

# The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

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

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

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## FAITH AND WORKS.

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Thus believing and doing are related to each other as roots and fruits. Paul has been insisting that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."—The truth that salvation is by grace alone is the "faithful saying" which the apostle directs Titus to "affirm constantly."

It is popular to belittle the importance of belief. Orthodoxy is frequently held up to scorn as though it were an obsession of the intellect having no relation to life; as though it were comparable to some vague theory of agriculture which is utterly foreign to actual fields, and real ploughs, and veritable sheaves, and flesh-and-blood reapers. On the other hand works of benevolence are extolled as though they were utterly unrelated to what a man thinks and believes, and instances of pagan pity or agnostic charity are cited, in contrast to the alleged products of the garden of faith.

But why should our sympathy incline to either extreme? The truth is found between the two: Faith without works is dead; and works which are pure in motive and aim, without faith, are impossible. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" As faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, so works are the realization of hope, and the evidence of true faith. Therefore, the apostle here emphasizes both believing and doing. Belief is the seed or the root: We must take care of the springs of life; we must sow the seed of truth; we must look well to the root of things—we must believe God in His revelation of Grace in Christ Jesus. But these things must be constantly affirmed "that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." The cultivation of the field is completed, not with sowing, but with reaping. We must be as "careful" of our doing as of our believing. Our performance must justify our profession. New Testament orthodoxy can find its own justification in New Testament results. New Testament Christianity, in New Testament Christians.

# The Jarvis Street Pulpit

## THE IMMEASURABLE CROSS.

A Sermon by the Pastor. :

"And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth."—Ezekiel 43:13.

Ezekiel's prophecy is one of the most mysterious, and therefore one of the most fascinating of the books of the Bible. From the fortieth chapter he describes a city and a temple which were shown him "in the visions of God" while he was among the captives by the river of Chebar. It is useless to ask, "How can these things be?" concerning that which a man sees "in the vision of God." As surely as the air is given us to breathe, and water to drink, and food to eat, some things are given us simply to be believed. And this book of Ezekiel is not a dark safe full of sealed packages of unknown value to those to whom are "revealed" the deep things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. It is one of the many mansions of this city of truth which we call the Bible, which, to the children of faith, is all the more attractive because it hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof.

I shall not attempt the identification of the temple of Ezekiel's vision. I shall not dispute with the literalists as to the ultimate meaning of the prophecy. I see difficulties in that direction that would be insurmountable were they to relate to anything than that which appears "in the visions of God"; in that realm nothing is impossible. I am far more concerned, however, that we should apprehend and be apprehended by those principles which abide, than that we should exercise our minds balancing Scripture as a merchant balances his ledger.


Whatever this temple vision in its marvelous symbolism may comprehend, the altar signifies the place of sacrifice; it is a symbol of the cross.

"And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits." But what is a cubit? In the Revelation the angel measured the city, "and he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." But can you tell me the measure of the angel's golden reed? "And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth; and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs." But who knows the measure of an angel's cubic, or an angel's furlong?

Once we measured the road we walked by miles, now we measure the distance we ride, by minutes. It may not be long ere, on meeting a friend in the morning, you will invite him to lunch with you, and he will reply, "Thank you, I am sorry, but I promised a friend in Chicago to fly over and lunch with him to-day, but I expect to be back in Toronto in time for dinner this evening." And we shall do still better than that some day. The time will come when the astronomer's distances will not stagger us as they do to-day. You may leave your tape measure behind when you go to heaven. The angel's reed will serve you better.

"And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth." But whose hand breadth? The cubit is a variable measure at best, but even if you knew the exact length of a cubit how may we determine the measure of the additional hand breadth?

And that is my message to you to-night. That no human hand can measure the cross of Christ; you cannot estimate the value of that blood whose outpouring was the laying down of "an endless life." "These are the measures of the cross after the cubits; the cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth."



I. I remark, therefore, that, **The atonement is immeasurable in its Godward reach.**

An atonement is necessary because God and man are not at one. Sin has caused the separation, and it is a breach which cannot lightly be healed. Sin is more than the breaking of a statutory regulation; it is more than the transgression of an abstract law; it is the violation of the very nature of the divine Lawgiver. The revelation of Calvary in this, as in all other respects, is a revelation of fact; sin not only offends, it actually wounds God. The law which decrees "the wages of sin is death" is not an arbitrary rule. It is a law of necessity written deep in the very nature of things. It can no more be changed than the law which makes fire burn and poison kill. In the most infinitesimal air space, in the tiniest dewdrop, on every atom that law is indelibly written, nay, that law is inherent in the thing itself, that sin, in the physical as in the moral realm, "when it is finished bringeth forth death," that life is conditioned upon obedience to law; and disobedience results in death.

I say, therefore, an atonement is necessary that God and man may be at one with each other, and (I say it with the profoundest reverence) that God may be at one with Himself. And that, not because God is an arbitrary ruler governing the world by mere caprice; but just because He is God, and as such is the source of all law, and, therefore, of all life.

"God is law, say the wise. O soul, and let us rejoice,  
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.  
Law is God, say some. No God at all, says the fool;  
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;  
For the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see,  
But if we could see and hear,—this Vision, were it not He?"

The whole fabric of nature so marvelously and beautifully framed, and held together by a thousand laws, is really a bright mirror in which the Divine nature is reflected. There is a law which determines the circuits of the wind, which makes the atmospheric "low pressure" area a prophecy of strong winds from the "high pressure" region which makes a comparative vacuum here a promise of a cyclone from yonder. There is a law which proportions the height of the mountains to the depth of the sea; which renders it necessary that the waters be measured, and that the mountains be weighed in scales, and the hills in a balance. And these laws proceed from God. There is a moral, as there is a physical constitution of the universe, and both reflect the nature of God, Who, personal and transcendent though He be, is yet immanent in the things which He hath made. In the one hundred and thirty-fifth Psalm these two, the physical and the moral, are placed in juxtaposition: "He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh the lightning for the rain; He bringeth the wind out of His treasures. Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants?" The stroke which slew the firstborn of Egypt and the paschal lamb was as necessary as the lightning which makes a way for the rain; the sending of tokens and wonders into the midst of Egypt as inevitable as the coming of the wind out of His treasures. The moral void which sin creates, the displacement of the Divine Spirit from human lives, this disturbance of the moral equilibrium, makes the awful tempest of the wrath to come as inevitable as the devastating cyclone which the atmospheric void calls forth. There is more than a figure of speech in Jeremiah's saying, "Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous

whirlwind. It shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return until he have executed, and till He have performed the thoughts of His heart." The moral void which God calls sin calls forth the whirlwind, and it is bound to fall upon the head of the wicked. That passage which describes God's rule in the moral realm is in strict accord with what science now knows to be His law in the physical realm.

And, therefore, I say, there is that in the very nature of God which is identical with the moral constitution of things which necessitates the atonement before man can be at one with his Maker. It is unscientific to make light of the atonement. If men knew as much about the realm of morals as they know about the realm of physics, they would know that as the night-time of one hemisphere is necessary to the day-time of the other, so the darkness of Calvary was essential to the world's light. Every meteorological observatory, every weather bureau, is a pulpit whose message—and it is the voice of science—is, "Flee from the wrath to come."

But who shall answer that demand of the divine nature on account of human sin? Who shall so fill that moral void as to prevent the whirlwind of wrath? Who shall supply that righteousness to be weighed against our sin as the mountains are weighed with the sea? From what ocean shall the clouds of grace be distilled? Upon what altar shall the lightning fall to make a way for the rain of salvation to descend? From what altar shall the waters of life flow as an ever-widening, deepening river, to keep that ocean full?

"These are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth." But whose hand breadth? Whose but His, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance." He has measured the Cross after the cubits, the cubit that is "a cubit and an hand breadth." This altar is not one cubit, but twelve, and the length and breadth of it are equal; twelve hand breadths of the hand that holds the waters in its hollow, and meted out heaven with a span, who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing." No wonder it is said of that altar, "And his stairs shall look toward the east," for he who trusts to such a Sacrifice shall see the breaking of a day on which the sun shall never go down.

That is the spiritual significance of this text. The Altar is immeasurable, the Sacrifice is infinite. Oh, my brethren! hold fast to the truth of that hand breadth—rather, yield yourselves to the grasp of that Hand, and never fear to sing:

"Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ, my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood."

The wounding of no other hand than that which spans the heavens, and holds the worlds, could make the sinner at one with God. But that Cross is enough! If the price of my redemption is paid by that Hand, if that blood which contains the wealth and the life of all worlds in solution, flows instead of mine, nothing more can be demanded; and if it were, what more could even the angels of heaven supply? God asks no more of any man than this, that Christ should die for him.

Others may think they have found another way of life. I know of only

one way. I can stand only in the garden where Jesus was crucified, where the flowers grow into beauty out of the death of their other selves; where the anger of the Lord, like the wind in its circuits, returned when He had executed and performed the thought of His heart on Calvary, and the whirlwind of wrath died away into silence in the grave where Jesus was laid. From there would I go forth to meet thee, sinner, "preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

II. The atonement is immeasurable in its ministry to the human conscience, in the satisfaction it renders to the moral law in us.

It was in this respect chiefly that man was made in the image of God, that the law of His nature was made the law of ours. We read that they who have no written law "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." And just as, the moral nature of God demands satisfaction for sin, so does our own moral nature require to be appeased; and the moral faculty, conscience, defiled as it is, will never wholly be at rest, and never will be at one with God until the penalty of sin is paid.

Conscience will never consent to your acquittal without the payment of a penalty. And no sacrifice which you may offer on any altar which you can build will wholly satisfy or silence the demands of your own conscience. Defiled and seared as it is, conscience is a little bit of God; His law is inherent in the very constitution. And though you could build an altar of precious stones, with steps and furnishings of gold, though for your sacrifices you should heap upon it all good works which a mortal may do, though your sacrifice were consumed with a zeal which only death could quench, Conscience, even as the holy law of God, must discern an infinite disparity between the measure of your sacrifice and the measure of your sin; and must refuse to accept the one or absolve you of the other. Even those "gifts and sacrifices" which were offered in the temple according to divine direction as "a figure for the time then present," the Holy Spirit saith, "Could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience."

*STANT* → And yet we read of the possibility of having "a conscience void of offense," "a pure conscience." We read that worshippers "once purged, should have no more conscience of sins," and that we may have "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."

But again we have to ask, Where is the sacrifice which can fully satisfy the law of God written in our consciences, which can make us at one with God and with ourselves, that there may be peace between God and man, and peace in God and man? Where is the altar sufficient for such a sacrifice? And again we reply, Nothing but the altar whose measure is after the cubits can atone, after the hand breadth of the Hand that made us and wrote His law upon our consciences: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

It is the testimony of every purged conscience that the blood of the altar whose measures are after the cubits satisfies all claims. Conscience allows that God ought to save the soul for whom Jesus died. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. The atonement is immeasurable in its attractive and inspirational power.

There is a such thing as gravitation measure. By the use of delicate in-

struments it is possible to measure the gravitation of one body toward another, to determine the measure of their mutual attraction. One can indicate the horse-power of an engine, or ascertain the velocity of the wind, or the voltage of an electric current. But who can measure the attraction of "the altar after cubits," the inspirational power of the Cross of Christ?

Who can estimate its power of attraction? Can you measure by cubits or furlongs the distance from the Father's door to the swine troughs in the fields which Jesus described as "a far country"? How "far"—oh, how "far," may a soul depart from God? The distance is longer than a human father's voice can carry, it is greater than a wife's entreaty can be heard, and it is sometimes farther than a mother's love can make itself felt. For men will pile up barriers between themselves and God, and put themselves so out of tune with all holy voices as to place themselves where no human voice can call and no human arm can help them back to God. And in the isolation of that far country where every communication with holy things is broken, there is but one power that can touch the sinner there. But even there, there reaches him a power by which he finds himself drawn away from his swine-feeding to journey in a new direction; and the mountains are leveled, and gulfs are bridged and rivers crossed, until he comes up with that resistless Cross on Calvary—"And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

And who can measure the uplifting power of the altar after the cubits? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," but how "far" "short" have we fallen? How far below the Divine level of life? "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are, my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

It is thus sin has dwarfed and degraded us from the palace to the prison, from a throne to the ashheap, from the gardens of Paradise to the miry clay of the horrible pit. But who can span that shortness; between our sin and the divine glory, between the malarial marshes of our natural moral level and the moral altitudes of the holy and healthy dwelling of the Most High? There are the drunkard, the thief, the libertine, so deeply sunken in the mire; and there are the self-righteous, of the same base passions, only keeping their outer garments clean by clinging to the sides of the pit. But what power shall lift them from the low level of life to company with angels or lift the beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes?

A cubit was the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the longest finger. But what human arm can measure this shortness, or span this gulf, or fathom this pit? When the cubit fails; when no mother's arm is long enough, and no father's arm is strong enough; when no church nor prophet nor priest, by their utmost reach can lift a soul from sin to holiness, behold the powers of the altar that is after the cubits, the cubit that is the length of an arm—and an hand breadth prevails! "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand!"

Time would fail me to tell of its impelling power. No ship was ever borne so irresistibly to her haven by any wind that did ever blow as the Church has been impelled by that Divine Wind set in motion by the fire kindled on this measureless altar. We talk of water power, but no cataract can generate power for such achievements as are traceable to that great river which Ezekiel saw flowing from beside this altar, and of which he said: "Every thing shall live whithersoever the river cometh." We wonder at the impelling power of steam. It transports a thousand people across the continent or carries the population of a town across the sea. But the power of the Cross of the hand breadth has

changed the face of the world; it takes up the isles as a very little thing, and by its righteousness the nations are exalted. We stand amazed at the marvelous accomplishments of electricity, as it turns the factory wheels and carries us about as on the wings of the wind, and turns darkness to light as by the wings of the morning. But Calvary's power turns the shadow of death into the morning; it illuminates the world, and bears unnumbered millions up the glorious "White Way" to their home in the shadowless City of God.

In the home of a friend one day, as he reclined on the lounge opposite, and I in an easy chair, we were having a pleasant chat until dinner was called, when his little boy, named Neil, about three or four years old, came in. He went to his father's side and I heard him whisper: "Papa, get up and show Mr. Shields how much you love me." I knew at once there was a secret between them, as it is fitting there should be between father and child, and that it was a secret in which the child rejoiced.

His father smiled, and said, "Oh, run away, Neil, and play; we are busy talking, and Mr. Shields knows I love you." "Yes," said the little fellow; "but I want you to show him how much."

Again and again the father tried to put him off, but the child persisted in his plea that the visitor be shown "how much" the father loved.

At length the father yielded, and as he stood, the child stood between us, and, holding up his index finger, with a glance first at his father and then at me, he said, "Now you watch, till you see how much my papa loves me."

His father was a tall and splendidly proportioned man. First he partially extended one arm, but the child exclaimed, "No, more than that." Then the other arm was extended similarly, but the little fellow was not content, and demanded, "More than that." Then one after the other both arms were outstretched to the full, only the fingers remaining closed. But still the child insisted, "More than that." Then, in response to his repeated demands, as he playfully stamped his little foot and clapped his hands and cried, "No! No! It's more than that!" One finger after another on either hand was extended, until his father's arms were opened to their utmost reach, and to each was added the full hand breadth. Then the child turned to me, and gleefully clapping his hands, exclaimed, "See? That's how much papa loves me." Then he ran off to his play content.

Oh yes, it is time for play when we know how much our Father loves us! That is the beginning of the happy life. And that child is a picture of the world. Nothing will ever satisfy the weary human heart that hungers for a lasting love but the Gospel, which tells how much God loves us. Many voices proclaim the love of God. But nowhere but at the Cross, whose measures are after the cubits of a cubit and an hand breadth, can we know how much God loves the world.

Who of us can resist the attraction of a love like that, measured by the hand breadth of the Hand which holds all oceans in its hollow? Who of us, how great soever our sins, shall fear to trust an atonement measured by twelve hand breadths of the Hand that meted out heaven with the span?

I charge thee, sinner, let not thine unbelief drive thee beyond the far reach of mercy's finger tips! There is no far country this side of hell which is not shadowed by that Cross. Behold and believe how much God loves thee; oh, lose thy sin, and find thy heaven in the hand breadth of the Cross!

And keep thine eyes open to that vision of infinite love, and thou shalt feel its power in the hour of temptation, and rest in its might in the hour of

weakness, and rejoice in its comfort in the time of sorrow, and delight in its companionship in the hour of loneliness, and share its victory in the hour of death.

And in the golden city, surpassing all splendors, and transcending all harmonies, and eclipsing all wonders, that vision shall remain. And when unnumbered milleniums have unfolded the mysteries of all worlds, thou still shall point in ever-deepening wonder to "the Lamb as it had been slain," and cry, "God so loved the world!"

NOTE.—The Pastor returned from New York last Monday and left for Saùlt Ste. Marie on Tuesday to speak at the Northern Association Wednesday and Thursday, and having but two or three hours to give to "The Witness," this sermon, which was printed some years ago, is reprinted here.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**The Choir Picnic** will be held on July 7th, at the home of Mr. Miles, Mimico. All the choir members are asked to reserve this date.

**Jarvis Street Sunday School and Church Picnic**, July 11th, at Centre Island. The Tea Committee (Mrs. W. W. Brown, Convenor) desires the ladies of the church to donate cakes, etc., as follows: Fifty large cakes, five hundred small cakes, tarts, pies and cookies, to be delivered at the church on Monday, July 10th. The Treasurer of the Sunday School will, as usual, need funds for the purchase of the necessary prizes, and general expenses of the Picnic. The "Jarvis" friends have always generously supported the Sunday School in this matter. About \$100.00 is needed to carry the day successfully through. Give your contribution to Mr. Hutchinson, Mr. Turney, Mr. Fraser, or enclosed in an envelope marked "Picnic Fund," and placed on the collection plate, it will find its way to the Sunday School Treasurer. Fuller particulars as to time and programme will be given next week.

## The Church Calendar

For the week beginning Sunday, July 2nd.

### SUNDAY

10.00—**Prayer Service** in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.

11.00—**Public Worship.** The Pastor will preach.

12.00—**Communion Service.**

3.00—**The Bible School** will meet.

Lesson: Ezekiel, the Watchman of Israel. Ezekiel 2: 1 to 3:27.

2.30—**Open-Air Work** with the Gospel Car, starting from Jarvis Street Church.

3.00—**The Parliament Street Bible School**, at 250 Parliament Street.

5.30—**Open-Air Service** on Gerrard Street.

6.00—**Prayer Meeting** in Church Parlor.

7.00—**Public Worship.** The Pastor will preach.

Service at **Parliament Street Branch**, Mr. W. L. McKay.

**MONDAY, WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY**—8.00—Prayer Service.

**THURSDAY**—8.00—Open-air service, Gerrard St. Gate, Allan Gardens.