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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD!"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, April 15th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

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"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—John 1:29.

John the Baptist was one of the most extraordinary characters of history. He was the special subject of prophecy. His mission was specially predicted long years before he was born, and a special providence superintended the events preceding and attending his birth. He was born to be the messenger of God, to go before the face of the Messiah, and thus to "prepare the way of the Lord".

In this place we believe in the absolute accuracy of this record. There is no doubt that what John is reported to have said, he did actually say. He recognized Jesus Christ as the One Who was to come after him, and yet be before him, the lachet of Whose shoes he esteemed himself unworthy even to unloose, and, recognizing Him, he introduced Him to his own disciples in these words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." There can be no doubt, therefore, that the mission involved in the figure here employed, was the specific mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was for that He came into the world, a Lamb without blemish and without spot, "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (us)." That is the heart of the gospel. The truth wrapped up in this verse is the *sine qua non*, that without which there is no gospel, there can be no salvation: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

I.

What does it mean, then, thus to "behold" the Lord Jesus? For as surely as it was John's mission, it is the mission of every preacher of the gospel, to direct the

attention of men to the Lamb of God. I want, if I possibly can this evening, very simply and very plainly to brush aside everything that would divert our attention from the Lamb of God, that would divide our trust, and thus rob us of that perfect peace which is the portion of those whose minds are stayed upon a personal Saviour.

I think it was only last Sunday evening that our organist, Mr. Penney, remarked to me at the close of the service, reporting a conversation he had had with someone, how widespread, and how general, is the assumption that men can save themselves; and how few relatively there are to be found who have come to an understanding of that great principle that salvation is of grace, and of grace alone. But that great doctrine that salvation is by grace alone is in this text.

How, then, shall we "behold" the Lamb of God? There are divinely ordained means of grace. *The Bible is one.* It is the inspired and infallible word of God. But I have often, in one way and another, endeavoured to make clear to you that the Bible has value as we find it a medium through which to get to the living Saviour of Whose character and work it is a record. Surely I do not need to tell you that there is no salvation in the acceptance of a Book as such. It stands apart from all other books, there is none like it. It has an inspiration which is unique, which belongs to no other book in all the literature of the world. God-breathed, it is the very word of God, and by the blessing of the Holy Ghost, it becomes the instrument of salvation—but it is not salvation itself. There is a living Word behind the written word. There is a living Saviour Who is far more than a character of remote history.

The church has its value. And yet what millions of people there are who are trusting to a church to save them! No church in all the world's history did ever save anybody. The church never did save anyone; it never can. We need more than that.

Such ordinances as the one you observed this evening have value. But nobody was ever saved by being baptized. Oh, I know what the prayer book says, and I know what the catechism says: "What is thy name?" "So-and-So." "Who gave thee that name?" "My godfathers and my godmothers in my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The only element of truth in that answer is that the child did get his name from his godfathers. Nobody was ever made a member of Christ in baptism. It is folly to trust in ordinances, whether applied to infants or adults. Nobody was ever saved by observing the Lord's supper in any form.

I say this only to introduce you to the great heart of the text, and to show you how subtle the temptation of the devil is as he endeavours to lead us to trust to intermediate matters, to things that were designed to be but media to get to God. We make an end of the means, and stop short of vital union with God Himself—and there is no salvation without that.

The brasen serpent in the wilderness was a divine ordinance, and the Lord Himself brings that bit of history into the New Testament, saying, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." But there was no salvation in the brasen serpent. It was lifted up as an object to which the gaze of the people could be directed as an expression and manifestation of their trust in God. The serpent did not heal them: looking to the serpent was merely an outward manifestation of the faith that was in them, that on condition they would so do they should be healed. But the serpent became an idol, to which the people burned incense, and in later years the people of Israel bowed down to the brasen serpent, and worshipped, as an end in itself, that which was designed only to serve as a means to an end. It was idolatry.

So have people piled obstacles between the soul and God because the god of this world would blind the eyes of them that believe not.

In the days of Hezekiah, when he effected his great reformation, he took the brasen serpent, calling it by its proper name, "Nehushtan", a piece of brass; and broke it in pieces, destroying it utterly, that the people might look to God alone in spiritual worship. The great need of our day is to learn to keep all these things designed as means of grace in their proper place; the ordinances of God's house in their proper place, the church in its proper place, the ministry in its proper place. Ministers are merely men called to preach God's word, and their authority does not consist in the laying on of any bishop's hands. What an absurdity is involved in that assumption! As though authority could be communicated—actually—through the ends of someone's fingers! I have as much authority to preach the gospel as has the Archbishop of Canterbury. So has any man who knows Christ, and is commissioned of Christ. There is no authority in the ministry apart from that which resides in a direct divine call. Keep these things in their proper place. Go

beyond them all, and "behold" the Lamb of God. That is what we need.

What does it mean but that we are to view the Lord Jesus in this character, as the "Lamb" of God? Many of the political nostrums that are now being served up for the alleviation of the economic ills of the world are put forth by their authors as having the sanction of Christ. They would claim His sanction for a thousand things. It is true, there is the germ of reform in the Christian religion. There is the dynamic that will effect reform in the individual life, in business, in the state, and in the world. But we are not here merely to effect reform. We are to "behold the Lamb of God", and bid others so to do. That is where we are to begin with Christ. The Israelites were required to make bricks without straw, but many of our would-be present day reformers are essaying a greater task: that of making a house without bricks. What we need is living stones, and they are made alive unto God only as they first "behold the Lamb of God".

The *Lamb* of God means just exactly what it says. You do not need to be a great scholar, nor do you need laboriously to consult all the commentators, or get the view of the great expositors, to find out what the Bible means when it calls Jesus Christ the "Lamb of God". You have only to turn to the Old Testament. Surely it means the lamb of sacrifice. It means what I read to you this evening: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath made to meet upon him (the Lamb of God) the iniquity of us all."

All sorts of theories are elaborated by men respecting what Christ planned to do. There are even some evangelicals, who hold to the truth of the authority of this Book, who assume that the Lord Jesus came to this earth with a tentative programme. If the Jews had accepted Him as their Messiah He would immediately have set up His kingdom! That were impossible. How such a theory dwarfs the Lord Jesus! As though He were an experimenter! No! No! John knew from the beginning that Jesus Christ had come to die. He Himself never was in any doubt about it. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." There was never the shadow of a doubt in His mind. He *knew* that He was the "Lamb of God", and that He had come to bear away the sins of a wicked world. So was He born in Bethlehem of Judaea because He had been foreordained before the foundation of the world, that He might die at the place called Golgotha when He had cried, "It is finished", and His work was done. He is the Lamb of God, I tell you. "Behold" Him as such! Let Him be your Teacher, let Him be your Master, let Him be your Example, let Him be your Economist if you will, let Him be your Professor, and ultimate norm and authority in the whole realm of literature, let Him be your Musician, for He is the Source and Master of all harmony—but first of all, you must know Him as the "Lamb of God", as the crucified Christ, or you cannot know Him at all.

"Behold the Lamb of God". What is He to you? What is Jesus Christ to you? Have you seen Him in that character? Is there someone who says, "But, sir, my pastor never says anything about the blood. My minister lays emphasis upon the ethical teaching of Jesus, upon the example He set, that we might walk in His steps.

I have thought of Him as one of the world's great men—I admit more than a man; but I must say that I have never viewed Him for myself as the Lamb of God." Then let me tell you, you may be a minister, you may be a deacon, you may be an elder, you may be a professor, but if you have not seen Him as the Lamb of God you are not a Christian. That is absolutely indispensable to salvation. Nobody else can help us but the One upon Whom all our iniquities were laid, "the Lamb of God". Is He that to you?

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,
While hanging on th' accursed tree
And knows her guilt was there."

Can you say that? Can you?

We have all been interested in the story of that man in Western Canada of whom so much has been written, a man who twenty-four years ago was charged with the commission of a certain crime, and sentenced to life-imprisonment. Later he escaped from the penitentiary, and has been at liberty for nearly twenty-five years. I hope it is true that he was innocent. But even if he was not, it seems to me his culpability was much less than the court's estimate. Be that as it may, the principle is this: For twenty-four years he was at liberty. At liberty? He married, and has a family. Has he ever been happy? No! The shadow of his past has followed him, for even though he were innocent, as we hope he was, in the eyes of the law he was condemned—and he knew it. He knew the police of a continent were always on the alert, looking for him. When I read his story I said to myself, "That is not liberty. Who would live a life like that? I think I would rather be in the penitentiary and be done with it, than dodging every policeman." He must have been suspicious of everyone, and never at rest.

It is a terrible thing to be under the law, to be "condemned already". But what a blessing it is to know, guilty as we are, that the penalty has been paid, that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Everything is paid, so that the believer can say to the law, "Here I am. I am not hiding from the law." The utmost requirement of the law has been satisfied. Dare I speak to my theological friends? I have a great many of them. I received a very kind letter from the chancellor of one of the large universities of the United States a little while ago. He said, "I hear you every Sunday night." I have heard from hundreds of ministers. Well, my brother, you preach Christ crucified, do you? "Yes." Do you faithfully expound the principle that the death of Jesus Christ was the payment of sin's penalty, rendering satisfaction to the outraged law of God, which is but a transcription of the holy nature of God? Are you teaching men that because the penalty is paid everything is forever settled since our sin was laid upon Him Who died in our room and stead, and that, therefore, we have nothing to fear for time or eternity on sin's account? "Behold the Lamb of God." By no other principle can we be delivered from a fearful looking for of judgment.

So, then, there is nothing you can do, no price you can pay, no works of righteousness of which you are capable, no amendment of life, no promise of a righteousness yet to be wrought out by yourself, that can afford you any guarantee of entrance. Brother Penney said, "It is free grace we need". Yes, the abounding grace of God, the truth that He does it all, and does it of Himself. "Behold the Lamb of God."

Is that enough? If I gave you nothing but the text there is no reason why you should not be saved. Many years ago Mr. Spurgeon was to preach in the Crystal Palace, London. He went to that great building to test his voice, and to give direction as to where the platform and pulpit were to be erected. He went to different parts of the building and quoted the verse which I have taken as a text, testing his voice: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He went from place to place testing his voice by repeating the same text, at last deciding where the platform and pulpit should be erected. Years afterward news came to him that that day, there had been some painters at work in the Crystal Palace. Away up in the roof of that great building, on a scaffold, was a man busy with paint and brush. He did not know what was going on below—nor did the preacher know what was going on above; he did not see him. But this man, the music of Christ's name refreshed his soul in death, as we sang just now, had been saved by the message of that text. Years afterward, as he lay near death, he sent a messenger to Mr. Spurgeon, saying "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that, standing on the scaffold, I heard his voice ringing out that glorious summons, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world'. Before I came down I had looked and lived, and have been a Christian ever since."

You need do nothing but that. "Behold the Lamb of God." Salvation is in Jesus Christ only.

II.

Let me take a minute or two to speak of that which I should like to expound—no, I will not say expound: it needs no exposition, but which I should like to enlarge upon if time would permit: "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

What does this world need just now? Freedom from sin. What does the business world need just now? A restoration of confidence more than anything else. Why has confidence been destroyed? Because the German Chancellor was not the only one who regarded a covenant as a "scrap of paper". We need a new morality everywhere: in the affairs of business, of the state, and of the home—in all human relationships. The cause of the world's distress to-day, as always, is its sin. If that could be taken away, then all problems would find their solution. And in His name I declare to you there is only one person that can take away sin from the individual, or from the community, and that is the Lord Jesus. He *taketh away* the sin of the world.

What a person He must be! We hear it on every hand, that what we need is a superman. Mussolini? Someone bigger than he. Hitler? No, thank you, not for me! Where shall we find him? In Canada? No. In Britain? Thank God for good and great men here and there; but there is no one big enough to meet this situation. In the United States? Thank God for many men there who are doing their best. But the biggest of them are dwarfs, pygmies. All of them put together

cannot take away the sin of the world. But there is One Who can. Who is He? The One Who weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, and Who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, to Whom the nations of the earth are but as the dust in the balance and altogether as vanity. The Lamb? The Lamb of God, God Incarnate, having resident within His person all the powers of Deity. He Who made the world can remake it. *He* taketh away the sin of the world. Without violation of the principles of His law, without doing violence to the law of His own holy nature, He found a way whereby He could be just, and yet the Justifier of such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, "That is a great programme, the taking away of the sin of the world"? How shall it be done? One at a time. Listen: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned *every one* to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." As we went astray one by one, we must behold the Lamb of God one by one. As we were born one by one, so must we be born again. God said in the beginning, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." As He made man in His image and likeness, and was pleased with His work and said, "It is very good", so, "If any man"—not men—"be in Christ, he is a new creation", made over again. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

I believe that we, as ministers, will make the largest possible contribution to the world's weal, and the solution of its problems, if we endeavour to get men and women, boys and girls, as individuals, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When the church gets back to that instead of holding conferences on economic questions about which they know nothing, we shall be doing our right business. Some of these ministers who talk so glibly about economics remind me of some aldermen who comprised the town council in a city I knew, no one of whom could run a corner grocery store. They had no business ability whatever, but they managed to worm themselves into positions involving the responsibility of managing the business of a considerable city. You may be a good man, my brother, but you need more than the mathematical mind of an Einstein to solve these problems. Bring men to Christ. That is our business. As we do that, it will change society, it will reintroduce the salt of the earth, to the earth; it will cause the light to shine—and better days will come again.

"Taketh away the sin of the world." Where does He take it? I have a picture at home. It is only a copy of a great masterpiece of The Scapegoat, but I like to look at it, and think of all it means. Because no figure could adequately set forth Incarnate Deity, on the great day of atonement there were two animals: one was slain, representing the death of the sinner's substitute; then the scapegoat, a living goat, was brought to the door of the tabernacle, and the high priest laid his hand upon its head and confessed the sins of the people. Then it was let go into the wilderness, to a "land not inhabited".

Would you not like to lose your sin? Is there something you would like to lose, and never see again, never think of again? Is there not something you would like to have blotted out, and no matter how old you might live to be, know there would be no danger of its turning up again? that it is buried out of sight forever? At the judgment, when the great white throne is set, and the earth and the heavens flee away from the face of

Him Who sitteth upon the throne, will there come to any one of us the remembrance of sins that are past? And when the books shall be opened, will anyone of us have reason to fear the calling of our name, and the reading of our record before an assembled universe? Yes, unless our sins have been confessed and recognized as having been laid upon Christ. If they have, He "taketh away" the sin of the world, where even the prosecuting attorney, the accuser of the brethren, the devil himself, cannot find them. Will that not be a glorious thing, to stand before that great white throne unafraid—not because we have not sinned,—but because the penalty is paid, because we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Is He yours, that living Saviour? Is He operating in you through the power of the Holy Ghost?

I should like to go on, and on, and on, but that must be enough for to-night. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Let us pray:

We remember, O Lord, the words which Thou didst utter in the days of Thy flesh, when Thou didst describe two men who went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. We remember that he who was so conscious of his ill-desert that he dared not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner—of him Thou didst say, He went down to his house justified. Thus, O God of mercy and of grace, we come to Thee. We have no works of righteousness to present, nothing in our life which we dare consider as inherently capable of meriting Thy favour. Sin is mixed with all we do. We are nothing but sinners. God be merciful to us, sinners. Help us to say it again, and again. No; we need but breathe that prayer once, and immediately our sin is remitted.

Is there one in Thy presence, O Lord, who has not yet thus called upon Thee? It may be weary days, and months, and years, have passed, years of irresolution, crisis after crisis apparently has been reached, and the man has thought again and again he had come to the great divide, but here he is to-night once more, almost persuaded to be a Christian. Open his eyes, O Lord. Help him to behold the Lamb of God. May the peace of God possess him. May the blood of Christ cleanse his conscience, so that he shall have no more conscience of sin, knowing that Thou hast blotted it all out.

How shall we pray to Thee? Our souls are open before Thee, Thou all-seeing One. Save us, save us every one. Look upon the fathers who are here; make them afraid to leave this building without Christ. Look upon the mothers who are here; fill them with a solemn sense of their responsibility to Thee. May they go to their homes in company of the Lord Jesus. Look upon the man of business who may be here. What a difficult time this is! How hard to be true, how hard to be kind sometimes! Give such an one grace, and make him to feel his need of the Lord Jesus.

Is there someone almost upon the brink of despair, who has tried until he cannot try any longer? who has hoped until hope has died within him? Let the Light of the world shine in his heart, we pray thee. Give such an one new hope, new courage, this evening. We pray for all in the gallery, for all on the floor, for all on the platform, and in the choir. Thou great Saviour, put Thine arms about us all to-night, and draw us close to Thy bleeding side, that we may find rest and perfect peace in Him Who is our Saviour.

So for the great unseen company to whom we have been privileged to speak Thy word: the man by the wayside, in restaurants, in hotels, or in their own homes, we pray. Make Thy word effectual to the salvation of souls; and when Thy great day shall come, and Thy books shall be opened, may it appear that this night's service made the angels busy, and filled heaven with rejoicing because of many sinners repenting. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

DAVID'S SIN AND REPENTANCE

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, April 12th, 1934.

*Twentieth in the 1933-34 Series of Thursday Evening
Lectures on Biblical Theology, which is included in
the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

Lesson Text: II Samuel, chapters 11 and 12.

In this place we believe the Bible to be the word of the living God. If that be so, it must be true. A very large part of the Old Testament, I have reminded you again and again, is taken up with biography. The lives of some characters are very fully told; the lives of others are recorded only as they touch characters that are more important and influential. Biblical biography differs from that to be found elsewhere in the fact that it relates even the ugliest truths. The divine Photographer does not "touch up" His negatives. Hence in the Word of God we see human nature as it really is.

The chapters before us tell a dark story as part of a life that was otherwise resplendent with the grace of God.

We saw in our lesson last week how David had proposed to show kindness to the children of Ammon, and how his ambassadors had been rebuffed and shamefully treated. As a result of it, a state of war was brought about between the children of Ammon and the children of Israel. Some successes had been won by the Israelites, and David now takes steps to consolidate his gains, and to complete the victory.

So far as his military achievements are concerned, he is to be commended for carrying his work through to completion. History abounds with instances of military commanders who, having obtained a partial victory, failed to follow up their advantages and consolidate their gains, with the result that the tables were turned upon them, making the ultimate issue the very opposite from what the early stages of the conflict promised. David was accustomed to go through with a thing, and therefore commanded Joab to complete the subjugation of the children of Ammon; and "they besieged Rabbah".

There is always danger, however, in any great success. There is always the possibility of reaction from any unusual and abnormal activity. David was a very energetic man, and in many of his battles he had led the armies in person. You will recall that on one occasion it was with great difficulty he was persuaded not to go into the battle himself, on which occasion his officers said to him, "Thou shalt not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city." They esteemed his life of such value they were unwilling he should jeopardize it by going to the front in person. David commanded his armies in person as he subdued the Syrians, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the king of Zohah, and the Edomites; yet in this further campaign against Ammon he left it to the hand of Joab while he himself "tarried still at Jerusalem".

So now David is seen in a period of inactivity and leisure. There are few people who have learned how profitably to employ their leisure hours. There are men of business who have had a particular occupa-

tion as their special vocation in life, who have never had an avocation. That is to say, they had no hobby, they had nothing with which they could occupy their time and their mental and physical energies in their periods of leisure.

I knew a man once who had a genius for making money. That genius was exercised to the utmost, and he became a very rich man: And yet, while a very rich man, it always seemed to me he was a very poor man; for the reason that he had not cultivated his mind. He had not multiplied the correspondences of life. He had not pushed back the boundaries of life so as to live largely and luxuriously. I do not mean in respect to the enjoyment of material things: but rather that he came to the eventime of life with a mind that was one-sided, and dwarfed. He had developed a capacity for making money, but was apparently incapable of enjoying the things with which his wealth would have provided him.

There is a lesson in the chapter before us respecting the danger of hours of leisure and inactivity. Stagnant pools are never sweet. They are certain to breed some sort of malaria. It is well that all the avenues of life should be kept open, the mind ever on the alert. We should endeavour to develop a vital personality so that we may become not one-sided, but symmetrical, versatile, having as many interests in life as possible.

That should be especially true, of course, of the Christian. It was true, speaking generally, of the man whose story is before us to-night. He communed with his own heart upon his bed. While he was musing, the fire burned. So often we find David engaged in meditation upon useful and ennobling subjects: "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." Those of us who are Christians ought never to want for useful, interesting, subjects of meditation. With this Book before us, with the record of grace behind us, and the prospect of faith before us, we ought never to be without useful matters of meditation.

A further lesson here is to be learned from the principle of *how easily the mind can be corrupted through the senses*. In respect to the realities of our holy religion it is said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." There is a realm that is not accessible to the senses: the eye cannot see it; the ear cannot detect its harmony; it cannot be felt or touched. It lies beyond. It is a spiritual realm, and the things of that realm are revealed to us by the Spirit, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

But we must remember there is a sense in which both good and evil may enter the mind through the eye and through the ear. I remember to have called forth some criticism here some years ago. One New Year's morning I gave the church as a motto a part of Paul's saying, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." I used these words only, "By all means save some". At that time we had a mission down on Parliament Street. In the course of a very simple address I told the New Year's morning meeting how, a little while before, at the Parliament Street Mission, I had asked the children what they had seen at the moving picture show. Many hands were eagerly raised, and I asked one bright little girl near the front—a child

of seven or eight years of age—what she had seen. She answered, "Please, sir, I saw a man murder a woman last week." A little girl of seven or eight years! She had seen this in the moving picture. I went on to say how the devil, through the eye, was flooding the mind of children and young people with every kind of evil; and that perhaps we ought to devise some means to counteract that evil, having that for our object, the saving of people by "all means", by every legitimate means—"Let us save some". Scarcely had I resumed my seat when one deacon rose and said, "I object to this knocking of the movies." Somebody at the close of the service said, "Aha, so Brother So-and-So has some stock in the movies!" Perhaps he had, I do not know. To the honour of the deacons of that day, let me say he left them by their determined insistence—himself a deacon and a millionaire—that he should resign, and resign forthwith, or they would ask the church to dismiss him. He resigned, and went out.

The point I make is this: the mind is flooded with evil things very often through the eye, even as it is often through the ear. We need, as Christians, to guard what Bunyan called, "eye-gate" and "ear-gate". You remember the story of Achan? "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonian garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." His downfall began by his *seeing* among the spoils "a goodly Babylonish garment".

I once had something to do with a reform committee whose duty was to try to clean up some of the plague spots of Toronto. We had an interesting experience! When we brought a whole theatrical company, including the playwright, into the police court, and secured a fine and the suppression of the play, the case was appealed—and later put on in the theatre for the judge, the prosecution, and defense, to witness. There were about fifteen of us there. A certain lawyer defended that filthy performance, one of the most horrible things imaginable. The informer was a Methodist minister employed for that purpose—Secretary of our Committee. The lawyer for the defense examined a witness who had seen the play, something after this fashion: "You saw no harm in it?" "No, sir." "You are quite sure that it would not tend to corrupt the morals of those who witnessed it?" "Yes, sir." "There was no harm in the play except as it filtered through the putrid mind of the informer?" "No, sir." Try to keep children and young people from harmful things, and you will invariably meet with the mocking remark, *Honi soit qui mal y pense* ("Evil to him who evil thinks"). The fact remains that we should turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and make a covenant with our eyes that we will not look upon evil.

Here is a further lesson: David was a good man, *who yet fell into grievous sin*. He was one of the best men the world has ever seen. There was another good Man, the best Man the world ever knew, the God-man. He said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Every door was locked; he was an absolutely fire-proof temple throughout. But He is the only Man Who ever lived Who dared say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Any other man who talks after that fashion is either a fool or a liar,—or both.

There are some things that ought never to be seen,

some should never be heard, and some should never be read.

Germane to this discussion, in respect to the principle involved at least, is this consideration. There are a great many people in our day who spend much time—and they profess to be evangelical and orthodox—reading magazines and articles that serve up every kind of religious heresy—on the pretext that they need to be informed. I have warned you against it again and again. Let me urge you not to take poison for the sake of sampling it to see how it works. It will work too surely! Leave it in the bottle! Leave it in the book! Leave it in the theatre—wherever it is. But do not get it inside of you. Therefore, be careful what you read, what you hear, and what you see. Which means that one cannot afford to keep certain company lest, by things that may be said, something may find entrance to the mind that you will find impossible to expel.

Further: *no sin ever travels alone*. It always multiplies itself, it always takes to itself others of its kind. Deception, ingratitude, even murder, may follow in its wake—as it did in David's case. Whoever would have believed such a man could be capable of such an offence—of such a group of offences: adultery, deception, conspiracy, ingratitude, murder! But such was the case.

In the twelfth chapter we find the Lord commissions Nathan the prophet to go unto David. I trust we still believe that God calls His prophets, not only in respect to their general career, but that He commissions them for particular errands, and under special circumstances.

A Salvation Army man once said to me, "We of the Army do not follow the example of you preachers." I said, "In what respect?" He said, "I never prepare my address." (Very probably if I had heard him deliver it, I should not have needed to be told that. Occasionally one may be effective without preparation, I readily grant.) "But why do you not prepare?" "Because I believe in making my address fit the occasion." "What do you mean by that?" "I wait until I get to the platform, and when I see the people and know who I am to address, then I have some idea of what they need, and I ask the Lord to help me speak accordingly." I said, "Your speech, ultimately, is dictated by your own judgment, rather than by the Holy Spirit. Looking on the outward appearance, you think you know what the people to whom you speak really need—and you may be a million leagues from the facts of the case. I can well believe that the Lord knows a good many weeks before who is going to be at church on a particular Sunday. He not only knows who is going to be there, but He knows what they need. And since He knows I have no ability to speak on the spur of the moment, He can take account of my little capacity in that direction and enable me to prepare weeks in advance—and prepare the message."

Just as surely as God called Nathan and said, "I send you on a particular errand, to a particular person", if you are in the Lord's hands, as preachers, you will find you are called on certain occasions to deliver particular messages to particular people. "The Lord sent Nathan." Make sure you are sent of God.

Then you remember how Nathan told his story. He preached a fine sermon, and his sermon was cast in a parabolic mould. It was a very interesting story of a rich man who had a large flock, any number of sheep;

and of a poor man who had only one, and "it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter". When a traveller came to the rich man's home, instead of taking one of his many sheep, he took the one ewe lamb of the poor man and slew it for his feast. David said—well, you know what he said. He had an opinion on that subject! "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

You can be sure your sermons will be well received if you preach after that fashion. Hold them up as pictures and say, "There they are; what do you think of them?" "I approve. I am quite in agreement with the principles of your discussion." That is what a man once told me: "You can discuss your principles as much as you like, but do not apply them to me. That is my business." Nathan's sermon was all right until he came to the application. Let me remind you that the most important part of any sermon is the application.

It is not often I have the opportunity of hearing a sermon, but a year or so ago I was home for a couple of Sundays. I listened to the same man preach over the radio both Sunday mornings. They were fine sermons. I saw him get the nail, I saw him put it in its place, I heard him hammer it; and I said to myself, "Now he will clinch it, now for the application." He came right up to the completion of the parable—and then the announcer said, "You have been listening to a sermon by Dr. So-and-So." There was no, "Thou art the man", in it. It was sort of cafeteria sermon—"Help yourself." But a cafeteria is no good to any but very hungry people. If they are not hungry, they will not help themselves. If you are a cafeteria preacher, and hold your sermon up and say, "There it is. Come and get it", you will not be an effective preacher. The proper way to preach is to be like the waiter who puts the food in front of you and says, "That is yours, that is what you ordered."

"Thou art the man", said Nathan. That was another story. It is a fine art to know how to reach the people who need to be reached. A pastor told me that in the days when he was shepherd over a little country church he had among his members some well-to-do men—but they gave practically nothing. There was one, the richest man of the church—it was only a little church, but it represented some wealth. This man gave nothing, and the pastor said, "I will flay him alive. I will prepare a sermon specially for him. I will make mince-meat of him." (That is not a wise thing for any pastor to do. If you think a man deserves that, go to him personally.)

When Sunday morning came my friend said, "My man was at church, in his usual pew; and I said to myself, He cannot escape. I will get him going and coming, standing up and sitting down." Mr. Preacher was sure that the rich man could not possibly escape; he said to himself, I am going to have a merry time to-day. If ever that man heard the truth in his life, he will hear it this morning. He said to me, "I thought I preached with special unction that morning. I enjoyed it myself. My man sat and listened. He did not go to sleep for a second. When the sermon was over and the benediction pronounced, my friend came up the aisle, gripped me by the hand, and said, 'That was the best sermon I ever heard. I am so glad Mr. So-and-So was here this morning! It described him exactly.'" The man for whom it was intended did not get it at all.

The pastor said he "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse". It is not an easy thing to say, "Thou art the man", but that is real preaching.

We had a very distinguished lawyer in the membership of this church some years ago. He told me of a Sunday he spent in London, when he went to hear Dr. Joseph Parker in the morning, and Mr. Spurgeon at night. There were crowds at both services to hear these world-famous preachers. "In the morning," said my lawyer-friend, "one was impressed with the ability and brilliance of the preacher, but he seemed to say, 'You are the small dust of the balance who are privileged to listen while I preach to the world'"—and Parker preached the gospel. I hope you will read his sermons. Marvellous productions they were! He was one of the greatest preachers of all time, but that was characteristic of his preaching.

Incidentally, before I tell you the other half of it. There is a story, whether apocryphal or based in fact, of a time when Spurgeon, and "Collar and Cuffs", as he was called, the Duke of Clarence, brother of the king, and then heir-apparent to the throne—so-called because he always wore a collar up to his ears and cuffs down to his knuckles—and Cardinal Manning, all three world figures, were known to be at the point of death. Dr. Parker preached every Thursday noon to a congregation of ministers and others. It was one of the great features of Dr. Parker's ministry. At these Thursday lectures he usually referred to current events. On this occasion he referred to the fact that these three world-figures were occupying the thought of the world because all three were lying at the point of death.

When he came to speak of Spurgeon, according to the story, he described him as the "world's greatest preacher". But, with characteristic modesty, the great preacher of the City Temple said, "But some one will say, 'The world's greatest preacher? What about the Pastor of the City Temple?'" (You must be a great man before you can safely indulge in that sort of thing, young man!) Parker said, "I could stop almost any boy on the street and say, 'Say, my boy, who is C. H. Spurgeon?' Instantly he would respond, 'He is the great preacher, sir.' That could be repeated almost anywhere in the English-speaking world, and one would receive the same answer. But go a short distance from the City Temple and stop a man on the street and say, 'Could you tell me, sir, who Joseph Parker is, or where he is to be found?' He would say, 'Joseph Parker? Joseph Parker? Let me see. I am sorry, sir, but I never heard of him.'" That was Parker's tribute to Spurgeon.

But my lawyer-friend said, "I heard Parker in the morning, and I went out of the Temple saying, What a marvellous preacher! At night I went to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. I saw the enormous crowd of people in profound silence waiting for the entrance of Spurgeon. Presently he came in, and one felt that everyone was thrilled by the presence of the man. He seemed to bring something with him. The service proceeded. It was wonderful enough, but when Spurgeon announced his text, and had spoken but about five minutes, I forgot the Metropolitan Tabernacle, I forgot the congregation, I forgot the people who were sitting in the pew with me, I forgot the preacher: I thought of only one thing. My soul was naked before God. God Himself was speaking to heart and conscience."

Ah, yes; that is preaching. That was characteristic

of Spurgeon's ministry. And that was characteristic of Nathan's ministry: "Thou art the man." Somehow or another we must seek grace of God so to preach that people will know that the message is specifically directed to them. Do not preach to absentees: preach to the people who are before you. You will be able to do that if indeed you seek your message from the Lord.

That is just as true of teaching as of preaching. It is as true of Sunday School teachers as of any other teacher. Our task must always be to bring the principles of Christ's gospel to bear upon the lives of the people to whom we are sent.

In this sermon of Nathan's—and it is an ideal sermon; study it carefully—there is a recognition of sin, and it was so delivered as to make the person to whom it was spoken conscious of his guilt.

Furthermore, it is a word that threatens judgment and retribution. We must not forget, as I pointed out to you a week or so ago, the severer aspects of the divine message.

Nathan's sermon wrought repentance and faith. That must be the end of all preaching, to get people to repent. We hear little about repentance nowadays. Modern evangelism scarcely ever mentions it. It is believe—believe—believe. But you cannot believe unless you repent. Repentance is an element in true faith. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Nobody will take the doctor's medicine until he knows and acknowledges he is ill.

What a blessing it would be if everyone who knows the Lord, every child of God, being convicted of sin, or error, or mistake—and often they are all one—would frankly by the grace of God acknowledge it. That is the mistake we all make. When we know we are wrong, let us be honest and courageous enough to acknowledge it before God and our fellows.

Why should we be so reluctant to acknowledge making a mistake? The man who makes no mistakes makes nothing. To admit you were wrong yesterday is only to acknowledge you are wiser to-day. It is the part of wisdom the moment we know we are on the wrong road to face the fact, acknowledge it, and turn right-about-face—and get on the right road as quickly as we can. If it were not that the devil deceives us, we should see that there is nothing that will command the respect of sensible men like another man's acknowledgment of his wrong. Anybody who knows anything about human nature knows that we all go wrong. We make mistakes. We are none of us sinless. Why then, when the Lord in His mercy, checks us up, brings us to a halt with a curb bit, and shows us we are wrong—why should we not, as David did, say, "I have sinned"?

Read in this connection the thirty-second and fifty-first Psalms, the penitential Psalms of David. How marvellous they are! How they reveal the heart-experience of a man with whom God has dealt! That is what we ought to do, endeavour so to preach as to make everybody feel what sinners they are—because we are sinners, whether we feel it or not.

As soon as David said that, Nathan said, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." In the thirty-second Psalm you will find that principle beautifully set forth: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be

found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Let me pass rapidly, then, in just a word to the twenty-sixth verse of the twelfth chapter. Joab took the royal city. He sent messengers to David and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters. Now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name." That is to say, Joab had broken the back of Ammon's resistance. He had ensured the victory for David, but apparently he wanted David to have the honour of it on this occasion. He stayed his hand, and sent to David and bade him come and gather together the rest of the people and besiege the city, and complete the victory.

That was generous, was it not? Could you do that? When you have almost got the thing in your hand, and can have all the credit to yourself, are you willing to share it with somebody else? Remember, you will never be able to share your responsibilities with others, and get them to share your burdens, if you are unwilling to share such recognition as your achievements deserve with those who have helped you to bring those things to pass. You remember the story of the organist and the little boy who pumped the organ? We must be willing to say "we".

"And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance." Unless he were divinely instructed thus ruthlessly to deal with the children of Ammon it would seem to me that David, on this occasion, exceeded the bounds of military necessity. However, I leave these two chapters with you for your further study.

THE EDITOR IN ROCHESTER, N.Y.

Dr. Shields is in Rochester, N.Y., this week, speaking twice daily at a Bible Conference under the auspices of the Interstate Evangelistic Association.

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