

# The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

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

T. T. SHIELDS  
PASTOR AND EDITOR

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE BETTER HOPE.

A Sermon by the Pastor

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday morning, Dec. 31st, 1922, on the occasion of the unveiling of a Memorial Tablet in memory of forty-one men who gave their lives in the Great War.

(Stenographically reported.)

"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."—Hebrews 7: 19.

WE have assembled this morning, as always in this place, I trust, primarily, for the worship of God. For this purpose this house was erected; and to this holy service it was long ago solemnly dedicated. But we have gathered also to honour the memory of men who gave their lives in a righteous cause. Over four years have passed since the guns in the Great War were silenced; so that we are able now to view that great tragedy in at least a short perspective. Although the war is over the world is still without peace; and amid the perplexities of the hour, men naturally turn their thought again toward that great conflict to ask why it came about; and whether after all it was not a stupendous mistake. In the darkness of the moment there may be a disposition to question even the wisdom and righteousness of that cause of self-defense, in which the nations engaged to prevent the aggressions of Germany; while those who paid so great a price in blood cannot be blamed for asking what their great sacrifice accomplished.

As we look out upon the world to-day, one cannot help inquiring whether it is any better for its baptism of blood. I suppose there are few of us who did not hope for better things to result from so great a sacrifice. Not that those who really believed this Book were ever persuaded that it was to be the last war, and that by means of the sword the millennium was to be introduced; but still we sincerely hoped that, as a result of the unparalleled effort made by the forces of righteousness, this dark world would have been moved at least a little nearer to the sun. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the disappointment and disillusionment which have followed in the wake of war, there should be on

the part of many sincere Christians a renewed emphasis upon that view which assumes that a Christian has no duty whatever to seek to improve the existing social order; but that inasmuch as "the whole world lieth in wickedness," and is under condemnation, the very best a Christian man or woman can do is to get out of it as quickly as possible, just as Lot escaped from Sodom before the fire fell.

It is well, therefore, that we should bring these principles once again into the light of God's word, that we may reassure ourselves; and that, as we do honour this morning to the memory of those who heroically laid down their lives in this great cause, we may be able to see more clearly how that cause in which they fought was and is still related to the great principles for which the Christian Church stands.

As I read this text, some of you, perhaps, would be inclined to inquire, what possible bearing such a text can have upon such a service as this? "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

I. I begin with this simple observation, that **In the divine economy there is a place for the exercise of the principle of restraint**, for the principle of law, for compulsion: even though it fails fully to accomplish the ideal, yet it has a place in the divine plan and purpose. The law did not begin at Sinai: considered as an ethical code, as a standard of righteousness objective to ourselves, the law antedated creation. It was a transcript of the divine nature; its principles were wrought into the very nature and constitution of things. The difference between good and evil,—that which is essentially, inherently good, and that which is essentially evil,—the difference between these two never did, and never can, depend upon any arbitrary rule, by whomsoever it may be enacted or promulgated: that difference consists in the relation of the thing of God, Who is Himself the only Absolute Good; Who is always the Norm, the Standard of judgment. And the law differentiated between good and evil. It set up in the world a standard of righteousness, a standard that obtains to-day, as surely as it did when given on Sinai; because, as I have said, it antedated Sinai: it belongs to the nature of things.

Sinai was a revelation, and not an enactment. The law given on Sinai was a proclamation of immemorial decrees: it was given for the establishment of a theocratic state,—a state of which God Himself was the recognized Head; and it was given in order that that state might be to all generations an example and a pattern. Potentially the state was established when Noah and his family emerged from the ark, and were divinely commissioned to re-populate the earth. The state was founded upon this cardinal law,—that is to say, upon a law upon which, in the nature of the case, all other laws hinge: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Upon that principle,—the preservation, the sanctity of human life,—the whole state is founded; but a complete pattern of the state was given to us with the establishment of the Jewish theocracy, when laws were committed to human hands for enforcement; and when it was recognized that, in order to the on-going of the race, and the preservation of a sinfully-disposed people from utter destruction, men must, when necessary, forcibly be restrained from an excess of evil.

The text does not speak merely of the ceremonial law: it is speaking of that which lay behind it; of those great and immutable principles, which abide forever. For moral law is just as plainly written upon the consciences of men to-day as it ever was; and the principle of forcible restraint is still necessary to the preservation of society.

I say this in order that we may save ourselves from extravagance. I trust all recognize that "the law made nothing perfect;" that by that principle nothing can ever be made perfect. You cannot make a man true, nor honest, nor sober, nor peaceable, by law; but you can bring the untruthful man to judgment; you can punish the man for his dishonesty, for his insobriety, for his quarrelsomeness; and by the fear of punishment, or by the act of punishment itself, you can restrain wrong doers from further overt acts. But when you have done your best, he is still only a liar, or a thief, or a murderer,—albeit, now in chains: he remains the same at heart.

Since "the law made nothing perfect," you cannot purge a nation by the principle of law; by the use of the sword; but you can restrain its predatory disposition; you can forbid its preying upon its neighbours.

And just as the principle of law is necessary in the community and in the state, so it is necessary in international relationships. Pacifism has no abiding foundation, in either reason or revelation. It is a negative aspect of anarchy:

in the nature of the case it is to that it leads. And he has not learned to think far beneath the surface of things, who speaks of the sword as an obsolete weapon! Though the form may change, this world will need weapons of war of some sort so long as human nature remains what it is. And that will be until that great day when Jesus shall come to "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

There is a pessimistic obtuseness which disposes men to say, "Because we failed to cleanse the world of all these things, we might better never have tried." Not at all. "The law made nothing perfect;" but it was never intended to make anything perfect. The law "was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come;" the two principles are set in contrast there as in the text this morning. The law was not designed to make better, but to preserve from growing worse; it was a divine preventive to preserve the world unto a better hope.

There is, therefore, a place for palliatives in the divine economy. The physician may say, "I cannot cure the patient: I have no remedy which can set the man upon his feet again, and make him a perfectly whole man; but I will do the best I can to make his life endurable while it lasts." Do you say, he is wrong? Somebody says, "There are certain human measures designed for the betterment of society; but if they do not, and cannot, produce an ideal condition, these things might better not be tried at all." Another says, "I saw somebody drunk last night; and, therefore, I am no longer in favour of prohibition." Well, if there was even one man drunk, I am sorry; but I would rather have one than a thousand, wouldn't you? "The law made nothing perfect;" that is the principle. It is at best an external regulator of human life, but while it leaves human nature unchanged it does make life possible for others. We shall be wise, therefore, to exercise ourselves faithfully in that direction, so long as we keep clearly in view that the principle of law is at best only a schoolmaster, impotent to produce perfection, serving as salt to retard the process of decay, but having no power to give the "better hope" of life from the dead.

II. Thus we are forced to acknowledge the **inadequacy of all human efforts directed toward the redemption of a sinful world.** The law did not effect its redemption. God knew that in the nature of the case it could not do it. "The law was our schoolmaster—our pedagogue—to bring us unto Christ." Every expression of the law is divinely designed to teach the same lesson: every failure of the principle of law cries aloud to every enlightened understanding to bring to men the only remedy—the "better hope"; to point the way—the only way, to true success. Never in all the history of the world was a more stupendous effort made with the purpose of making this world a better place to live in; never was a greater price paid for the world's liberty; never, since Cain slew his brother Abel, has so much blood flowed, in so short a time, in all the history of the human race; never were such vast armies of men and women, such an aggregation of nations, welded together by a common fear, inspired by a common purpose;—never in all the world's history did so many people of all nationalities devotedly concentrate all their energies upon one end, as in the late war. What a price of blood, what tremendous sacrifices; and in that concentrated effort, what an investment of intellect, of heart, of physical energy, was made! What human virtues were revealed! As we read the stories of the war, our hearts are touched; our eyes are moistened still, as we read of the heroic service rendered by some of these men; and we cannot help asking if, after all, human nature was not a little bit better than some of us supposed it to be.

But look at the reaction! Look at the world after all the price has been paid! Did ever a condition so near to universal chaos obtain before? What is the meaning of it? When the best of earth's nations, and when the best of the best of the nations, when the highest product of human nature concentrated its all in an effort to redeem this world, over fields of blood it is written, that there is no human power adequate to the task. "The law made nothing perfect." We honour the men who so splendidly served,—not only those who laid down their lives, but those who jeopardized their lives:—for let us never forget that we owe as great a debt to the living as to the dead,—to the millions who voluntarily faced death. While some did not return, they all, who went, were willing to pay the same price; otherwise they never had gone. By the inscrutable decrees of divine Providence, some were never permitted to come back again; but those who returned rendered the same devoted service as those who died. Yet even

their splendid service did not bring in the millennium. We wish it had. Some of us, of course, never believed it would; but I think there were few of us who did not hope, as I said at the outset, for something better than has resulted.

I have said this, this morning, in order that we may not be guilty of the folly of turning aside from that which is divinely ordered; because we have been unable by its use to bring in the measure of perfection for which we hoped. These men, most of whom were avowed Christians, recognized that they owed a certain obligation to the State; and they discharged that duty to the utmost. And we owe to the State the same duty. There must always be the machinery of law, while the state endures; and we are under obligation to support it. "The powers that be are ordained of God;" and he who wields the sword in the cause of justice is the minister of God, according to the teaching of Scripture. An army may be like a burglar in pursuit of his spoil; or like a policeman on his beat. A revolver may be good or evil, as it is found in the hand of a burglar, or in the hand of the policeman who represents law and order. I hate war. I have no love for a policeman's revolver or his baton. I do not like to see officers of the law, as I have seen them in certain cities directing the traffic with a truncheon. I prefer the white-gloved hand politely raised; with a law that is inexorable behind it. There is a place for diplomacy in international relations as in the ordinary social relations of life. We all approve the British effort to talk the Turks into a reasonable frame of mind; but I think nothing could be wiser under present circumstances than for a British squadron to sail full speed for Constantinople, as was yesterday announced. And it will probably give effect to the white-gloved finger. It will politely say to the Turks, "The same power that has broken other tyrants will break you, if you do not behave yourselves."

There will be other wars before the Lord Jesus comes. Human nature is basically the same. We shall, perhaps, have other burdens to bear, other war services to render; but when we have done the very best we can, we shall not have advanced beyond this: "The law made nothing perfect—it never can make anything perfect—but the bringing in of a better hope did." The truth is, that all the rivers of human blood that ever flowed, or can flow, can never cleanse this sin-cursed earth. This inspired writer saw another Hero,—some One else going forth to the battle; Another pouring out His life's blood; and he said, "Only He can purify the world." The law can never do it; but the abounding grace of God can and will. All the armies of the world will never be able to cleanse it of its defilement; but He Who came to die in the room and stead of sinners, shall some day see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, not alone in the salvation of individuals, but in the redemption of the whole creation.

Shall we learn the lesson of the great war?—not that we should be indifferent to the responsibilities and privileges of our earthly citizenship; not that we should say to-morrow, "I am too busy to exercise my franchise;" not that we should ever be content to do less than our utmost to promote righteousness in the earth; but the war has taught us that the utmost human effort makes nothing perfect; and all the wrecks of history cry aloud to us to direct men to "the better hope."

And if these men could speak this morning they would say "Amen" to the principle I have been discussing. They were all fine men; but there were some of them of whom I think more particularly to-day,—because I knew them more intimately than others,—for some of the names appearing on this Tablet were members of the church: while others were connected with the congregation, or attended the Sunday School, or the Parliament Street Branch. But none of them were perfected by their own sacrifice. I would not this morning preach that Mohammedan doctrine that death on the battle-field is a passport to glory, for the simple reason that I do not believe it. Human blood can never cleanse this world, nor can a man's own sin be purged by his own blood.

I heard during the war of a certain minister who had two sons. One was an avowed Christian, the other was not. They both went to the war; and the father and mother were greatly concerned about the one who had never made any profession of religion. He had been carefully trained: he had been taught the great truths of the gospel: he had been pointed, again and again, to the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinner's only Saviour; but he

went away across the sea and into the battle line without having made any profession of faith, and without giving his parents any assurance that he had given himself to Christ. One day they received a letter from him. He was in the artillery; and in his letter he said that his battery was wading a stream in France, taking their guns across, when the enemy got the range, opened fire, and the shells fell thick and fast about them. They thought it was the end of all things for them. There seemed to be no possibility of escape; but by some means or another they came through the furnace. As soon as that young man got to a place where he could write a letter, he sat down and told his father that when death seemed but a moment away, all that he had ever been taught came before him in a flash. He saw in an instant the way of salvation. Instantaneously he looked to Jesus and was saved. He said he never hoped at that moment that he would live to tell of his salvation; but the first thing he did was to write home to say that in that last moment, as he thought, by a look, he was saved.

That is a better hope than that anybody should ever be saved by anything that he himself had done. Personally I have never yet met a soldier who believed that doctrine of salvation through sacrifice in battle. There may be a few; but I have never met a man, who had had experience of actual war, who believed or taught that men were saved by the sacrifice of their own lives on the battle-field. But whether or no, the Scripture unmistakably teaches that faith in the Crucified is the "better hope."

Many of these men boldly confessed their faith. I shall read all the names; but I am sure that no one will object to my specially mentioning a few who were active in the life of this church.

I remember one Sunday night in a public service, as I gave an invitation, to enlist Reginald Boyce, President of the Young Men's class, stood in that back seat to the left in the second block. He was one of seven others who went home that night in khaki. We knew him as a devoted Christian: we knew him as one who loved the Lord Jesus, and who bore faithful witness for Christ wherever he went. But he was no more a Christian, between the walls of this building, than when in the trenches in France. He was the same true, stalwart witness for the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere.

Major Collin won his majority on the field. It was my joy to bury him in the waters of baptism in this baptistery. We hear regularly from his widow in Cardiff, Wales. I remember going out to see her in the west end of the city, and taking a photograph of his baby boy, and, taking it with me, delivered it to Major Collin in England. He was a splendid man.

One evening in London I had Mrs. Boyce, before her husband was killed, and a group of men with me at dinner; and Victor Fradley came in on his crutches. He had lost one leg; and he told us, as we sat around the table, of how he had linked his arm in his brother Will's, and how they had gone together for a long walk shortly before Will was killed, and he said, "We talked about Jesus all the time." The very night that Victor was wounded, Will was killed. "Jim" McKinley was one of the truest of men. A quiet, earnest, consistent Christian, whose life was a clear testimony for Christ.

And our dear young friend, Carey Pinnock: I remember his spending a day with me in camp here in Canada; and a year later he came down from the north of England specially to spend a week-end with me in London. He spent part of Saturday, and Sunday, and Monday. He was a quiet but true witness for the Lord Jesus. I could speak of many others, such as Melville Lobb, who enlisted the first month of the war. He was a true soldier of Jesus Christ. George Pillow was Ass't-Treas. of this church. He came to me one day and confidentially told me that he had made all his plans, and that on a certain day, two or three months in advance, he was going to enlist. Later I met him here in the office; and he told me that the date on which he intended to enlist would be the next week. Having finished his task he enlisted; and in less than twelve months from the time he enlisted, if my memory does not fail, he had laid down his life. We heard the story of how he was wounded; they were going to carry him out; but he said he would walk. And in his walking that others might be carried, he laid down his life. He never reached the dressing-station; and was first reported missing, but later reported killed.

What would these men say if they were here to-day? I know what they would say: every one of the men I have named, and many others, would

say, "Pastor, tell them of the better hope; tell them of Jesus and His love; tell them of the blood that was far more valuable than mine; tell them of the only way by which we can draw nigh to God." And I think, my friends, we cannot honour the memory of these splendid men more worthily than by recognizing that, in spite of all the heroic sacrifices they made—and they were representative of millions of others—"the law—the principle of law—made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did." And if we are wise we shall make that "bringing in of a better hope" the supreme business of our lives. To that, let us consecrate ourselves afresh, with new devotion.

There are three columns of names upon the Tablet: the centre column represents the names of men who were in actual membership in this church; the right and left columns, as you will see are the names of the young men who were in attendance at the Sunday School, or at the congregation, or at our Oakham House School, or at the Branch on Parliament Street.

We have invited the Central Church to appoint a representative to share with us the honour of erecting and unveiling this Tablet, to the memory of the men who died for us; and they have responded to that invitation. They have also met their share of the expense of the Tablet; and they have appointed Mr. Howard Wellington as their representative, to act in behalf of the Central Church to-day in unveiling the Tablet. We have asked Mrs. Owens, the mother of John Owens, whose name is on the Tablet, to act for Jarvis Street. And Mrs. Owens is representative of parents and others some of whom are here this morning whom we all honour for the sacrifices they have made.

I shall now read the names which are on the Tablet, giving the manner and date of death: H. R. Baber, killed in action Oct. 1918; Sergt.-Major Blake, killed in action May 1917; Pte. R. Broomhead, killed in action; Lieut. E. Davison, D.C.M., killed in action May 1917; Pte. Sid. Dudley, killed in action July 1917; Seaman Alfred Garwood, drowned; Corp. Frank Hunt, died Oct. 1917, at Grimsby, Ont.; Pte. W. McCleary, killed in action; Pte. Wm. John McLean, killed in action Sept. 1916; Pte. John Owens, killed in action April 1917; Pte. Wm. Pendred, died in hospital June 1916; Pte. Hawley Ross, killed in France April 1916; Seaman George Taylor, drowned; L/Corp. Reginald Boyce, died October 1918; Major. Geo. R. Collin, killed in action Sept. 1918; Pte. Herbert Ferris, killed in action April 1915; Pte. Will. Fradley, killed in action Oct. 1916; Pte. Archie Gillespie, killed in action Sept. 1918; Lieut. Edmund A. Gunn, died in France Feb. 1919; L/Corp. Melville Lobb, reported missing April 1916; Sergt. James McKinley, killed in action; L/Corp. Geo. F. Pillow, reported missing November 1916—since reported killed; Lieut. Carey Pinnock, killed while on duty in England; Lieut. Roy Riggs, killed in action July 1917; Gunner Dante Runcini, killed Sept. 1918; Lieut. Evan Ryrie, killed in action July 1917; Lieut. Harry L. Smith, died in France Feb. 1919; Pte. Geo. Wesley, died in hospital Oct. 1918; L/Corp. R. Bennett, killed in action April 1915; Pte. Louis Blake, killed in action; Pte. Douglas Clark, killed in action April 1917; Bandsman J. J. Dowling, killed August 1917; Corp. J. F. Garbutt, killed in action May 1916; Pte. Wm. Gordon, killed in action April 1916; Pte. G. Edgar Moore, killed Sept. 1917; Pte. C. C. McIntosh, killed in action July 1916; Pte. Sydney Osborne, killed August 1918; Pte. Leonard Parsons, killed in action Oct. 1917; Nurse Gean Rogers, died Nov. 1918; Corp. L. T. Skilton, killed in action August 1917; Pte. S. Walpole, killed in action.

At this point the Pastor called upon Mrs. John Owens and Mr. Howard Wellington to come forward. At the unveiling of the Tablet the congregation rose: after a few moments of silence the congregation united in singing, "For all the saints who from their labours rest;" following which Mr. Penny played the "Dead March in Saul;" and the service concluded with the benediction.

#### NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**Opening of Mount Pleasant Road Baptist Church.**—This church, formerly known as the Davisville Church, will dedicate their new building, Sunday, Jan. 7th. The preacher for the occasion will be Dr. Curtis Lee Laws, the great Editor of the "Watchman Examiner," New York,—perhaps the greatest Baptist paper in the world. Dr. Laws will preach at 11 and 7; and will



The Tablet shown above is erected on the east wall of the church, on the south side of the pulpit. It is permanently draped above with flags, and a shaded electric light floods the Tablet with light.

address an open session of the Sunday School at 3 o'clock; and will speak also at 3 o'clock and 8 o'clock Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The church is situated on the corner of Mount Pleasant Rd. and Belsize Drive. Members of Jarvis Street are heartily invited to all these services. Take Yonge St. cars and transfer to a trolley bus which stops at the church door.

**Sunday School Festival.** The second installment will be held Wednesday at 8 o'clock. The programme will consist of recitations and songs by the scholars, and the distribution of Rewards for attendance during the year. The Christmas Tree last Wednesday, for an occasion of pure joy, surpassed everything we have ever seen in Jarvis St. The Hall was packed with happy children and their parents.

**The New Year's Morning Meeting:** The last hours of 1922 and the beginning of 1923 will long be remembered in Jarvis Street Church. The usual after-meeting Sunday evening extended beyond midnight, a large number remaining throughout the entire evening; while many others came in at 11 o'clock. The New Year's morning meeting, beginning at 10.30, was very largely attended, and continued at white heat until 12.30. Frequently three and four were on their feet at once awaiting an opportunity to express their gratitude to God for the mercies of the year. The Pastor gave as the motto for the year the words, "Not I, but Christ." (Gal. 2:20).

**Sunday Morning, Jan. 7th.:** The Communion Service will be held at the close of the regular morning service, beginning not later than 12.15. A number of new members will receive the hand of fellowship; and it is hoped that every member resident in the City will endeavour to be present. Members are reminded of the offering for the poor taken at this service. We are privileged to have in our membership a number of the Lord's aged and infirm saints, whom it is a joy to help for His sake. We hope that every member will come prepared with a generous offering for our Communion Fund on Sunday morning.

**Last Year and This.** During the year over 100 were baptized, the total additions numbering over 180. Many others have been converted, and at our 156 prayer meetings held on week evenings during the twelve months, and at our 52 great Sunday evening aftermeetings, hundreds have testified to having received such blessing as marks a distinct advance in Christian experience. For two years now our three weekly prayer meetings have continued with ever-deepening interest. Financially we have been able to meet our obligations without undue strain. This is No. 34 of **The Gospel Witness** and every week strengthens our conviction that this venture is of God. Our Witness Fund requires strengthening, and we invite those who receive blessing from these pages to give this Fund a place in their prayers that we may have no lack.

We go forward into the New Year with a prayer that the delightful unity of the spirit which has characterized our church life for 1922 may be intensified, and that our united ministry may be more abundantly fruitful in conversions and the upbuilding of the saints.

## The Church Calendar

**Sunday.** For the week beginning Sunday, Jan. 7th, 1923.

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

11.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

12.15—Communion Service.

3.00—The Bible School will meet. The Pastor will speak.

6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.

7.00—Public Worship—The Pastor will preach. Baptism will be administered.

Monday, 8.00, Young Ladies' Guild.

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday—8.00—Prayer Service.

Wednesday—S.S. Festival.

**The Parliament Street Branch, 250 Parliament Street. Sunday:** Bible School, 3.00.

Evangelistic Service, conducted by W. L. McKay.

Wednesday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting. Friday, 7.15, Junior Service.

**Young Women's Mission Circle** will meet Monday evening at 8, when Mrs. C. C. Holman will give a lantern lecture on Home Missions. All young ladies of the congregation invited.