

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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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday evening, Jan. 28th, 1923.

(Stenographically reported.)

"The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Galatians 6: 14.

The text contains what ought to be every minister's subject as often as he preaches. Paul declares that when he went to Corinth he "determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." I have spoken of the cross of Christ, from this pulpit, I suppose, hundreds of times, and I expect to continue preaching on the same subject to the end.

I. I invite you to look this evening to the Cross as to A DIVINE REVELATION. Our Lord Jesus came into this world to declare God: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He came to gather up in Himself every word that God had spoken. The testimony of God in nature, through the prophets, and in the written word, is all summarized and completed by the testimony of God in His Son. And the cross of Christ was designed to be a revelation of truth, an unveiling of that which is not discoverable by the natural man.

First of all, it shows *what sin does for the sinner*. Jesus was "made under the law, to redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He came to take our place, to live our life for us; and thus to come into the same relation to the law of God as we sustain. He took on Him our nature: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The life of our Lord Jesus from beginning to end is a revelation, a divine disclosure of truth; and at the place called Calvary, sin itself is unmasked: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." So completely did He identify Himself with us, that He became as one of us; and standing in relation to the law of God as we do, and taking our place He came to the "place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull." Men

have always been disposed to make light of sin. But we cannot understand God's plan of redemption, nor the purpose of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord until we have a clear conception of the malignant character and the inevitably fatal consequences of sin. "Fools make a mock of sin." Sin is by some regarded as an accident, as a mere incident in the upward progress of the race, as something that a man may grow out of, or that a man may himself correct. But Jesus came to reveal the real nature of sin. Sin is an offence against the nature of things—not merely a transgression of an arbitrary law, but the transgression of a law that inheres in the nature of things. If one were to take that glass of water and put into it a certain quantity of strychnine, or of some other deadly poison, and drink it before you, it would not be necessary to hold an inquest to discover the cause of death. Everybody would know that as he took that glass of poison he took death into his hand, and that when he put it to his lips he destroyed his own life. No special action by officers of the law would be necessary; for there would be in that glass a self-enforcing law, and the man who would thus drink poison would sin against the nature of things; and all the powers of the world could not save him because all the laws of nature would be against him. He would thus set himself in opposition to the very constitution of things, and would be bound to die.

That is what sin is; and Jesus came to reveal the fact, that when a man becomes identified with this virulent thing which the Bible calls sin, through whatever flowered paths he may make his way, however gaily dressed he may be, by whatsoever banqueting tables he may sit in the course of his pilgrimage, however pleasant and promising the road that leads to his destination, Jesus came to show us that the way of the transgressor is hard, and leads always at last to the place called Golgotha, always to the "place of a skull," always to the place where death reigns supreme.

The malignant nature of sin finds its most terrible illustration in Jesus Himself, the most perfect of all men, Himself sinless, a man—and I speak of Him for the moment as a man, for He was essentially a man, He was more than that as I shall show you,—but He was a man, He was our fellow; bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; yet having a moral and spiritual health possessed by no other mortal since the day that the first man sinned; when He, I say, identified Himself with the sinners' cause, and stood in our place, sin did not spare even Him,—it stripped the purple from Him; it substituted a reed for a sceptre; it nailed the hands of might to a cross of wood; it took from His brow the crown of laurel and put upon His head a crown of thorns. The manliest, the most majestic of men was He; but because He identified Himself with the sinner, and became sin for us, He was despised, and rejected, and cast out,—driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. And it is not without significance that when Jesus died as a man—and I am still speaking of the human aspect of this revelation for the moment—it is not without significance that when Jesus died as a man, the earth trembled and mid-day became as midnight; for sin not only affects the human individual, it affects the whole creation: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake;" it darkens the very sun in the heavens; it turns the brightness of noon into the blackness of midnight; it inverts the laws of order; it turns the world up side down! The sinner is cursed by his sin in every relationship of life.

"The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" is a revelation of sin when it is finished. What sin does to the man himself is no light thing. It brings him

last to death and into the outer darkness; for the physical aspect of the effect of sin is the least of all. It wrings from the anguished soul upon whom divine judgment rests a confession that God, his Maker, has forsaken him; and to be cut off from God is to be in hell.

The cross is also a revelation of *what sin does to God*; for Jesus was not only a man, He was God; and He came into this world that He might show us how sin touches God. Somebody says, "I do not see why God should be so concerned about our actions on this planet, when we and the very world we live in are but as the dust of the balance in His sight. Why should God care how I live? Why should my sin be an offence to God?" Until the Spirit of God reveals it to them, men do not know that sin is an offence against God. They see only the human side of it; and as I have so often pointed out to you, they define sin in the terms as of a man's human relationships; and as long as he is righteously and charitably related to his fellows, they say, "I do not see what more can be expected, or what more is to be desired." A man dies without hope in Christ, without ever having bowed his knee to God; but he was a prominent man in business, and had a wide and influential connection. The newspapers say that the man was very prominent in the city; that he was greatly beloved by all his neighbours; he never robbed anybody of anything; in his home life he was most admirable; he endeavoured to discharge his full duty to the state; he was, in short, a man of unblemished character and of stainless earthly record; and, of course, if that were true it is popularly assumed that he has gone to heaven. But nothing is said about the man's relationship to God; it is never remarked that God hath made all things for Himself, and that though the man was made to glorify God, in the supreme business of life, like Belshazzar, he utterly failed.

What is sin? Something that touches our fellows merely? We are learning things. A man sits in his study. He takes the telephone and speaks, and somebody hears what he says, even the tones of his voice, and every syllable of his speech, on the other side of the world. We are coming to understand that the laws of God are so perfect, that this material creation is so admirably balanced, and so finely adjusted, that you cannot disturb one part of it without affecting every other part. A boy used to stand on the shore of the mill-pond and throw a stone into the middle of the pond if he could, and then watch to see the circles as they went out, and out, and out, until they touched the farthest shore. Little did he know that that pond was a mirror of the whole created order; that you cannot cause a ripple anywhere but that it goes on—and on—in ever-widening circles until it touches the remotest bounds of the physical universe. There is an instrument we call the seismograph. There was an earthquake tremor on the Pacific Coast last week, and it registered itself on that sensitive instrument nearly two thousand miles away. If it were within our power to make instruments sufficiently sensitive—just as now we have learned to make the radio receiver—whatever you call it, I do not know—so sensitive that it will catch the vibration from another hemisphere,—I say, if we could make instruments sensitive enough it is probable that we should discover that every word we speak is registered somewhere. Some day we may be given even a physical example of the solemn significance of the words of the Lord Jesus when He said, "Every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

But that is only the physical: what about the moral realm? They are closely related. No man can offend morally without his offence registering

itself physically at last. Your very temper expresses itself in your countenance. The hidden man of the heart, in spite of all disguises, shines through the eye; and it is for ever true that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he. You could not permit a putrefying body of any sort—I know it is an offensive and a loathsome sort of illustration—but you could not permit such a body to remain even in your cellar, for the offensive odor would fill the whole place, and drive you out of the house at last. Who and where is God? Have you localized God? Where does He live? "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee;" said Solomon, "how much less this house that I have builded?" Where is God? I read to you this evening an inspired utterance of a man who had been given some conception of the nature of God. He said, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into the heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." He speaks of the beginning of his physical being, and of his moral being, too, and he says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . In thy book all my members were written . . . when as yet there were none of them." O what a conception of God! God is everywhere! God is a spirit, and He is a Holy Spirit. You cannot shut God up to any locality, either in the heavens or the earth. He is everywhere. You cannot exclude Him from this world that He has made for Himself. What then? If God is everywhere, and He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity," what follows? Even an inarticulate thought, be it good or evil, registers itself in the nature of God: "Thou understandest my thought afar off," said the Psalmist. We cannot even think wrong thoughts without offending against God: not merely the words we speak, the acts we perform, but the very thoughts of our heart go on, and on, until they touch God!

Now because this truth was beyond the possibility of our understanding, because it belonged to the moral and spiritual realm, to whose sensitive constitution our calloused natures had become unresponsive, no man could understand the far-reaching effects of sin, God took upon Himself our nature and He appeared among us in the form of a man, that He might show us what sin does to God: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," said Philip. And Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Philip, I came down to reveal God; I came to show men what the hands of God can do: when I opened the eyes of the blind, it was the touch of God; when I healed the leper, it was the touch of God; when I lifted up the fevered patient, it was the act of God; when I fed the multitude and sent them away satisfied, it was merely a revelation of God's opening His hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing; when I stood at the grave of Lazarus and said, 'Lazarus, come forth,' I designed to show the world what God is." Thus, Jesus "went about doing good;" displaying the qualities of Deity, radiating the love of God, showing us Who and What God is. .

What, therefore, is the cross? It is man's repudiation of God! It is a revelation of what sin does to God: it takes the healing hands of God and puts a nail through them; it puts into the hand that sways the sceptre of the universe and rules in grace and mercy, a reed; it puts upon the brow of Deity that

which sin produces,—thorns! That is what sin does—it breaks the heart of God,—it pierces Him with its spear! And every sinful thought that finds a place in your heart or mine, does no less than that. Sin is an offence against God; and they have thought most superficially who make light of sin. It were wiser to laugh at an earthquake, or to challenge a cyclone, or to defy the lightning, than to make light of the deadly potentialities of sin.

Talking to a doctor recently, he said that when a doctor has attended a case of erysipelas, or certain other cases, however he may wash and protect himself, it is not safe for him to operate that day. He said that the poison generated by these bodies of ours in certain forms of disease is so virulent that even a nurse may carry it from bed to bed. If only we had as thorough a knowledge of moral evil as we have of physical evil, we should fear lest even evil thinking should bring death to ourselves and others. "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" is given to us that we may see what sin does to the sinner, and what sin does to God.

Let us further observe that the cross is a revelation of *the divine attitude toward sin*—I speak of sin, not of the sinner, for the moment. How will God deal with sin? He knows what it is; and when sin was found upon His only begotten and well-beloved Son, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and sin, and even the Lamb of God died under the stroke of the Almighty. As I read the newspapers to-day about the French occupation of Germany, I say to myself, "I do not understand the economic aspect of it: so far as I can see, it is economically a foolish undertaking. It looks as though France were going to kill her debtor, or to so further cripple her that she will not be able to pay." But apart from the economic aspect of it, I feel like saying, "I wish you success. I hope you may be able to make them pay." Don't you? It would be immoral not to desire that somebody should make Germany pay. But you cannot pay for millions of lives, for human blood, in coal and timber and gold. I have had a feeling that many men in Germany ought to have been brought to judgment; but I am certain that the conscience of the world feels that somebody ought to be made to pay. What for? For the ruin wrought in France, and in Belgium, and in Poland, and in Gallipoli, and in Mesopotamia, and in Russia. Somebody ought to pay for all these millions of graves. Do you not think so? But how did it all come about? You will immediately think of the Kaiser, and of the military party. But I wish I could show you a gentleman with cap and gown in a university classroom, just instilling certain ideas into the minds of the young men before him—he was, of course, an eminently respectable and very scholarly gentleman. If he had come to Canada a few years ago all the universities in the country would have conferred upon him honorary degrees, they would have honoured him in America, they would have honoured him in Europe. What was he doing? He was instilling into the minds of his students a thought that was antagonistic to God; he was sowing the seed of this red ruin that has cursed the world; but we had not the discernment to see it. But praise be to His Name, our God is a God of knowledge by Whom actions are weighed; He knows the motives behind them; He knows the thought from which the action springs; and God will judge a man not for what he has done only, but for what he would have done if he could. The thoughts and intents of the heart are written down in God's book; and in His own time God will deal with every sin.

I have said somebody ought to make Germany pay. Somebody will make Germany pay!—"Vengeance is mine, I will repay," saith the Lord; and, mark

you, Somebody will make you pay, too. O yes, as sure as you and I live, that debt we owe to God will have to be paid here or hereafter. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." But God's day will come, when "he shall reward every man according to his works." This is the revelation of the Cross. God's attitude toward sin is this—somebody must pay.

What is His attitude toward the sinner? "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God found a way whereby He might readjust the moral balances. He found a way whereby "he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." What is the revelation of the cross? It is this, that while God hates sin, and while there is no escape from its punishment, He loves the sinner. The cross is a revelation of the great truth that, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Somebody must pay? *Somebody has paid!*

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

Is there any other gospel like that? God's attitude toward the sinner is one of abounding grace, of unmeasured and immeasurable mercy.

I have no time for a tenth of what I wanted to say. I have said that the cross is a revelation of what sin does to the sinner, and what sin does to God; of God's attitude toward sin, and of God's attitude toward the sinner—hating and judging his sin, but loving him, and providing for his salvation.

II. **The Cross of Jesus Christ is A REDEMING POWER.** In the Cross of God has made provision for the cancellation of your indebtedness: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,"—every debt paid, every sin taken account of, your whole life adjusted in the person of Jesus Christ. I wish you might every one see that: that since God could not cease to be God, He had to find a way whereby He might, without yielding His Godhead, or abdicating His throne, save the sinner. And He found a way by taking our punishment upon Himself. And in the same way as God has redeemed the world in harmony with the laws of His own nature, He makes the cross a redeeming power in your life and mine, in harmony with our nature. It is a wonderful truth that as the Cross found a way whereby God could still be God, and yet save the sinner, it has also provided a way whereby men may still be men, with all the attributes of men, continuing the exercise of all the powers of their manhood, and yet, submitting to God, find salvation through Christ: God brings us into co-operation with Himself by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the inspiration of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus I have spoken to you of the objective reality, of what God did for us outside of ourselves. But the truth of the Cross comes to us to inspire us to repent; by its revelation to enlighten our judgment, to convince our reason, to appease our conscience, to kindle our affections, to inspire our will, and to call all our powers into co-operation with the Holy Spirit in repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Still a man, but a redeemed man, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do you repent? O unsaved soul, do you repent?

The cross is *the inspiration of faith*; for if it is all of God, if He has done it for me, with all my powers; my reason, my judgment, my perception, my affection, my conscience, my will—the whole man enlightened, illuminated, regenerated, by the power of the Spirit of God, I trust Thee, Lord Jesus. He

is my Saviour, He saved me from my sins. "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the inspiration of faith, and the assurance of eternal life; for if it was God who died for us, and the promise is made to us through the Son of God; then as God was just at the cross and spared not His only begotten Son, He will be faithful and just to fulfil to all who trust in Him the promise He has made in Him.

May I say this one word to you Christians? What did that burial mean to-night? "God forbid that I should glory," says the context, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." These believers went down into the baptismal grave with Jesus. Why is that other young lady who was to have been baptized locked in her father's house this evening? Because she has come to see that Jesus Christ can be more than father and mother, more than all earthly friends. Jesus died for her and why should she not follow Him? O the winsomeness, the attractiveness of our glorious Lord Jesus! A young lady once lightly said to me, speaking about this ordinance, "I should be afraid." I said, "And why would you be afraid?" She said, "I am afraid I should strangle." And I said, "What if you did? Jesus endured that for you." "Did He," she said. I said, "Do you not know what baptism means? Christ died for you. His was a real death: 'He tasted death for every man.' He died and was buried, and He rose again; and if He endured the reality, then shame on us if we are afraid of the symbol of it!"

How many this evening will look to Jesus first as the Saviour 'Who will save from sin; and then still look to "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" for the inspiration of faith, and of love, and of true courage to follow Him, to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"?

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Tuesday Bible Lectures.—It is evident that both the oral and printed lectures are supplying a need. The attendance on every occasion is gratifyingly large, practically filling the Lecture Hall. We fear there is no other church in the city of any denomination which assembles so many people at any regular week-night meeting. The printed lectures are selling in large numbers, and a considerable number of people living out of town have subscribed the dollar for the season's series. For those who have not read of this weekly publication before we announce again that the Pastor's weekly lecture is stenographically reported and printed in twelve pages ready for sale the week following. Ten cents per copy is charged, or one dollar for the whole course of ten to fourteen lectures. This price merely covers the bare cost of printing. The subject of course, is "How to Study the Bible," and the titles of lectures already printed, No. 1, "The Importance of Motive in Bible Study"; No. 2, "Where to Begin," showing the one subject of the Bible to be the Lord Jesus; No. 3, "Bread for the Eater and Seed for the Sower," teaching the necessity of studying for one's own spiritual nourishment first; and No. 4, "The Future Life," or the testimony of the Bible respecting the life beyond. Orders for single copies or the whole series sent to the church office will receive prompt attention.

About the Gospel Witness.—As our church year draws toward a close (March 31st), we are anxious to see The Witness fund in a flourishing condition. The contributions have far surpassed our expectations, but we have also dared to extend the sphere of The Witness far beyond our original purpose. We invite every member to pray about this, and all who can to make a special offering to The Witness Fund.

Pastoral Calls.—The Pastor finds it practically impossible to call upon all the members of the church in any systematic way; but he is always ready to visit the sick if only he is informed, and will be most grateful to the members for assistance in this direction. It often happens, also, that people find themselves in difficult situations where they need the counsel of a friend. The Pastor will always endeavour to arrange to meet those who desire his advice, especially those who are in trouble. Telephone N. 628, or the church office, M. 5670.

To See the Pastor.—Anyone in spiritual distress, or who desires to consult the Pastor on spiritual matters, may meet him by appointment at any time. Appointments may be arranged through the office, M. 5670, or with the Pastor direct, N. 628.

Great Giving.—We have just heard of one of our church families where there are several mouths to feed. The father is working short time, and when he has paid his rent, he has just seven dollars a week left for the support of his family. He and his wife are of one mind in putting Christ first in everything, and together they give one dollar out of the seven to the Lord every week. No doubt they receive from the Lord's hand, Whom they thus honour with their substance, abundant spiritual compensation. But what if every member of Jarvis Street were similarly to honour the Lord? There are many of our members who do not give by weekly offering envelope. We wish Jarvis Street could set an example to all other churches by the proportion of members who thus assume a regular obligation for the support of the Lord's work. If you are not a weekly offering subscriber, will you not begin at once?

"Continuing instant in prayer."—The Bible lectures on Tuesday evenings are the response to a general feeling that the many young converts whom God is giving us should be given instruction in the Bible. The wisdom of giving one evening a week to this was abundantly justified last season, and is being justified this season, too. But it affords us only about a half an hour Tuesday evenings for prayer. This makes it all the more necessary that we should make the most of Thursday and Saturday.

Candidates for Baptism.—Last Sunday evening three were baptized. A fourth, a young lady, was not baptized only because her father had literally locked her in the house to prevent her from being baptized. Thus the obedient believer still finds obstacles in the path as others have done. But the devil always over-reaches himself. At the close of the evening service last Sunday six others came forward and applied for baptism: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

The Dorcas Society will meet in the Church Parlor, Thursday, February 8th, at 2 p.m. All the ladies of the church congregation are invited to come prepared to sew and quilt. Tea will be served at 6.30, to which gentlemen are invited. A collection is taken at the table to defray expenses.

The Junior Dorcas will meet on Monday evening, February 5th, at 7.30. All young ladies invited.

Every Member a Missionary.—One of the inspiring elements in our week-night meetings is the testimony of so many of our members who are "going everywhere preaching the word." We believe the local church is a divine institution, and that we are in the will of God in our endeavour to build up a strong church true to the principles of the New Testament. But the church as a visible, local institution, is a means to an end, and that end is the salvation of souls. The church exercises her divinely appointed function as she becomes the mother of spiritual children. Therefore, there is no truer sign of sound spiritual health than when the individual member of the church recognizes his or her privilege to be a missionary of the Gospel seven days a week. We rejoice in the ringing testimonies of those who so glowingly tell of their consciousness of the help of the Holy Spirit while following the footsteps of the Good Shepherd in search of lost sheep. There is no greater joy on earth than that which is found in bringing souls to Christ.

The Church Calendar

- Sunday** For the week beginning Sunday, February 4th, 1923.
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—Monthly Communion Service.
Monday, 7.30—Junior Dorcas.
Tuesday, 7.45—Prayer, followed by the fifth Bible Lecture by the Pastor, on "How to Study the Bible."
Wednesday—Junior Service, 7.15.
Thursday, 2.00—Dorcas Society.
Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock, Meeting for Prayer
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.