



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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The Snare of Gradualism

The title of my message this morning is “The Snare of Gradualism.” The word gradualism is a synonymous word with the word apostasy when we think of it in church life. The word gradualism means, “approaching a desired end by gradual stages,” with gradual measures being taken. However, notice it is “an approaching of a desired end by gradual stages.” In the context of conservative Biblical church life

we usually think of gradualism not as an activity of approaching a desired end by gradual stages but rather an undesired end by a slight variation, with slight almost unnoticed changes. That is why gradualism is a snare.

As a rule, it is not that anyone is interested in destroying the faith within the Church. It is not that someone is deliberately trying to apostatize. Rather, the process of apostasy is so gradual

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and so persistent that it can happen really without our noticing it as we ought to, and will happen if we do not stay alert and arrest worldward trends. Certainly then, gradualism will ensnare us and the faith will be lost.

The snare of gradualism suggests that faithfulness is something that is not settled in one decision that is made, or in a single choice that we make. Rather, whether we will gradually come closer to the Lord or lose the

way, depends on many seemingly insignificant choices right at the time that we make them. As we think about the choices that we make, sometimes we call this a mind set or a values system, our particular leanings in a direction or another, our outlook, or our mentality. These are words that describe how we might come out when the particular issue is faced.

Faithfulness to the Lord has to do not with one major decision.

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Sometimes we say, or we hear people say, “I became a Christian twenty, or thirty or forty years ago” (whatever the case) as if that once and for all settled the question of faithfulness for them. It does not. If those persons are still Christians it is because they have chosen the right things along the way as they were faced with various snares and have dealt with the snares and sins that have arisen.

I think that the psalmist was distressed with gradualism that led to unfaithfulness when he cried out in Psalm 12:1. “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” He saw a particular situation apparently in his day, in his lifetime, where it seemed like the godly people were becoming less and less. It is much the idea I suppose that Elijah had when he said “I, even I only, am left” (1 Kings 19:14), and if they take his life then righteousness is gone. We know that he was discouraged, and it was not nearly as bad as what he thought. Yet, apparently, the seven thousand that were left in Israel was kind of a small group in comparison to the whole.

This “godly man ceaseth;” to me depicts a progression. Ceaseth — continually getting a

little less and less — more and more unfaithfulness — less and less godliness. The snare of gradualism could be seen in words that Jesus expressed in that concern in Luke 18:8 when He raised this question, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” He will. We know that there will be those who are faithful when He comes. Certainly He will find faith on the earth, but the question was, will it be that way? The question is a very sobering question that suggests gradualism. By the time His second advent comes, will there still be faith here?

For a basis for further thoughts on the snare of gradualism, let us look at Judges 2. I have used this passage before in thinking about apostasy. I like its “ring.” I think it certainly does have (we could say) the application or present day ring. Judges is a rather good book for us in studying the cycles of apostasy and of revival because things in our day are much the way they were in Judges. One of the characteristics of the day of Judges was that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). That is much how we see the religious scene today. We know that it is not good enough. If you look at the cycles of apos-

tasy through the entire book of Judges, you would find seven cycles, in all, where they apostatized and then came back again to the Lord, apostatized again and came back again to the Lord. In the first chapters we have somewhat a summary of conditions and perhaps we could also say of the first apostatizing and of turning from the Lord. I want to read Judges 2:6–10, 13–23.

I am not sure what impressions you might have as you have read this. You might think that what we see here does not sound like anything in New Testament Church life, and in one sense it does not. You might think that the people here were really bad compared to us. However, there are sufficient parallels to make me think of the clear message concerning the dangers of gradualism and of apostasy. There is a reference here to a first and second generation. We saw the summary of generation to generation in verses 13–19. In 2:6–10 we see that second generation arising. Actually, that comes out in verse 10, “there arose another generation after them.” *The outstanding characteristics of the first generation were faith in the promises of God, obedience to God’s commands and marvellous victory under the leadership that God had put in place — marvel-*

lous victory over the enemies. The outstanding characteristic of the second generation was that they did not know the Lord. Did you see that? It was the opposite. It was a sad lack of faith in God. It was deplorable disobedience to God’s commands and then tragic defeat before the enemy.

The revival of Biblical conservatism is in many ways like this first and second generation. There are many who are still with us of whom we could think of as the first generation of our revival movement. There are many revival churches (many what we think of in the conservative category of church life) that have been established within the last thirty or more years. However, there is also a second generation (myself coming partly into that). Many of you who are younger are a part of that. You do not really remember things about the first generation much and the sweat and toil that they needed to face. The first generation of individuals whom I think about are those who had the vision, courage, and the conviction to first of all attempt to arrest the apostatizing trends in the organizations in which they were a part. When they saw that would not work, they were willing to withdraw from those organizations and be counted radical in their

attempt to regain Biblical ground, and regain lost ground.

The second generation is those of us who experience what we have today. They have benefited from the sweat, toil, and heartache of the first generation without needing to experience many of the same difficulties. Therefore, the potential is here according to this passage. By the time the first generation of this revival movement passes into eternity there could be a generation that does not know the Lord. I say that is the potential, and it is frightening. It is not only sobering but a frightening thought. That statement in the middle of verse 10 does cry out with questions. It says, "There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel."

It cries out with questions, "Why did they lose the faith? Why did they let the faith die? How did these people fail? How could they fail when they had seen so much of God's hand of blessing and of victory?" They had maybe not directly seen it. They saw it through their parents. They had seen so much of God's hand of blessing and had experienced such astonishing victories why should they have not known the Lord?

Notice from this passage various snares that I think can be drawn out of this passage to show us why gradualism is a snare. 1) *The snare of complacency.* The question again is, in what way did this second generation fail? They "knew not the LORD, nor yet the works." I do not know how you understand that, and you may have a different opinion than what I have, but does it mean that their parents had already gone so far from the Lord that the children never heard about God? No, it does not mean that because it says that both Joshua and everyone who were leaders during Joshua's reign as leader, during Joshua's leadership, everyone of that generation knew the Lord and it was not until all of those had passed into eternity that there was a generation that did not know the Lord.

Therefore, it was not a question of whether or not the parents had moved so far away that they no longer knew the Lord. Rather, it was a subtle change taking place between the two generations. The second generation must have apparently become indifferent. It is not that they did not know the Lord. The first generation had served the Lord, so it was not a reference to the second generation being intellectually ignorant that there was a God and

not knowing about God and His Word. It was not that they were not informed of the events of the great deliverance (for instance the Exodus out of Egypt and the victory of Joshua in Canaan). No, they had all of that. “Theologically” they had a great amount of information, I am sure. They knew a lot about the Lord. The time span is not stated but it is possible that at least some of the second generation had witnessed through children’s eyes the crossing of the Jordan and the fall of Jericho, or other later victories in Canaan.

Certainly, this second generation did not lack facts. It was not facts about the Lord that they missed. They knew about the Lord, but they became so indifferent that they did not acknowledge the Lord as their Lord. They knew the deeds that the Lord had done for the generation before, but they apparently had become so complacent and so lukewarm in their relationship with Him that they were out of touch. They did not take His Word seriously. They did not know God as their Lord. Very likely, instead of being filled with wonder and awe, and thrilled at the great things that God had done previously, for the grandparents and forefathers that they might have been beyond with

boredom and said, “I have heard those things before.” I do not know if they did that, but I believe that the heart of the second generation’s failure was the problem of lukewarmness and complacency. They were not interested in spiritual things all that much.

Why did they not know the Lord? Why did the first generation (if we may raise that question) let that happen? The Bible does not say the first generation did let it happen. We need to keep that clear. We are inclined to think that the first generation must accept blame for this. Interestingly, God does not put blame on the first generation. Maybe part of the problem lay with the first generation. We know the influence that successive generations have on each other. For instance, what is tolerated in one generation will become accepted in the next. Interestingly, this text places no blame on the first generation. Notice verse 7, “And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.” There you have it.

God held the second generation accountable for their failure. He did not allow them to shift the

blame over to somebody else. Perhaps this application can be made that each individual and each generation no matter where they are, and in what situation they may be in church life, is responsible and accountable for the decisions that they make, the actions that may bring gradual changes, and whatever it may be. Each generation is responsible for that, whether those decisions and actions are good or bad. Each generation will give account for the influence they leave. However, any failure of the previous generations cannot be listed as valid reason for our failure in this generation. No, God does not allow that. As men we are inclined to allow that. We say, "Well, how can you blame this generation if the previous generation had done so badly?" God does not allow us to shift the blame. He holds us all responsible for our own lives and for our actions and reactions as a generation, and as a group of people. Therefore, the second generation was responsible. They did not know the Lord. How sad. The responsibility was on them, and the fact that they did not know the Lord indicates lukewarmness and complacency and indifference to God's great salvation.

2) *The threat of cowardice.* Cowardice simply means cow-

ardly, or being somewhat afraid. Where do I see that? I see it in this that while the first generation had conquered much of the land of Canaan there were still some pockets of territory that were unconquered. Many of the enemies still remained. They were untouched. Joshua commissioned each tribe, as he gave them their possession to go and do battle with the people in their territory. That is what he said and that is what chapter 1 tells us. Thus, while there were great victories under Joshua in which they had cleaned up the land sufficiently such that they could move in and inherit the parts of the land that God chose for them, yet each tribe had some pockets of resistance untouched that they would need to work with. That is where the second generation "flinched." That is where their cowardliness is demonstrated.

In chapter 1, over and over again, we have this phrase, "[they] did not utterly drive them out," speaking about the enemy. It starts already with Judah. Judah was supposed to go and drive out the enemies, but by the time you come to verse 19 it says that they did drive, "out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Chariots of

iron were there. They thought it was too hard to do battle with these strong defences, and so they left them be. They could not drive them out. They let them alone. They might have reasoned something like this: "We have enough territory here in the hill-sides and mountains. We really do not need the valleys. Let us let them there. And for another thing if we take enough territory to become the dominant people in the area then we will have these people as servants and we can collect taxes from them . . ." and on and on. "Would that not be a reasonable compromise? After all, the land the previous generation conquered is sufficient." They might have thought that. The Bible does not say they said all of those things.

Herein lies the great temptation for every generation. There is the great temptation to be satisfied with the ground that was gained in previous generations and to leave it there. This is not only a subtle, but very dangerous to rejoice in. It is a benefit from the victories of the stability that the previous generations have seen and won. Yet, failing to fight the battle necessary to preserve the faith today, is a very common occurrence. Over and over again, not only Judah but almost all the tribes listed after-

ward have this word neither did they, "drive them out."

Was it that they were not supposed to? Was it that the Lord did not help them? No, that was not the case. It was that they were afraid to do battle with the enemies who looked stronger than they. That is what the problem was. We ought to keep in mind. If the first generation of our revival movement has gained a lot of victory in many areas and has regained lost ground, it really does not matter how great that generation was, it has not conquered all the land. There are still pockets of resistance. There will always be pockets of resistance when this generation (of whom we are a part — whatever your age) passes into eternity. Then, the successive generation will still need to do battle with the enemy and to avoid and stave off gradualism and apostasy.

It is sure that if we, in this generation, get battle weary and are not willing to face the issues that need to be faced now, we will lose the way. Someone has said that the experiences of previous generations should not be like a diving board from which each generation goes down after that. Rather, the victories of previous generations should be foundations upon which we can build. I like that. Sadly, over and over

again, this diving board thing is seen. One generation regains lost ground and in one or two generations again it can easily be lost. It is sold out to the enemy. How sad it is.

That is the thing that happened here, and it is good for us to notice. Their fear of the enemy — the enemy kept them (as it were) in a corner, and they could not have had the freedom they should have had. We will see that a little bit later. The Bible makes it clear that these people as well as for any, as we look at the New Testament teaching on the subject, for a generation to go into apostasy is simply not necessary. We do not need to do so. It does need to be that way. The reason that it happens is fear of the chariots of iron many times. That is, I say, one snare — this cowardice thing — the fear of whether or not we can conquer as we ought to.

3) *The snare of experimentation.* What happened here is very interesting. First of all they were so complacent — they did not know the Lord anymore. They could not relate to Him. They apparently had no testimony for Him. It was not that the Lord in their life was not guiding them to good behaviour. They were afraid of their enemies, and the Bible says they could not drive

them out. This does not mean that God let them down. Rather they said in essence, “We are helpless. We cannot do it.” Now, we see that they chose to experiment with the enemy’s ways. It sounds bad, does it not, that they stooped to worship the enemies gods? Did you hear that and see that? It says in verse 12, “They forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.” Do you see that? They experimented with, and adopted the enemy’s religious ways.

It sounds bad (as I said) that they would stoop to worshipping idols. As we know of idols and other gods today, we say, “How could they do that?” Interestingly, these people did only like the people around them. We face the same snare. See, we are not really struggling with whether or not we want to imbibe Islam, for instance, or whether we want to imbibe Hinduism or even many, many other religions and cults that are in the world today. Rather, we are in danger of doing like the world around. We are in danger of being caught in that snare. That is what we see

them doing here. Their neighbours were nice people apparently and they were religious. Certainly, we cannot judge whether God is pleased with all people that call themselves Christians. We can discern the good and the bad in individuals' lives most certainly. On the other hand, we should be careful not to imbibe their ways. Maybe this people said, "Is not this thing of obeying one God and serving Him rather narrow and restrictive? Can we not keep on serving the Lord without being so dogmatic and so radical as Joshua and his generation were? Must we be as peculiar and as different as the first generation was? Can we not think for ourselves?" Most certainly every generation must think for themselves if they will ward off gradualism and apostasy.

Why should we allow the previous generation to press us into their mould? These are questions that are asked in our day. The Bible does not say that the generation back here in Judges asked those questions, but it is conceivable that they did, because human nature does not change. It stays the same from generation to generation. They might have reasoned in a manner similar to that. Certainly, such reasoning is the snare of experimentation and the

snare of gradualism, and is part of the sequence of apostasy and of losing the faith. It comes so natural. First of all, we tolerate the enemy and we do not really like the worldward trends, maybe in attire or in business involvements and in pleasures and sports. We do not really like to lose ground to the enemy, but after all we say these things are here. It is true. We do accommodate.

We look at the subject of accommodation from one generation to the other, for instance, the conveniences that we have. However, whenever accommodation leads to departure from the Word, whenever accommodation makes it so that we become less and less interested in the things of the Lord. That kind of accommodation is heading down the wrong path. That is what we call apostasy. On the other hand, we should always be on guard for (could we say) what we may call other outlooks that people have, or other methods of church life wherein we can clearly see the marks of apostasy. We should not think, for instance, that we can adopt the ways of apostatizing groups simply because we are more spiritual than they are. Essentially the question of spirituality can be rather relative and even vague. Sometimes we may

think we are spiritual but we must keep in mind that those who are departing from the faith also see themselves as “spiritual.” The question is how serious are they in believing the Bible?

If we are spiritual, we might think we should be able to adopt or accommodate to Protestant methods without letting those methods destroy us, but can we? Very likely not. Therefore, in areas such as the youth social activities programs, in areas such as lifting or making fund raisers, having benefits sales and this kind of thing for special church projects, or maybe in the realm of missions where we choose to adapt to the cultures that we go to. We need to keep a guard in the realms of entertainment in worship services such as special music and picture shows and that kind of thing, or unequal business and partnerships, we could think that maybe we are spiritual enough that we are able to keep a straight line even though we may do some of these things. This is experimentation.

They chose to worship and serve the gods around them like the people around them were doing. The point is that when we start tolerating the enemy, eventually it leads to acceptance. Frighteningly, this kind of departure often happens while people

are talking about being more spiritual. It often happens when they are speaking of the rest and peace they have since they no longer need to restrict themselves to the “old” Mennonite ways of plain clothing and the veiling and all of those things. It starts by overemphasizing that you cannot legislate spirituality. Indeed it is true, we cannot make a rule that says “Everyone here this morning must be spiritually minded.” We cannot make a rule that makes everyone do exactly according to the Scripture. No. Likewise you cannot legislate spirituality.

On the other hand, it is only partial truth and it reflects a wrong mentality. It reflects a mentality that rules are to blame when people are not spiritual, and that rules are to blame if people lack spiritual interest. Therefore, people come to believe, “Get rid of the regulations. Get rid of the discipline, because these things destroy spirituality.” Usually what happens is spirituality is then thought to be some deep inner mystical experience and not so much obedience to God’s Word. It is true that the discipline we have — any group can have such a discipline, and that a group and persons can be legal. They can adhere to a strict standard with-

out being spiritual. One can trust in his own good works to for salvation. On the other hand, the person or the group that becomes increasingly worldly and doing more and more like the world cannot be said to be more spiritual. It does not work. We are not more spiritual than what we are Scriptural whatever Scripture we choose to disregard. We cannot be more spiritual than what we are spiritual.

Therefore, the truly spiritual person is not merely staying a few steps behind the world or the people around him. Rather he is motivated by a concept of life that governs his behaviour and makes him different. Regulations that help people apply Bible principle to their lives and help them to go right according to the Scripture, these are not a killer to spirituality. They rather help us grow and develop good conscience and sound conviction. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). To paraphrase that He is saying that there will be many people who have a testimony that they believe in Jesus and they believe they have salvation in Him and call on the name of the

Lord, but they have not taken the Bible seriously. They will not be able to enter when that time comes.

There appears to be a subtle and mistaken notion that lurks, I think, in each generation. We need to take warning to this ourselves. It is not because of our greater spirituality or maybe because of our perception which we think is often greater and more intelligent than previous generations had, that we are inclined to think we can experiment with the enemies ways? We cannot. We think we can experiment with things the previous generations saw they could not experiment with. We could think about a number of these things, I already mentioned. I will not take the time. There are many, many churches who are losing the way because they have chosen to try to adopt other methods like in the forms of worship and entertainment to keep their young people, and to keep their people in the churches. Many churches lament today about the fact that they do not even have the young people, though they have tried to make programs. I am thinking primarily of what we may think of as Protestant or evangelical groups. The church is dwindling down to only the few old people because

they have tried to excite interest and keep the young people through entertainment, but it has not worked. They have experimented and still lost the way.

4) *The threat of compromise.* These people (this second generation) tried to find the middle of the road. These people drove out some of the enemies but they made a league with the others. Judges 2:2 says, "And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?" He had told them not to make leagues. "Do not go into any partnerships. Do not go into any contracts. Do not go into any deals with these people," but they did. Then God said, "You have not obeyed my voice. You have made leagues," but the people said, "They have chariots of iron and we cannot drive them out." They said, "If we 'sign on' here, then their chariots of iron might do us some good if we get into trouble with some of the other nations."

Whatever was the case, they had made leagues with them and it was only a half-hearted and a partial obedience that was happening. They apparently thought that would work for them. However, notice verses 3 and 4, "Wherefore I also said, I will not

drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. (4) And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept." Perhaps the most miserable people in the world are those who are trying to get the best of both worlds. They want as much of the church as they can possibly find. Well, not really, they are satisfied (as we say) to "ride the fence." They want to be in the Church but they still want as much of the world as they can have or maybe of their way, whatever the case might be. I believe individuals who seek the best of both worlds in the end have the worst, really. They do not have peace, joy and contentment, only pain. What we see in Judges will be true today.

This does not mean we have looked at all the snares, but only a few of the ways in which departure gradually occurs. In conclusion, Let us see what God put in place to fight off gradualism. What did He do here for these people that could have been the means of their faithfulness and their stability? What did He do? The question may be raised, "Is apostasy, is gradualism toward the world inevitable? Must it

come? Must we give in to the world?" Each generation faces new gods. There are things now which we face that twenty-five and thirty years ago we did not face. We must look at what things we may retain. We are into an electronic revolution, for instance, in our society and in the world, and it will surely change the way people live. We need to sort out those things that will be detrimental to faith and cause us to lose the way, from those things which can be rightfully used and beneficial to us. In every generation we are faced with the snare to gradually lose the way, but is gradualism, is apostasy inevitable? Must it be that way? Will all churches fail?

The answer is no. They do not need to fail. We do not need to lose the way in the second generation. I am glad for the personal conviction that I sense in the younger generation — among our youth and our young parents. I am glad for the growth and development that is evident and the desire to be rooted and grounded in the Word. I want to encourage that to continue. What did God put in place here? It comes out in Judges 2:21, 22, "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: (22) That through them I

may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not." It is very clear. The second generation had the same opportunity to keep the commandments and the way of the Lord as the first one did. God said, "I will leave these pockets of resistance here. I will not drive them all out to see whether the second generation will do something about them — whether they will drive them out."

There is a strategy against gradualism. God left some pockets of resistance to teach us to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ and to teach us to rely on God. I do not know — have you ever wondered — I know I have — why God did not take away our sinful nature when we became a Christian? Why must we still struggle with temptation? Are you puzzled that there is apparently no perfect church and that even in those churches like our own where we think we stay closely by the Bible that there are always some problems that need solving, always some needs, always some spiritual needs that ought to be addressed, and always the pull to apostatize. Have you wondered why it is this way? Why is there not, and cannot there be a once and for all

victory? The answer is this: God leaves these pockets of resistance and of enemy territory to prove us, to see whether we will keep His commandments or not. That is what He does. The question is what are we doing about that? Are you ready to lend your support to fight against gradualism and apostasy?

It is not so much the support (as it were) to the church, as it is (I am sure it is that) also the support, as we would say it, to the Lord. He wants our allegiance, loyalty, and commitment to Him. When we stay committed to Him we do not give the enemy room to expand. We deal with him as he shows himself. God gives us the opportunity to battle with the enemy, to learn to trust in Him, to learn to obey Him, to pull down the “strong holds” (2 Corinthians 10:4), and to take and keep the territory that God wants us to have. Again, to us all and especially the younger generation among us, I appeal. May we be

at peace with the Biblical conservative way of life. May we be at peace with our godly heritage. Let us not ignore it. Let us rather be rooted and grounded in the Word and make the convictions and the values that aid in preserving the faith our own convictions and values. It is the only way that we will avoid, or ward off gradualism. The only way we can keep the faith is to hold firmly and to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life.

Remember young ones (who perhaps are wondering whether you can really give much influence to the church now) you are not merely the church of tomorrow, as we sometimes put forward, but you are here to help preserve the faith today. Lend your support. Lend your influence to that which is good and right so that we may not by slow, almost unnoticed progress finally end in the world. May God help us to that end.

Perils of Apostasy

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trou-

ble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4). We thank you for praying and may the Lord bless you for that.

In Psalm 1 we read, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the

counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (2) But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (4) The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. (5) Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. (6) For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

2 Timothy 3:1–9 gives our text, “Perils of Apostasy.” Apostasy as an English word, is a word that I could not find in the Bible but many things in the Bible point to the fact of the meaning of apostasy. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 the words “a falling away” and in Acts 21:21 the words “to forsake” are translated from the Greek word from which we obtain the English word apostasy — [Strong’s # 646]. It is also related to the word that is translated as “divorcement,” or “writing of divorcement” found in our English Bible. Apostasy — what

is it? We hear much about the word. In Psalm 1, the first three verses point us (we might say) to the godly person, one who is in favour with God. It is a perfect picture of contentment, fruit bearing, and no spurts and ups and downs. He “bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” It is the perfect picture of a Christian. The last part of Psalm 1 gives us quite a different picture. It gives us a picture of a person (we might say) as we think of the wickedness of the world in general, does it not? There are two different classes of people.

I would like to think, at this particular point, that the last part of Psalm 1 is in general what we would say is outside. Every one of us have “come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), “and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), upon Jesus, our Saviour. This is the class that we talk about at this particular point. Now, while we were all in that particular stage, how did we ever manage to get to the top of Psalm 1? What does the Scripture say? The psalmist gives us the thought that “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings” (Psalm 40:2). Colossians 1:13 says, “Who hath delivered us

from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Sincerity and truth undertaken by humans sets us apart from the class of the last part of Psalm 1.

Apostasy, what is that?
Apostasy is simply reverting from the particular point where God has helped us to and returning back again to the former life. We read the thought “But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:22). That is apostasy.

When we think of apostasy as the Bible teaches it, it is not someone who has never known God. It is those who once knew the power of God and have reverted back to their old life. That is real apostasy. The Scriptures also give the thought, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20). This is rather serious, is it not?

When we think of perils, we think of something that is really dangerous. Danger faces us. We are in a peril. Something that we

have all experienced possibly, is a mountain road that is cut out about half way up the mountain. There is a deep ravine on the one side and of course danger signs and a guard rail around there. When you look down it is really dangerous. When we look over on the right-hand side, there we see a precipice. What is danger there? We do not drive very far on a road like that till we see a sign, “Falling Rocks.” Danger is on both sides. That is apostasy. It is everywhere. There is not a particular place where apostasy is simply “there.” Satan plies his trade wherever he may gain entrance. It is a dangerous thought to think of again falling away from God.

Much is heard today of the fact of falling away, and rightly so, but you must have been somewhere or be somewhere before you can fall. Those who have never known the love of God do not fall in the class of apostasy — only those who have known God. All of us have heard about perilous times. We have heard about apostasy. In 2 Timothy 3:1 after it tells us “that in the last days perilous times shall come,” words or phrases are given. If I am right, maybe you will have seventeen different thoughts as signs of apostasy.

I would like to think again of

Psalm 1. Many of these things are running rampant as we look to general society. They seem like they are out of control. The Scriptures says, “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). 1) *“Lovers of their own selves.”* Lovers of their own selves are selfish. Romans 12:3 teaches us “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” We do not want to, and may it never be “named among [us], as becometh saints” (Ephesians 5:3). My brother once said, “We are only made of clay. We do well to remember that. We are only humans. Never attempt to take God’s place.” That teaches on our level where we need to be. “lovers of [our] own selves.”

2) *Covetousness.* In my own words, we simply desire that which is another’s, which rightfully does not belong to us. It is desiring something, whether possessions, positions, or whatever we might think of. In the Ten Commandments, it is stated so simply, “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17).

3) *Proud of accomplishments.* The first thought is proud. I thought of king Nebuchadnezzar. I can hardly find another place in the Bible where it speaks so plainly with the thought of seeing the king priding himself, walking

around, “This is the great Babylon which I have made” [Daniel 4:30]. We also know “The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.” (Psalm 1:5) It did not pass for him. Neither does it pass today for anyone.

4) *The thought of “boasters.”* They go around boasting of things. I think of someone who is loud mouthed. They are always talking and never listening. Titus 1:11 gives the thought of people, “Whose mouths must be stopped.” It has been around quite a while. It is not only now happening to be in our generation. It was already in Bible times. They had those who were known as boasters.

5) *“Blasphemers.”* What do we think of when we think of someone who blasphemes? Our mind goes to Jude 8, where it speaks of those who “speak evil of dignities,” without any reserve. They speak against things that belong to God you know. They blaspheme. I would like to also think of these who sit “in the seat of the scornful,” as mockers, making mockery. The opposite of that is those who do not sit in the seat of the scornful as Psalm 1 teaches us.

6) *“Disobedient to parents.”*

I really do not need to remind you of that. It is quite prevalent today, not only inside but also

very much outside. We think of the general uprising that started sometime in the early '60's on the college campuses. They stampeded and burned, and everything that had ever happened before that was thrown out. The parents had never done anything good. I am talking about general society. Those things have somehow or other crept in unawares. In my lifetime, when I was rather young, I heard the account of a father endeavouring to teach his child who was going to school how he should behave himself. The father was somewhat concerned. The child turned around and looked at his father, "Why don't you be still and go back into the house?" It makes us fear and tremble (it does me). I happen to know more of the history of that also, what happened after that. Then we also have the thought a little farther on this particular one. What about the thought of, "Where was the parent at that time?" The child was not too old. We may have other things that fall in line here with this disobedient to parents. We probably have child delinquency and possibly also parental delinquency. We must go on.

7) "Unthankful, unholy." Romans 1:21 says, "Because that, when they knew God, they

glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations." Then, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (verse 28). They were unthankful.

8) "*Without natural affection.*" That has many different areas to look into and there are some things that sort of stand out in this. I rejoice in the fact that we do not find ourselves involved in this to a great degree. In society around us we have daycare centres. Mothers are not taking their place. They are letting someone else take care of them. It is unnatural affection. It is not normal. Animals even do not do that. Then, we have another area of that which is the nursing homes. It is not natural. The Scripture teaches us that children should take care of their parents. They are only signs. We are simply giving these particular thoughts. Think them over.

9) "*Trucebreakers.*" They are dishonest. They make promises, but keep them not, make vows and break them. That is common, is it not? It is creeping too close for comfort as we think of divorce and remarriage.

10) "*False accusers*" — gossiping behind others' backs.

11) "*incontinent.*" It is being out of control. There is no self-restraint — anything goes. "If

you cannot win them, join them,” is the slogan today. It is apostasy. I think of it as an automobile running in neutral, going downhill without brakes. That is incontinent. “Simply let her go.” There is no control.

12) “*Fierce.*” We hear about the stoning of Stephen. I think of the fact of people gnashing on someone else with their teeth. I am not under the persuasion that they bit Stephen, but they probably gnashed their teeth around him. It was more or less as a type of aggravation — “We do not want you. We despise you.” Also, the Scripture is clear that it does have its place and that is the place of no return. It is outside of God where there is a “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42). That is fierce. Again, the psalmist says something about it. “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:20).

13) “*Despisers of those that are good.*” I think of Cain and Abel. 1 John 3:12 gives us the thought, “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” Do you understand the thought? That is the thought of “despisers of those that are

good.” Have you ever heard the expression, “He is not as good as he thinks he is?” We have heard that already. I am sure we have. We may have been accused of that. “Oh, he thinks he is so good. You really do not know what I know about him.” These are signs of apostasy.

14) “*Traitors.*” That means “a deserter.” It is simply letting others down in the line of battle. The psalmist gives us the thought in Psalm 41:9, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Do we grasp the thought? It is someone who turns traitor to us in another sense. He simply forsakes us. Again, it is a sign of apostasy.

15) “*Heady.*” The dictionary’s description for that one was, “to act rash, reckless, willful, suddenly.” — “I know what I am doing.” You know the thought.

16) “*Highminded.*” It refers to the fact of being “haughty,” of which I could get a better meaning. It is a person who is very self-sufficient. “I do not need anybody else.” It is having, or showing, great pride in oneself or position. They are highminded. It is a disdain, contempt, and a scorn for others. That is the description we have of the word “highminded” — haughtiness.

17) “Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” That runs rampant again today. We think of the general immorality. The billboards we see along the road and what they say, give the message that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). 2 Timothy 3:4 describes them somewhat. Lovers of pleasure — we see this in the general sports craze with ball games, roller blading, skiing, skydiving, ice skating, electronic games, sight seeing, vacationing. Again, it is “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” It is something that is sort of appalling to me that the people who live close to Niagara Falls need to see Yellowstone National Park. Those who live near to Yellowstone National Park, must see Niagara Falls.

We talk about peer pressure, but it is bad when it is inside. So often, families are taken into the type of environment where there is real peer pressure for the children. Almost nakedness — look around and see what is there. Is it not falling into the line of lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? Money is plentiful. I remember the time when it was not. There was no money to go to the west coast. Today, it is not so. “In the last days perilous times shall come.” Do not forget,

Satan brings these schemes up and makes them look so, “Oh, they are so harmless you know. There cannot be anything wrong in this.” Try to look through what is happening. See what is behind it. There is where apostasy is at work. It is working slowly but surely.

We have the thought today that you have heard also, “What a wonderful thing it was. We saw the wonders of God in nature.” I am probably in the old school and you will probably class me there. If you want to really see the miracle of God take a small baby and hold him on your hands and look. I know of no greater miracle that God ever made but that. I simply do not know. I simply marvel.

18) *Verse 5 gives the thought of “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”* What do we see there? We simply see the fact that with all this, in the so-called Christian realm, there is yet a form. There is a profession. This gives the thought (and I class it under the fact of apostasy) of gradually, but surely, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

19) *Verse 7, “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* We think of our public schools today.

I simply use them as an illustration. In my time, I saw a great push in endeavouring to get better education, better books, better teachers, more teachers. You know, as well as I, the answer to that, and what has come out of that. The public schools are hardly safe anymore. We have parallels in the Christian profession today. We see special schools, ministers' seminars of many descriptions, things that history says have never worked.

Paul gave his testimony that he was taught "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3). After his conversion he counted them all but dung [Philippians 3:8]. Then we have another account in the Bible to describe what I endeavour to say here. Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and Jesus said, "Mary hath chosen that good part" (Luke 10:42). The thought is that she sat at Jesus' feet and absorbed what he was saying, and it says, "which shall not be taken away from her." Paul sat at Gamaliel's feet. There is where he was getting his direction before his conversion. After his conversion — read Galatians 1, what did he do? He went to Arabia for three years. There was no school there. What had he done there for three years? He had not met any of the other apostles according to the

Scriptures. Where did he get his ability, his unction, or his burden for preaching the Gospel? Not at the feet of Gamaliel, but at the feet of Jesus when he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6)?

Things that face us today. As I listened to myself I thought, "This is very negative, is it not?" I think so. I would like to think of the fact that there is hope. This thought is not only for our own generation. Remember dear friends, brothers and sisters, this has been something that has been happening ever since the Garden of Eden, but there is hope.

In Ezekiel 9, the Lord tells Ezekiel (in my own words) to take his inkhorn and go out on the streets of Jerusalem and mark all of them "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (verse 4). Put a mark on them. I think if I am right he says, they should take their swords after they had this mark and go down through Jerusalem and slay the wicked (in my own thoughts). That is good enough for the Old Testament. Today, we hear people sighing about the terribleness of things, but there is hope. It is not wrong to be burdened and to cry and to be concerned of things which are not as they ought to be.

Do not understand me wrongly

when I talk about these Old Testament saints who were marked because they sighed and cried. What is the application for our time today? Revelation 2:5 is the answer for our day. The New Testament says “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). Revelation 2:5 says, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Apostasy is at work. What is the answer? It gives it here. When the candlestick is removed that is outside back where we were at. Here, they are still hanging on. “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.” Revelation 3:20 says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in

to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” This is quoted quite often in evangelistic meetings, and rightly so. It fits there. However, the real thrust of that is not someone who has never known God, it is Jesus standing outside the Church and knocking on the door, “Let Me in.” In that particular thought it said simply, “anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see,” (verse 18) and “clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” That is the remedy for apostasy.

Apostasy generally starts with a person — an individual. Then it spreads as leaven. The door here that we have in Revelation is a body of people. Today (and I think possibly then also) it probably started around an individual — a lot of these things that we mentioned. They start and then quite soon the leaven goes through the church. There is room for repentance. Hold fast to what ye have.

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From the Previous Issue:

Directing Maturing Youth

From a message by Harold B. Good

Sunday, October 09, 2005

Woodbury Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 36.

Ordinances. — The Communion.

I. The Jewish Passover.

1. Instituted. — Exodus 11 and 12.
2. Commanded to be kept from year to year. — Exodus 12:14.
3. Records of its observance. — Exodus 12: 28; Numbers 9:5; Joshua 5:10; 2Kings 23:21; 2 Chronicles 35:8; Ezra 6:19; Matthew 26:19; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7; John 13.

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4. A figure pointing both ways.
 - a. Deliverance of Israel from Egypt. — Exodus 13:8–10.
 - b. A type of Christ's death. — 1 Corinthians 5:7.

II. The Communion, or Lord's Supper.

1. Instituted. — Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20.
2. Meaning of the Communion.
 - a. A memorial of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. — Luke 22:19, 20.
 - b. Fellowship and union of believers. — 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.
 - c. A figure pointing (1) to the death, and (2) to the second coming of Christ. — 1 Corinthians 11:26.
3. Rules governing the Communion.
 - a. Only the bread and the cup have divine sanction. — 1 Corinthians 11:17–26.

NOTE. — It has been argued by some whose desire is to keep the commandments as they were handed to the apostles, that inasmuch as our Saviour and His disciples ate a full meal at the institution of the communion, and since this was eaten, as some authorities claim, the day before the Jews kept the Passover, that therefore our Saviour also at the same time instituted a full meal to be observed as an ordinance which we, as His followers, should still keep. We cannot subscribe to this view for the following reasons:

1. Matthew, Mark, and Luke plainly tell us that this Passover

was killed on the first day of unleavened bread, the regular day for killing the Passover.

2. Our Saviour and His disciples frequently called this the Passover.

3. We have no record that Christ ever taught, publicly or privately, that this was not the Jewish Passover; nor can we find that the disciples ever taught that it was not.

4. The teaching of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is conclusive that this was the Jewish Passover.

5. There is nothing in John that cannot be harmonized with this view.

6. The only reference in the Scriptures with reference to the full meal is to condemn its use.

b. Those who are contaminated with the sins of the world must not be permitted to participate. — 1 Corinthians 10:18–20.

c. Communicants are to present a solid body in Christ Jesus. — 1 Corinthians 10:15–17.

d. Persons apparently in the order of the church, but secretly contaminated with sin, must not commune. — 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 11:27–29.

NOTE. — Some well-meaning persons, favoring what is usually known as “open communion,” have chosen to insist that the communion-table *is* the Lord’s table, not the table of any denomination. The fact that the communion-table is the Lord’s table, is the best reason why this table should be kept in order. The Lord refuses to recognize any table as His table when all classes of people are admitted to it. How can there be a communion where union does not exist?

4. Frequency and time of holding communion.

NOTE. — The Bible is silent as to the frequency and time of day in which the communion should be observed. It is reasonable to assume that it should be observed often enough to keep the suffering and death vividly before our minds, and not so often that its observance will be considered a common-place affair. The most appropriate time for its observance is at or near the time of day in which the event occurred for which the communion is a memorial.

1. Why did Jesus use bread to represent His body and “the cup” to represent His blood?

2. Explain consubstantiation and transubstantiation.
3. Discuss 1Corinthians 10:16, 17.
4. Did Judas Iscariot commune on the night of the betrayal?
5. Compare the Communion of the New Testament with the Passover of the Old.

LESSON 37.

Ordinances. — Feetwashing.

- I. Feetwashing as mentioned in the Old Testament.
 1. As a service. — Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 43:24.
NOTE. — This custom of the host setting out water that the guests may wash their feet was similar to our present custom of the host setting out water that the guests may wash their hands and faces.
 2. As a ceremony. — Exodus 30:17–21; 40:30–32.
 3. Distinction between the two kinds of feetwashing mentioned.
 - a. As a service. — A voluntary custom without command or restriction.
 - b. As a ceremony. — Instituted by divine authority, and reward for its observance.

- II. Feetwashing as mentioned in the New Testament. — John 13:1–17.
 1. Not an old custom.
 - a. Disciples not the guests of our Saviour.
 - b. They had no custom of rising from supper to wash feet.
 - c. Peter's ignorance of what Christ was about to do (7).
 2. Was not for cleanliness (10, 11).
 3. Objects of the ordinance.
 - a. The sign of humility (14–16).
 - b. Brotherhood of saints (14).
 4. The disciples commanded to continue the practice. (14, 15, 17).
 5. The command perpetuated. — Matthew 28:20.
 6. An echo from the epistolary writings. — 1Timothy 5:10.
NOTE. — If this had reference to good works only, as some would have us believe, the word "saints" would never have been written. It

would have read “the needy’s feet,” or the “guest’s feet,” or some expression showing that it was an act of kindness, regardless of the spiritual condition of the one receiving the attention. As it stands, it is a significant passage of Scripture, showing the importance placed upon the ordinance at that time.

7. Why call this an ordinance?
 - a. It was instituted by “one having authority.” — Matthew 7:28, 29.
 - b. Jesus was serving as Head of the Church, not the host of a social company.
 - c. Resembles ceremonial footwashing mentioned in Exodus 30 and 40.
 - d. It was not an old custom (7).
 - e. The disciples were to continue the practice. — (14, 15). Matthew 28:20.

A striking feature of this chapter is our Saviour’s carefulness in presenting this subject. He first gives the example, then tells what it was for, and then gives the commandment. No other command is more carefully given.

CHRISTIAN WOMAN’S VEILING.

1 Corinthians 11:2–16.

- I. Called an ordinance. — 1 Corinthians 11:2 (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6).
- II. Relation between man and woman in the Lord (verses 3, 8, 9).
- III. How this relation is to be shown (verses 5, 10).
- IV. A lesson from nature (14, 15).
- V. Two coverings spoken of in this chapter.
 1. One showing the relation between man and woman in the Lord (5).
 2. The other showing their relation according to nature (14, 15).

VI. Two Greek words.

1. *Katakaluptetai* — artificial covering — to verse 14.
2. *Peribolaïou* — natural covering — verse 15.

VII. Teaching of verse 6. — If a woman discards the covering designed to show her relation to man in the Lord — the prayer head-covering — let her also discard the covering designed to show her relation to man according to nature — her long hair; but if she retain the covering designed to show her relation to man according to nature — her long hair — let her also retain the covering designed to show her relation to man in the Lord — the headship covering.

VIII. What the covering should be.

1. Something that shows the “power or sign of authority” and worn for that purpose (10).
2. Being a church ordinance, the church should determine the form.

IX. When worn? In time of prayer (5).

X. A word to those who would be contentious. — No custom among the churches of God for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered (16).

The prayer-covering worn today by those who believe in it as an ordinance, consists of a modest fabric (usually white — an emblem of purity) which answers the scriptural idea of a veil, shaped for convenience in wearing.

1. Is the word ought any less binding upon the Christian than “must”?
2. Name some abuses to which these ordinances are sometimes subjected.
3. Is the abuse of anything an argument against its lawful use?
4. Should the prayer head-covering be considered an article of apparel?
5. Tabulate the reasons advanced in favor of and against these ordinances. Place them side by side and then compare.

Children's Book Reprint *continued*

The Little Woodchopper

William was so glad to be once more at a house, that he knocked loudly and called out,

“Open, please open!”

Finally William heard shuffling feet nearing the door, and a voice from within:

“Who is there?”

“A poor boy who was lost in the forest,” replied William. “The wolves would have torn me to pieces had it not been for the dog.”

“Come in,” was the welcome sound from within, and at the same time he heard the bolt being moved back. In another moment the door opened with a creaking sound, and the bent figure of an old woman appeared.

“Come in, you and your dog are both welcome.”

“In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge.” Proverbs 14:26.

As William entered the narrow hallway with Caesar following him, he was met by an old lady with a light blue woolen shawl around her shoulders, and a white cap on her head.

“Step into the room, my boy,” she said kindly. “How you must have been frightened in the forest, but now your troubles are over.”

William did not have to be told twice, but quickly stepped inside, while the old lady again bolted the creaking door. It was a tidy and cozy room; “just like the old lady herself,” thought William. In an open hearth, such as you may yet find here and there among the old farmhouses, burned a bright light. On the table stood a low oil lamp and near it lay a large open book. It was the Bible, as William found out afterwards. He had never seen a Bible until now. Near the warm chimney sat a gray cat and blinked with astonishment at the newcomers. At the other side of the room stood a large bed, covered with pure white linen; close to this was a roomy closet with glass doors, behind which stood a number of plates and cups and shining dishes.

William's eyes wandered from one object to another. How much better it was here than in the forest! The sudden change from fear and sorrow to rest and safety overwhelmed the little boy, so that he fell sobbing on his knees and thanked God for His wonderful help. Then he turned to his faithful dog and said:

“My good and loving Caesar! Where would I be now if you had not followed me? Twice you have

saved my life. Had you not come I would have drowned, or the wolf would have torn me to pieces.”

“The poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless.” Psalm 10:14.

The old lady, who had meanwhile entered the room again, looked at the scene with a touched heart, and when she heard how kindly and thankfully he spoke to his dog, the tears came into her eyes.

“Now, my boy, tell me, had you no other friend in the forest than your dog?

“No one!” said William sadly.

“All alone in the forest?” continued the kind old lady in sympathetic tone. “Poor child! but you can tell me tomorrow where your home is, and how it happened you got lost in the forest. O!” she said in astonishment and fright when touching the little fellow’s clothes, “you are all wet; how did that happen?”

“I waded through the creek, which crosses the path not far from here.”

“Through that swift stream? How is it possible?”

“I heard the wolf behind me, and so there was nothing left for me but to go through it,” replied the boy; “but I would surely have been drowned had not Caesar pulled me toward the shore.”

While the boy was telling her, the old lady got a woolen blanket out of her closet and began to strip the poor lad of his wet clothes. She looked at him so pitifully and lovingly that the tears came again to William’s eyes.

“Why do you cry, my boy?” she asked him.

“Because you are so kind and loving to me, and I am so thankful God has led me to you. I was afraid I would never see anyone again. I was alone and so afraid of the wolves.”

“Dry your tears, my child,” said the old lady with much feeling; “you are now safe, and the bad wolves cannot harm you.” With that she kissed him several times on his pale cheeks.

After putting the clothes up to dry and rubbing William’s body thoroughly, she wrapped him in a woolen blanket and had him climb into her bed. After warming a pan of milk on the fire she gave him some, feeding him herself, because his arms were wrapped up in the blanket.

William relished the warm milk, and soon felt his blood begin to circulate again. Satisfied, he fell back against his pillows, saying,

“I can’t go to sleep until I have thanked the Lord for His gracious care and protection. This I

have been doing since my father was sick. I feel as if I must kiss you, for you are just as kind and loving as my father has been to me.”

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. Psalm 103:13.

But haven’t you a father any more?” inquired the kind lady.

“No!” answered William with a deep sigh; “he died a few days ago. I still have five brothers, but they do not love me. When father was dead — he died in, the night while I fell asleep on a chair by his bed — they buried him close to our cabin and took me with them on a donkey into the forest. Two days we marched till we came to a place where four paths met. Last night, while I slept, they left me, and have probably gone home again. When I awoke this morning, I did not know what to do. Then I asked the Lord Jesus to help me; He has helped me and has brought me here. O, if I could only stay here; it is so nice here, much nicer than in our cabin at the other side of the forest.

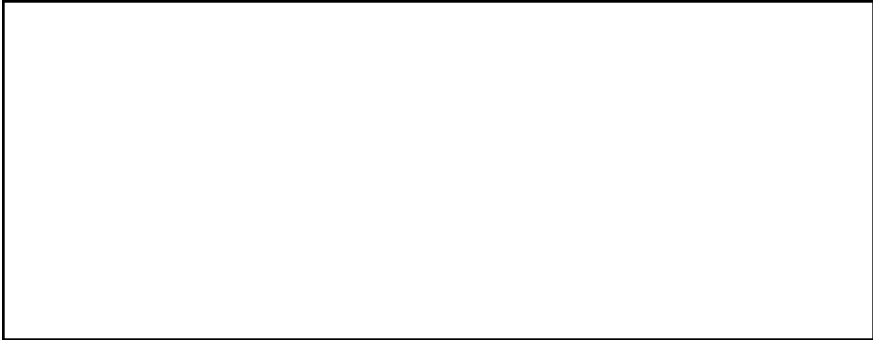
“Yes, you shall stay here, my child,” she replied, very much touched; “I am all alone and have often desired to have somebody with me. Since my son left me, I have always been alone; and now I am an old woman and have

nobody in this world. Yes, stay with me, my boy; we will work together, and thank the Lord together for His kindness. You must love the Lord very much since you know how gladly He answers the prayers of the young, don’t you?”

“Yes, I love Him; my father told me much about Him, how He came from heaven to die for sinners; and how He loved little children so much and took them up in His arms and blessed them. O, it was so nice when father told me such lovely stories, like that of Moses in the little ark, or of Abraham and Isaac, or David and Solomon. He said that all this was in a large book that is called the Bible. We had no Bible, but he said his mother had owned a Bible and had often told him all these nice stories when he was young. But that was many years ago, and for a long time he had not thought of them and did not care for them. My brothers too, did not care for them, and laughed and mocked when father spoke to them of the Lord Jesus.

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” Psalm 10:4.

The little narrator paused because his eyes became heavy with sleep. But the old lady, whose curiosity had been



aroused, desired to know more.
She had followed the boy's talk
with the closest attention.

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