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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

A BLIND MAN BROUGHT TO CHRIST

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, August 12th, 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.

"And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

"And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

"And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

"After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."—Mark 8:22-25.

Prayer before the Sermon

We thank Thee, O Lord, for the revelation of Thy Word, of that great company of the redeemed who sing to Thy praise, where there is no sin, nor sorrow, nor death, nor tears; but where the Lamb is all the light in the city of gold. We thank Thee for the song of Moses and the Lamb, which none but the redeemed can learn. We would fain learn to sing that song, O God. Tune our hearts to sing Thy praise.

To this end, do Thou grant us the presence in this service of the Spirit of truth. May we be the subjects of His gracious ministry. Give us, we pray Thee, heavenly illumination that we may understand the Word of God. Open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures.

We covet some in Thy presence this evening for Thee. We remember how Thou didst say to Peter, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. So does he desire to have us all, and, failing that, to cripple us and impair our usefulness. We beseech Thee, Thou sovereign Saviour, take the prey from the mighty this evening. Bring to Thyself those for whom Thou hast died. May this be a night of salvation within these walls, and among our larger company of radio hearers. Save such as are unsaved. Build up, we pray Thee, Thine own children in their most holy faith. Glorify Thyself this evening, Thou glorious Lord! Prepare us all that we may sing with the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Bless us for His name's sake, Amen.

It is both interesting and instructive to observe in the record we have of the life of our Lord in the Gospels, how often people in need were brought to him by others. This morning we saw that the little children were brought to him, doubtless by their mothers; certainly by somebody who loved them. You will recall the instance in

which four men carried a palsied man to Christ. When there was no room for them to enter by the door because of the press, they took him up on the roof, uncovered the roof, and let him down into the presence of the Lord Jesus. There was a father who had a son vexed with an evil spirit, and he brought him first to the disciples, and then to Jesus. The Syrophenician woman came to Him with her complaint that her daughter was exceedingly vexed with a devil. The Pharisee, hoping for her condemnation, brought a sinful woman into the presence of Christ. Philip found Nathanael, and brought him to Jesus. And there are many other instances recorded in the Gospels.

In the text before us we find people bringing a blind man to Christ. That is in accord with His plan and purpose for us. Those who know Christ, and know what He can do, ought to spend themselves trying to bring others to Him. That is every minister's business, of course. No minister has a right to preach at all if he has not that in mind—bringing people to Christ, or building up in their most holy faith those who have already come.

That, too, is the church's business—not to entertain or amuse; not even primarily or exclusively to instruct, but to evangelize, to bring people to Christ.

What a blessing it is that we have Someone to Whom we can bring our troubled friends! What an unspeakable boon it is that there is One to Whom the weary and heavy laden may be brought with an assurance of rest!

Think of the circle of your acquaintance this evening, and of the many people within that circle who need the grace that only the Lord Jesus can give; and then resolve that you will endeavour to bring those people to Christ.

We may bring them to Christ by the exercise of the privilege of prayer. If salvation were of works, if men could save themselves, it were useless to ask God to save them. But if salvation be God's work, we may well constantly pray for the salvation of the unsaved. Thus by prayer we may still bring people to Christ. And by our personal testimony, by bringing them within sound of the gospel, by whatever means your zeal and your faith may invent—and faith is very inventive when inspired of the Spirit of God—let us resolve, my Christian friends, afresh, that we will make it the supreme business of life to bring people to Christ. That, by the way.

We have to do this evening with the case of a blind man who was brought to Christ, and whose eyes were opened. In this simple incident I think we have an illustration of the methods of divine grace.

I.

Let me begin by saying THERE IS A NATURAL BLINDNESS IN RESPECT TO SPIRITUAL THINGS, WHICH IS DUE TO A WANT OF SPIRITUAL CAPACITY. Even in physical sight we should bear in mind that the apprehension of objective truth depends upon the mental capacity that is behind the eye. A dozen men may be equally clear-visioned. Their organs of vision may be equally vigorous; but when directed toward a particular object, the dozen men may see a dozen different things. What we see when we behold, depends upon what capacity we bring to our investigation.

There are many examples of this principle—I need scarcely labour the point, or even trouble to illustrate it. I have seen, driving along a country road, a magnificent farm, beautiful for situation, that could be made a paradise of beauty. It may be well tilled, it may be productive, it may indicate great industry on the part of the owner. And yet I have seen such a place that had not a lovely thing about it. Everything was plain and unattractive. The utilitarian spirit of the owner led him to try to turn everything into material gain. There was nothing pleasant to look at about the place save only the general topography and the things man could not spoil.

When I was a lad I used to be taken every year by my father to an exhibition of great pictures. I have gone into the gallery with him, as he looked at those great pictures. I could see the biggest of them in about a minute, but he would take a chair and sit down with one of them in view and stay, in some instances, lost to everything, for an hour or more. I wondered what he was looking at. My childish mind could see nothing beyond the outline of the picture: he saw the soul of the thing.

Yes; there are many examples of that truth. You have seen some pictures that you would not take home with you. I lived in a little town once of a time where all the women of the town conceived the idea that they were potential artists. Some good saleswoman came to town and sold her artistic talents to the women. They all bought palettes and brushes and paints, and wherever one went their atrocious creations smote the eye. The whole town looked like a paint-shop struck by lightning; but it was supposed to be artistic. In the home of a certain friend, years ago, I saw in the hallway a great

easel, and on that easel a great canvas covered with paint. But it struck me in the eye the moment I entered the place. It was elaborately and expensively framed—and actually that man lived with that "picture"! I could not sit in its presence with comfort for a minute. But he saw nothing objectionable in it. Yet it was nothing but a mass of vulgar colour.

One is reminded of the familiar story of the young country swain who asked his employer to lend him a lantern one night when he was going to see his sweetheart. It is an old, old story, I know. You remember how the farmer said, "What do you want a lantern for? I did not carry a lantern when I went courting." "No," said the young man, "but see what you got!" I suppose that even by the light of the lantern he saw some beauty that other eyes could not discern. And it is a blessing that is true! What people see in each other is a problem sometimes.

But you will readily see what I mean, that it is not the organ of vision alone that determines what one sees. It is the peculiar mental capacity behind that organ which interprets and appraises the object to which the sight is directed.

There is a spiritual blindness of that order. When we speak of men as being spiritually blind—and we have scriptural warrant for the metaphor, as I shall show you in a moment—we do not mean that the man is mentally defective. He may be a great scholar. He may be a man of unusually vigorous intellect, of large natural capacity. He may be at home among the sciences, and familiar with many of the world's languages and much of its literature. And yet he may be utterly blind to spiritual truth, because he is devoid of a spiritual faculty. He can reason. He can deal with the truth of revelation. He may be able to analyze it grammatically, tell you what each word means—and yet see nothing of spiritual value in it because he has no spiritual faculty competent to interpret the spiritual truth hidden from the view of his intellect.

There are people who see nothing in the Bible. They think they are very clever. They tell us it is not the word of God. They laugh at us for believing it, and persuade themselves that they are very superior. Poor blind men! I am not surprised that they do not regard it as the word of God, for no one can so understand it without the creation within, by the divine Spirit, of that spiritual faculty which will apprehend spiritual truth.

You would not be disturbed by the caustic observation of a blind man respecting art, would you? You would say, "The man is incompetent as a critic: he cannot see." Of course! Those who find fault with the Word of God are utterly incompetent to criticize the Word. They have no faculty with which to appraise the Word they presume to criticize.

As for Jesus Christ, they say He is only a man. And some go so far as to say that we may expect a greater than Christ to arise. The cross is an offence to them. I read it to you this evening: "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." But a bridegroom would not be greatly disturbed by what a blind man should say about his bride; nor the bride by what a blind person should say about her husband. "Of course, she cannot see him as I see him", she would say. We do not expect that unenlightened men should

see in Jesus Christ what we see. They are blind. They have no faculty with which to behold Him.

This has come about *through the malicious wounding of the mind by our great adversary*. I have heard of one in a jealous rage throwing vitriol into the eyes of a rival, burning his or her eyes out, blinding the person for life. That is exactly what our adversary the devil has done. He has said, "You shall never see the divine Bridegroom. You shall never behold the Lover of your souls." Therefore "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." They have been blinded, that they may never behold the incomparable beauty of our glorious Lord.

What shall we do for them? Send them to school? No; that would do no good. They might be worse when they came out than when they went in. Will you labour to argue them into an acceptance of the great principles of the glorious gospel? You will fail if you do. There is no human power that can cure that spiritual blindness. There is only one thing to do for people who are spiritually blind, and who have not fallen in love with Jesus Christ, and that is to do what these people did, bring the blind man to Christ. He will do the rest.

II.

Look for a minute at THE METHOD WHICH OUR LORD EMPLOYED TO CURE THIS MAN, to heal him of his blindness. I would remind you that our Lord is a God of variety. He does not repeat Himself. He never made two blades of grass alike. There is infinite variety in all the works of His hand. That is as true spiritually as it is in the natural realm. He never wrought two miracles in precisely the same way. He opened the eyes of one man by saying, "Receive thy sight"—and he immediately received his sight. He opened the eyes of another by making clay and anointing his eyes, saying, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed and came seeing." In this case He made spittle without clay, and anointed the man's eyes. But it was all His work, whatever method He employed. It was His power that accomplished the miracle.

Salvation is always the work of God, and therefore of grace; of grace, and therefore of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." All men are saved on the ground of the same principles of grace, the blood of Christ, His atoning sacrifice. And yet God makes due allowance for our varied constitutions. He deals with each with due respect for the constitution of his mind. While only He can save, no two people are saved in precisely the same way.

That is a principle Christian people need to learn. I knew a deacon who had, before his conversion, led a very wild and reckless life. When first the Lord dealt with him, and he was convicted of sin, sleep was taken from his eyes. For a couple of weeks he could not sleep, and mourned with agony. Night after night he went alone down by one of the piers of a bridge that was in the town where he lived. There, long past the midnight hour one night, God appeared to him; and he rejoiced in his salvation. I heard that man talk with people about their soul's salvation, and sometimes wondered if he believed that anyone could be saved anywhere but down by that pier, whether anyone could possibly experience salvation without the same number of days of repent-

ance. When young people, like the little maid who died, but who opened her eyes in her father's house and scarcely knew she had died—when little children were thus graciously saved by the grace of God, he was never quite sure of it. They had not had two weeks of mourning! They were saved in their own room, or at church—not down by the pier!

I have known godly people to do great harm by implying in their testimonies that, to be saved at all, everybody must be saved in exactly the same way as they were saved. The fact is, our gracious Lord deals with us in different ways, as He wrought these miracles by different methods in the days of His flesh.

You will observe that in this case it is said, "And when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought." He used no clay, no word of command; it is quite different from the other examples of his opening the eyes of the blind. There are some people who are very emotional. Their emotions are easily stirred, and are greatly moved by the recital of a death-bed scene. I know a certain Southern preacher who never preaches but he causes streams of tears to flow. On one occasion he preached from this pulpit. He announced his text, and when he had uttered but a few sentences, the whole congregation looked very much like a Monday morning's wash. Everybody was using his handkerchief. Throughout the whole service the feelings of the people were harrowed, and their emotions stirred. I should not like to criticize him. Doubtless the Lord uses him to stir up some people. But it was too much for me, I confess; I have no doubt, however, some others were ministered to by his intensely emotional appeal. There are others who are purely intellectual. In such case an appeal to their reason, to the philosophy of salvation, may be used of God to win them.

I remember a man who spoke kindly but critically of a sermon I had preached. He came to me following a Sunday evening sermon, and said, "I understood you well last Sunday, but I could not follow you to-night." Yet people were saved on both occasions. It was not his day, that was all. It was somebody else's day.

There is a story told of the great Rowland Hill, who was a highly cultivated man, one of the orators of his day. He was a glorious preacher, but he sometimes used the plainest and homeliest illustrations. Sometimes they were so plain that certain meticulous people were offended. There was a lady who attended his congregation who was concerned for the salvation of her son. The son was a very fastidious young gentleman, who could not endure anything that even approached vulgarity. With difficulty his mother prevailed upon him to go to hear Mr. Hill preach. Telling the story afterward she said, that as soon as Mr. Hill began to preach she asked the Lord to save him from descending to the colloquial and commonplace because she knew how her son would resent it. In the course of his sermon Mr. Hill said something like this: "Last week as I was going along the street, I saw a couple of men trying to drive a lot of pigs into a slaughter-house; but they would not go. Then one of them went ahead of the pigs, took out of his pockets handfuls of corn, and sprinkled it on the road. As the pigs followed him, eagerly gathering up the corn, he walked into the gates of the yard of the slaughter-house, and all the pigs followed him. When they were safely within, the gates were shut. And there are some of you like that. You are following the devil, picking up his corn; and you do

not know you are going straight into his slaughter-house."

When she heard that, the good woman dropped her head in confusion. Said she in her heart, "I shall never be able to get my son here again." When the service was over, and they left together, the son was silent; and his mother thought he was displeased with the sermon. After a while she said, "Mr. Hill is not always like he was to-night. Sometimes he carries us away to the heights. It is not often he uses such a course, common, simile as that dreadful story about the pigs." "Please do not apologize mother", said the fastidious young gentleman, "that was for me. I have been picking up a good deal of the devil's corn, and was almost in the slaughter-house. That sermon brought me to my senses, and I have yielded myself to Christ as Saviour and Lord."

God has His own way of dealing with people. He knows how to touch the human heart. He deals with no two exactly alike.

III.

Let us see HOW HE DEALT WITH THIS MAN.

First of all, *He effected a change in his circumstances*: "He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town." I do not know why; nor does anybody else. There appears to be no reason why He should have done it. He might have opened his eyes in the town as easily as out of the town—but He did effect a change in position, in his circumstances. He led the man to a new place before He wrought the miracle. It did not then—it does not now—appear to have any particular relation to his healing; but it was part of His plan.

How many people have I known like that! Last year when I was in England I went to Birmingham to meet some young men, two of whom I had not seen for ten or eleven years. There were three of them that arrived from England here in Toronto about twelve years ago. They got on a Yonge Street car, and were going up Yonge Street. One of our workers got on the car. It was crowded, and they could get no farther than the vestibule—the same was true of this Christian worker. He saw these three young men, and spoke to them about Christ. The next Sunday they came to church. They were converted, remained in Toronto but a few months, went back to England, and have been there ever since. I had often wondered what became of them, and whether they were still walking in the fear of the Lord.

When I went to England last year I received a very urgent invitation to go to Birmingham, to visit these three young men. We had a happy gathering. I found all three of them were out-and-out for the Lord, busy in His service. They said, "Is it not strange, Pastor (they still called me Pastor), that the Lord should have taken us across the sea to Toronto, and allowed us to stay a month or two—long enough to get saved—and then bring us back home?" There were plenty of Christian people in England who could just as easily have been the Lord's instruments in their salvation. I do not know why He took them, not only out of town, but out of the country—but He did it.

We have known of scores of people who have been saved the first time they crossed the threshold of this building. They were here from out-of-town. Why did they come? I do not know. There may be some stranger here to-night. You say, "I do not know why I am here. I had

heard of this place, and thought I would go and see what sort of man the preacher was, whether he had horns or not!" You did not expect to be saved, did you? You came, you know not why. It may be that the sovereign Saviour has taken you by the hand and led you out of town. It may be the striking of His hour when God, in His grace, will find you and save you.

Then the divine Healer *anointed the blind man's eyes, and gave him a glimpse of world from which he had hitherto been excluded*. Something occurred. He did not know what it was, but there was a light that had never shone before. He got just a glimpse, as through a mist, into a world he had never seen before. He saw moving objects there. He had only a little light.

Are you a Christian? "No, sir." Why not? "I cannot tell you." What are you here for? "Because I am interested in the subject of religion." Have you always been interested? "No; I cannot say that I have. But I am finding a little interest now." Do you read your Bible? "I am trying to." Do you find it interesting? "Parts of it." More interesting than it used to be? "I could not read it at all once of a day, but I can find things here and there now that I understand. I do not know what has happened. I suppose I am getting older, and am finding life somewhat difficult. I am thinking more seriously of the question of religion than I formerly have done. I do not know anything about this miracle of conversion you talk about; I am not saved, but I am interested." No; you do not know about conversion yet, but what can you see? "I do not know that I see very much."

"What do you see?" Christ asked the man who was the subject of His healing grace. "I see men as trees walking." What do you know about men or trees? Have you felt a tree, poor blind man? "Yes." Did you ever see one? "No." Why do you think trees walk? "I walk myself, and I know something of the sensation of movement. I have an idea of what it is to walk. I can see something moving along, and what I see is what I conceive trees to look like. The objects I see have voices, and I know they must be men; yet they look to me like walking trees."

Poor man, he does not see much. When the first gray streaks of dawn come above the horizon, what strange shadows appear. What an eerie hour that is, when it is neither night nor morning! How the hobgoblins walk! The early morning twilight makes one feel a little afraid. Sometimes the Lord, in sovereign grace, dawns upon the darkened minds of men—and the first effect of his visitation is only apparently to add to their confusion of mind. Did you ever say, "I wish I had not gone to church. I am more in the dark than before. Something has happened, but I do not know what it is."

Then Jesus Christ laid His hands upon him again, this time without spittle, and he was restored, and "saw every man clearly".

I call your attention to the fact that *the transition from twilight to noonday was as much an act of divine grace as the transition from darkness to twilight*. But someone will say, "The man has become interested: now we will labour with him. We will tear the scales from his eyes." Do not do that. Do not pluck the fruit before it is ripe. Do not be impatient with the rosebud: let the sun do its work. Let God touch him again, and then he will see all men clearly.

As for you who see men but as trees walking, ask Him to touch you again, for—and with this I have done—all the miracles have this in common, coming back to our principle of the morning, *Jesus Christ touched them all, if not by laying His hands upon them, then by His Word.* Somehow He communicated His own power. That is what enabled them to see. That is what made the lame man to leap as an hart; that is what made the deaf to hear, and the dumb to sing; that is what made the dead to come forth from death to life. God communicated Himself to needy souls, and the dead lived again.

Has He touched you? In our morning meditation we saw our Lord take the little children up in His arms, lay His hands upon them, and bless them. Has He laid His hand upon you? Have you had that supernatural touch? I cannot touch you. I can only preach to you, and pray that God may use this poor clay in some way to open the eyes of the blind. But our meditation will be profitless unless He touches you. Let us ask Him so to do.

Lord, in the depths of our need, of our utter helplessness, we cry to Thee. Are there some here this evening who have never got a glimpse of the spiritual realm, of those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have never entered into the heart of man, but which are revealed by the Spirit Who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Some have never seen these things. We would bring them to Thee, O Lord, and pray that Thou wilt open their blind eyes. If there are some who have experienced a deepening interest in the things of God, we beseech Thee to touch their eyes again, and make them to see all men clearly. But above all, to see *the Man*, Who is the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world. Bless them, and bless us all, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Sunday Morning, August 12th, 1934.

(Stenographically Reported)

"And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

"But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

"And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."—Mark 10:13-16.

I think it is an evidence of human perversity, and of the darkness of the human mind in its natural state, that there is scarcely a scripture, a passage in this Book of God, that men have not twisted and perverted to uses other than those for which they were written. There are few more tender and gracious utterances of our Lord recorded than that contained in the verses I have read as our text. And yet that scripture, which means exactly what it says, and nothing more than it says, has been quoted, I suppose, times innumerable in support of a practice which is of human origination, and which is entirely destitute of divine authority. It ought to teach us the necessity of going to the Word of God again and again,

and reading it over simply that we may disabuse our minds of such conceptions as are not justified by the Word of God itself.

I.

What does the text say? It says that **THERE WERE CERTAIN PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOUNG CHILDREN TO CHRIST.** Surely there could be nothing more commendable than that! It is well to serve the interest of young children, to see that they are fed and clothed, and comfortably housed, and properly educated, and carefully disciplined, and preserved, so far as it is humanly possible, from all temptations to evil. But the very best thing anyone can do for a boy or a girl, for a young child, is to bring that young child to Christ. Surely it would be impossible more wisely or certainly to seek the highest good of any person, old or young, in a truer way than by bringing that person to Christ!

That is what that text means: *they brought young children to Christ.* We ought to do the same, even when they are very young. We ought to instil into their young minds the great truths of the gospel. No age is too early to bring children to Christ. As soon as they can learn anything they ought to learn about Him. As soon as they are able to remember anything they ought to be taught to memorize His word. You are highly privileged if you were born into a home where father and mother clearly conceived it to be their duty to bring their children to Christ. There are many children in our school who come from homes where Christ is not named, where neither father nor mother is a Christian, where no member of the family serves the Lord, where the voice of prayer and praise is never heard. What higher service can we render such children than to endeavour to bring them to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ? It is just as easily possible to bring children to Christ to-day as it ever was.

They brought the children to Christ not only that they might learn of Him, but *that He might touch them.* Matthew says: "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray." It is a good thing to come into the presence of Christ at any time and for any purpose; but what we ought to desire above everything else is that He should touch the children. Have you noticed the change wrought in a child when God has touched him or her? You have endeavoured to explain the word of life, and all apparently in vain. There has seemed to be no response whatever, no reception of the great truth until one day you discerned a new interest. The soul was awakened, the heart and will responded, and you knew that Someone was in the class other than yourself; that the children's Saviour had actually touched them.

Nobody is ever saved without the touch of God. Nobody was ever saved by the hearing of a sermon—if nothing more than that was done. No one was ever saved by submission to an ordinance, or by any sort of religious observance. No one can be saved until Jesus Christ touches him. That is true of little children. Even the youngest have need to be touched by the Spirit of God. Surely, my dear friends, a church ought to exist for this—not to teach children to play baseball. That is not bringing them to Christ. I have nothing to say against any kind of wholesome recreation; but it is not the church's function to teach people to play tennis or any other game; nor to prepare them for a picnic; nor merely to give them a good time; not that; not even to

teach them to be useful and polite to each other, desirable as that may be. We ought to labour, as did those people who brought the children to Christ, with the one purpose of having Him touch them; and with the deepest conviction that all our labour must be in vain unless boys and girls and men and women are brought into personal contact with Jesus Christ.

You recall the story of the woman who came in the throng, saying in her heart: "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." And as they journeyed along, suddenly Jesus stopped and said, "Who touched me?" The disciples said, "Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?" But He said, "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." He knew that in that throng there was someone who had established contact with Him by faith, and virtue had flowed to the touch of faith. It always does. Sometimes He leads us to touch Him; sometimes He touches us. But there must be contact, vital union of the soul with Christ.

They brought the children to Jesus that He might pray for them. Is not that lovely? Do not you mothers pray for your children? you fathers, too? But they said, "We will take these little ones to Jesus, and ask Him to touch them, and to pray for them." Nobody is ever saved unless and until Jesus Christ prays for them. We may pray for each other, but our prayers have value only as they ascend to the throne through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the seventeenth chapter of John Jesus in His great prayer as our High Priest said of some: "I pray not for the world." How terrible a condition to be numbered among the people for whom the only Mediator does not pray! There are children for whom father and mother never pray. There are people who live in a circle where God is not known, and for whom, directly and personally by name, no one prays, because they have not come into association with people who do pray. What a terrible thing, to be so situated that we have no one to pray for us at all! Ah, but, my friends, if we can only have the Lord Jesus Christ pray for us, we shall be saved; for that is what it means to believe on Him, to recognize that, like Esther of whom we studied this morning in the school, He appears in the presence of God for us, even as on Calvary He died for us. And if He prays for us, God will not deny Him, and we shall be saved.

II.

THE DISCIPLES FORBADE THE MOTHERS, OR WHOEVER THEY WERE, WHO BROUGHT THESE CHILDREN TO CHRIST. *They did not believe in the salvation of children.* Certain people so complicate the religion of Christ that they cannot believe a child can understand it. I do not wonder that people who have that view of Christianity should feel it is of no use to bring children to Christ, for not only would the children find difficulty in understanding it, but everyone else, too.

There is a certain lady who comes to this church—she is not a member, but she brings her children. She goes occasionally to another church, in which she was brought up. She said to me one day, in effect, "I find it impossible to understand what that minister is talking about." She said, "One day there was a children's service, about Easter time, and I said, 'I will take the children with me, and we will go to my old church this morning, for surely on children's day I shall be able to understand.' We went. I may be very dull and wanting in intelligence,

but I had not the remotest idea when the dear man had concluded his sermon what he had been trying to say: it had escaped me entirely."

The religion of Christ ought to be very simple, and it is very simple. Evidently there were some who recognized it as being so simple that it was worth while to bring little children to Christ. But the disciples—good men as they were—had so complicated the whole matter in their thought that they could not understand that there was any profit whatever in bringing little children to Christ.

A certain woman had long desired, in years gone by, to hear the world's greatest preacher in London. She had looked forward to that as the greatest treat in store when she should visit the metropolis. At last she got to London, and went to the Metropolitan Tabernacle and heard Mr. Spurgeon preach. Someone asked her later how she enjoyed it. She said, "I never was so disappointed in my life." "Why" said her friend, "on what ground were you disappointed?" "Because I understood every word he said." I have heard preachers thunder away, and shout themselves red in the face on a preposition. I know of a certain man who sometimes shouts "THE"! His vociferation gives the impression of an important announcement; and people say, "Is it not wonderful?" But what has the dear man said? One might suppose many people go to church to sleep. At all events they do not go to think. They do not want to be informed. If you attend a church where you do not understand what the preacher says, make him a present of a dictionary, and ask him to begin all over again. Give him a Bible, too, and tell him you would like to learn what it means. Pray that you may be saved from that condition of mind that assumes little children cannot understand the Lord Jesus.

It is sometimes assumed that one cannot be a Christian until he has had a long course of training. By all means the mind should be instructed, we should seek the largest possible measure of religious intelligence. We are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", and grace and peace are to be multiplied to us through the knowledge of Christ; therefore, the more we know of Christ, the more intelligent our grasp of the great varieties of the gospel, the larger will be the measure of our peace and joy.

On the other hand, it is a very simple thing to begin with Christ.

When I was pastor in London, Ontario, a woman came to me requesting baptism. I asked her to tell me about her conversion, when and where she was converted. "Ah," she said, "that is my difficulty; I cannot tell you when. I wanted to be baptized during the time of your predecessor, and immediately he asked me your question: 'When and where were you converted?' I replied that I did not know. I was brought up in a Christian home. I was taught the things of God from my infancy. I attended the primary class. I grew up in the Sunday School, and my life has been spent under the influence of the gospel. I know I am a Christian. I know the Lord has forgiven my sins. I believe He has saved me with an everlasting salvation. But I cannot tell when nor where." She added, "The Pastor shook his head and said, 'I think you had better wait until you know when and where you were converted'. I have been waiting for years, and I have never yet been baptized. Will you baptize me?" I said, "You are soundly con-

verted; you know you are saved?" "Yes." "But you don't know when it occurred?" "No." "You do not remember your first birth, do you? But you know you are alive." She said, "Yes, I know I am alive." I said, "Never mind if you don't remember your birthday. The all-important matter is that you should know you are alive." She was a woman in middle life, a woman, I judged, of more than average intelligence, but she could not point to the date or place where she was converted. Christ had dawned upon her like the sun, and it was so simple that she passed from death unto life not knowing the particular place and time in which the miracle had taken place. But she knew that she was saved.

The minds of many have been so confused by the hazy, speculative, preaching and teaching to which they have been exposed that they have come to conceive of salvation, if they think of it at all, as involving as great intellectual exercise as would be necessary to obtain the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at a University. No wonder such people cannot believe in the conversion of children.

A woman was brought before the pastor and deacons of a certain church to be examined regarding her Christian experience. She spoke haltingly, and very unsatisfactorily. So thinking to help her, they asked her a number of questions, but she could not answer them. Finally the minister said, very kindly, "I think you had better wait a little while until you understand this matter more perfectly." Her eyes filled with tears, and her chin quivered as she said, "Well, sir, I may not be able to speak for Christ, but I know one thing: I would gladly die for Him any minute." That moment every one of those men knew that God had touched her, and that she was saved. She needed further instruction and that would require time, but it was a simple and instantaneous matter for the Spirit of God to quicken within her her spiritual nature, and so shed abroad in her heart the love of God by the Holy Ghost, as to enable her to show that God had touched her: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

How many there are who forbid the bringing of children to Christ in other ways! How many there are who put stumbling-blocks in the way of little children. Many there are who mark out a path for little feet to tread in. Many a father will have to give an account to God for the example he has set his children. Many a mother will find that her heaviest condemnation is that she never tried to bring to Christ the children God had given her. There is no greater crime before God than to fail to bring the children to Christ. Remember the word of the Lord Jesus: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The text says that *our Lord was displeased by the action of these disciples*. "He was much displeased." It is inspiring to see people whose experience of the grace of God is so fresh that they find it easy to believe that other people can be saved. To stand in the way of those who are coming to Christ, to forbid their coming, to make it difficult for anyone to believe in the Lord Jesus is to incur His great displeasure. May the Lord save us from committing that offence!

III.

Our Lord said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Perhaps you have heard of the little girl who tried to quote that text. She had memorized it, but when she tried to repeat it she forgot part of it. She began by saying: "Suffer the little children to come unto me"—but she could not remember the rest. But she knew what it meant and she said, "And don't let anyone stop them." That is exactly what it means: Do not let anyone stop them. Let them come. Encourage them to come. Help them to come.

As I was leaving a certain home last week a man pointed to a little child of about two years of age, who was out on the boulevard in front, playing with some other children. He said, "That is my little fellow there. I have never had him baptized yet, but I am going to as soon as I can." He thought an apology was due because he had not had the child "baptized" as he presumed to call the ceremony he contemplated.

This text is very often quoted as though it justified, and gave divine warrant for, the practice of infant baptism. But there is not a word about baptism in the text. It has no relation to baptism. As a matter of fact, you cannot find infant baptism in the Bible, because it is not there. You say, "But it is practised by the United Church, the Anglicans, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, and the Roman Catholics." I know; and it is all of Roman Catholic institution; it is a relic of Rome. There is not a vestige of scriptural warrant for it. Baptism, by scriptural teaching, is reserved exclusively for those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who know they are saved, whether they are children or adults. No one has any right to be baptized who does not first believe on Christ. The practice of infant baptism, and the teaching of it, has been, and is, the mother of many of the evils that have cursed the Christian church. One will say, "But it is a lovely practice." I cannot agree. You have no right to do in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost that which the Bible does not teach, and therefore which He has not commanded. How dare you take God's name in vain!

Sometimes it is called "christening" instead of baptism,—the idea being that you are made a Christian by being baptized. No one was ever made a Christian by being baptized, whether by sprinkling or by immersion, whether in infancy or in adult life. Baptism saves no one; it is nothing more than an outward confession of faith in Christ Jesus.

Infant "baptism" has put the name of Christian on millions of unregenerate people, and has constituted the mass of so-called Christian churches of unregenerate members. From that condition have radiated influences which have brought the religion of Christ into reproach.

Well now, if you do not want to know what the Bible teaches, of course you will be offended by what I say. If it were lawful to do so, and I were competent to implement my promise, I would gladly offer a million dollars to anyone in the world who could give me one solitary passage of scripture that by any reasonable construction could be made to justify infant baptism. It is not there. The whole tenor of Scripture is against it. "What about your text?" I reply, *if infant baptism were commonly practised, why did the disciples forbid the mothers to bring their children to Christ?* If a mother were to take her child to be "christened" in the United Church,

or in the Anglican Church, the minister would not forbid her. No; he would expect and encourage her so to do. It was not the practice in those days. Hence the disciples argued, "What are they doing that for? The children cannot understand His teaching." And they forbade them. No; had it been the practice to baptize "infants", as Luke tells us they were, the disciples would not have "forbidden" or "rebuked" those who brought the children for that purpose.

Furthermore, if they brought them to Christ to be baptized they brought them to the wrong person, for the Scripture is perfectly explicit that in all His earthly ministry Jesus Christ never baptized anyone: "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples". Furthermore, the text itself tells us that *He did not baptize them*, but He took them up in His arms and blessed them. He laid His hands on them, but He did not baptize them—not a word is said about baptism. You know what baptism means? New Testament baptism is always immersion, as the word means; and it can never be anything but immersion. If the Lord had meant "sprinkle" He would not have commanded to "baptize". Baptism is immersion, and it is never anything but immersion, and anything other than immersion is of human design, for which there is no authority in the word of God.

No; *the little children were not brought to Christ to be baptized, but that He might touch them and pray for them.* He said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Then He applied it to the disciples and to others when He said, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." He said, "You grown up, clever, men, have so surrounded the simplicity of My gospel with your complicated ideas of things that you want people to grow up before they can be saved; and I tell you if you have grown up you will have to come back and be a little child again, and come in the simplicity of a little child, with a child's faith. And just as I take these little children in My arms, and bless them, so I will take you in My arms. I will give unto you eternal life, and you shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck you out of My hand." He wants us all to be just like little children.

What is the distinctive characteristic of a little child? I sometimes wish we could all remain children. You remember when the outlook of life was like a winter morning when, over night, God had mantled the earth with an immaculate robe, and you looked from the window before any human feet had soiled it, and said, "How beautiful the world is!" And there was a time before children had been deceived, and before they learned the art of deception themselves, when they were simple enough to believe that the truth could be told, and that being told there was nothing to do but believe it. Have you not heard the little boy quote his father as the supreme authority on a certain subject? His father may be as ignorant as a Hottentot, he may speak about matters concerning which he has no accurate knowledge. But for that little boy the highest authority in the world is the word of his father. "My daddy says so", is the end of all argument. Later in life he learns, alas! that his daddy, and other people's daddies too, say things that are not true, and by and by, perhaps he will begin to question everyone, and if he lives long enough he is likely to say what the Psalmist said in his haste, "All men are liars".

We must become as little children in our relation to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Return to God, and with the simplicity of childhood receive the word of God Who cannot lie, accept His promise, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life"; "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee"; and then, as a babe in Christ, with the unfaltering faith of your new spiritual childhood, say, "My Saviour says so: God who cannot lie has promised me eternal life. I am saved."

May we all come to Him as little children this morning as we sing:

"Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong,
They are weak but He is strong."

MORE LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN

By an Amateur Gardener

A week or so ago I wrote a little article entitled, "Random Lessons From a Garden". As I am still going to school, I thought I might share with my readers a few more lessons I have learned.

One lesson I have learned relates to the importance of atmosphere to a garden. When lawns and plants are watered artificially, they are, of course, greatly helped. In a dry season nothing else can be done. Plants may thus be kept green, and made to grow. But such artificial irrigation at best is a poor substitute for heaven's rain and dew. Artificial irrigation produces no atmosphere. The water is applied to the plants, but the atmosphere remains dry. But when God sends His rain, He not only puts water upon the plants: He impregnates the atmosphere with moisture. If you would note the difference, walk in your garden after you have given it a thorough watering in dry weather, and compare and contrast it with the garden after a drenching rain.

So is it in spiritual things. Whatever human care is given to the Lord's garden, the plants which the Heavenly Father has planted can really grow, and become fruitful and beautiful, only as the Lord waters His garden. But someone will say, "Did not the Apostle Paul by inspiration say, 'I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase'?" True! And the Lord's garden cannot get along very well without Apollos. An intensely personal ministry may be exercised by those who have experience in the Christian life, and patient instruction and godly example may prove to many a tender plant to be as water on the thirsty ground. But even so, the atmosphere may be dry enough.

We have known churches that were, for the most part, like an arid desert. But in the church there was some godly Apollos who taught a class, or exercised a certain godly influence—or did both—with the result that in the midst of the dry desert there was a garden patch, an oasis, in which the fruit of the Spirit flourished. But how difficult to produce spiritual fruit under such circumstances! How blessed the condition when the church experiences a divine visitation when all the plants are watered together! The very atmosphere of the place is impregnated with vitalizing spiritual elements. How blessed when the divine Gardener exclaims: "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;

a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." With what ecstasy the spouse can then respond, "Awake O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

I learned another lesson from my hanging-baskets. I explained in the last article that I have a number of baskets hanging from the trees, in which flowers, and climbing and hanging vines, are planted. As the sunshine or the moonlight touches them, shining through the trees, swayed sometimes by a gentle breeze, they are very attractive. But one day I noticed some of the plants were languishing. The lawn below was moist, the soil in the shrubbery presented a moist appearance even to the eye; and yet the plants in the basket had begun to droop a little. I got up on my step-ladder to feel them, and found the soil perfectly dry. Yet they had been drenched with water forty-eight hours before, and in the meantime a heavy rain had fallen—still the baskets were dry. What was the explanation? They had been directly watered artificially. The foliage of the trees had perhaps prevented their getting their full share of the rain. But they had not been exposed to much sun—yet they were dry.

I soon found the explanation. They were exalted above the level of the other growing things in the garden. Even the majestic trees had their roots in mother earth. But the hanging-baskets had the dry air all about them; and the wind that made them to sway, and wave their trailing vines so attractively, had given the baskets special attention, and every drop of moisture had been evaporated. So I learned that the plants in high places need special treatment, and require more water to keep them fresh, than those which lie humbly on the ground.

Most of us would like to be hanging-baskets. How fond we mortals are of positions of eminence, where we can be seen! How ambitious we are to rise above the ordinary levels of life! The mother of Zebedee's children petitioned the Lord that her two sons, when He should come into His kingdom, might be permitted to sit the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. The Master's reply to this ambitious mother's petition was most significant. He said, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They answered, "We are able." To which He replied, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

Did He not imply that such positions of honour as they sought, involved and required special treatment, unusual discipline, even the drinking of His cup, and the sharing of His baptism of anguish and pain? We may at least learn this lesson, that positions of prominence expose their occupants to all the winds that blow, and they need special grace to keep green and fruitful in their exaltation. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God", the Lord Jesus

said, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." By the needle's eye He meant the small door in the city gate which might be opened after the larger gates were closed, to admit belated travellers. But how difficult for the camel to enter by that door! All its burden must be removed from its back, and only on the instalment plan, by much struggling and stooping, and with great difficulty, could the camel get into the city. The disciples knew what Jesus Christ meant, and they answered, "Who then shall be saved?" And He answered, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." Yes; it is possible—but to return to our illustration: the gardener must give special care to the baskets to keep them green.

We learned too the value of instructing little children, and of the importance of leading them to Christ early in life. I have also many climbing plants in my garden. Some of them climb where I do not want them to climb, and some of them wrap themselves about each other. Unless they are watched every day, and tenderly and carefully directed, their tender shoots persist in running in the wrong direction. In such case, I have tried with great care to untwine them, and make them climb where I want them to climb. They do not cry out, even though I do not administer an anaesthetic. They do not scream their protest. But I have learned that they do not like such correction; and when I have unwound them from their support, however delicately I may have done it, they seem to look at me reproachfully and say, "Oh, why did you not give us attention several days ago so that we might know in what direction you wanted us to climb instead of twisting us back and making us begin all over again?"

It is for ever true that a fence at the top of the precipice is better than a hospital at the bottom. It is better to train up a child in the way that he should go. What climbing plants they are! How they aspire! What incalculable potentialities of growth and development may reside in a single life! So then I am resolved to give more attention to the climbing plants. My garden has made me more enthusiastic than ever about our Sunday School. I see ever more clearly the wisdom of sparing no effort to bring the children to Christ.

I learned another lesson from one of my tender ivy vines. I tried to keep them in order. I made every possible effort to keep them in their places. But one shoot, more venturesome than the rest, pushed itself out on to the path; and it was crushed by a careless foot. Oh, how sad! What a pity! Indeed, what a shame was it! In a few days, just back of the crushed part of the vine, a dozen shoots pushed themselves out, and the vine that was crushed has become one of the most luxuriant in the rockery. There are no accidents in the divine economy:—

"Aromatic plants bestow

No spicy fragrance while they grow;
But, crushed or trodden to the ground,
Defuse their balmy sweets around."

So is it with the people of God: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew"; "Our light afflictions . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

I have some flower-boxes around my veranda. I wanted to have the flowers close to me. I planned some time to sit upon the veranda, perhaps when the

rain was falling, and have my flowers talk to me. But alas! they have no interest in me at all! They have all turned their backs upon me. I see, for the most part, the under side of the leaves; and even the flowering plants show me only the smile that registers at the back of their necks. And yet I have cared for them; I have loved them as well as an amateur could love them. To the extent of my limited knowledge, I have done the very best I could for them—and yet they will not look at me. Why is that? Because all the affectionate care I have lavished upon them is of secondary importance to their health and beauty. While they turn their backs upon me, they all look toward the sun!

What a splendid commentary they are on that great text, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The flowers in my boxes know they could dispense with my care, and the care of a thousand like me, with less damage to themselves, than would be occasioned by the loss of the sunshine of a single day.

Oh, for the development within us in larger measure of a divine instinct that will lead us always to turn toward the Sun! To the expression of that law of the spiritual life the Apostle Paul alludes in saying, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

I told my readers in my last article that I have a little gnome in my garden. He is a happy old fellow; with water-pot in his hand, he smiles the whole day through. No matter what the weather, he smiles as though it were the very kind of weather he had ordered. But one day the gardener stumbled upon him, and knocked him over. There was a slight depression in the ground, and his shoulders struck on one side of it, and his head on the other—and his neck broke. Poor little fellow! But when I looked at him, he was still smiling. He seemed not to have suffered any pain. But I discovered that he was hollow, and so my gardener decided that he would give him something to eat. He filled him with cement. Indeed, he put some iron into his blood—he put an iron in him that ran through his body right up to his head. He filled his head with cement, and then put his head back upon his shoulders—and you would never know he had been broken. Notwithstanding, he is now as solid as a block of concrete; and still as happy as the day is long. But there is this difference: he is not so easily bowled over as he once was—and if indeed he is knocked over, he is so solid that he would not break his neck.

What a lot of frail people we meet! How many people are easily broken! I have known a good many church members who needed a good solid meal of cement! I knew a man some years ago, an official of the old Convention. I met him just a little while before the Fifth Avenue Convention, and told him I should like to take him to Mayo Brothers, at their great Rochester clinic. He smiled and said, "Why? I am not ill." "No; but I should like to have that place down your back, where a back-bone is supposed to be, opened, to see if they could graft some kind of back-bone on the thing you have! You would be a fine fellow if only you had a back-bone that would enable you to stand for principle." How many people there are who need stiffening up like my little gnome in the garden.

Some time last summer, on the south side of my garage, down at the end of the garden, I planted some Engleman's Ivy. The south wall of the garage is perhaps eighteen inches or two feet from the fence, and when the left door of the garage is left open, as it usually is in the daytime, that little strip of ground is not in view; and at the end of it I have a fine Dutchman's Pipe which is growing, luxuriously, and entirely obscures the view from my garden. But that side of the garage can be seen by my neighbour, and it was really for the good of his eyes I planted my ivy. But alas for human selfishness! I have been thinking this summer more of the pleasure of my own eyes than of my neighbour's; and so I forgot all about my ivy, and gave much attention to the rest of the garden, but left that little strip to itself.

One day I bethought me, Surely I planted something back there. I looked around, and behold the ivy was doing beautifully. It looked at me and said, "I am rather glad you left me alone. I can do better by myself, thank you, than with all your care. Just keep your hands off me, and let me grow of myself; and I will cover up this side of the garage for you in due time."

What a ministry is exercised by those people who are willing to become beautiful without observation, who just let the life that is in them express itself, and fill their little corner in life with beauty and fragrance; and ask for nothing but to be allowed simply and freely to express the joy of living!

One other lesson from my garden will be sufficient just now. I was very careful of the lawn in front of my house. Last year, while I was away, it developed some bare patches, so I gave it special care, as I thought, this summer. I secured, as I supposed, a very choice mixture of seed, and I scattered it very carefully over the lawn; and did everything I was told ought to be done to make grass grow. Up to about a month ago it looked beautiful, and as I walked on it, it was like walking on an expensive carpet with a deep, heavy nap. I should have called it a luxurious lawn, and I felt like congratulating the seedsman who supplied the seed with which to sow it.

But a week ago an examination of that lawn made me suspicious that all was not as I hoped it was. I sent for an expert who told me he had never seen a finer crop of a certain kind of annual grass, which he said was the very worst pest that one could get into his lawn. Then he showed me what it was; and that which I supposed was the seed I had sown, growing, was a kind of annual grass that had seeded itself from a few plants perhaps dropped by the birds last summer or the summer before. It had multiplied itself until it covered the lawn. He pushed aside a few of the broad blades, saying, "There are the seeds you sowed vainly struggling to push their way through this grass. This grass has choked out all your lovely lawn." It was not plantain: it was grass; it looked like grass. But it was the worst hypocrite I have ever seen.

The expert told me what to do with it. "You could never pull it out root by root: you must kill it." Oh listen to the ugly word: kill! kill! kill! He said, "It must be killed, or your grass can never grow." And I am ruthless. I hate that weed. I am not ashamed to say it: I hate it with a perfect hatred. I am going to have it killed. Yes; every root of it. I am going to

have it killed! Think of talking like that about a garden! Ah yes; but there are some things that are hateful even in a garden, and the very love you bear the garden leads you to hate everything that would injure it.

So do dreadful things grow in the garden of the Lord, those poisonous heresies dropped in the cultivated ground by evil birds. Only one or two plants at first, while someone says, "Do not make a fuss about it. Let us have no controversy. Do not trouble. Let us have peace." And a little while after, the thing multiplies, and it looks like my lawn. So beautiful! And the peace-lovers say, "There now; are you not glad you did not uproot that? See what the Oxford Group have done." Thank God the Oxford Group did not get into my garden. It is a superficial seed that gives a green appearance, but will smother all spirituality, and make the garden but a desert in the end.

I have learned many more lessons than these in my garden, but I dare say this is about all the gardening my readers can comfortably endure for one week. So then we will do with this as we do with the hose when we have watered the garden: put it on the reel and roll it up, and say, "That is done."

AMONG THE CHILDREN

By Rev. A. H. Barham, Pastoral Visitor of
Jarvis St. Church

Patsy is one of our youngest church members, but she listens well to the pastor's sermons, remembers, and puts into practice his teaching as the following will show. The pastor once made the statement that the most important part of a letter was often contained in the postscript. Before going to bed at night our young friend was as usual praying in the hearing of her mother. Closing her general petition with "Amen", she continued, "Oh, yes! Lord! and then I have a p.s. Please bless the Pastor, keep him well and strong, and use him to bring souls to Thee".

May we not believe that this prayer with its p.s. has been heard, and therefore answered?

THE EDITOR'S VISIT TO BRITAIN

It is known to most of our readers that the Editor is under engagement to speak in Great Britain and Ireland, beginning September 16th, and continuing to the end of October. The completed programme, when it is received from the London Committee, will be published. Meanwhile it is enough to say we are to be three weeks in London; we are to speak in Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Ballymena (Northern Ireland); and we have received an urgent invitation to visit Cork. Whether that will be practicable or not, we do not know. We have heard also, through Mr. Whitcombe, from Pastor Duberry, requesting that we make a visit to France, to see our French brethren. Whether this can be done, we cannot for the moment say. This is published merely for the information of enquirers. The Pastor expects to sail from Montreal September 7th.

We are very happy to be able to announce that we have secured the promise of Dr. P. W. Philpott to become acting-pastor of Jarvis Street Church during the entire time of the Pastor's absence. Dr. Philpott became somewhat indisposed a few weeks ago, and most exaggerated reports of his condition have been in circulation—just as the report still persists, notwithstanding every attempt to deny it, that the Editor of THE GOSPEL WITNESS is suffering from a malignant affection of the throat. Thank God, there is not a word of truth in it; but the report continues in circulation.

We are happy to be able to say that, from all indications, there was nothing seriously wrong with Dr. Philpott. His

indisposition was the result of over-exertion on that particular day, but he is practically himself again; and he has promised to share the day with the Pastor on the first Sunday of September. We shall try to persuade Dr. Philpott to preach in the morning, while the Pastor conducts the service; and then for him to conduct the service in the evening, while the Pastor preaches his last sermon before leaving.

We have known Dr. Philpott for many years. We knew him as a fellow-pastor in Hamilton years ago. He did a marvellous work in that city, building from nothing the largest congregation, we suppose, in Ontario at that time. Right to the end of his Hamilton ministry he was incomparably the most popular preacher in the Niagara Peninsula. Then Dr. Philpott went to the great Moody Church of Chicago, and his ministry there was equally fruitful. From there he went to the Church of the Open Door, in Los Angeles, Calif., with the same result.

Dr. Philpott has always preached a sane, symmetrical, gospel. He has been free from fads which so often characterize many otherwise very able preachers. Like Spurgeon, he has kept to the main track. He has preached the glorious gospel to sinners, and has been used of God in the salvation of countless thousands. He has always felt that next to the business of leading souls to Christ, his most important ministry was the building up of God's people in their most holy faith. To these two great matters he has devoted his life.

We are sure there are hundreds of people—we trust, thousands—in Toronto and in places adjacent to Toronto, who will be glad of the opportunity of sitting again for a couple of months under the ministry of this great man of God. Dr. Philpott has promised to teach the Pastor's Bible Class each Sunday morning at ten o'clock, to preach at both services, to give the Bible lecture to the workers on the Sunday School lesson Monday evening, and again each Thursday evening the Bible lecture in the auditorium of the church, beginning Sunday, September 9th. We make this announcement with thanksgiving to God that He has made it possible for us to secure so able and widely-known a substitute as we have in Dr. Philpott. We know of no man to whose hands we could more confidently entrust the pastoral care of Jarvis Street Church.

THE SECOND SERMON THIS WEEK

The second sermon this week contains, of course, the a.b.c. of the gospel. It is as simple, we hope, as anything can possibly be. And it is published in response to several requests. For over twelve years all the Pastor's sermons and addresses have been stenographically reported. Ordinarily, one a week is published, except during the Seminary term, when the Bible lecture of Thursday evening is published as well as the sermon. But there have been enough sermons reported and transcribed, and put on file, to supply THE GOSPEL WITNESS week by week for another twelve years if the voice of the Jarvis Street pulpit were silenced. We often wish we could publish both sermons. The only reason for their not being published is lack of space. But there are hundreds of Jarvis Street members who listen to two sermons: perhaps there could be found hundreds who could read two sermons.

We have written this to give our readers a glimpse into the office: These sermons are there, and some day perhaps others of them will see the light.

Last Sunday morning's sermon, we have said, is published in response to several requests; and particularly to the request of one of our most faithful members who said, "I wish you would publish that sermon; and if you do, I want two hundred copies." Which only goes to show that bread and milk—common fare—are the things of which people do not get tired. We soon weary of cake, and of highly flavoured, highly seasoned, foods; but bread and butter, a little cheese, perhaps some milk, potatoes, and the ordinary vegetables—these are ever the staples of the sane man's fare. So also is it true of the gospel. There are people who want to explore the stratosphere, or to break all records by going into the depths (as two scientists recently did), or possibly to travel by speculative aeroplane into the future; but the most useful type of Christian loves, like Abraham, to walk before God. And in order to do that, they have to be well fed with the commonplaces of the gospel. Hence the sermon on, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 37

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JOB ANSWERS ELIPHAZ

Lesson Text: Job, chapters 6 and 7.

Golden Text: "How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove? Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?"—Job 6:25,26.

Bible School Reading: Job 7:1-21.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Psalm 90:1-17; Tuesday—Psalm 18:1-6; Wednesday—Eccles. 3:1-8; Thursday—Deut. 34:1-12; Friday—Matthew 13:45-52; Saturday—Luke 12:22-31.

I. JOB JUSTIFIES HIS COMPLAINT (6:1-7).

Being reproved by Eliphaz for his complaint, Job justifies it, first by referring to the weight of his grief. If it were laid in the balances he estimated "it would be heavier than the sand of the sea". One cannot but sympathize with him in his affliction, though only those who have suffered in a similar manner can really enter into his experience. He has lost practically all that was worth living for, and in addition he was in great bodily suffering. Surely a heavy enough burden for anyone. He then intimates further the reason for, and justice of, his complaint by a reference to his feelings under trial—likened to the stinging sensation of arrows in the person; and to the fact that his complaint presupposes a cause for the same, as in the case of animals whose call implies lack of something, and in relation to the partaking of unsavoury food, to which he likened his experience. We are made aware in these statements of the unpleasant nature of Job's complaint, together with the soreness inherent in it, and its hopeless nature.

II. JOB'S DESIRE FOR DEATH (6:8-13).

Having justified his complaint, Job expresses his desire for death. He longed for it, and desired God to grant it to him. He wished the Lord would let loose His hand and cut him off. He would be willing to endure the pain of such a stroke if only it would bring death. There was no strength in him to recover, as intimated by Eliphaz (5:18-26). In order to regain his health he would require the strength of stones or of brass, but such strength was lacking; there was no help in him. These are the words of a man sorely stricken, and feeling the heavy burden of his affliction. There is no complaint against God for his condition, only an expressed desire that He would put an end to it. Some people charge God foolishly: Job refrained from doing this. Note Job's desire to depart this life, and his recognition of God as the One Who had the disposal of life. Paul also desired to depart this life, toward the end of his career, and while he was in prison; although for the sake of others he was willing to remain (Phil. 1:23-26). The desire may come to many when under severe trial, but hope should not be given up of gaining deliverance on this earth. Job was healed, and more richly blessed than before; and Paul was liberated from prison. Let us be patient in trial, submissive unto the will of God, and we shall be conscious of His sustaining power (James 4:7,8).

III. JOB'S REPROOF OF HIS FRIENDS (6:14-30).

His desire for death expressed, Job turns to reprove his friends for their unsympathetic attitude toward him. One might expect pity from a friend when enduring affliction, but his brethren had dealt deceitfully as a brook with him (v. 15). He is referring in this to the winter streams of an eastern land which dry up in summer. In the winter they are full of water, but in the warmth of summer they vanish away—disappointing the merchant caravans which expected to quench their thirst at them. This is an interesting illustration of the attitude of some who profess to be friends. The Arab proverb respecting a treacherous friend, "I trust not in thy torrent" is applicable to many in the west! They make loud profession of friendship, but when the need arises for the manifestation of their profession they are strangely silent and inactive. Their friendship existed but in words. A friend

is known by his deeds, as well as by his words (Prov. 17:17).

Job applies this illustration to his friends: "For, now ye are nothing." They were simply dried up streams, whose friendship did not exist, who were only a disappointment to him. What a contrast such people are to the Friend Who "sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24); Who is like a perpetual spring of water, a "fountain of living waters", always dependable, and never disappointing. Continuing, Job informs his friends he did not ask anything from them, and then requests them to teach him, and cause him to understand wherein he had erred. He enquires further concerning the nature of their reproof, and then declares his honesty before them. In Job's estimation it would have been better if his friends had never come to comfort him. They evidently lacked the true sympathy of the friend, and only aggravated the patient instead of helping him. Note the need for love, understanding, and tact, in seeking to help others. Our Lord's example should be followed in this, as in other matters.

IV. JOB'S REASON FOR DESIRING DEATH (7:1-11).

In excusing his desire for death, Job gives a description of his condition, which enlightens us concerning his affliction, and gives evidence of the weakness of human nature, and the brevity of man's life. There is first a reference to man's appointed time on earth, or man's warfare. Life is a conflict. No one goes through it on a bed of roses, for the world, the flesh, and the devil, must be faced by each one. Our Lord engaged in battle, and emerged victorious (John 16:33); and His followers through Him are promised victory (I Cor. 15:57). Job then describes his condition, and the reason for His intense longing for departure is stated, together with the wearisome nights which, by his sufferings, he was made to pass. The state of his flesh was loathsome. His days were spent without hope. His life was wind; he would no longer enjoy prosperity. He was probably thinking of his previous days when he enjoyed the good things of this world. Such an experience he believed would not come again. He was mistaken in this, but discouragement hid the possibility of such future blessing. He felt the end of life was very near. He would go down to the grave, and come up no more (vs. 9, 10). This is not contrary to Job's belief in the resurrection (19:25-27), but merely implies that the person who goes to Sheol, or the place of departed spirits, would leave his earthly abode, and return to it no more in the present order of things. Thank God for the hope of the resurrection (I Thess. 4:16), and for the home prepared for the Lord's own people (John 14:2). Christ has robbed the grave of its hopelessness, and taken the sting out of death (I Cor. 15:55-57). Because of these things which he has mentioned, Job states that he will complain in the bitterness of his soul (v. 11). Note the sad condition of those who have no hope for eternity. They are without God, and without hope in this life (Eph. 3:12), and in a lost miserable condition beyond the grave (Luke 16:19-31). It is certainly our duty to urge them to get right with God at the earliest possible moment (II Cor. 6:2), and prepare to meet Him (Amos 4:12).

V. JOB'S EXPOSTULATION WITH GOD (7:12-21).

In this section Job expostulates with God for paying so much attention to him, as manifest in his trials. Was he a sea, or a whale, that he should be thus watched? He could get no peace to sleep; dreams scared him, and he was terrified with visions, so that he would rather die by strangling than continue to live (v. 15). He wanted to die, and desired God to permit him to do so. Observe Job's attributing of dreams to God. This was the common belief of that time. There is no doubt that God does visit men in this way, but we need not attribute all dreams to God. Some of them have a physical origin, and are due to some disorder in the body. Job felt that God was dealing with him in a most severe manner, and desired Him to cease doing so, and to permit him to die. He did not know the cause of his trouble, nor understand the reason for it. Much goes on in the spirit realm that we know little about. This, Daniel discovered (Dan. 10:13). God has enlightened us some respecting this sphere, and we know that Satan and his hosts are interested in men, and seeking to dominate in their lives. As the great adversary he is permitted to test them, but such testing, if borne victoriously, works out for the glory of God, and the benefit of the saint.