The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

IN THE INTEREST OF JARVIS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, TORONTO, AND OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH

REV. T. T. SHIELDS, D.D. PASTOR AND EDITOR

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

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The Iarnis Street Pulpit

WHAT CHRIST CAME TO DO

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis St. Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, Oct. 1, 1922.

(Stenographically reported)

"He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?"-John 5: 6.

The miracles which our Lord wrought in the days of His flesh are described as "signs": "This beginning of signs did Jesus . . and manifested forth His glory." They were designed to reveal His supernatural, His divine power. And it is legitimate to examine the principles operating in this miracle of physical healing, in order to understand the methods of divine grace.

You will remember that from the beginning the devil misrepresented God: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." God was implicitly represented as denying to the creatures He had made, that which was pleasant and profitable. And when the man possessed with the legion of devils was met by the Lord Jesus, the devils cried out, saying, "Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." And from then until now, the adversary of the souls of men has persistently represented the Lord Jesus as One Who would rob men of the joys of life. And the religion of the Lord Jesus is looked upon by many very much as they look upon the undertaker—as something that is necessary in case of death; but to be avoided as long as possible.

In this question, which our Lord Jesus propounded to the impotent man at Bethesda's pool, He announced His own programme: "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "Ye are complete in him," the Word says, respecting believers. Life finds its wholeness, its complement, in Christ: "In him all things consist;" and apart from Him it is impossible that anyone should be whole.

I. And so I bring to you first of all this evening, The Gospel's Proposal.

The Lord Jesus has come to make men whole; and the gospel proposes to do that very thing for all poor sinners—to round out our lives; and to make life complete.

In the first place, our Lord Jesus proposes to complete the record of our lives; to make the record of life one which may be read in the presence of the angels, and before the great white throne. There are pages in every man's history, which he would not care to have his nearest friend read. The secrets of the heart, the unworthy thought, the unholy ambition, the record of the inner life—they are all written down. I repeat, there is not a man or woman who would not be filled with horror at the thought of having life's complete record spread out, in the presence of a Holy God, and read to the assembled universe. But we read, "That every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." There will be a day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." The day will come when the books will be opened; and we shall be judged according to the things which are written in the books.

I think I know how we must all feel about it; but I can at least speak for myself. I should like to have a record that I shall not be ashamed for angels to read. I should like to have the books balanced, to see the record of every day of my life made complete.

A young man told me not so very long ago that he had written a certain man, whom he had served for a certain time, asking him for a testimonial. But, I said, "What do you want a testimonial for?" He said, "From the time I began to work for myself, to earn my own living, until now, I have a record of where I have been. I am able to say to any man, I began to work on such a day, and I worked for so many years. There is the testimony from the man for whom I worked. I left his employ and went to work for another man; on the expiration of that time he gave me a testimonial, and that covers that period. But now there is a gap in the record of a year and a half, or two years; and when I present my testimonials, they will say, 'What were you doing for that year and a half?' Therefore, I have asked him to give me a testimonial, so that the record of the past will be complete, and up-to-date."

That, I think, is a very good idea. But when we stand before the bar of God, what about our testimonials? "There came a day," you say, "when I began to try to do something for God; when I formed a solemn resolution that I would live righteously before Him." Let me suppose for the moment the impossible: Suppose you had been able to fulfil that pledge; the day will come when God's books will be opened. And, he will say, "There is a big blank here. Where were you then? What were you doing then?" "Oh, I was in the far country." "Yes, and for whom were you working in the far country? What is the record of the past?" What answer can you make?

Blessed be God! Our Lord Jesus comes to complete that record—to write down in God's book His perfect righteousness against our unrighteousness: so that from the day of birth until the day of death, there shall not be a page, nor a part of a page, that is not filled out, and balanced, so that God Himself will pass it. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Wilt thou accept the righteousness of Jesus? Wilt thou accept the perfect obedience of the Son of man, for the life of transgression which you have lived? That is the proposal of the gospel—to make up the deficit of the past; to restore to us "the years that the locust hath eaten."

Then the gospel proposes the complement of life in still another respect. It proposes to complete our character; to make a man whole—not only as to his record, but as to his character before God; to make him something more than a fragment of a man. I read in the Word that certain gifts are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministering, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The proposal of the gospel is to make it possible for us to be perfect men, and perfect women—to be whole. "I pray God," said Paul, "your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved entire unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Spirit, soul and body—a trinity in unity—made whole by the power of divine grace; and "preserved entire unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

I have not time to elaborate this truth, but only to suggest to you the need for that gospel ministry—for the ministry of divine grace to all these elements of our complex nature.

Our spirits need to be made whole. The spirit is that part of our nature in which God dwells: that part of our nature which has a capacity for God. And it is the function of the gospel, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to quicken those who are "dead in trespasses and sins;" and to make room for God in the human spirit; to liberate the spirit, and to restore it to its native element; to take the imprisoned spirit of a man, like the hind that is shut fast behind iron bars, taking it out in the wide expanse of its native forest to breathe God's air, and to live its own life according to the law of its own nature, it is the mission of the gospel to take the spirit of a man, that is like a bird caught in "the snare of the fowler," to break all its shackles, to open the door, and to release it into its native element; to take the spirit of a man, and lift it up into "the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," so that we shall live in happy relationship to the God Who made us. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Except a man be born again, (or from above) he cannot see the kingdom of God." God comes in through the sky-light, not through the basement door: He takes possession of the spirit first, not of the flesh.

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul (or mind) and body be preserved blameless." Do not reverse that order! Keep to the biblical order; and remember that this work of wholeness—making whole—begins with the spirit, and descends to the mind, and includes the body, until the whole man is redeemed.

And the mind finds its complement in Christ, the intellect—the power by which we think, and remember, and perceive, and judge: the mind—an element of which is the affections; the heart by which we love, the seat of the emotions: the will—the volitional power which directs the course of a man. And it is the plan and purpose of God that Jesus Christ should come and take possession of the intellect, quickening his memory, enlightening his judgment, giving him spiritual perception, opening his heart, enfranchising his will, making him intellectually whole.

Perhaps there are some students here this evening, who have just begun their college courses. Let me tell you that if you are going to be intellectually whole, you must learn to sit at the feet of Jesus; nowhere else will you find ample verge for the activities of the mind. Some man says, "I am going to find out where life begins;" and so he buries himself in a materialistic philosophy, to see if he can discover that original vital element, from

which it is alleged all manifestations of life which we now observe have evolved.

But, you will never find satisfaction in that search. For even when you have got back to that-even if that were true-the great question is: What lies behind that primary, that fundamental principle-Whence came life? Who originated it? Never can the mind be satisfied until it bows in humble submission, looking into the face of Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh, saying, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the . mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." And nothing. short of that will satisfy the range of the human mind! But when a man comes to see Him, Who is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" He challenges the thinking man, and says, "Wilt thou be made whole? Will you bow to that first great challenging word of Scripture, "In the beginning God"? And will you learn that God will be in the end? and that man was made for God? and that he never can be happy away from God? There can be no intellectual rest for any really awakened mind until he can say of Christ, "He is the image of the invincible God, the first born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

And further Christ is the complement, not only of the spirit and the mind, but of the body too. God does still directly heal the body sometimes. He always heals where there is healing—sometimes by the use of means, sometimes without: but the word says, "I am the Lord Thy healer." He is the Source, the Fountain, of life and of healing; and through whatever channels it flows, it comes from Him.

But what if you have healing-what then? Some of you are grey-haired. here this evening. The marks of decay, visible or invisible, are upon us all; and I do not know that any are foolish enough to say that with all our skill we can indefinitely postpone the visit of the last enemy. He will come; and we shall have to say as Peter did, that we must put off this tabernacle-"our earthly house of this tabernacle will be dissolved." You see the old man just tottering on the edge of the grave? By and by his body will be laid in the casket, carried down with disease, or old age; yet how lovingly somebody touches it! Old and withered as it is, how precious is that tabernacle! Or, is it a little child that is about to be laid in the grave? Somebody says, "After all it is only the tabernacle."-"Only the tabernacle"! Remember,-there is no word in this Scripture that will justify you in despising the physical. Abraham bought a field in which he might bury his head. And O how lovingly he did it! And you will remember that when Abraham was buried, his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, came to the funeral; and they laid that precious body away. And when, later, Isaac was buried, his sons, Jacob and Esau, stood at the graveside, and buried their dead out of their sight.

But there was One of Whom it was said, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." And when He was hanging on the cross, they came to break His bones; but the hand of Providence stayed them, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." He was the typical Man; He was the representative Man; He was the Head of a new race: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." He was the Head—the federal Head of a new race; and though His hands were

wounded, and His brow was crowned with thorns, and His side was riven, and His feet were pierced-no bone was broken! And that unbroken body was laid in the grave; and it came forth into life again. And He showed them His hands, and His feet; and He said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

He had a real, material body, different from the other body in some respects; but with that body He went into the glory. Even as they looked upon Him, Jesus carried that body with Him up into the presence of God. "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." these bodies of ours are to be redeemed! We are to be made whole at last, even as to our bodies. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body (or the body of our humiliation) that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

That is the programme of the gospel—to save the spirit, and the mind, and the body; and to relate all to the living Head, even Christ, that we "may grow up into Him in all things—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Is not that a salvation worth having?

But again, "Wilt thou be made whole?"-whole as to the sphere of life. It is with hesitation that I speak at any time to magnify these human natures; because it seems to me there are enough engaged in that business already. And yet we must recognize that God made us for a noble destiny; that He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And man was not made-this trinity in unity, as I have said; this spirit, soul and body-not separate entities, but three aspects of one personality, inseparable from each other—spirit, soul and body—I say, such an one was not made to be "cribbed, cabined, and confined," within mere temporal boundaries.

I was at the grave-side yesterday—as I am too often—but we must obey the summons of that great conqueror before whom, if Christ come not in the air, we all must bow. And yesterday it was a little boy we laid away, just a little fellow of three or four years—a beautiful spirit, I doubt not, in a beautiful tabernacle. And we laid it away there, and covered it with earth, and then with flowers in order to make death as beautiful as possible. Is that the end? Why did that little child come into life for a brief period of three or four years, and then fly away? What is the meaning of that?

Or, there was a young man: mind and body trained, splendidly disciplined, just buckling on his harness to bear life's burdens, and fight life's battles! And ere he had well begun the task of the day, he was laid low, and somebody laid him away yesterday. Was that the end? Was he, with all his splendid powers,

made to live that brief period, and then go out?

Or, there was another, a man in the prime of life, with years of experience behind him, splendidly and heroically carrying life's burdens. "A man shall be as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;" and he had become such to multitudes. And yet in the days of his vigour, when in the course of nature one might have expected there would be years of service before him, he is summoned; and somebody laid him away yesterday.

Or, there was still another man, like a shock of corn, fully ripe, with years of service behind him; with the achievements of a worthy life to his credit; his mind stored with the accumulated knowledge of a life-time; his powers trained to the highest point of usefulness; his heart mellowed by the touch of the years; and everybody saying, "O that he could live on, and on, and on"; but

he did not! And somebody laid him away yesterday!

"Wilt thou be made whole?" Shall we find the complement of that child's little earthly career somewhere? O ye mothers, shall we find a door into another life which will show us that child enlarging, and expanding, in the presence of God; and going on in holy service in other and happier realms? Or that young man, or the man in his prime, or the aged saint? It cannot be that, this side of the grave, life for any one of us can be "whole." It is only a preparation for something fuller and richer beyond.

Read the story of the apostolic ministry—the record of Paul's life, how wonderfully, how abundantly he lived! And yet in the day when his powers were at the full, he said, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better—let me get into the larger, the richer life." "Wilt thou be made

whole?" O that is the programme of the gospel!

II. To whom is the proposal made? Jesus came to a company of impotent folk. I do not know what was the matter with all of them; but they were impotent in one direction or another: they were people who could not realize even their own conceptions of the possibilities of life; they were men and women who had tried to lift themselves up, and they had gone down again; they had tried to labour, and they had failed; they were beaten in the battle of life; they had no strength for life's purpose. And it was to them Jesus came.

My brethren, it is a picture of this wide world of ours, for we are all spiriually impotent. No—as to our spirits, we cannot make our way to God, unless He comes to us: as to our minds, we cannot withdraw the veil, and extract from the invisible the truth we fain would know. We are impotent to explore that other realm; and as to our bodies, well do we know we have no power over them. Is there anybody here this evening like that? saying, "O yes, sir, I have had some joys. Of course, I have had some pleasures in life; but they they have been fleeting, evanescent. I have soon reached the end of the day, and it has been cut off; and I am prepard to admit that life is just an incomplete programme, in every direction. I have been unable to do the thing I wanted to do; and the thing that ought to be done. Yes, you can put me down among the impotent folk."

Well, if there are no impotent folk here to-night in that respect, it is because you have not seen "the land that is very far off." I remember to have seen people, who have lived in a very narrow circle; who have read very little; the boundaries of whose life have been almost the boundaries of their farm, or village experience. And it is easy to feel one's self great, if you have not seen any one greater.

As I was speaking a few moments ago, someone mentally observed: "I do not subscribe to that doctrine. Do you know that I am a college student; and that I am being taught every day that there is nothing impossible to the man who is determined to get on?" Well, my friend, if that is how you feel, it is a good thing you have come to college; because you have a lot to learn. I heard of a college president asking a young student, who had just come, what he knew; and he said, "I do not know anything." "Well, what have you read?" "I have read so little it is hardly worth mentioning." "Then," he said, "what did you come here for?" "I came to learn." "Then," said the president, "I congratulate you, young man: it takes most students two or three years to find that out."

Impotent! I am speaking now, not of the intellectual realm—I am speaking of the moral and spiritual realm. And if there is any man or woman here who thinks he or she is not impotent, it is because you have never yet got a glimpse of what God intended you to be. If you could see the glory of a man in Christ; if ever the light shines in your heart, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," you will say, just as Isaiah, that seraphic prophet did, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Whenever we get a glimpse of the King, we all bow, and say, "I am undone: I belong to the impotent folk."

They were "waiting for the moving of the water." People are always waiting for something like that, you know. Ah! these old stories—they are newer than last evening's paper. "Waiting for the moving of the water!" And some-

body here is just waiting!

There was a story that "an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." Around Bethesda's pool there gathered this company of impotent folk, gazing at the surface of the water, waiting to see it move; and when it moved the strongest of them instantly dragged himself there to step in before his fellows. And if he got there first, according to the belief of these impotent folk, he was made whole, no matter what happened to the other people.

That is the kind of salvation men dream of—a salvation that depends upon doing the thing at a particular time; and doing it first; and helping ourselves: then God does the rest. There is a proverbial saying that "God helps those who help themselves." I suppose He does. There is a sense in which that is true. A farmer has to plow and sow, and then God gives him the increase. A man has to labour for his livelihood, and God gives him power in one way or another. It is true "that if any would not work, neither should he eat." We must labour. There is a sense in which we must do something for ourselves, in the physical realm; but I am speaking of those who had come to the place where they had no power to do anything themselves. They were impotent folk. And mark you! Jesus did nothing for the people who could step down first! He never

does! The gospel does not come to the man who is always first: it comes to the man who is always last. How wonderful it all is, that when Jesus looked at this poor man, He "knew he had been a long time in that case!"

Have you been waiting for a long time? Is there anybody here, who says, "Well, sir, I have not been to church for a long time. I just came this evening. I used to go long ago. I sat at the pool just like this man you are talking about; and I waited—and waited—saying in my heart, perhaps sometime I will get some help; I will hear some preacher who will give me some new ideal; and I will place the ideal before me; and I will fashion my life after that. If somebody will just give me a helping hand, I shall get on my way." But the helping hand did not come to this man, even as it did not come to you. He had been a long time in that case;" but he was there still, because he had nowhere else to go.

Listen now to this plaintive cry! When Jesus said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" the impotent man answered him, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled to put me into the pool: but, while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Let me paraphrase his saying: "The principles that operate in that pool, or are prepared to operate, are principles which cannot help me because the grace of that pool—if grace there be—is given to the man who steps in first; and I have never been able to do it: and the grace of that pool—if grace there be—is given to the man who is able to help himself sufficiently to step in first; and I have never been able to do it: or, it is given to the man who has somebody to help him to step in first; and I have never had anybody to help me—I am all alone in the world. Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming—just trying to drag my impotent feet to the water's edge—another steppeth in before me; and it is too late, and there is no salvation for me."

O, I am thankful for the salvation that helps the man who cannot help himself! I praise God for a salvation that is designed to meet the need of a man, whom nobody else can help! And Jesus, when he heard him say that, commanded an impossibility: He said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." He could not do it—that was the one thing he could not do. Yet He commanded him.

My friend, this Bible is full of impossibilities. It sets before us an ideal of life, which not one of us can ever realize. We had a Japanese student in our meeting a few weeks ago; and this is what he said to us, in effect: "Do not send to Japan your ethical systems. We have Shintoism, and Confusianism, and Buddhism. We have the ideal. We know something of what we ought to be, but—with flaming passion, he said it—we have no power to realize that life; and what we need is the word that will not only set the ideal before us, but which will breathe power into our souls to realize that ideal. Japan needs the dynamic of the Cross!"

Do you not see tt? Jesus said to the impotent man, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk"—angel or no angel, pool or no pool, helper or no helper, I meet you where you are—right where you are in your utter impotence, and command you to be whole." And the Scripture says that "immediately the man was made whole." The instant Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," the Creator breathed into him His health, His life, and he was made whole. He did the impossible before them all—he took up his bed, and walked.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" "If I could, sir," you answer. Well, this Jesus can make you whole. Just yield to His command; just believe the promise!

I cannot tell you how it happened: this man did not know. The Jews came to him afterwards, and they said, "We heard you carried your bed on the sabbath day. What right have you to carry your bed on the sabbath day?" And then he said, in effect: "I do not know anything about your fine points of sabbath-keeping; but He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. And when He had power to do that, I think it was only right to do as I was told." But how did it happen? He would have said, "I cannot tell you how it happened. I only know that when He said, Take up thy bed and walk, I was able to do it—and I did it."

There are men and women here this evening who will get up and testify in our after-meeting; and they will say this very thing—"I was impotent; I was unable to do these things; but when Jesus commanded me, and I yielded my soul to Him, I found I had the power; and I was made whole.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" May the Lord help us to hear His voice tonight, that we may be complete in Christ.

CHURCH NEWS AND NOTICES

Sunday last. A verse in the psalms reads, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Experience is an argument for expectation. Hence it is a good thing to record what God has done. Sunday last was a day of unusual blessing. Several professed conversion at the evening service, and to others the joy of salvation was restored. Baptism was administered, and others made application for baptism and membership. The week's prayer. The spirit of prayer is deepening; expectation is increasing, the joy of the Lord is overflowing! Let us besiege the throne of grace with our petitions until the deluge comes. Among other things, let us pray constantly that our material needs may be supplied in such a way as will glorify God. The Gospel Witness. Never a week passes without word coming from some quarter of God's blessing resting upon the Witness. We ask our readers to continue to pray that its messages must be blessed to all of our hundreds of readers. And all who hear of spiritual fruit resulting from the perusal of its pages will inspire to new effort those who continually pray for its prosperity, by sending us word of blessing received.

Pastor's change of address: On and after November 8th, the Pastor's address will be 96 Winchester St. North 628.

Special To Ministerial Readers.

The Gospel Witness has been sent to all our ministers free of charge for some months. A number have subscribed for the paper (it costs us \$3.00 per year per copy for printing and mailing) and these will, of course, receive The Witness weekly as before. If any others desire to subscribe, or send us a contribution, we shall be grateful for their help. We feel, however, that some would like to continue to receive the paper who cannot afford to pay for it. We shall count it a privilege to continue sending it free to all such while our funds permit us to do so. Below we print a simple form which those who desire us to continue sending The Witness may use. If you send us money cross out the second line; if you wish us to continue sending it free, cross out the first line.

The Church Secretary, Jarvis St. Baptist Church, Toronto, enclose \$ toward The Gospel Witness which I ask you to

1. I enclose \$ continue sending.

The undersigned desires you to continue to send The Gospel Witness without charge.

Those who do not wish The Witness discontinued will please fill in above and mail at once, as our mailing list of ministers for next week (other than subscribers) will be made out from the coupons signed and returned.

JARVIS STREET CHURCH DIRECTORY.

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The Church Calendar

For the week beginning Sunday, November 5th, 1922. Sunday

10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway. 11.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach. 3.00—The Bible School will meet.

6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.
7.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.
8.30—Communion and Reception of Members.
TUESDAY, THURSDAY and SATURDAY—8.00—Prayer Service.

WEDNESDAY—Junior Mid-Week Service—7.15.

The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School, 3.00;
Evangelistic Service, conducted by Mr. W. L. McKay, 7.00.

Wednesday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting. Friday, 7.15, Junior Service.