, is the demand we must make for Christ. Men must change Masters. The new life must be a conversion; a change from one master to another. We must re-instate that word conversion; the conversion not merely of the illiterate, the "Punchers" and "Tight-Handfuls", but of the cultured and educated. The talk about the cultured man not worrying about his sins is all nonsense. If he does not worry, it is our duty to do our utmost to make him worry. It is not because he has no sins. The sin is there, beneath his culture. We know that now. The sins of culture have been written in blood. Saul, the scholar, as well as Onesimus, the slave, must find a Master, and become a captive.

There is an experience, in many cases a very real and enriching experience, known among earnest religious teachers as "the second blessing". If I mistake not, the second blessing is simply the mastery of Christ; the complete, full mastery of a Lord. But why "a second blessing"? Is there not something wrong with our preaching that it should require such an experience, *at such a date*, in the soul's life? Should not the Lord walk in from the first? We must bear a clearer witness to the truth that the Saviour of the soul is the Lord of the soul.

**DEEPENING OUR CONCEPTION OF CONSECRATION.**—The Apostolic emphasis on the Lordship of Christ would deepen our conception of Consecration. By such a doctrine alone can we transform the Church, and raise the standard of Christian living. This lawless age

is partly the reflection of the lawless church. Christ the King has neither "complete supremacy" nor "loyal reverence" in the hearts of His knights. The Authority to which we have to bow is not custom, convention, creed — we have said that often enough — but there is an Authority. That we have not said often enough. "One is your Master, even Christ." The Mastery of the Lord is the mastery of Love, but it is a mastery all the same. It is Love that allows no rival. It requires the throne, and nothing less than the throne. Faith, trust, love we have preached. Is it not time we preached obedience? Love must be made to have loyalty in it. Faith must not be divorced from "Follow Me." His knights must take vows of "utmost obedience to their King." Do you remember Tennyson tells us in his "Idylls" how Guinevere wrecked the realm, and brought "red ruin" and "the breaking up of laws", and all through her want of loyalty to Arthur? Her love was a love that had not crowned him. Is not that the tragedy of the Church?

"O Kinsman loved, but not enough."

"Not enough." There is the secret of our failure.

We must place a new emphasis on consecration. Not a spurious, sentimental, emotional consecration, but a definite, practical allegiance of life. Consecration has too long been regarded as the privilege of the select, and not the common bounden duty of all believers. How meaningless those great utterances of our Lord's seem to modern Christians! "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." "If any man hate not . . . his own life he cannot be My disciple." Allegiance, self-denial, cross-bearing, complete abandonment of life a condition of discipleship! How we have softened that "hard saying"!

We have allowed the Lordship of Christ to become what Bacon called, in an illuminating phrase, "a bed-ridden truth", without strength in its ankle-bones. It does not come down into our common life. We must bring it back into vital contact with the activities of life. The Redeemer of the conscience must become the Lord of the conscience. . . . May I say one other word? My only right to say it is that I have said it to my own heart first. I speak to men who hold a great and solemn office in this lawless age. We are "ambassadors", "ambassadors for Christ", ambassadors of this King who is the one hope of the age. Have we given Him the supreme place? Have we kept our knightly vows to our great Lord?

"Be thou the King, and we will work Thy will who love Thee . . ."

Then the King bound them by strait vows to his own self."

Those "strait vows", how have we kept them, brethren?

We must face the question of His Lordship for ourselves first. *There* the recovery of the old truth begins for many of us; in our own consciences. And it is not easy. Is there a better place to face it than here, or a better time than now?

How have we kept our vow?

It is a memory of long ago with some of us, a far away sacred memory; the hour when He came and put His tender, pierced hand upon our life and claimed us "Counting me faithful and putting me into the ministry."

If He should meet us again to-day, in that old mystic way, and call us by our name, let us look up into His face, even if ours be clouded with shame, and bedimmed with tears, and say again —

"Rabboni" — My Master.

# Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 21	First Quarter	Lesson 1	January 6, 1957
Vol. 21	First Quarter	Lesson 2	January 13, 1957

## THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Lesson Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Golden Text: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep."  
—1 Thessalonians 4:15.

In the writings of the Apostle Paul instruction and exhortation go hand in hand. He first lays down the broad, general, fundamental truths; then, on the basis of the doctrines expounded, endeavours to arouse the believers to appropriate action. The chapter before us is no exception to the rule. These Christians in Thessalonica, who were but children in the faith, were given the much-needed teaching concerning the Return of Christ, and then, resting their minds and hearts upon this glorious hope, they were exhorted to be of good comfort.

God had called them by His own sovereign grace (1 Thess. 1:4), and since the grace of God is not to be abused (Rom. 6:1, 2) or to be bestowed in vain (1 Cor. 15:10), they were commanded to walk in a manner worthy of their high calling (1 Thess. 2:12; Eph. 4:1). Their manner of life was to be characterized by holiness (1 Thess. 4:1-8), brotherly love (1 Thess. 4:9, 10; 2 Thess. 1:3) and by holy diligence (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:10-12). Idleness would spoil their testimony before the world (2 Thess. 3:8, 9) and would also tend to poverty (Prov. 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:12).

The great Apostle to the Gentiles strictly observed in his own life the injunctions which he laid upon others. Everywhere he went, we find him rejoicing with those who rejoiced and weeping with those who wept (Rom. 12:15). His was a heart of tenderness, for he knew by experience the meaning of sorrow and affliction (2 Cor. 4: 7-12; 6:4-10). Death is the common lot of all (Heb. 9:27), and the passing away of certain Thessalonian Christians had brought keen sorrow to the hearts of their loved ones. To minds that were almost overpowered by confusion, anxiety and doubt the Apostle brought the great consolations of the Gospel.

Ignorance may cause unnecessary sorrow and despair. A mother, not having learned that the little ones who fall asleep are safe in the arms of Jesus, will be tormented by unreasonable pain. Similarly, the Christians in Thessalonica were ignorant concerning the hope of the Lord's Return and concerning the condition of their beloved dead.

In the New Testament the death of a Christian is described as sleep, the figure suggesting quiet rest, calm and sure repose (Matt. 27:52; John 11:11-13; Acts 7:60). For him there will be no death, in the sense of separation from God (John 5:24; Rev. 20:6; 21:8). Eternal life is the portion promised to all who believe upon Christ as Saviour and Lord (John 3:16; 17: 2,3). But, the wages of sin is death, and all who die in their sins will perish, not in the sense of being annihilated, but in the sense of enduring never-ending, conscious torment, eternally separated from God (John 8:24; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11-15).

The sorrow of the Christian differs from the sorrow of those who are not Christians in that hope brightens the path of the believer, although that path may be dark and dreary (Prov. 4:18), while the sorrow of the world is characterized by hopelessness and despair (2 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 2:12).

Upon what grounds may the sorrowing Christian have hope? What are the elements of joy that will find their way into his saddened heart? There is first the assurance that Christ died. Therefore, the penalty of sins being removed, those who believe in Him will never die spiritually (John 11:25, 26; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Thess. 1:10). Christ tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Again, inasmuch as Christ not only died, but rose again, the believer also will one day rise again from the dead. Because He lives, we, too, shall live (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; 2 Cor. 4:14). The loved ones,

believing in Christ, are forever one with Him, and whether alive or asleep, are safe and secure in Him, united to Him by faith (John 10:27-30; Rom. 14:9; 1 Thess. 5:10). But the chief hope is the great truth that when the Father brings back His Son, He will with Christ bring also the believers who are one with Him (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14). We shall see our loved ones again.

Those who are alive when Christ returns will not have any advantage over those who have in the meantime fallen asleep in Him. The English word "prevent" (verse 15), formerly meant "go before" or "precede", and not "hinder", as it does now.

Our Saviour has Himself promised to come again personally, even as He ascended to heaven personally and actually (Acts 1:9-11). What a glorious event that will be! Archangels and angels will be present. Also, the trumpet of God shall sound forth (1 Cor. 15:52). The trumpet is the symbol of the presence of royalty (2 Kings 9:13; Zech. 9:14), and the token of victory (Judg. 7:18-22; 2 Chron. 29:27, 28). The dead in Christ shall rise, the living believers shall be transformed (1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20, 21), and all shall be caught up to be with Christ. There will be a joyous re-union of all the saints of all the ages. Never more shall there be any separation (John 17:24; Rev. 21:1), any sorrow (Rev. 21:4) or any sin (Rev. 21:27).

With these words, which are verily the words of the Lord (verse 15; 1 Cor. 15:1-4), the Apostle urged the Thessalonians to comfort themselves and one another. So may we, too, when called upon to pass through the valley of sorrow, find consolation in the sure promises of God (Psa. 23:4; 1 Thess. 5:11).

### Daily Bible Readings

- Jan. 7—His Return is Predicted ..... Mal. 3
- Jan. 8—His Return is Personal ..... Acts 1:1-11
- Jan. 9—His Return is Sure ..... John 14:1-6
- Jan. 10—His Return and the Resurrection of the Dead  
1 Cor. 15:51-58
- Jan. 11—His Return and the Transformation of the Living  
Phil. 3:15-21
- Jan. 12—His Return is Our Glorious Hope ..... Tit. 2:11-15
- Jan. 13—His Return Inspires to Good Works .. Matt. 25:14-30

### Suggested Hymns

For ever with the Lord,  
When He cometh.  
Thou art coming, O my Saviour!  
When Jesus comes to reward His servants.  
Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.  
Rejoice! rejoice! our King is coming.

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### FREEDOM OF RELIGION DENIED

#### *Condemned by the Pope:*

"That every man is free to embrace and profess the religion he shall believe true, guided by the light of reason." (15).

### ROME ASSERTS HER "RIGHT" TO EMPLOY FORCE

#### *Condemned by the Pope:*

"The Church has not the power of availing herself of force or any direct or indirect temporal power." (24)

### ROME TEACHES THAT THE STATE IS SUBSERVIENT TO THE CHURCH

#### *Condemned by the Pope:*

"In the case of conflicting laws between the two powers, the Civil Law ought to prevail." (42)

### R.C. CHURCH CLAIMS RIGHT TO BE THE SOLE RELIGION

#### *Condemned by the Pope:*

"In the present day it is no longer necessary that the Catholic religion shall be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other modes of worship." (77)

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