

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

### ETERNAL SECURITY

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, July 22nd, 1934.

(Stenographically Reported)

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"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."—John 17: 1-3.

This is a profound utterance; a text which is in itself an infinite ocean of truth, whose fulness one can neither exhaust, nor fathom. Yet, I trust, we may view it with spiritual understanding, and be enabled to appreciate enough of it to derive some profit from our meditation.

This chapter is a record of what I like to think of as the high-priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus. With the cross immediately in view, with the knowledge that His earthly course was about to terminate, that He had given His full testimony as the Incarnate Word, and that He would return to the Father from Whom He had come, He offered this prayer, burdened with a desire not only for the illumination, but for the complete and eternal preservation of all whom the Father had given Him. Let us look at these great verses, and pray that God may give us spiritual discernment that we may learn something of their value.

#### I.

Our Lord here represents Himself as ONE TO WHOM SUPREME AUTHORITY OVER ALL FLESH IS ALREADY GIVEN. Isaiah described Him as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". There are those among His devoted followers who sometimes speak of Him as though He had come to the world with a tentative programme conditioned upon certain human responses to His appeal; and that in the event of the acceptance of the kingdom by His ancient people, He would set up His kingdom. But because He was rejected He did not do that which otherwise He might have done, but went on to the cross. Oh,

I wish our friends who preach that doctrine of the postponement of the kingdom could see how utterly dishonouring it is to Jesus Christ. He postponed nothing! He failed in the accomplishment of nothing to which His hand was set. He carried out the programme conceived in the mind of the Eternal before the worlds were made, without the slightest deviation from His set purpose. He finished the work which God had given Him to do. There are those who speak of Him in such a way that one might imagine His powers to be still limited. The fact is, He is clothed with universal authority. He is even now the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He has been given, and now possesses, authority over all flesh. Many of the world's rulers have desired and designed enlarged dominions: Alexander, Charlemagne, the Caesars, Napoleon, and the Kaiser, have dreamed their dreams of universal authority and empire, but they all failed in the accomplishment of their ambitions. There was one who, by some strange means, brought before the vision of our Lord, in the hour of His temptation, all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, and offered them to Him. But He knew they were His by divine right. He knew that the day would come when the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He should reign for ever and ever. He is the only One to Whom authority over all flesh was ever given.

But, my dear friends, I would have you conceive of Jesus Christ in the terms of this self-revelation, One Who knows no limitation of His authority even now. The

hearts of all men are in His hand. He is before all things, and even now—not in the future—in Him all things consist, or hold together. The One Whom I preach to you as Saviour this evening, I declare to be your sovereign King: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

He has overcome, and He has sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. "All authority," He said to His disciples ere He left, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Let us not open our minds to the reception of any doctrine of a diminutive Christ, a Christ Who is stripped of His power and authority, or Whose authority is limited. Your faith can be no stronger than the object in which it is reposed. Men are men of great faith who believe in a great King. Authority is given to Him over all flesh. That means you, everyone who hears me to-night. If He does not exercise that authority it is because it pleases Him, sovereignly, to restrain His power. But He can exercise it; He can so deal with men as to bring them to an acceptance of Himself. I have quoted many times the text—it is a favourite of mine, and it gives me comfort every time I quote it—which explains the blessing that came to that little group by the riverside one Sabbath morning in Philippi, when Paul preached to a company of women who had come together to pray, among whom was a business woman called Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira, who received the truth. It is said of her, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul". He exercised His authority. Taking His key he opened her heart and admitted the truth, and showed Himself as Saviour and Lord. The master key which can open all hearts swings at His girdle: He has authority over all flesh.

And that is our hope, my dear friends, as we preach this evening. I have no powers of persuasion, no powers of learning or logic, that could break down your prejudices and open your heart, or unseal your mind to the reception of the truth. It were folly even to attempt it if it were not true that all authority is given to Him. That is why we pray. That is why we prayed for this service. I do not know whether it shall be in this room, or as the message shall go out by radio, but certain I am that some hearts will be opened to the reception of the truth, not because I preach, but because authority is given to Him over all flesh, and He can and will make men hear. He can compel submission. If He could not, it were vain to preach the gospel at all: "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And here is the emphatic word: "Go ye therefore"! It were no use to go at all if we were not assured of His presence, and that His word will be accompanied by divine power.

## II.

And THIS AUTHORITY IS BENEVOLENTLY EXERCISED. He is given authority over all flesh. In these days of distress and public relief how would you like to hear of someone of unlimited resources being exalted to a position of authority in order that he might dispense his wealth, that he might be pleased just to give—give—give—keep on giving? The Queen of Sheba said to Solomon, "Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king." So may we say, and with greater emphasis of a greater than Solomon. How marvellously

He gives! He openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing; He "sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust". How benevolently this world is ruled! How true it is that it is a place "where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." That is not mere poetic imagination: it is literal truth. This were a great and beautiful world if it were not for the human sin that has cursed it. And yet our gracious God—Who is none other than Jesus Christ, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of all things—is exalted that He may give.

You remember how the slave was brought from the prison house in ancient Egypt, and how he interpreted the king's dream, and told of a day of dearth, and of great distress that was yet to come; and you remember what the king did with him? He took the signet ring from his finger, and put it upon the finger of Joseph. He put a gold chain about his neck; he exalted Him. Oh, not like Hitler, who commits murder on a wholesale scale! Joseph was exalted, not to dip his hands in blood: he was exalted that he might be in a position to give. Later when explaining the providence that had made him next in authority to Pharaoh himself, he said: "God did send me before you to preserve life." We might well tremble at the doctrine of divine sovereignty if that sovereign power were not tempered by an infinite love. But I can see no sane, moral, objection to the exercise of absolute sovereignty by One who is Himself love in its very essence. He is given "authority over all flesh, that he should give."

## III.

Give what? "THAT HE SHOULD GIVE ETERNAL LIFE." Joseph could not do that. Mordecai could not do it. No ruler was ever able to give life. Napoleon, having given an order to one of his generals, said, "Now, sir, use dispatch. Ask me for anything but time and I will give it to you; but I cannot give you time." Ah, but the King of eternity could give time if He chose to do so. He gave Joshua time; He gave Hezekiah time, and turned back the shadow on the dial of Ahaz.

It is the sovereign prerogative of Jesus Christ to give life; and no one can give life but God. In all realms that is true, even in physical life He has reserved a point at the genesis of life for His own direct appearing. He has power to give life.

*That means to communicate a life principle of inestimable potentiality.* What is your idea of salvation? I wish people could be delivered, by divine grace, from their churchianity, and their idea that God cares about ceremonies and external forms! as though we had it in our power to minister something to the completeness of Deity. What nonsense!

I was away from home the other day, and I sent a telegram. A friend accompanied me to the office. The telegram cost seventy-six cents. And this friend proposed to pay the bill. I said, "You will do nothing of the kind," and I took some coins from my pocket. He said, "I must obey my father's orders, and he told me I was to allow you to pay nothing." I said, "Stand aside", and I put some money on the counter. There was some silver, and one copper. He threw down seventy-five cents, and said to me, "All right; I will take the copper", and he added my poor penny to his seventy-five cents. I said, "You make me like a lot of folks I know." "What do you mean?" he said. "Well, when God pays the whole bill they want to add a copper, and thus spoil the whole

principle of grace." I had a little part in the telegram—not much, just a penny. But my dear friends, you have not even a penny, or if you have it is a counterfeit one, and it has a hole in it, too! It is not full weight. "Nothing to pay"!

Christ is exalted that He should give life. He gives it, confers it, imparts it, communicates it: it is part of Himself; He communicates life to men dead in trespasses and sins. And that is what salvation is—contact with God; an act of God. "Why, sir, you do not mean to say it is not my prayers, not my Bible reading, not my almsgiving, not my works!" I mean exactly that. It has no part in your salvation at all. He is exalted that He may give eternal life; and He just gives it.

"And this is life eternal,"—life that never ends. I spoke at a conference the other day where there were a number of ministers in attendance at a minister's institute. There was one man who seemed to be very much interested, and after one of the sessions he came to me and said, "What is your view of the eternal security of the believer? Do you believe in that doctrine?" I said, "Of course, I do." "Well," he said, "I have never quite been able to see that yet." He was a minister, and he did not know that the only kind of life that Jesus gives is life that is eternal. That does not mean, as I have so often tried to explain to you, and must keep on explaining to the end of the chapter,—that does not mean endlessness of duration, mere continuance of life: it means that the life in its very quality, to use the strongest word I know, in its very nature and essence is eternal as God is eternal. The salvation that consists of life is a part of God. God communicates Himself to men, and that is what saves them. You cannot save yourself. He is given authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life. And that is the only kind of life He ever gives; He has no authority to give life of any other quality. It is involved in the eternal covenant of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that ruined men should be brought back to oneness with God.

Let me pause a moment to say that in discussions of organic union of various religious bodies I have heard this text quoted, and have always felt a protest against it. When Jesus prayed that they all—all believers—might be one, did He mean that some clever lawyer should write an instrument to which all could set their signature, and then say, "We are all one"? Not at all. It was something infinitely deeper than that. The kind of union for which He prayed was that union which subsists in the persons of the Godhead, that all might be one in Christ Jesus: "That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." What He meant was that the only way by which anybody could be saved was to be brought into vital and eternal union with God Himself. There is no other salvation, and that is the salvation that Jesus Christ gives—eternal life!

"To as many as thou hast given him." Oh, I should like to tarry a while with that, but I dealt with that principle in a sermon a few weeks ago. Life is communicated, and they are saved by divine choice. You want to be saved? That is proof that the Lord will save you, so you need not worry about it. If you wish that you were among those whom the Father has given to the Son, that is proof positive that you are, for no one would ever have a desire after God if God first of all had not put the desire into his heart: "When thou saidst,

Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek". He gives eternal life.

#### IV.

I come with hesitation to deal with the next verse. I wish my reason were equal to the task of exploring this great storehouse. I wish my imagination had wings mighty enough to fly away into this realm of the infinite. I wish that I had language with which to express even the things I see. But let me speak to you who are on the low level of expectation of salvation by church membership, salvation by forms or ceremonies, salvation by works of righteousness that you and I might do. Listen to this great word: "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent". "That they might know the Bible?" Yes; we ought to know the Bible; but you may know the letter of that and not know the God of the Bible. Let us get past all secondary considerations, and face for a moment that tremendous statement, that eternal life consists in knowing the eternal God. How can we know Him? I said just now that life consists, or that salvation consists in the communication of a vital principle, of some new element that is put within us by the Spirit of God. It is the communication of the very life of God. Thus we are born again; thus we are made a new creation. But that is but the beginning of it. How interesting life is in its beginnings? I talked to a man a little while ago about a flower bed. He said, "I wonder can you see it? Do you know plants?" I said, "I do not know much about them." "You do not know their habits. Then you must try to visualize them as they will appear three months hence, for they will not look as they do now." When he put them in the ground he put them so far apart that I said, "Why leave so much bare ground?" "Oh," he said, "remember that I see them two or three months hence."

What does eternal life mean? More than the life of a man who might attain, let us say, to the age of the patriarchs, or the life of a man who might outlive the record of Methuselah, if that were possible: that would not be eternal life. It means what it says. The life of God goes on forever. And that life God communicates to the soul when He saves us. He makes us one with Himself, and saves us forever. And Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee."

I heard a man say once that the function of education was to make a man at home in God's world, and that the wider and more numerous his correspondences the larger the life He would be able to live. If he knew his own language he could hold commerce with those who had expressed their thought in his own speech. When he acquired another language he opened the door to another storehouse; and still another language, he pushed back another boundary. When he delved into the history of the past he held commerce with the great souls of all the ages that have gone. If he became master of the sciences so far he enlarged his life intellectually. As he multiplied his correspondences, he pushed back the boundaries of life. The really educated man would be the man who would be able to go anywhere in God's world and be measureably at home. By that definition there are not very many educated men. We are all but partially instructed, for often we find ourselves in places where we are not at home.

What is life? During the war I lectured on some features of the war, and I met a man, a farm hand, and

as soon as I heard his speech I knew that he came from my own mother country. I said, "Where were you born?" "Surrey, sir," he said. "Well," I said, "I suppose you know all about London, do you?" "Oh, no, sir, I never was in London." "You never went to London!" "No, sir; I lived thirty miles from London, and it took a lot of money to go to London." Somehow he could cross the sea, but he knew nothing about the great metropolis. He had never been there, and was greatly interested in some of the things I told him about the great city so near to where he was born. What does it mean to live?—not merely to exist? "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." We do not live the life of an animal. We cannot say, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die." That is not all of life. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." How richly some people live! I have known people who lived in perhaps one or two rooms, and yet held converse with the whole world. They refused to be cribbed, cabined, and confined, hence they enlarged their minds. I am speaking now merely of the intellectual life. It is possible to reside in Toronto and know more about the world without than some people know when they have travelled in all countries of the earth.

There was a young fellow of wealth in New York, who belonged to—I know not how many clubs. When he came of age his father sent him to Europe for six months, to improve his mind. Before leaving he went the round of his clubs, and they gave him some little send-off, a celebration of some sort. They bade him Godspeed, or at least a good time; and he went away. In six weeks he was back in clubland again. And they said, "Why, So-and-So, we thought you had gone to Europe?" "So I did." "Well, we thought you were going to stay six months?" "Well, that was dad's proposal. I went there to stay six months." "Why did you not stay?" "Oh, bless you," he said, "there is nothing to see in Europe. I do not know why I went there. I was a fool to go." I heard a man tell that story, and he added, "The fact was, he was a fool before he went." He had no capacity for the enjoyment of the things he saw.

But we are dealing now with spiritual things. What if this world were ours! What if everything in it were at our command, for our use, for our enjoyment! What if we were free from every kind of moral and physical infirmity, and of intellectual limitation! What if our capacities were enlarged so that we could live spiritual lives upon this earth, and could roam at will—yes, even fly here and there! And what if life could be extended until there should not be a corner of the world whose treasures we had not explored! That would not be life. But what if, instead of this world, we surveyed the universe! I do not know much about it, but I have some sympathy with those who think of other spheres as being peopled, inhabited, by some sort of beings. And I should not be at all surprised to learn in the life beyond, that this is just a rebellious province of God's universe. There are suggestions in scripture to that effect. I am not dogmatic or positive about it; but suppose instead of this world we were able to fly to other worlds with all their content of wealth and possibility, with endless duration of life, to go wherever we liked! That would not be eternal life. Life consists in relationships. We live not to ourselves. No man can live to himself. We live in relation to others. Even on this

lower plane we find our supreme joys in these human relationships. But eternal life! If that be put within us, and if in that germinal communication there be the qualities of the Godhead, if I am some day to be just as He is just, faithful as He is faithful, holy as He is holy, what sort of a sphere shall I need in which to live, in order that that life may find its full and complete expression? I can find it only in God Himself: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And He said, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." And in that high-priestly prayer He said, in effect, "I have told them Who and what Thou art, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me; that I came out from Thee. And they have learned to interpret God in terms of my revelation of the Father. And this is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Are you not staggered by the astronomers' distances? Are you not amazed by what these daring explorers tell us about their explorations in the—what do they call it?—stratosphere? How big the universe seems to be! Yes; and it is only a little speck. The inhabitants of this earth are as grasshoppers, and even the infinite seas God holds in the hollow of His hand. Read that great chapter, the fortieth of Isaiah, and see how great God is in relation to this little earth of ours. But what must it be to know God Himself, as He is revealed in Christ, and to be one with Him, shut up to God, with the promise and prospect of the privilege of everlasting exploration of the riches of Deity! I think that is what the Holy Spirit means—speaking by Paul—when He says, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God". And He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Would you like a vacation? Going away for a holiday soon, are you? How long? "Oh, a couple of weeks, perhaps a month." But you have to come back to the old grind, have you not? Where are you going? "Oh, to a cottage by the lake somewhere, just for a change." What do you want a change for? "I feel I must have a change." At this time of year we pass some fine mansions all shut up, for the people have gone away somewhere. They may be living in a log cabin or a tent. They will endure anything for a change. Well sometimes I feel about ready for a vacation. I do not mean an ordinary vacation, but one that will never end—I mean I would like a change from this terrestrial sphere. I understand what Paul meant when he said he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better: Far better to get away from all these limitations of life in this lower realm, to lose ourselves in God. What a blessing! Are you saved? Are you started on the road?

What is the station, what is the dock at which we board the ship? I have read many sermons that remind me of a great ocean liner without any gang-plank, sailing somewhere, but no provision is made for a poor sinner to get on; or like an express train that flies past would-be passengers at every way-station. If we are going we must know where to begin, at what station we may board this heavenbound excursion train. Here it is: This Man!

"What man?" His name is Jesus. "I thought you said He was God." He is God, but He has stooped to my little understanding so that, with the mind of a little child, I may understand Who He is, and He whispers to me: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Trust Me, and I will give you eternal life, and no man shall ever pluck you out of My hand. Then we may journey Godward and heavenward, and explore the infinite reaches of His grace through all the ages to come.

Will you start now? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, for the simplicity of Thy gospel. We thank Thee that the little children can understand the way of life. And we would come this evening as little children, confessing that we are sinners, that we have done that which is wrong, which is sinful in Thy sight, and we ask Thee to forgive us. Nor could we ask Thee if it were not that Jesus died for sinners, the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

Lord we would trust Thee. Help us to delight ourselves in the salvation that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Save those who have heard by radio. May there be joy in the presence of the angels tonight over sinners who have repented. May Thy children rejoice in their inheritance. Oh, that we may know how rich we are. Bless us for Thy name's sake, Amen.

### THE BRITISH WEEKLY ON THE OXFORD GROUP IN CANADA

In order to learn what is happening in one's own city it appears to be necessary to read papers that are published thousands of miles away. It is both interesting and instructive to study the psychology of patent medicine advertisements. The letters therein appearing testifying to help received usually are from addresses very remote from the place of publication. A few years ago Toronto suffered from what was almost a plague of "divine healing" charlatans. They told of miraculous cures which had been effected in other places, usually somewhere on the Pacific Coast.

In *The British Weekly* of July 12th there is an article about the Oxford Group, signed with the initials "J.T.S.", and headed, "The Spiritual Awakening in Canada". We are told "Londoners were invited on July 4th to hear at the Guildhall an account of the national uprising in Canada under Group leadership, which is so vitally affecting the business, political and social life of the Dominion." We make one or two other quotations:

"The leader dwelt on the influence of Group teamwork in preventing strikes in Canada."

Again:

"The teams have travelled 4,000 miles over the length and breadth of Canada. Four or five meetings were held daily, and people heard the good news who had never before given a thought to religion. Through the wireless the tidings penetrated to the most distant shacks on the prairie. Donald Ross has noted the perfect understanding and friendship between Canadians and United States citizens at the house-parties."

A Vancouver journalist was reported as saying:

"The message has swept over Western Canada."

Another Grouper said:

"The journey across Canada had given him the most wonderful experience of his life. He would never forget the kindness, gentleness, and goodwill that had been shown him everywhere."

Another

"ventured, greatly daring, to suggest that after-ages would give England credit for two great original creations—the tanks and the Oxford Group."

Again:

"At a meeting of clergy last week there was a Canadian Pastor from a western town, and also an editor from the same place. Between the two there had long existed a sharp hostility. The preacher denounced the journalist from the pulpit; the editor assailed him with rapier-like thrusts in his paper. At Oxford these two good men have become completely reconciled. 'When the editor goes back he will exchange his rapier for a quill—and not a goose-quill either!'"

These incidents are cited as proof of "the spiritual awakening in Canada".

For nearly twenty-five years this Editor has lived in Toronto, and preached from one pulpit. He claims to know something about the religious life of Toronto. If there has been such a "spiritual awakening" in Canada as this article would have us believe, it has entirely escaped our observation. There are churches in Toronto from which the principles of Biblical evangelical Christianity have long been excluded; pulpits from which no principle of supernaturalism has been proclaimed for many a year. These prayerless churches, where the conversion of a soul is never even expected, so far as evidences of their being a media of any sort of supernatural power is concerned, have been as destitute of fruit as was the fig tree that had on it nothing but leaves. In these churches the Bible has been discounted, and the supernaturalism of the gospel implicitly or explicitly denied. Such churches at length find difficulty in justifying their existence; for the investment of time and talent and money they represent yields no revenue.

It is significant that it has been in just such churches as these that the Oxford Groupers have been welcomed. But the testimony of Oxford Groupism has not brought them back to the Bible, or to the atoning blood. There has been on the part of these churches no acknowledgement of unfaithfulness; nor has there been, so far as we are able to learn, the slightest appreciable change in the church life.

Certainly, the Oxford Group Movement is well advertised. They are as careful and subtle in their press announcements as are the Christian Scientists. We are positive that the Oxford Group Movement is every whit as unscriptural as is Christian Science itself: the one is positive, the other is negative; but they are twins in principle.

So far as Toronto is concerned, the influence of the Oxford Group in this city, so far as we have observed, or can ascertain, is practically nil. We are told the movement swept Western Canada. We know a little about Western Canada; and among other things we know that there are few large centres of population in Western Canada, and comparatively few good hotels. And where there are no good hotels the Oxford Group does not go. Our Lord and Saviour found place in the stable of Bethlehem's inn; but the Oxford Group would not condescend to cross the threshold of the inn itself.

One man is impressed with the goodwill and kindness shown him! The same could be said, we hope, by any visitor to Canada. Canadians are not boors: they are usually courteous to their guests. We have known not a few Modernists, whose whole outlook was definitely anti-Christian, who could be exceedingly kind to strangers. Is that evidence of a spiritual awakening? "Do not even the publicans the same?" We are told that a certain editor and a certain preacher were bad friends. It is quite possible that one or the other may

have been perfectly justified in his attitude. But, joining the Oxford Group, of course nothing matters: Unitarians and Trinitarians, Supernaturalists and anti-Supernaturalists, Revelationists and Rationalists, Creationists and Evolutionists, Protestants and Romanists—they all bring their absolutely conflicting views and join the Oxford Group without even changing their opinions!

When Moses was about to lead Israel out of Egypt into a life of liberty as proof of his divine commission, he wrought certain miracles, but "the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments". It seems to us that the Oxford Group is one of the devil's substitutes for a real heaven-sent blessing. We are certain of this, that no one instructed in the word of God can long keep step with the Oxford Group.

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO GERMANY?

We once believed in human sanity. We supposed that the mind of the average man of ordinary intelligence could be prevailed upon to accept the logic of facts; and in the light of facts indisputably established, could be expected to change his opinion. But prejudice seems to be hard either to kill or to dispel. Prophetically we are warned of those who will cry: "Peace, peace; when there is no peace": We hate war and violence of every kind. We believe that people morally sane and spiritually enlightened, should not be "as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle"; men ought to be amenable to reason; they ought to be so related to the great Lawgiver and Guide that He could say to them: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye". But even good people sometimes become subject to obsessions. They would not be classed as mental defectives, of course, but they become absorbed with an idea, and make their prejudices the standard of interpretation alike of characters and events.

Since the war many leaders of opinion seem to have become obsessed with the idea that abiding peace is a possibility, that war is unnecessary. We admit this ought to be so; but we are convinced that pacificism, properly understood, and as applied to unregenerate human society this side of the millennium, is only anarchy disguised.

We have long believed the Bible to be the infallible and authoritative word of God; and, therefore, to be true to all the facts of life. It is the only Book that has the courage to portray human nature in its true colours. That human nature is utterly bad is either implicitly or explicitly taught on every page of scripture. The human heart is a veritable pesthouse in which every evil out of hell is bred. It is not so very long since the evolutionists told us that human nature was outgrowing its savagery, and that every necessity for the application of force would soon be at an end. It is not surprising that the horrors of The Great War should have driven men to find mental relief from the contemplation of its possible repetition in an endeavour to persuade themselves that war can be outlawed and prevented. But to these theories, desirable as they are in themselves, we have never been able to yield assent. The Bible is a mirror which reflects not only the life of the individual, but the life of nations in their relation to each other, and to the great principles of the moral

government of the world. We do not deny that there are specific prophecies in the word of God that must, ultimately, be fulfilled to the letter. We are, however, somewhat skeptical of the pronouncements of those who claim such expertness in identifying the particular persons or events toward which these prophecies are directed. But we believe there are principles revealed in the scriptures which are as inexorable in their operation as the law of the tides. The historical portions of scripture, whether of the Old or of the New Testament, exemplify some of these great principles, which in their united and co-operative action determine the character and destiny of nations.

On this ground we have no fear that modern Germany will immediately provoke another world conflagration. We have known before now an influential man in a church, a man who filled many positions, and who was regarded as almost indispensable to the church's progress, who, little by little, from varying motives, relinquished one duty after another, with the result that his place was gradually filled. And when the last tie was severed and he stepped out of the church altogether, his going was scarcely observed, and had no appreciable reaction upon the church's life. In respect to the rest of Europe and of the world, Germany has been teaching the world how to get along without her. If, by some miracle of judgment, the German nation were blotted out of existence over night, neither the world's trade, nor its cultural life would seriously suffer. Internally, Germany has been playing the part of a madman sharpening a razor with which to commit suicide: "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword". Violence invariably destroys itself. No one will question the phenomenal character of Hitlerism. If it be not a new thing under the sun, it is at least a modern manifestation of ancient barbarism. Hitler's Storm troops were a creature of his own, brought into being to further and protect his pretensions. He was shrewd enough to see that he had created a force which might effect his own destruction, and therefore ruthlessly murdered the leaders; not because they were enemies of the state, but because they threatened Hitler's personal supremacy.

What of the future? Only one who has forgotten, or failed to observe, the teaching of history can believe that Hitlerism can long survive. For millions of German people, among them many of the Lord's elect, we have nothing but sympathy; but for the German nation as such, we have no pity. It has been the plague spot of the world for several generations. Sodom and Gomorrah were not a greater menace to the world's moral health than Germany has been. It has been the breeding spot, the culture bed, for every thing that is inimical to human interests, and to the divine government.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil". We said in England before the armistice was signed, and offended many by the saying, that the greatest disaster that could come to the world would be for peace to be signed anywhere outside of Berlin. Had the allied governments carried out their programme, and brought to justice the persons proved to be responsible for the World War, they would have done more to curb the war-like tendencies of human nature than all the speeches of all the pacifists in the world.

But though men fail to keep their promises, God does not: "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished". We greatly fear that a judgment day for Germany is dawning. Added to the danger lurking in the fact that millions in Germany have been fed on doctrines of violence for a long time, is the sinister fact that it seems probable that they will soon have nothing else to feed upon. We are now told that Germany will soon be put on food rations as in time of war. The Chancellor in his speech broadcast over the world, in which he attempted to justify his murderous acts, at the same time issued a word of defiance to all the world, and it seemed to us, to God Himself. He boasted of German independence, declaring that her inventors and chemists could manufacture synthetic foods which could sustain the German nation, though she were boycotted by all the rest of the world. Does he also think he can do without God's dew, and rain, and sunshine! But God still lives and reigns! There are many instances in the Old Testament where the divine judgments made a nation to become its own judge and executioner. We believe that Europe, and the rest of the world, will see the conflicting elements in Germany arrayed against each other. And we are greatly mistaken if something as bad or worse than the French Revolution does, not take place in Germany in the immediate future. Regrettable as that may be, we believe it may have its compensations. It is a horrible illustration—we have used it before, but repeat it: Job suffered from more than one boil, as those who are subject to that malady frequently do. Germany is not the only plague spot of Europe: there are other boils. But the breaking of the German mass of putridity may have the effect of letting the poison out of Europe's blood at least in part, in which event there may come better health to the world.

#### REV. W. S. WHITCOMBE IN EUROPE

We have just received a letter from Rev. W. S. Whitcombe, Professor of Systematic Theology, and of English, in Toronto Baptist Seminary. We were minded first to give a digest of the letter, but on second thought, although the letter was not sent for publication, we believe we cannot do better than to publish the letter in full.

The reference in the last paragraph but one, to Mr. Whitcombe's being in England, is in response to our request for information as we were sure there would be churches in England glad of an opportunity of hearing our Seminary representative.

Mulhouse, Alsace,  
July 12, 1934.

Dr. T. T. Shields,  
Jarvis Street Baptist Church,  
Toronto, Canada.

Dear Doctor Shields:

In the last month I have made the tour of France, Switzerland, and Germany—the latter in half an hour while the motor bus waited! I have seen the Côte d'Azur—Nice, and Monte Carlo—and had I known the map better should also have seen Mentone and crossed the border into Italy. Together with the young people of the church at Court in Switzerland, I climbed a real mountain, and crossed a genuine glacier. I must confess that the Mediterranean and the Alps impressed me much more than anything else I have seen.

Thus far I have visited seven churches in France and Switzerland, and have spoken seven times in French. By our standards the churches are all small, but so far as I have

been able to discover, are strong in the quality of their membership. The pastors I have met are good men, all thoroughly evangelical, and of spiritual power. Mr. Dubarry of Nimes and Mr. G. Guyot of Paris, the latter pastor and editor, strike me as men of unusual ability who are gladly sacrificing themselves in a small work for the sake of the future of the Baptist work in France and Switzerland. The monthly *Lien Fraternal* is written in the best French, and the articles are always well chosen. I have read it for several years. It goes into almost every home in the churches, and is actually a paying proposition, the surplus going to the support of the work in the needy churches. An unusual feature of almost all the churches is the number of lay preachers available to carry on work in the "annexes" or branches as we would say. At Court, in Switzerland, for example, there are five such "annexes"; at Mulhouse, where I am at the present time, there are four. Some of the churches have made rapid advances by such means.

The history of the Baptist work in France is similar to ours, and so far as I can see their outlook for the future is much like ours. On the one hand there is the shadow of Rome, and on the other the deadness of a formal Protestantism: the future of evangelical Christianity in France will be made by our Baptist brethren, as in Canada it will be made by our movement. Surely we are brought to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Mr. Dubarry has followed Jarvis Street and the Union through THE GOSPEL WITNESS, and is well informed as to our situation. I have enjoyed some times of real fellowship with him, and am convinced that he is a gift of God to the churches here. To put in the briefest form possible, he has done for the work here what you have done for the work in Canada and in the United States. Mr. Dubarry was greatly disappointed that he did not get better acquainted with you during his last visit to Canada. He met you, of course, but feels that he did not have sufficient time to unburden his heart. He is hoping that it will be possible to have a satisfactory interview with you during your time in England this summer, and suggests that if you would care to take a trip to Paris during the first week of October, he will be there for a conference of the pastors at that time. If this is not possible for you, he will go to London to see you. Would you be good enough to write him telling him when you could see him, for he evidently attaches much importance to seeing you and unburdening his heart.

As to my own plans: I am certain that I shall be in England and free to preach on the last Sunday in August, and the first two in September—August 26th, September 2nd and 9th. I hope to be in Toronto for the last Sunday in September, and perhaps before that.

During the last month I have been ruminating much, chewing my cud of last year's experience. And, far away from Jarvis Street and the Seminary, and THE WITNESS, I am more than ever persuaded of the uniqueness of our work, and give God thanks for it, and for you, and for the fact that I have some small part in it.

With warmest regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,

WILL WHITCOMBE.

P.S.—My address for the next five weeks will be as follows: M. G. Guyot, 98 bis, rue Jean-Jaurès, Bois-Colombes, (Seine).

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## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 9

No. 3

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 34 THIRD QUARTER August 26, 1934

### DAY OF VENGEANCE

Lesson Text: Esther, chapter 9.

Golden Text: "But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey."—Esther 9:16.

Bible School Reading: Esther 9:1-5, 20-32.

#### DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Job 18:1-8; Tuesday—Psalm 71:1-16; Wednesday—Isaiah 9:1-7; Thursday—Genesis 41:37-45; Friday—John 2:1-11; Saturday—I Corin. 3:1-15.

#### I. THE SLAUGHTER OF ENEMIES (9:1-19).

On the day set by the king's decree for their slaughter, the Jews gathered themselves together "to lay hand on such as sought their hurt". This was in obedience to the second decree which permitted them to defend themselves, and placed the king definitely on their side. It was a critical time for their race, a time of testing; yet a time of hopeful expectancy, with everything in their favour owing to the king's decree, yet with the possibility of loss through superior numbers against them. The enemy, however, was paralyzed in his attack, for "no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people". This was probably in part due to the royal influence, and the position of Mordecai at court; but divine influence may be observed underlying all. God was undoubtedly protecting His people. On previous occasions the fear of the Lord's people had fallen on their enemies, due to divine favour; and victory had crowned their efforts (Ex. 23:27; Josh. 2:9-11). Note the goodness of God toward His own, and His unfailing thoughtfulness respecting their welfare.

The result of the day's encounter was a great victory for the Jews, and the slaughter of many of their enemies. At its close, in response to the enquiry of the king, Esther requested permission to continue for another day the privilege of her people to defend themselves against their enemies, which, being granted, many additional enemies were slain, and the bodies of Haman's sons were exposed on the gallows. Esther has been condemned for requesting this second day of slaughter, but it is not wise to pass judgment without a full understanding of the facts. No specific reason is given for the request, though undoubtedly there was such a reason. We are informed from Jewish sources that those who attacked the Jews and were slain in consequence, were Amalekites, of which race Haman was a member (8:1). These were people on whom rested the judgment of God (Ex. 17:16). They were bitter antagonists of the Lord's people, and most likely to take every opportunity of attacking them. In slaying them, the Jews were but carrying out the judgment of God. On the first day it would appear that five hundred and ten of them were slain in Shushan, and seventy-five thousand in the provinces; and on the second day which affected only Shushan, another three hundred persons. The members of this latter company might have hid during the previous day, and have come out the second day thinking to take the Jews by surprise; therefore the need for a second day's strife. And possibly, being in the capital and more closely related to the family of Haman, they would be more determined in their aggression. Whatever the case may be, it is clear they were active opponents, and for that reason were slain; for only those who attacked the Jews lost their lives.

It seems quite clear that the Jews were not the aggressors in this strife. They merely "stood for their lives", and defended themselves when attacked. Therefore those who suffered were guilty of the grave offence of seeking to slay others, and brought their fate upon themselves. Like in this day who do wrong, they might have lived in peace and safety if they had only acted righteously, and sought the good of others, instead of trying to harm them. Note the foolishness of hatred, and the wickedness of seeking to harm others, even though they may be enemies. It is of interest further to note that the Jews "gathered themselves together

and stood for their lives". They did not meet the enemy separately. If they had done so, they would have fallen prey to the attack. They used excellent judgment in co-operating together for the good of all. It was a case of united they stood, while divided they fell. It would be well if the Lord's people these days would realize the serious nature of the conflict in which they are engaged, and would cooperate in facing the enemy. Sometimes division in the ranks takes place on account of principle, making co-operation impossible until rectification is made; but in many cases minor matters of a personal nature divide the people of God, giving the spectacle to angels and men of little groups of people fighting hard, and sometimes losing battles, against the enemies of the cause. Cooperation and concentration are both needed in this conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to this end all personal matters should be sunk, that the will of God may prevail in the ranks of the believers. Note the time of rejoicing following the victory (vs. 17-19). This is one of the results of victory which ought to be manifested now by God's people (I Thess. 5:16).

#### II. THE FEAST OF PURIM (Vs. 20-32).

So important was the victory of the Jews considered that an annual celebration of the event was decreed by authority of Mordecai and Esther. They had had a marvellous preservation from destruction, and it was not in their interest to forget it. The celebration was to be one of gladness and feasting extending for two days (v. 27), and was named Purim after the term Pur or lot, used in connection with Haman's selection of the date for the execution of his plan of destruction (vs. 24, 37). At the celebration of this event it has been the custom of the Jews to read this book of Esther. It was but natural to do this inasmuch as therein is contained the account of their salvation. We are reminded by this of the fact that saints of God have also a marvellous deliverance to celebrate (Col. 1:13), and a wonderful preservation in which to rejoice (Jude 1). And inasmuch as these are not due to our own efforts, but to the work of Christ on our behalf, we manifest our joy in Him, giving thanks for Him as our Saviour, and for His work of redemption (Col. 1:12-14). Note the manifestation of gratitude in this celebration, also the beneficial effect of the remembrance of blessings; and the fact that all have much for which to thank God. Scripture enjoins the remembrance of our Lord's death in the observance of the Supper (I Corin. 11:20-36); and by apostolic usage, points the way to the commemoration of our Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Both of these experiences of our Lord are symbolized in baptism (Romans 6:1-6).

#### III. THE EXALTATION OF MORDECAI (10:1-3).

The book ends fittingly with an account of the greatness of Mordecai, the wise man who is seen first in a humble position at the gate of the king. Like Joseph, he exemplifies the scripture which teaches that the one who humbles himself shall be exalted (Matt. 23:12). He was content to act righteously, and is never seen seeking selfish advancements. His exaltation therefore came as a reward for his righteous acts. Several things are stated in reference thereto. First, he was "next unto king Ahasuerus", denoting the highest position in the kingdom under the king. Second, he "was great among the Jews", due to his position in the state, and his care for his people. Third, he was "accepted of the multitude of his brethren", evidencing a lack of jealousy, and an appreciation of his merits. And fourth, he sought the wealth of his people, and spoke peace to all his seed. These statements magnify his office, and bear testimony to his high character, and sincerity of purpose, in seeking the highest welfare of his people. They believed in him, and trusted him.

The Lord enjoins us to walk before Him in humility (Micah 6:8; I Peter 5:5); which implies willingness to labour for Him in obscure places if only His will is carried out, and leaves the choice of the sphere of service to Him. The self-seeker at the feast was made to take a lowly position (Luke 14:7-11), whereas Joseph was raised from the prison-cell to the governor's seat (Gen. 41:40), David from watching the flock to ruling Israel (I Samuel 16:13), Matthew from collecting custom to functioning in the apostolic office (Matt. 9:9), and Peter from catching fish to catching men (Mark 1:16-18). Better have promotion to God, and seek only to be faithful to Him where thou art.



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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM, THAT IS AT THE GATE"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, July 29th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

Broadcast over CFRB, 690 k.c., as is every Sunday evening service of Jarvis Street Church, from 7 to 8.30 o'clock, Eastern Daylight-Saving Time.

"Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.

"And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem.

"And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!

"And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the Lord,

"And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. These things did these three mightiest."—I. Chron. 11:15-19.

### Prayer before the Sermon

We have come together, O Lord, this evening, not that we might meet each other, but that we might meet with Thee. We remind ourselves as we bow in Thy holy presence of our innate unworthiness, of the fact that we are sinners by nature; and that we have, by our own rebellion, our sin against Thee, forfeited all right to come where Thou art. As we thus come, we depend wholly upon Thy grace. But for the grace of God it were impossible that any one should appear before Him. But we thank Thee that Thou hast manifested Thy grace to us in the person of Thy son, that He has told us that we are to think of Thee in terms of His revelation of Thee. He has said that, seeing Him, we have seen the Father. We thank Thee for His tender compassion toward sinners. We bless Thee that He received sinners in the days of His flesh, that He did even eat with them. We thank Thee that He went to the cross, that He allowed nothing to turn Him aside from His purpose, that the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world was, in due time, manifested for us, and by His precious blood we are redeemed; through the merit of His atoning sacrifice we have free access into the presence of the Holy One. What a priceless privilege that is!—howsoever poor we may be, if we do but come repenting of our sins, and seek Thy face and favour, Thou art ready to receive us.

Ere we proceed further with this service, may many thus come for the first time. Thou hast said that if we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Thus would we come confessing our sins, each for himself. Oh, help us to pray this evening, God be merciful to us sinners.

There may be those who hear by radio, who have turned their dial apparently by accident, but who urgently need the cleansing blood of Christ and the upholding grace of His free Spirit. We thank Thee that it is possible that all the past should be blotted out, that the record we have written in Thy sight may be expunged, and that we may appear before Thee in garments that are whiter than snow, and at last be presented without fault before Thy throne. How many there are this evening who need that salvation—indeed, we all need it. We thank Thee that some have already been made partakers of Thy grace. Unworthy though we are, it has pleased Thee to set Thy heart's love upon us, and to constrain us to an acceptance of Thy grace.

We rejoice in our position as children of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. But there are still many who are out in the storm. There are still many exploring the utmost reaches of the far country. Break in, we pray Thee, upon their indifference this evening; inspire them with a desire toward Thee, and toward the remembrance of Thy name. Incline them to repentance, and bring them back home again.

Some hear this service this evening for whom many prayers have ascended, the prayers of some whose voices have long since been silent, and whose redeemed spirits are before Thy throne. Still the subjects of their intercession have gone on in their sin; but the prayers which have ascended to heaven are not forgotten, and in Thine own time Thou wilt answer the prayers of father or mother, wife or husband, for those whom they loved. May this be to many the day of salvation! May many who hitherto have heard only the voice of the preacher, this evening hear the voice of God. Lord, speak to us! May the seeking Saviour find the lost

sinner, the seeking Shepherd find His lost sheep and lay it on His shoulders rejoicing!

We pray for those who are in sickness, for those who may be racked with pain, and for some who know that the day is shortening, that the river soon must be reached and crossed. Be gracious to all such. Give healing where it is according to Thy will. Give patience to those who must endure for a while yet, we beseech Thee. Some will change worlds to-night. As they pass through the valley of the shadow may they be comforted by Thy rod and Thy staff.

Bless us as we turn to Thy holy Word. May the message of that Word this evening be one that shall be heaven-sent, reaching the hearts and consciences of men. Make this service one that shall never be forgotten in the experience of many as the occasion when God came near in all the fulness of His saving grace, and brought the prodigal home. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Of all the biographies contained in the Word of God it is doubtful whether there is one that so closely parallels general human experience as that of David. It is perhaps for that reason that the Psalms of David, which so closely mirror his own experiences, have found, through all ages, so large a place in the affections of God's people. As we read them, we feel we are in company with one who anticipated in large measure the life and character of his greater Son, in this, that he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He passed through our experiences, entered into our darknesses, shared all our burdens, and, by divine grace, discovered the way of victory.

In the chapter before us we find David in one of his gloomy moods. He has been anointed king, but has not as yet generally been recognized as such. He has had much to do with men. One of the characteristics of his reign is this, that he built no institutions, he effected no great organizations; but he did build and inspire great personalities. There gathered about David a great company of strong men, and we read of the "mighty men whom David had".

This story has to do with the exploits of three of these mighty men, who are described as "these three mightiest". Of all the great men, these were the greatest. Of all the deeds of daring recorded to the credit of these invincibles whom David inspired, the exploit accomplished by these "three mightiest", was the greatest of all.

We have these two things in contrast: the melancholy of David, his wistful homesickness, his longing for earlier days; and side by side with it, this splendid achievement, expressive of the most perfect devotion, wrought by these three mighty men.

### I.

The suggestions of a text like this are manifold, and the application of its principles almost without end; but I desire to begin this evening by viewing it in A PERFECTLY NATURAL WAY, ASKING YOU TO LEARN THE LESSONS WHICH LIE, FIRST OF ALL, CLEARLY ON THE SURFACE. And what are they?

First, that *none of us fully outgrow the memory of our youthful felicities*. We can look back to the days of our youth, and of our childhood, and, if memory serves us sufficiently, even to the days of our very early boyhood and girlhood; and we see much, and recall much, that we experienced in those days which we would gladly repeat. A passage in Job speaks of "the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me." Some of us can and do cherish very happy memories of our life at home.

It may be that David, like other boys, in the days of his youth, had sometimes wearied of the limitations of Bethlehem, of the narrowness of the sphere in which his life was spent. He may have dreamed of a larger world beyond. He may often have longed to taste of other springs than could be found at Bethlehem. He may have observed that distant fields in his day looked green, and as he thought of that outside, larger, life, that world beyond his local interests, it may be that distance lent enchantment to the view. It may have allured him, fascinated him, and made him eager to get away from home.

So has it been with most of us. Sometimes we fretted because of the littleness of life. Sometimes we wanted to get away and try our wings. We dreamed of the great things that we should accomplish when we got away, and of returning at last in triumph, having achieved victory in the world without.

David had had a long and varied experience. He had tasted of other springs. He had explored other worlds than that to which he was born. He had broken the narrow bounds of his ordinary life. He had become a traveller, a soldier, a hero, and the object of the hatred of many. And often he had proved the fickleness and the innate disloyalty and mutability of men. And now, although he has some stalwarts about him, he is suddenly seized with a fit of homesickness. Just now he would rather have a drink of the old well at home than anything else in the world,—not, I suppose, because the water was fresher or sweeter: he was thinking, rather, of that of which the well was but a symbol—of all the home associations, of the freedom, as he now interpreted it, of the days of his youth, of his immunity from anxieties. He remembers the day when he had no burdens to bear, nor obligations to meet, as he has to-day. He feels as though he would like to throw all these things from his shoulders and get back to the days of his childhood, and be a boy again, free to go to Bethlehem's well and drink deeply of its vital waters. We have all felt like that, have we not? We have longed that time might turn backward:

"Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight!  
Make me a child again, just for to-night!"

*Nor was this an idle sentiment.* David was not a sentimentalist: he was a man who thought profoundly, a man who had trained himself to go to the root of matters, a man whose mind had often exercised itself with the philosophy of life, with the investigation of first causes. But his life had become very complicated. Its interests were manifold, and sometimes apparently conflicting. Life, to him, had become, not the simple thing it once was, but a vexing problem. On this occasion he longs for the simplicities of childhood, to rid his mind of the accumulations of the years, to dispel the clouds and prejudices which had formed in his mind—it is almost as though he had said, "I wish I were able as once I was to believe everybody. I wish I could regain that attitude of mind toward life that was characteristic of my youth. Even when I went up to the camp of Saul, I went frankly, ingenuously, desiring nothing but to be helpful, ignorant of the deceitfulness of men and of all the bitter springs of life. I wish I could return to the situation I occupied when I so happily drew water from the well of Bethlehem."

How many things there are in life we should like to forget! How many things we should like to expunge

from our memories altogether! How many associations, how many contacts of life, we have reason to wish we had never formed! Many of these things have not tended to the enrichment of life. And sometimes, even in our inspirational moods, when we have scaled the heights and caught a glimpse of life's successes, even then we have longed for the simplicity of our childhood, for the freedom which was ours—even for the restraints against which we fretted—all of them representing to us the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate. We have felt as though we would sacrifice everything if only we could retrace our steps and begin life's pilgrimage over again.

These are wholesome experiences, dear friends, when the mind does not dwell wholly upon things of the present, but when it holds converse with the past, and looks eagerly and enquiringly toward the future, when it stretches its wings and flies away to higher and purer and nobler realms of thought. Ah, did not the Greatest of all men, of Whom more particularly I shall speak in a moment, say that there was a kingdom which no one could enter unless he should once again become as a little child? Did He not say there were some things that could never be seen unless and until our aging souls should be born again, and we should renew our youth, and get back to Bethlehem, and to the well which is by the gate?

And yet I think there was something more than that expressed in David's cry. Youth has its joys, *but so has manhood, too*. Sometimes, I suppose, we wish we were younger, and sometimes we are foolish enough to wish we were older. We may be filled with a holy discontent. There are joys of middle life, and joys which belong to the evening hour, which were never surpassed by the joys of youth. David, for the moment, had lost sight of them. Read his life-story, and see how he had to learn to do without people. They dropped off from him one after another. Even his good was evil spoken of. The mightiest service he ever rendered, the slaying of Goliath, became the occasion of his greatest sorrow, for it filled the breast of Saul with an implacable jealousy. David had seen enough of life's vicissitudes to make him permanently, abidingly, bitter, if grace had not abounded and prevailed.

There are experiences like that for all of us. Human nature, yours and mine, is of such a fickle quality, there is no depending upon it! "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." It is a sad thing to have to depend upon your friends; in the hour of stress too often they forsake you. David evidently had, temporarily at least, become rather weary of it all; and longing for the happier days of his early life, he exclaimed, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate."

But he never expected to drink again of the well-spring. "Nobody could do that for me," he said. The Philistines were in Bethlehem; the very place toward which his longing desire turned, was garrisoned by his enemies; between him and this great desideratum was a host of aliens thirsting for his blood. Even as he cried, he must have felt, "It is but a vain wish! I desire it more than anything else in life, but it is beyond my reach."

Do not be too sure, David! Do not allow yourself to become cynical. I know you have met with Saul. I know you have suffered the sneers of Eliab. I know you have met with traitors, and with fickle friends

innumerable, until now you feel as though you can trust nobody. But do not be too sure. Human nature is a pretty poor thing, but when God lays hold of it, it can accomplish marvels. When God lays His hand upon a man, who otherwise is of little value, he becomes a mighty man.

There were three of the thirty captives who heard this expression of David's desire, and they conferred together. They said, "We will do anything for him." Girding their swords upon their thighs, they brake through the hosts of the Philistines, they actually cut their way to the well at Bethlehem, and came back into their Captain's presence bearing the precious draught for which he longed. Ah, my friends, the world is full of evil people, I know; but there are a great many good people too. You have had your experience of those who have betrayed you, but do not forget that *human loyalty, by the grace of God, is a possibility*. If you have only three mighty friends, it is something,—and they may bring you the very thing you desire. I gladly give this testimony, that happy as were the days of my youth, I am not at all sure that I should like to begin life again. I greatly fear that I might make greater blunders than I have made. I am not sure that the second time I should escape the pitfalls into which I have fallen. And I can say this, that I have met among the saints of Zion, among the people whose hearts God has touched, nobler spirits than I ever knew as a child. Ah yes, there are those who are so good and so great that they bring back to us the simplicities of our early years.

Did you ever meet a great man, a really great man? When I was younger I read of great men, some really famous men, and I thought if ever I were to come into their presence I should scarcely know how to behave myself. But I have been privileged to meet a few whose names are known the world around, and I have always found that they have this one characteristic in common: they are as simple as little children. To be in their presence is to get back to the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate. There is no duplicity there. You have not to be always on guard lest you should say something which could be used against you should the friend become a foe. A great man sets you at rest immediately. There is nothing subtle about such minds. They are too great to be deceitful: they are as frank and open as the morning, with souls like the souls of little children. When you come into their presence you feel that once again you are drawing water from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate. Thank God for the mighty men who will go through fire and flood, but who will be true to the death, and who will even bring the dear-bought draught from Bethlehem's well.

*Observe what David did with it.* When they brought the water for which he had longed, he did not drink it. I am glad he did not. I think I should never have forgiven him so vulgar a lapse as he would have suffered had he drunk the water brought to him at such a price. The fact is, it was not water that he wanted. It was not his physical frame that thirsted; it was the soul of the man that longed for refreshment, to drink again from youth's spring of hope. When these three men brought him this precious draught, I think he said in his heart, "The days, the beauties, the simplicities, the loyalties, of childhood have come back to me. I will pour it out unto the Lord as a holy sacrifice. I will not drink it."

I have met some men and women in whom God has

dwelt in such measure that I have felt that to be in their presence is to be in the presence of God, because God was with them:

"For Thou, within no walls confined,  
Inhabitest the humble mind;  
Such ever bring Thee where they come;  
And going, take Thee to their home."

What shall we say of these "three mightiest"? We must not pass them by. A man was there who was all but broken in spirit, notwithstanding the greatness of his soul. The burdens of life had been piled upon him until at last he almost fell beneath them. He had reached the limit of his endurance. Grown man as he was, he longed for his mother, for his mother's tenderness and fidelity. Perhaps he said, "I could always believe her. I could always trust her. When I was at Bethlehem's well I had peace, I lived in a world that was not all blackness." But when these three men brought him the sparkling draught I think he said, "I shall not abandon hope yet. There still remains to me such loyal friendships as I knew in my youth. I will go on, supported by such men as these."

It is something—understand, I am speaking now chiefly of the application of this story to the natural affairs of life—I say, it is something so to behave toward our fellows as to make it possible for them to believe that God can do something for human nature. What is the mightiest apologetic for the gospel? I will tell you: a man in whom Jesus Christ lives. What is the mightiest proof that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead? A man living in the power of His resurrection. What is the greatest argument in support of the scripturalness of the ordinance of baptism you witnessed this evening? The answer is, A man walking in newness of life.

Three mighty men, touched by the Spirit of God, lifted above the low levels of life, made to live loyal, heroic, self-sacrificing, lives, inspired even a David with thankfulness to God. Looking upon their act of devotion as an act that involved the offering of life, he said, "My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it."

So may we learn to abound in hope from those who abound in all the graces of the Spirit. There are ever the seven thousand who will not bow to Baal, and a great company of mighty ones who bring the refreshment of Bethlehem's well to weary souls.

## II.

But there is A DISTINCTIVELY SPIRITUAL APPLICATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE. In the plan and purpose of God, my dear friends, our spirits were not made for this terrestrial sphere. It was never intended that life should consist in the abundance of the things a man possesseth, or that the kingdom of God should be meat and drink. God designed us for something higher and holier than the things of time and sense. But we have turned to our own way. We have gone far afield. We are like the prodigal: we have made our journey to the far country, and we have tasted of many springs which do not flow from the hills of God. What a blessing it is when there is born within us a desire after Bethlehem, and for the water of the well that is by the gate! when our ears weary of the Babel sounds of earth; when we prove the inadequacy of all human companionships and fellowships;

and when we begin to long for a higher fellowship, for sublimer music, for loftier ambitions, for a wider and longer view of life—for that which belongs to the realm of things which are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, where there is virtue, and where there is praise; and when such longing is born of the discovery that there are no earthly springs that satisfy! Our text is parallel, in principle, to that passage in the incomparable parable of the prodigal: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger—I can find nothing to eat in all this country, separated from home. I will arise and go to my father. Oh for a taste of the bread of my father's table! for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!"

Do you thus earnestly long, my dear friends, for spiritual springs? If only everything could be blotted out! If there were no record on high, no witness in heaven, nothing of which we had any reason before God to be ashamed! If it all could be blotted out in a moment of time, and we could be spiritual babes once more! Would you like it? Do you hunger for it? Do you thirst for it? That is what Jesus Christ meant when He said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Such thirst, such hunger, is divinely begotten. Only when the Wind that bloweth where it listeth, plays upon this harp of our human nature do we thus feel. Nobody else can thus play, because the harp-strings are broken!

"Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more."

Is that true? If you put into that word "grace" all that the Bible means by it, the sovereign power of God, it is true, because all the strings that are broken may be retuned by the Spirit of God; He can play upon us, and awaken within us desire for a higher, holier, life.

But between us and the well of Bethlehem is the Philistine host. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." I recall the first time I went to the Pacific Coast. I had crossed the ocean many times, and I had looked out day after day upon the wide expanse of water without any consciousness of extending distances; but when I turned westward and saw those hundreds of miles of prairie rolling out behind me, and then climbed through the Rockies and went down the Pacific slope, I felt as though every mountain was a world, and that I was separated by a hundred worlds from everybody I loved. I was never so lonely across the sea, but with the consciousness of those mountains between me and home, I felt I was in another world. So have we piled up range upon range of iniquities that rise like mountains, separating between us and our God. And all of them garrisoned by the Philistines: principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places, forbidding us to drink of the eternal springs, saying, "You shall never, never, refresh your soul's thirst by drinking of the water of the river of life."

I do not say there is anything typical here, but it is illustrative at least of the work of the three Mighties, of the great triumph of redeeming grace, of what Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, accomplished in our behalf, making a path to the wellside, opening a road to a better country,

pointing the way to the city in the midst of which there flows the river of the water of life.

That is what the gospel does. It brings back our youth again; restores the captivity of Jacob, restores to us the years that the locusts have eaten; and brings to us, for the refreshment of our spirits, the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate. Said He Who was the Representative of the Father and the Holy Ghost, God manifest in the flesh, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." To which the Samaritan woman replied, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?"

Ah yes, He was greater than all; and in Him were, and are, the springs of eternal life, for He answered, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Wonder of wonders, He not only brings us a goblet filled with sparkling water from the spring, but He, paradoxical as it may seem, puts the well of Bethlehem in us: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." So shall we ever drink of the eternal springs.

How will you receive it? With the same reverence and adoring gratitude which David evidenced when he poured out the water before the Lord? Will you thus receive this precious draught? Will you drink, and never thirst? May the Lord help us to find in the Babe of Bethlehem, the Ancient of days, the One Who is from everlasting to everlasting, Whose life and grace span the eternities! May He enable us to find in Him the realization of all our divinely-inspired dreams!

And when we shall have done with earthly wells, nor ever again shall go thither to draw; when the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel is broken at the cistern; grace will teach us to pray:

"When on my day of life the night is falling,  
And, in the winds from sunned spaces blown,  
I hear far voices out of darkness calling  
My feet to paths unknown,

"Thou who hast made my home of life so pleasant,  
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;  
O Love Divine, O Helper ever present,  
Be Thou my strength and stay!

"Be near me when all else is from me drifting:  
Earth, sky, home's pictures, days of shade and shine,  
And kindly faces to my own uplifting  
The love which answers mine.

"I have but Thee, my Father! let Thy Spirit  
Be with me then to comfort and uphold;  
No gate of pearl, nor branch of palm I merit,  
Nor street of shining gold.

"Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,  
And both forgiven through Thy abounding grace—  
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned  
Unto my fitting place—

"Some humble door among Thy many mansions,  
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,  
And flows for ever through heaven's green expansions  
The river of Thy peace.

"There, from the music round about me stealing,  
I fain would learn the new and holy song;  
And find at last, beneath Thy trees of healing,  
The life for which I long."

## RANDOM LESSONS FROM A GARDEN

This writer is not an expert gardener. He has for years been so occupied with his vocation as to have no time for an avocation. But now we have a garden. Probably a real gardener would look with disfavour, and perhaps even with contempt, upon our amateur efforts. Be that as it may, the writer finds the garden as instructive as the study, and a rather pleasant sphere of labour. Some men play golf for physical exercise, some walk; but this writer "putters around"—whatever that is—in a garden.

In this country a garden is likely to prove rather a public advertisement of the character of its owner. We say "in this country" because here there are few people who surround their gardens with high walls. But even a garden walled around, if inspected, displays something of the qualities of the man who owns it. It has always been so. A wise observer long ago recorded: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

It is rather dangerous to have a garden unless one takes care of it.

In the Song of Solomon the church is likened to a garden into which the Beloved comes to eat His pleasant fruits. We have been long enough a pastor to feel the full force of the symbolism. There are churches like gardens, which advertise the character of their overseer. Any kind of error can obtain a rampant growth in such a garden. Oxford Groupism, Russellism, Christian Science, Modernism in its many varieties, flourish like weeds in some gardens. When churches become culture-beds for every sort of anti-Christian cult, does it not suggest that the one who is charged with caring for them is either slothful, or void of understanding, or both?

We have found that a good garden cannot be developed overnight. The quality of the soil has to be studied, the relation of the garden to the sun, and many other things must be kept in mind; and if there are to be flowers or fruit from our sowing, we must have the right kind of soil. So then we have learned that plants need to be fed. The soil must be enriched. The other day the gardener said of one plant in the garden, "That is a very good plant, and you will have a fine lot of bloom on it; but do not forget that it is a plant that likes feeding."

It is a prosy sort of business, feeding plants, digging things into the soil, and seeing no immediate results. But the plants that grow in a church garden "like feeding". And we must not expect much bloom if they are not properly fed. Too many pastor-gardeners seem to have a love for the sensational and spectacular. They want an exhibition garden. They have no interest in any plants that are not all abloom. It is possible to produce a garden like that, by transplanting flowers grown in other gardens. The plants may last two or three weeks—until the exhibition closes; but they will soon wither away. We should see better gardens if pastors would set themselves to the business of feeding the plants, and

patiently waiting as they grow imperceptibly. If this is done, in due time the fruit of the Spirit will appear.

We have some plants that give forth a delightful fragrance, but they have not strength to stand alone: they must have a support driven in beside them to prop them up. And we have found that even the stake may be made unobjectionable, and if the plant is properly tied to it, the supporting stake may be scarcely noticeable at all.

We have a number of oak trees in our garden. They do not need any stake to support them: they have withstood the storms of perhaps a hundred years or more. They are very useful and ornamental, and they provide excellent shade. It is a good thing to have some oaks in the church; or, if not oaks, cedars of Lebanon which God has planted, and which can stand alone. What a benediction it is that there are so many stalwart Christians who are no longer children carried about by every wind of doctrine. They are rooted and built up in Christ, and established in Him, as they have been taught. They are cedars or oaks in the garden of the Lord. They need very little care: they are strong and independent.

But there are some lovely plants in the Lord's garden that are utterly destitute of the qualities of the oak or the cedar. They need a trellis to cling to, or a prop to hold them up. That is why they grow in a garden. That is why they are planted in the church. The divine Gardener knows they need care. Hence they are not left out on the mountainside to brave all the storms of life. There are some people in the church that are made for props. They may have few leaves, and not much bloom; but they serve as props. They are the stay and comfort and inspiration of those who are made of softer material.

Once of a day we used rather to fret when a heavy rain or wind had past, to see so many lovely plants prone upon the ground. We felt that lifting them out of the ground, and tying them up to a stake, was rather an irksome task. But when we discovered what rich rewards flowed from such a tender ministry we learned rather to like the job. It is a thrilling experience for a preacher to be able, like Peter, to "stand up with the eleven", an oak in a group of oaks; but it is part of the pastor's ministry to support the weak, to comfort the feeble-minded; and some who seem thus to be weak by and by grow strong; so that they can stand alone, and richly repay the labour expended upon them.

We remarked that we have some oak trees in our garden. We are rather proud of them, and would not have one of them removed. And yet they create a problem. They do something to the soil which makes it hard for lesser plants to grow. Their shade shuts out the sun, and makes it difficult to maintain a lawn. We planted some things beneath the trees, and they grew up like beanstalks, thin and ungainly. The gardener said, "The tall trees draw them up."

Yes; oaks create a problem in a church too. It is a good thing to be blessed with strong men, but they are like the trees: they overshadow the lesser plants sometimes. Perhaps that is why some people run away to a little mission where there are no big trees! There they find for themselves a place in the sun.

Furthermore, we have seen some people like our imitation bean-stalks: they try to be oaks when they are not,—and succeed in being nothing in particular. The world is full of imitators, and as our gardener said, "the tall trees draw them up." But alas! when they are

full-grown, they are not of much use to anyone. They are as green as they are soft, and as soft as they are green.

Another thing we have learned from our garden: we must observe where the sunshine falls. There are plants that need plenty of sunshine, and will not grow in the shade. And there are plants in the Lord's garden that are not brothers born for adversity. They will never flourish on the north side of the house. They need to be surrounded with sunshine. There are people who need to have somebody to say, "Well done," a dozen times a day in order to keep going. They are like a toy-watch we had once when a little boy, of which we were very proud: it would keep time providing it was wound up about every hour of the day.

But how lovely these plants are that grow in the sunshine! What an infinite variety of colour! What a mass of bloom they sometimes present! Beautiful to look at are they, because the sun has made them beautiful.

But there are other varieties that will grow in the shade. Usually they are much less showy. They have little or no colour. They produce mostly foliage. But they have their place in the garden, and by their beauty convert a wilderness into a paradise.

We have known Christians like that. There was nothing brilliant about them. They never make a show, either in the flesh or the spirit. They are quiet and unobtrusive. But they are always beautifully green, always present an appearance of exuberant health. They make the north side of the house beautiful,—and that is a real ministry. There are positions in the church that afford no opportunity for display, but a large opportunity for faithful, quiet, duty-doing. And how they adorn lives that have a northern aspect!

We have learned too that weeds will flourish where useful plants die. It may be that in some instances their growth would be more rapid in a richer soil, but it is really astonishing how little some weeds need to live on. So, too, weeds grow in the garden of the Lord, all sorts of weeds. And they flourish both in the shade and in the sun: they need no care; they grow of themselves. And usually they are most prolific.

We once heard a minister say that he would like to be a pastor of a church in the millennium, when the devil will be chained. We said, Amen, to the sentiment. When a church can be found in which weeds of error, and roots of bitterness, will not grow, the millennium will have come.

We have found there is only one way to get the weeds out of our lawn, and that is to get down on our knees to it. There is a lesson there. A good deal of effective gardening can be done on one's knees.

But if the garden is to be kept clean, one must be always at it; for when it has been blessed with a copious rain, and one goes out to see the flowers flourish, while we find they have made some response to heaven's visitation, we invariably discover that the weeds have multiplied still more rapidly. So is it always: when God blesses His church, the devil tries to neutralize the blessing. When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, satan comes also among them. When the revival breaks out in Samaria, and multitudes turn to the Lord, invariably there is a thistle like Simon the sorcerer that lifts its head overnight to spoil the beauty of the garden. So, then, brother-pastor, get out into the beds and attend to your weeding.

It is a mere commonplace, we know, to speak of pruning. Our readers must remember the Editor is an amateur gardener—with the emphasis on the adjective. In his inexperience he dreaded to touch any living thing with the shears or a knife. It seemed such a ruthless piece of business to cut shrubs to pieces when they were making an effort to grow. But we have learned that such ruthless cutting is indispensable to the health and beauty of the garden.

The majority of churches need to be cut to pieces. How an otherwise beautiful shrub is disfigured by a few dead branches! And how the growth of the living branches is retarded by association with the dead ones! We learned that when the dead branches were cut off, and the living ones were cut back, the shrub took on a new beauty, and became a symmetrical plant, relieved of the ugliness of the branches that were dead. We know of churches which cannot grow, or be useful in any particular, because of the dead branches in the shrub. Very often the dead branch is the biggest branch in the shrub. And very often the dead church member is the biggest man in the church. He occupies a position of prominence, though not of loveliness or fruitfulness. What a mercy it would be if such churches could be ruthlessly, albeit, wisely, pruned.

We have some clinging plants in our garden. They seem to have an affinity for the stars. One can almost see them grow. One particular variety we felt disposed to appreciate with a yard-stick, to see how many inches a day it could grow. But we observed it was just extending its stalk, and sending out a few branches, leaving the trunk it was designed to cover almost bare. So we "nipped it back". It seemed a cruel thing to do when the dear young thing was so ambitious, and so anxious to get to the top of everything in a few hours, or days, at the most. Notwithstanding, we "nipped it back". Then it began to throw out its branches, and to produce a profusion of leaves, and became a thing of beauty. But soon we found we had also to nip the branches back, and then they sent out new shoots; and soon the bare trunk was entirely obscured by the beauty of the plant whose ambition had been so cruelly thwarted.

We have known many young people who needed to be "nipped back". We have known some preachers who badly needed "nipping back". To change the figure, they have hitched their wagon to a star—but alas! there is not much in the wagon. And it will take nothing to the stars, and bring nothing from them. The way of real progress is the way of humility: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

We were told by the gardener that some of our flowering plants should not be allowed to go to seed. As soon as the bloom had fallen the stalk should be cut off, and the plant kept clean of all members that had had their day. There is a lesson in that. If ever you have produced a flower, do not boast about it. Do not spend the rest of your time telling the garden how beautiful you once were. Get rid of the stems of yesterday's flowers, of last week's or last year's successes. Learn to forget the things which are behind and press on toward the things which are before. By this means the plant will be kept flowering all the time, and no one will need to be told what a beautiful plant it is. People will see it for themselves. It must always be remembered that when the righteous man falls from his righteousness, all his record of righteousness is forgotten. When we cease to be fruitful in the service of the Lord, we are no better

than a weed, a cumberer of the ground, that needs to be cut down.

Of course we have a rockery in our garden. No garden would be complete without one. Some of the rocks we had brought to the garden for the purpose: others were there, ugly and useless. So we put them together in artistic irregularity, planted flowers among them, and covered them with beauty. There are people in the church that are like rocks. Some, rocks upon which one can build—but we are talking of gardens, not buildings. What can you do with those characters which are not to be despised, but which seem to produce neither bloom nor foliage? Make a rock-garden of them! Some of them are fine to look at, and will try no one's patience, even if slow-growing perennials are planted among them. They and the plants will exercise a mutual ministry toward each other. But if the rock is angular and unlovely, perhaps you can find an annual of rapid growth to cover it, and when it is covered someone will say, "What a lovely shape that plant is!" Let them admire it, and do not expose the angularity of the rock that gives it form.

We must not forget that every garden has its enemies: worms that gnaw at the root of things, and blight that fastens itself upon leaves and flowers; and, if not checked, will soon reduce a paradise of beauty to something worse than a wilderness. What can one do? Well, there are ways of treating various blights. There are poisons that will not hurt the plant, but will kill the bugs. So the gardener must sometimes put aside his spade, his hoe, and his pruning-knife, and use the spray. He may not know where all the bugs are, but the spray, faithfully applied, will find them out. We have known churches that need frequent spraying. Let the faithful pastor-gardener remember that the Word of God is profitable, among other things, "for correction". It would be folly to use a rifle to remove a form of blight that requires a microscope to identify it. We have known preachers who have gone gunning with rifles when what they needed was a good garden spray.

There are forms of worldly amusements that lay hold sometimes upon the young plants in the Lord's garden, and the minister indulges in mere bitter denunciation of worldly amusements, without giving any reason for doing so. And there are people who are not vicious, who really love the Lord, and who in their hearts desire to do His will, who, because they do not understand, are grieved and wounded; and the Lord's garden looks as though it had been sprayed with a machine-gun instead of with a gentle garden spray. Let the Word of God be faithfully expounded, let the great principles of the gospel be explained, and illustrated, and applied gently and tenderly; and where there are responsive hearts the blight will fall away from the plants, and they will take on new life and new vigour, and will adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

But we have birds in our garden, and squirrels, and a little gnome, and some hanging baskets so as to make two stories of the garden. Oh, we have lots of things, but we have not lots of space! We will not say, Will you come into our parlour, as the spider said to the fly; but, instead, Will you come into our garden? Or, if it is too far, go into your own. It is just like this Editor's garden, only, of course, yours is better. But the same voices may be heard, and the same lessons may be learned. What a privilege to be a gardener!

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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### IN THE SIEVE OF SATAN

Lesson Text: Job, chapters 1 and 2.

Golden Text: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."—Job 1:21, 22.

Bible School Reading: Job 1:1-22.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Psalm 129:1-8; Tuesday—Ezek. 20:11-19; Wednesday—Genesis 15:1-6; Thursday—John 9:1-7; Friday—John 18:1-13; Saturday—Matthew 26:36-46.

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

The book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible, and probably the oldest in the world. It derives its name from its principal character, whose testing by Satan it records. During his affliction his friends come to comfort him, and a series of dialogues take place respecting the reason for his sufferings and the proper attitude to adopt under them. Following these, the message of God is given concerning His servant, and censuring the three friends for their wrong attitude. The book closes with an account of Job's final prosperity, and the duration of his after life. The record, though in the main, poetical, is historical. References to its chief character, and to its teaching, are found in other parts of Scripture (Ezek. 14:14-20; James 5:11; Matt. 24:28; I. Cor. 3:19); and the whole is inspired of God. The subject of the book, while related to the sufferings of one man, yet affects the deeper and more abiding question of the divine government respecting men, and aids us in our understanding of the reason for the righteous suffering in this world. The author of the book was probably Job himself.

#### II. JOB'S CIRCUMSTANCES (1:1-5).

In the prologue of the book, contained in the first two chapters, Job is introduced as an upright, wealthy, individual, careful of the religious life of the members of his family, and seeking their highest welfare. His dwelling-place was the land of Uz, situated possibly north of the Arabian desert, adjacent to the Euphrates. His character is made known in the statement that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil"—intimating strict integrity of life, and devotion to the will of God. The duty and privilege of thus serving God requires emphasis. Sin is that from which we ought to flee, and righteousness is that which we ought to practise. We need more of the fear of God these days. We should then have the fear of man eliminated, and the divine will more perfectly done. He should receive our utmost reverence with its accompanying attitude of extreme carefulness, lest we sadden Him with our sin. Note the command to fear God (Deut. 10:12; I. Peter 2:17), and some of the saints who feared Him (Gen. 42:18; Mal. 3:16; Acts 10:2). Job's family is mentioned, the extent and nature of his substance, giving a picture of early patriarchal eastern life when wealth was estimated largely in cattle. An account of a family feast is recorded, connected with which Job is again seen in his patriarchal role of family priest offering sacrifices on behalf of his children. It is quite evident that he desired his family to keep right with God, and he did his best to aid them. Parents should take note of this.

#### III. JOB'S FIRST TEST (1:6-22).

The record of Job's test is introduced with an account of a heavenly scene, wherein there is seen the presentation of angels before the Lord, and Satan in the midst of them (v. 6). The reality of this wicked being is quite clearly set forth in Scripture, where he is designated "the prince of this world" (John 12:31); the "god of this age" (II. Cor. 4:4), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). He is termed also the great red dragon, and the serpent (Rev. 12:9). His title, Satan, implies one who lies in wait, an adversary; and his other name, devil, means slanderer, or accuser. He is a powerful being, always seeking to come between God and men; but he can be overcome in the power of God (Jas. 4:7). He should not be despised at any time, but he is most to be

feared when he comes as an angel of light (II. Cor. 11:14; Matt. 16:23).

In answer to the Lord's question, Satan states that he had come "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it". The thought is that of hurrying to and fro. Evidently Satan had something to do with the earth, as indeed his titles would imply. He is then asked a question respecting Job (v. 8), which he answers quite readily from his intimate knowledge of human nature, although in this case he was wrong in his estimate of Job's character (vs. 9-11). Respecting his answer several things are worthy of note. First his knowledge of Job's circumstances, including his trust in God. The devil's knowledge is extensive, though not omniscient, and we must needs be on our guard against his use of such knowledge. Second, his inference that Job's trust in God was due to selfish reasons: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" A hedge had been placed about him, and about all his property, and he had been richly blessed in his substance. Satan thought that on account of these circumstances Job served God. He was judging this man of God after his own standard, which is also that of the world in both of which self-interest governs all actions. Job acted in accordance with the higher standard of unselfish devotion to God. Note the comforting thought of the hedge about this child of God. Satan could not touch him without the permission of God. In the third place, observe Satan's statement respecting that which would happen if Job's property should be touched. There are some people who fall away from the service of God when they lose their property, but they are not the genuine article.

Permission being granted to test Job, Satan instigates disasters which deprive him of his property, and of his family, and leave him sadly stricken, though still trusting the Lord. Notice Satan's power over men (vs. 15-17), and over nature (vs. 16, 19). Does he still exercise his power in a special manner in these realms, and are present world-conditions due in some measure to his manipulation? He has not resigned his position, and his presence explains many things. Job's attitude under his loss is worthy of consideration. He accepted in a resigned manner that which had befallen him, and "charged not God foolishly" (vs. 21, 22). He accepted each experience as coming from God, and was content to abide by the divine choice. And in this case, as we have seen, that which happened was by divine permission, in order to test the saint, and glorify the Lord. Note the great loss sustained by Job, and the wisdom of his attitude. It is better to trust God at all times, even though we cannot understand (Heb. 3:17-19).

#### IV. JOB'S SECOND TEST (2:1-13).

The result of the first test, of Job proving satisfactory, Satan was permitted to test him a second time—on this occasion, in relation to his body, which was afflicted with sore boils. Job was in a sorry position, with his family and property gone, and his body a mass of sores. Yet "he sinned not with his lips". Observe God's testimony concerning him (v. 3), and Satan's estimate of human nature (v. 4). The falsity of this latter statement as it affects the children of God is to be seen in the multitudes who have gladly suffered for the cause of their Lord; and Job himself is a refutation of it. To add to the severity of the test, Job's wife advised him to curse God and die. Probably she thought it better to die than to live in such physical misery. But Job was not of the same mind. He administered a firm rebuke, and reminded her that all things should be received from the hand of God (v. 10). Some men are not helped spiritually by their wives. Job's wife was evidently lacking in spiritual discernment. She could not see a purpose in affliction. It is always a comfort to remember that all things work together for good to those who love God (Rom. 8:28), and affliction may be productive of a rich blessing, not only in eternity (II. Corin. 4:17,18), but in time (Ps. 119:71).

The visit of Job's three friends is next recorded (vs. 11-13). They were well-meaning men, but like many another friend, somewhat mistaken in their attitude and words. Their intentions were good, but they did not understand the case. They desired to help, but they only aggravated the matter. They sought to blame Job for his affliction, and poured out their wisdom to convince him that he was at fault, which roused him to strong denial, based on the consciousness of his innocence. Better if they had left him alone. Yet some good has come of their visit in the truths made clear in the dialogues. Note their approach to Job, their grief at finding him in such a sad condition, and the purpose of their visit.