

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

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

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PASTOR AND EDITOR

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE LAW OF INCREASE.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, Oct. 29th, 1922.

(Stenographically reported)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."—St. John 12: 24.

The disciples of Jesus were slow to appreciate the true character of the work He came to do. They were looking to Him to restore at that time the kingdom to Israel. There never was such a man as Jesus; never did any human character appear in all the course of human history so splendidly endowed; nor one who wielded over his fellows such a marvellous power as Jesus. When Saul was set forth as the king whom God had selected, the people cried, "God save the king." He seemed to have been born to be a king; and one can well understand how the disciples of Jesus, particularly as they came into intimate association with Him, were impressed with His fitness to restore the kingdom and the glory to Israel. In the beginning they did not dream of the path along which He must travel. They read the ancient Scriptures; they saw something of the glory that was promised; they saw the crown; but they had no eyes whatever for the cross. Jesus, little by little, revealed His purpose to them; and on this occasion, as He is approaching the cross, He lays down the great principle upon which the progress of His kingdom is to depend—that the crown of His harvest is always to be life out of death.

The metaphor is a very familiar one which any little child can understand: the corn of wheat abideth alone unless it fall into the ground and die—unless the life forces that are within are liberated, and thus permitted to find expression in a new life. And so our Lord Jesus declared to His disciples, and to those who were about Him, the necessity of His own death; that He must die in order that He might bear fruit unto God. "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

But this text has application not only to our Lord Himself: it applies to

every believer. We rejoice in the objective value of the cross; that Jesus died instead of us; that our sins were laid upon Him; that He gave His life a ransom for many. Because of that we live.

"Jesus paid it all;
All to Him we owe:
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow."

And as we view the cross, we rejoice in it; we give thanks for it. We are filled with gratitude as we are led to an appreciation of that great fact that our salvation is secured to us by the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is another aspect to the cross. We are to know something of its power subjectively. We too must go to the cross. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." And I remind you, as perhaps I have done before, that when Jesus spoke of the cross He meant something far more than a slightly unpleasant duty,—more than application to a somewhat irksome task. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was a thing of blood. It was a crucifying power; it was something that laid the whole man in the dust of death in order that he might arise by the power of God in a new life of resurrection glory. The Apostle Paul declared, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

And it is true, my friends, of every one of us, that we shall never become fruitful Christians until we "fall into the ground and die." Moreover, it applies to a church: it is necessary that a church should be crucified with Christ; that the whole church should "fall into the ground and die" if it would not, in the view of God, abide alone.

I want you, therefore, to turn over in your thought this morning this perfectly familiar principle; and as we do so shall we pray that the Spirit of God may help us to translate this truth into our own experience, and yield ourselves to its sanctifying power.

I. **What does it mean then to "fall into the ground and die"?** What can it mean to you and to me to be crucified with Christ? I need only spend a moment in suggesting to you that it means, of course, **the giving up of our bodies, of our carnal natures, to the cross.** It does not mean merely that the baser passions are to be subject to its crucifying power; it means also that subtle love of ease, of self-indulgence, of comfort—that all these things should be brought under the power of the cross of Christ; that our fleshly natures should be subject to crucifixion. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." It means that our bodily natures are to be subject to the rule of Christ; and that they are to be yielded up to His cross.

That is a commonplace. We freely and frankly admit it; but it means far more than that. It means that we must be subject to the cross in **the realm of the mind.** I venture to believe that the physical sufferings of Jesus were the least that He endured. He "tasted death for every man"; and the whole man—spirit, soul, and body—entered into that terrible experience. It was not His body alone that suffered: it was His mind. All the powers of the undarkened mind were subject to the crucifying power of the cross. It means that I lay down my reason; that I be willing to go into the outer darkness where I cannot see, where I cannot understand. You remember how he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There was that one dark moment in which Jesus asked, "Why?" It means also the submission of the will to the cross of

Christ. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." And the will of Jesus went down into death. He was crucified also in the realm of the affections. No one ever loved as Jesus loved. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Have you ever stopped to ask why Peter was permitted to deny Him? It was necessary to the fulness of His sacrifice: it was necessary that His love should be crucified. He looked on Peter! Have you ever inquired why all the disciples forsook Him and fled, and left Him alone on that dark day? It was just for this reason, that the whole man might submit to the cross. When Jesus "bowed His head, and gave up the ghost," not only His body, but His reason, His judgment, His imagination, His memory, His will, His affections—the whole mind, as well as the body, entered into the horror of that death.

Well, sometimes it is necessary that we should pass through experiences like that—necessary for us to say "Why?" necessary for us to look upon our Peters; sometimes necessary for us to stand in amazement at the powers of the rulers of this world's darkness. But somehow or another we must "fall into the ground and die."

Perhaps some of us have been most severely tried in the realm of the spirit. We have prayed for things; and they seem to be denied us. We have prayed for some great spiritual blessing, and just as it came to our hands God has demanded that we surrender it. He calls for the surrender of the legitimate, of the holy, of that which is His best gift, that all may go down into the dust of death.

The outstanding example of that principle is the story of Abraham. "Abraham believed God." Perhaps for twenty years or more he kept on believing God, and waiting for the fulfilment of the promise; until at last the laughing Isaac was born. And now the day is recalled to him when he was told to view the stars, and he was promised that as the stars were for multitude so should his seed be, and "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" because he had obeyed God's voice. And then there came the day years after, when God came to him and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." He did not come to Abraham in that late day and say, "Abraham surrender your sin; abandon your evil courses; walk in the way of My commandment." Not that!—but He came to him and said, "Give back to Me the choicest gift I have ever bestowed; surrender to Me all your holiest ambitions; lay in the dust of death your holiest dream—give Me back Isaac; offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I tell thee of." But Abraham might have said, "I thought, O Lord, that this was Thy way of bringing the blessing. Didst thou not say, In Isaac shall thy seed be called? Does not the covenant, do not all the blessings of the covenant, does not everything that thou hast said to me depend upon this? And now Thou dost come and lay Thine hand upon my holiest, and ask me to put him into the grave?" And when they came to the place at last, Abraham laid his son on the altar, and he stretched forth his hand to slay his son, when a voice said, "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." For in the moment that "Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son," in that moment he drove it to his own heart, and he was crucified: he fell into the ground and died. And God said, "That is the way, Abraham. I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore."

Do you not see it my dear friends? How is the revival to come? Never mind how it is to come! "But I have my Isaac. I began to see it come; and now the Lord says that even that must be surrendered." Yes, crucified in the whole man,—spirit, soul or mind, and body—all' falling into the ground to die. Are you ready for it? Is any spiritual revival to come to this old world by means of organization? Are the fields to be golden in the autumn sun by putting grains of wheat under a microscope, or displaying them in a seedsman's window? Is that how the harvest comes? O no, they must "fall into the ground and die." And as you and I "fall into the ground and die," we may expect the blessing to come. Thus only by death of the whole man can we become abundantly fruitful.

Then there is another aspect to it: it means death to the world. In that sense we must needs "fall into the ground and die." The record we have of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is after all only a symbolic and typical representation of the temptation that pursued Him all through life. There it is set forth in detail; and if you examine it you will find that Jesus was tempted in the realm of the spirit, in the realm of the mind, and in the realm of the body; the whole man was subject to the tempter's assault. After that the devil left Him for a little season; but he came back again. And those temptations were repeated all through life. The tempter showed Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." And I believe he was always showing Him the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; but Jesus accomplished His mission by shutting His eyes to that glory, by refusing to be turned aside from His main purpose, to die for the sins of the world. We have to learn to surrender the world's favour—to die even to the good opinion of men. I am not now justifying that cynical attitude which says, "It does not make any difference what anybody thinks of me"—not that; but if we are really to live unto God, we must be delivered from the pressure of human opinion, from the tyranny of the fear of man which bringeth a snare. "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Someone said last evening in the prayer-meeting that popularity, a passion for the world's applause, is the common god of the hour; and I believe it is true. You will see men who would scorn to do an unworthy thing on certain planes; but who yet seem willing to surrender almost everything in life, if only they may win the applause of the world; that they may be judged great according to worldly standards. They are ready to make any sacrifice to win the world's applause. Jesus said a profound thing—and I would have you ponder it, not only as I quote it to you; but let it linger in our minds that we may think of it—"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" Faith—the faith that results in obedience; the faith that expresses itself in an obedient walk, following "the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,"—that faith is an impossibility to any man until he has learned to subordinate every human opinion to the answer of a good conscience, to the assurance in his soul that though the world burn, and the heavens fall, he is ready to do what God would have him do. Never until God is enthroned, until a man would rather be right with God than have all that the world can give; never until he is brought there can he really believe and say, "I trust Thee. I will go down into the grave if need be; but I will go with the favour of God."

O my brethren, we shall have a revival when we get there! How concerned people are when they see their names in the newspapers! Really I have come to the position where I should begin to be afraid of myself if I ever found certain newspapers saying anything good about me. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" That may be one of the things which we have not to

fear; but it is really true that we must die to the world's favour, if we are to have full liberty to believe and obey God.

This principle is as applicable to a church as to its members.

God does not accomplish His great miracles of grace in those places where, according to worldly standards, the great assemble. I heard recently of somebody expressing wonder that certain people should go to Jarvis Street Church, because they were reputed to be intelligent. When they "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled." You may not really be as unlearned and ignorant as some people say you are, you know; but you must not fear the reputation. If only people will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, we need care for nothing else. That is the test a minister needs to have—not, what college was he graduated from; not, how does he stand with all the societies in town; not, what do the newspapers say of him—the outstanding characteristics of the minister of Jesus Christ should be that people who see and hear him should feel that he has "been with Jesus." That ought to be the outstanding characteristic of a Christian church, that in every expression of her life she manifests the Spirit of Jesus. Therefore, let us pray for grace to die to the favour of the world, and to become insensible to its frowns, to reckon ourselves, individually and collectively, to be dead to these things and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are people who make light of a ministry which seeks in any way to put the fear of God into the hearts of men; and yet "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." We have not begun to be educated; we have not learned even the alphabet of wisdom, until we have learned the fear of the Lord. Men boast that they are not afraid of God; that they are not afraid of the Almighty—not afraid of Him "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;" to whom the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers—and yet they will look to the north, south, east, and west, to see what their neighbors think of them before they will dare to move. Afraid of man whose breath is in his nostrils; afraid of the influences which men may exert! Have we not seen it? Only last Wednesday there were many men who, if they had allowed their souls to speak, their consciences to utter themselves, would have arisen as a great army in defense of the truth, if they had not been afraid of the power of a human machine. May God deliver us from the fear of man, and make us utterly insensible to his frown. Let us die to it! Thank God when they "cast out your name as evil." You say, "That belongs to the distant past. It ought not to be necessary to carry those principles into the Christian life in this day." Never was it more necessary than to-day. "The friendship of the world," my brethren, if that Bible is true—and if it is not, somebody else may come here and preach, because it is folly for me to talk to you: I would not impugn your intelligence by suggesting that there could be any profit in your coming to hear what I have to say about the things unseen and eternal,—I have nothing to say beyond what I find written in that Book in principle—and if that Book be true, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." Think of the standards applied to Christian movements to-day, and to Christian churches, and to Christian ministers! "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Is the mark of the world's hatred upon you?

But we must be careless too of the world's rewards—indifferent to its favour, to its frown, to the rewards it has to bestow. "It is a small thing," said Paul, "that I should be judged of man's judgment, or of man's day."

General Booth said when he was here—I did not hear him say it, but I saw it reported in the papers—"My officers are high salaried men, but payment is deferred." Though the word should never say, "Well done," we must go on with our work.

II. And then there is the promise of abundant fruitfulness. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." And yet in the kernel of wheat there is a great life-force which can multiply itself and fill all the storehouses of Egypt, or cover the plains of the Great West with golden grain, and load all the ships that cross the sea: given its opportunity, that single grain of wheat has that potentiality in it; but it will never be realized until it "falls into the ground"—until a process of dissolution, of disintegration sets in; and in that process the latent force within will find its liberty, and begin to work until by and by it will come up through the hard clod; first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear.

It is so with you and with me! It is only when thus we die—our own reason submissive to His; our imagination subject to the realities of His promise; our wills, our affections—everything in a soft and plastic state responsive to the Spirit of God, then He can work, leading the man to do the will of the Holy One.

"It abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Does that mean that I shall win many souls to Christ? Perhaps, by and by; but while there is a sense in which conversions are the fruits of the Spirit, they are not what is called "the fruit of the Spirit." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (or self-control)." In a word, when we "fall into the ground and die," the life that is within us, which is the life of Christ, finds opportunity to express itself. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" "Christ in you, the hope of glory." He could not be hid when He came into the house. The people found it out somehow. And when He comes into the heart of a man; when the man dies to self, and to the world, the Christ that is in him cannot be hid.

The principles of righteousness and truth may seek recognition at the hands of great religious bodies; and there are powers which can operate so as apparently to defeat them; but remember, when those who espouse those principles fall into the ground and die, there is no power which can prevent their resurrection. There is no power in earth or in hell that can prevent the Christ that is within a man from shining out from him, and that is the thing that counts. If we thus die, that death will bear fruit first of all in character, in Christ-like character, in Christ-like spirit. They may call you names: "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub; how much more shall they call them of his household?" Do not worry about things like this: only let the fruit appear.

And then there will be that other fruit, objective to ourselves: we shall be God's instruments in the salvation of others. For the life that is in us will flow through us and touch and quicken and beautify other lives than our own. The carnal mind—the mind that is unawakened by the Spirit of God; the mind that has not seen the veil drawn and looked into the glory—that mind may be dazzled with worldly splendour; but the truly awakened soul becomes possessed of a passion for reality, for truth, for the real thing—not only for the corn of wheat, or the dry unlovely bulb, in the seedsman's window, but for the golden harvest-fields, and for the growing and fragrant flower in the garden of the Lord. And if we "fall into the ground and die," and spring up again in beauty, and in fruitfulness, being ourselves living, pulsating, exemplifications of the truth of the resurrection, people will say, "I know that Jesus is risen from the dead; I saw Him to-day; I talked with Him to-day; He touched me to-day; I breathed

the atmosphere of Heaven to-day." Where did you find it? In the company of a man in whose heart Jesus dwells by faith, and in whose life the fruit of the Spirit is unmistakably to be found.

And then we shall not be without our reward: I revert to it again—"High salaried men—deferred payment." They saw Him heal the sick; they saw Him feed the multitude; they saw Him raise the dead; they heard the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth; they felt the charm of His personality—the magnetic power which everywhere He exercised upon the sons of men; they came and heard Him gladly. And some of His disciples caught a gleam of the glory, but did not understand. They saw that He would some day wear a crown!

"Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. . . . Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask." And few of us know what we ask when we ask for promotion in the kingdom of God. I repeat it. You bow your knee and say, "Lord let me grow up into Christ; make me a channel of blessing; make me an instrument of power if it be for Thy glory." And it is a perfectly legitimate thing that we should desire it; for Paul spoke of "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give," over and above the free gift of eternal life. There are rewards awaiting the faithful; and it is perfectly legitimate that we should desire to possess them; perfectly legitimate that we should desire a place of honour in the kingdom that is to come. But when we ask for it, our Lord replies, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, 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."

There are rewards; but the way that leads to them is the way of the bitter cup, the way of the baptism of darkness and blood. Are we able to drink of His cup? Are we able to be baptized with His baptism? Are we as a church ready this morning to say, "O Lord, we will put Thee first once again; we will yield ourselves to Thee; we will together 'fall into the ground and die;' and henceforth live for this one thing only, that God the Holy Ghost may work in us, and through us express His gracious power to the world."

As He does that, we shall become like unto Joseph—a fruitful vine "whose branches run over the wall." Have you ever seen in the Old Country a great mansion, with a high wall all around it, and doors locked fast? There behind the wall is a tree, a fruitful tree, and its branches hang over the wall, just bowed down with luscious fruit. And never a boy passes there but he says, "I wish I lived on the other side of the wall. I wish I had the key to unlock that gate."

And as we thus, by His grace, bear fruit to the glory of God, by the illumination and constraint of His Spirit, people will come that they may pass within that gate, and find the Saviour we love.

LAST SUNDAY EVENING.

The Pastor gave the hand of fellowship to twelve at the Communion Service. At the public service preceding, there was a great congregation, baptism was administered; and in response to the invitation at the close of the sermon four rose bravely before the whole congregation; one of these was already a Christian; the other three we have reason to believe come into the light. The day was a day of great grace to all

CHURCH NEWS.

Thursday, November 2nd, Madame Dorcas returned from her vacation. Her spirit is as generous as ever and her fingers are just as nimble. The Dorcas Tea was very largely attended, and was provided by the young ladies. The Pastor has recently been overwhelmed with kindness. The preceding Thursday evening and Sunday morning resolutions of loving appreciation of the Pastor's ministry had been passed. But the young people, having learned the Pastor had had a birthday November 1st, turned the Dorcas Tea into a birthday party and presented Mrs. Shields with a large bouquet of American Beauty roses, and the Pastor with a handsome dressing-case. At this rate the Pastor will never get out of debt to his loving flock. He tries to say, "Thank you," but words have almost no value in such cases. These words are written to express the Pastor's conviction that there never was a more loving and loyal church and congregation than Jarvis Street. What swarms of young people God is giving us! And all of them finding their chief joy in a life of prayer and praise!

The Pulpit's Printed Ministry. The reception accorded The Gospel Witness has surpassed our greatest expectations. The work was undertaken as a venture of faith. There were some who thought people would not read sermons. We are glad, however, to report that we are hearing of blessing attending the printed sermon on all hands. One pastor kindly writes, "I could not do without it." Many others tell of finding inspiration in The Witness pages. Every week subscriptions and contributions continue to come in. We venture to ask every reader of The Witness to co-operate with us in extending its ministry. Ask your friends to subscribe for the paper, or send us contributions for The Witness Fund. If you cannot do this, pass your own copy of the paper around—let each issue be read by as many as possible. Then, too, we should be glad always to hear of anyone, shut-ins or others, who have been helped. Of course we should especially like to hear of conversions. Above all, we beg our readers to continue to pray that the right message may be printed, and that the Holy Spirit may use every one to glorify the Lord Jesus.

"When they had prayed"—? Last Saturday (Nov. 4th) the tide of blessing was at the flood. The room was crowded and prayer continued until 10.30, and after the meeting was dismissed a large number still remained and prayer continued till far past midnight. We were sure of a victorious day: on Sunday. Now let us pray not for fives or tens, but for hundreds to be converted.

The Lord's Treasury. It is our privilege to give all we can to its support, and to pray God to keep it full. Coal, and insurance, **The Gospel Witness**, and other things require a good deal of money. Let us trust God for the supply of our material means, but let us pray for it.

The Junior Service continues to grow in interest and attendance. This is a real ministry to young people. Give it a place in your prayer, and tell all young people about it. The subject next Wednesday will be "Joseph and His Brethren."

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The Church Calendar

For the week beginning Sunday, November 12th, 1922.

Sunday

- 10.00—**Prayer Service** in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.
11.00—**Public Worship.** The Pastor will preach.
3.00—**The Bible School** will meet.
6.00—**Prayer Meeting** in Church Parlor.
7.00—**Public Worship**—The Pastor will preach. Baptism will be administered.
8.30—**Communion** and Reception of Members.
Monday—8.00—Young Ladies' Mission Circle will meet; election of officers.
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday—8.00—Prayer Service.
Wednesday—Junior Mid-Week Service—7.15.

The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School, 3.00; Evangelistic Service, conducted by Mr. W. L. McKay, 7.00.
Wednesday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting. Friday, 7.15, Junior Service.