

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

"OTHER LITTLE SHIPS."

A Sermon by the Pastor.

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

(Stenographically reported.)

"And there were also with him other little ships."—Mark 4: 36.

WHEN reading the story of the miraculous stilling of the tempest by our Lord's word of command, we are accustomed to look chiefly at the ship in which He sailed. Perhaps that is not surprising, for He always fills the vision of those who have once beheld Him by faith. But it is well to remember that on that stormy day when the disciples were tossed by the tempest, and when they toiled in rowing, and the Lord miraculously calmed the sea for them, "there were also with him other little ships;" and it is of those other ships I shall speak particularly this morning.

I. First of all, a very simple and obvious suggestion that **THERE ARE USUALLY MANY SHIPS AT SEA, AND THE STORM THAT BREAKS UPON ONE SHIP IS SHARED BY ALL THE REST.** We are accustomed to suppose that we monopolize all the difficulties of life, that all the waves break especially over us, and that ours is altogether an unusually stormy passage. But there is a law of averages after all that applies to every life, and we all get our share of the storm. There are always "other little ships" beside our own at sea. That is true of *those who are exposed to the winds of adversity, who suffer material privation, whose chief difficulty is poverty.* A man whom I have not seen for a good many years came to see me last week. Apparently he had just discovered that I was in town, and in the strictest confidence asked me if I could let him have twenty-five dollars! It is not of that I speak, but of this: he said, "After all, there are no troubles in the world like monetary troubles, are there?" "Well," I said, "did you ever hurt your foot?" "Why, yes." And I said, "You thought you could stand anything better than that, didn't you?" When a man breaks his leg, he would rather have broken his arm; when he has trouble with his

arm, he wishes it were somewhere else; wherever it pinches us at the time, we think it is the tenderest spot, and the hardest thing in the world to endure.

We are disposed sometimes to look at those who we think are a little better off than ourselves, and we say, "Ours is the only ship at sea to-night;" but it is not true, my friend. There are always "other little ships;" and they are battling their way through the storm just as you are. The same circumstances that trouble you trouble them; the same gale shrieks through the rigging of their ship and disturbs the equilibrium of their deck. Perhaps that is small comfort to some this morning; and yet there is a kind of comradeship that one is able to welcome when they discover that others are fighting their way through the storm; and that if they survive we may survive, too.

This is true, too, of *the afflicted soul*. When affliction comes to us we are disposed to think that we are the only one who has such sore trouble; and yet if we go up on deck a while and look out upon the rolling billows, we shall discover that there are other ships at sea. You are not the only one who has sickness in your home. You are not the only one who bears burdens. Many ships are ploughing their way through the storm this drab and dreary day.

I recall the case of a woman who was troubled with rheumatism. She used to spend most of her time in a wheel-chair. In this particular case the rheumatism seemed to have found its way into her spirit as well as into her joints, for she was about as rheumatic spiritually as physically. She was all pains and groans; and when I went to see her—she always called her husband by his surname—to be as impersonal as possible I will call him Smith, and she used to say, "Smith does not understand me." She had two of the most devoted daughters I have ever known, who waited on their mother hand and foot; but she insisted that they had no sympathy either, nobody cared; her timbers were the only ones that creaked in the storm, her ship was the only one exposed to the violence of the waves. And I used to tell her of another little ship; of another woman who was troubled just as she was; but she was like one of Dicken's characters—I forget her name for the moment—but she used to suffer from the east wind, and when she was told that the east wind touched other people also, she insisted that nobody else felt it as she did; the east wind went through her shawl as it got through no other shawl. And there are many like her, who find their only happiness in being excessively miserable. The fact, however, is that every little ship at sea has to face the violence of the same waves: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." There are many little ships at sea; and it will help us, I think, sometimes to remember that ours is not a peculiar lot, and that the promises of God's Word are designed to meet our need as they are meeting the need of others. He will help our ship, and He will help the other little ships as well.

And that is true, too, of *those who are exposed to peculiar sorrows*. One says, "Mere stress of circumstances, and even bodily affliction are as feather-weights compared with sorrow of heart; and it is from this last I suffer." "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." Yet we are tempted to think that we have a heavier burden of sorrow than anybody else; that we are going to be altogether overwhelmed. We thought that grave-digging was a new business the first time our spade was made to turn the sod; and we could hardly see through our tears that the path to the cemetery was worn by many feet. Others had been there before us, and

as we came away we met others coming to the same place to bury their hearts. Notwithstanding, sometimes we felt that we were not travelling a road—it was a wild and furious storm-swept sea we were riding! Yes, but battling with the boisterous billows of the sea of sorrow there are also “other little ships.” Why, my friend, this is a troubled world. Long ago a keen observer said, “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” It is as natural for us to come into trouble as it is for the sparks to fly upward. (Mr. Bonar Law went to the country in the Old Land a little while ago with a most unusual proposal. He proposed that they should adopt a policy of “tranquility”; and Mr. Lloyd George said that he supposed nobody ever yet put to sea without desiring a tranquil voyage; but, he said, the unfortunate part of it is that such a voyage is not determined by the captain, but by the sea. And it looks as though Mr. Bonar Law were going to discover that there were some things beyond his control; and that a policy of tranquility is not always practicable. We all want it, but we shall find that the sea forbids it. You say it is poor comfort to be reminded that other people are passing through the same experience. You remember Tennyson?—

“One writes, that ‘Other friends remain,’
That ‘Loss is common to the race’—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.”

That does not help us? O but it does, sometimes! A mother was standing dumb with grief beside a little coffin in which her only child lay cold in death. Her friends came in and they brought flowers and piled them around the casket in a well-meant effort to disguise death. But it was still death! I remember myself standing, in a similar case, beside the form of a little boy. His mother stood with me, and as she laid her hand upon his cold little hand, she said, “Pastor, that is death.” I had nothing to say. So these friends came in, and they brought their flowers. Others came and told her she should not weep; that after all God had taken her darling child home, and that she must be resigned. She listened to it all, but made no response, and was un comforted. Then a little woman came in and stood with her for a long time in silence. Presently she put her arms gently and lovingly around the stricken mother—she was an intimate friend—and she said, “Mary, in a drawer at home I have two pairs of little shoes, and the little feet that used to wear them are walking the golden streets to-day.” That was all! But the stricken mother seemed to shade her eyes with her hand as she looked out over the raging waters, until she saw that there were other little ships at sea. There was a bond of sympathy between her and another suffering soul, and she was comforted.

It may be there are some here this morning who say, “Well, I could endure even that; I could bear physical pain; I could live on dry bread; I should be content to live in one room; but it is the moral aspect of things that troubles me. It is so hard in my business to steer a straight course; it is so difficult to live as a Christian should live; the temptations of life are multiplying, and the storms are so severe.” I was talking with a theological professor one day some years ago regarding his attitude, and the attitude of the Christian Church in general, toward the Bible; and he said, “Well, what are you going to do? We are facing a world condition.” His policy was simply to drift, drift, drift. The winds are blowing, and the seas are rolling mountains high—what can one do but drift with the storm? Ah, blessed be God; if our eyes are opened, though we may not see them at once, they may disappear in

the trough of the sea for a moment, but if you watch long enough you will see some other little ship bravely riding out the storm, steering a straight course, because commanded by the one Captain Who is Sovereign of the sea.

"And there were also with him other little ships."—"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left. I am the only ship at sea." "O no, Elijah," said the Lord, "you are wrong. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. I have seven thousand other little ships, and they are all steering a straight course. Cheer up, Elijah! You are not alone." It is a dark day, my brother. The storm is on; and it is true that men are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," and that "they will not endure sound doctrine" but turn away their ears unto fables; and yet, I verily believe that there never was a day since Peter stood up with the eleven that the Lord had more faithful souls than He has to-day. There are still other little ships.

I recall an experience I had a few years ago, before the days of motor cars. But please remember that is not so very long ago, for I am not speaking as an octogenarian. It was in the days when bicycling was fashionable, and I was in the fashion—I had a wheel. I had been away to a meeting which continued until late. I was the last speaker, and it was later still when I got through, as you would expect. I had to be home the next morning at eight o'clock, and there was no train; in fact, it was a country place, and there was no way of getting home but going on my bicycle. The road was strange, and I was directed to take a road that I had never taken before. I started out from the church in the country about midnight, and I wheeled along for a few miles until I came upon a sandy road, with a deep ditch on either side. I had to dismount, and I trudged along and pushed my wheel through the dark. After tramping for several miles further, I came into the midst of a thick bush, and it was as black as Egypt. The sky was cloudy, there was not a star anywhere to be seen. It was hard enough walking without pushing a bicycle, and I could not get off the sand without getting into the ditch. There were a few fireflies here and there—it was in the summer time—and I remember that I felt as though I were the only one in all the world that was awake. I felt as though there was no human creature anywhere within a thousand miles of me. I was very, very lonely. Then I felt a few big drops of rain, and presently I heard the thunder, and a summer thunder-shower came on. The only redeeming feature about it was that the lightning lightened my path a little occasionally. I got a little wet and lonelier still, and I said to myself, "Was there ever such a night as this? Was anybody ever in such a plight as I am to-night?" I did not know where I was, nor whither I was going, and there was no one to tell me. At last I came to a railway track, and a little way-station. I climbed up on the fence and tried to read the sign, to discover where I was; but there was not light enough. Then I put up my hand like a blind man to see if I could read it with my fingers, if the paint would give me any help; but all to no purpose; so I resumed my journey. Presently I heard the sound of wheels, and as the vehicle approached, I hailed the driver. But he evidently feared I was a highwayman. He applied his whip and galloped away, and as the sound of the wheels died away in the distance, I was left alone again, the only one out in that storm. After a few more miles I came at last into a village street, and I thought, "I shall surely find company here," but it seemed lonelier than the road through the bush, because everybody was fast asleep. There were no

electric lights, everything was in darkness; until, getting to the end of the street, I saw just a glimmer of light. I shall never forget the feeling that came over me, and I said, "Well, there is somebody else awake in the world." As I reached the place I saw the light came from a dim lamp, shining out through a screen door. I stood on the street and looked through the screen door, and there were two women sitting beside the bed of a man, who was apparently very ill. I went up, and so as not to alarm them, gently knocked on the door. They were startled, but one of them came to the door, and as I began to tell her that I was lost, she said, "Will you come in, Mr. Shields?" And I said, "How do you know me?" She said, "My sister's husband is dying, and she sent for me two weeks ago. While on my way I saw you on the train, and I overheard somebody mention your name, and that is why I knew you." I went in, and went up to the couch of the sufferer. This good lady yielded me her chair, and I sat down beside his wife. He was dying. I took his hand and I talked to him about the Lord Jesus. I did not know whether he was a professing Christian, but he seemed to open his heart, or the Spirit of the Lord opened his heart, to the truth, and he was greatly comforted. Then we knelt in prayer, his wife, and her sister and I, and commended him to the One Who goes through the valley of the shadow with those who put their trust in Him. Presently he lapsed into a peaceful slumber. Then these good women said, "You had better not go on." "Well," I said, "I do not know where to go. Perhaps you can tell me where I am. I have not the remotest idea." They told me the name of the village, and I said, "I will wait until daybreak, but I have to go a long way, and must be home early in the morning." So I waited until the birds began to herald the morning, waited and

"Watched the eastern sky
To see the glorious spears arise
Beneath the oriflamme of day,"

then quietly I slipped away, and ultimately found my way home.

A year or so after that I was preaching in a certain place, when at the close of the service a woman in a widow's garb came up, and gripped my hand very heartily, as she said, "Do you remember me?" I said, "No, I do not." "Do you not remember being lost," she said, "one night some years ago, and finding your way to the side of a dying man at three o'clock in the morning?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I shall never be able to tell you what a comfort your visit was to my husband. He has gone home, but he witnessed a good confession before he went."

There is always a reason for your being out in the storm, my friend. There are "other little ships," and it is your privilege to share the trouble of the night with them.

II. These little ships SAILED IN THE WAKE OF THE SHIP IN WHICH JESUS SAILED. He was not in their ship, but they put to sea because He put to sea. "And there were also with him other little ships." It would be interesting to know the story of their passengers, and their crews, and their cargoes. I wonder what they carried? I wonder whither they went, those little ships that were on the stormy sea that night, because He was there? One of them may have carried a doctor, another may have carried a teacher, another may have carried a philanthropist upon some errand of mercy bent. But whoever they were, whatever they proposed to do, they were there because He was there, although they were not actually in the ship with Him. When Jesus puts to sea He never sails alone.

There is an indirect influence of the Gospel which is not to be underestimated. Many beneficial influences are set in operation by the preaching of the Gospel, for which the Gospel gets no credit at all. There are always with Him "other little ships." There are some people who deny to the Church of Christ credit for accomplishing anything in this troubled world. It is popular to boast of the various forms of social service in which clubs, and fraternal organizations, and other institutions engage, to the disparagement of the church. Ah yes, but your hospitals are the ships with doctors; your educational institutions are the ships with teachers; and all your philanthropic endeavours are ships that carry well-intentioned men who put to sea only because Jesus first shows the way.

I heard Professor George Jackson deliver an address before the Ministerial Association. I am not sure of the exact wording of the title of his address, but I think it was "John Morley, The Priest of The Outer Court." He extolled John Morley, the biographer of Gladstone; he described his blameless character, his wonderfully serviceable life, his amiable disposition, and held him up as a kind of superman; being careful to point out that in the production of this character religion had no part; for John Morley was an agnostic. I happened to be living in the same direction and walked up the street with Dr. Jackson, after the meeting, and I said, "Doctor, has it ever occurred to you that Morleyism never yet produced a John Morley, that you cannot find a John Morley where Christ is not preached, and His principles are unknown?" I said, "All the influences which made him what he was had their origin in the very religion which he refuses to acknowledge." "There were also with him other little ships;" and everything that is good in what we have been pleased to call our Christian civilization is there because Jesus sails the sea.

III. But let no one make any mistake: THERE ARE SPECIAL ADVANTAGES TO THOSE WHO SAIL IN THE SHIP WITH JESUS. I would rather sail in the ship with Him than be in either of the other little ships, wouldn't you? What was the difference? In the first place, *those who sailed in the ship with Jesus were conscious of His presence as the others were not.* The others shared the miracle, the others reaped the benefit of His stilling the tempest, although perhaps they never knew, and never acknowledged what they owed to Jesus. Multitudes of people sail a calmer sea, and live an easier life, because Jesus shares the sea with them; but they are in one of the "other little ships," and they do not know how much they owe Him. But they who were in the ship with Him knew that it was the presence of Jesus in the storm which brought deliverance to them, and to the other little ships.

It may be there is someone here this morning who is not a Christian, and who says, "I have seen Christian people just as much troubled as I." Yes, they sail the same sea with you, my friend. "But they are just as fearful in the storm as I am." Yes, they seem to be so. They may even talk of perishing sometimes, as David did when he got into a fit of the doldrums. He said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. He will be too much for me some day. I fear I shall be overwhelmed at last." Yet, he really knew better; and so did these disciples. Although they were filled with fear, there was a subconscious realization through it all that there was someone in the ship with them Who had command of the winds and the waves. You will remember how they awakened Him at last, and said, "Carest thou not that we perish?" The Lord does not command the storm at the first gust of wind. He lets the wind blow awhile for us; and some of us have to have a time of real seasickness before we get out of our difficulties, and perhaps that will do us good. They say seasickness is very beneficial! But He is there; and in due time He awakes and rebukes the wind and the waves, and there is a great calm; and the ship in which Jesus sails always outrides the storm.

It is a high privilege to sail in the ship with Him. I exhort you to be sure you get in the right ship. May our lives be such that we may be conscious always of the immediate presence of Jesus with us in the storm. See that you put to sea in a ship that is equipped with wireless so that you will never get out of communication with Him.

"Begone, unbelief; my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear;
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform;
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

IV. Let me now remind you of THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF STILLING THE STORM FOR OTHER PEOPLE. What did these men do when they arose and said to Jesus, "Carest thou not that we perish?" They prayed, and said, "Lord, save us, we perish." He answered their prayer; and in the hour in which He answered their prayer, they brought deliverance to "other little ships" beside themselves. There are "other little ships" watching your course, my friend. I was at a funeral service the other day with a minister of another denomination. I had never met him before. We drove to the cemetery together, and he said, "I have long wanted to meet you." And I said, "I am glad to meet you, sir." He said,

"You know a lot of us have been watching the course of Jarvis Street Church, and you would, perhaps, be surprised to discover that many ministers are fighting the same battle that you have been fighting, in greater or lesser degree, and," he said, "I know of at least two ministers who have found deliverance through the victory God gave you in Jarvis Street Church." I said, "That is another view of things." Do you not see, there were also with us other little ships? I am hearing it everywhere. Brethren, what are our many weekly prayer-meetings for? Why do we meet so frequently, week after week, now over two years? Somebody says, "Your great revival has not come yet, has it?" No, not in the measure in which we hope to see it. We have seen souls saved; but then, do you not see we are not praying for ourselves alone? We are praying for "other little ships," and who knows what blessing even one church may be privileged to bring to other churches, and to other ministers, and to other hard-pressed mariners on the mighty deep? Let us see to it that we use our privileges aright, for the sake of the "other little ships." How truly there are "other little ships" following us; how necessary that parents should be in the ship with Jesus for the sake of the "other little ships"; how important that every man and every woman should live in such relationship to Christ that their influence may tell upon other lives, and calm the sea for other ships!

V. Lest any should misunderstand, I have this one simple word and I have done: THERE IS A VOYAGE WHICH ONLY ONE SHIP CAN TAKE, A SHIP THAT IS NOT ACCOMPANIED BY "OTHER LITTLE SHIPS." This was a physical salvation of which we have been speaking this morning: there were "other little ships" crossing the Lake of Galilee—little ships that could safely put to sea upon that inland water that would have been smashed to pieces by an Atlantic wave. I read of a day when there was one big ship. It was built after a divine pattern, and the builder was given no discretion to change the design in the slightest particular. It was made for a stormy day, and for a rough sea. And when at last the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the storm of divine wrath broke upon a sinful world, and the waters rose until the tops of the highest hills were covered, "all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died," and they only survived who were in the ark, whom God had shut in. When God shut that door at last there were with Noah no "other little ships." Salvation was to be found in that ship or there was no salvation at all: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." We are not saved by the indirect influences of the Gospel, beneficial as these influences are so far as this present life is concerned: it is only as we are found in the ship with Jesus Himself, as we are "in Christ," that we can safely make that last great journey to the land where there is reared "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "Christ in you," is the only "hope of glory": May He save and bless us every one.

"Jesus, Saviour, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal;
Chart and compass came from Thee;
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

"As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey Thy will
When Thou sayst to them 'Be still!'
Wondrous Sovereign of the sea,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

"When at last I near the shore
And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me,
Fear not, I will pilot thee!"

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

A GOOD WITNESS STORY.—One of our *Gospel Witness* subscribers 'phoned the other day to ask to whom he should send his subscription. By the way, if any others desire to know how to address your cheque, please note: "Jarvis Street Baptist Church," is all you require to write. Our friend is a traveller, and is not often in town, and finds in *The Gospel Witness* a means of spiritual nourishment. Sometimes one finds himself in a place where no meals are served, and on such occasions it is good to have your own lunch-basket with you. So our friend manages to feed his soul despite the famine for the Word of the Lord throughout the land. He intimated that he wished also to pay for a friend in Buffalo who is receiving *The Gospel Witness*, and writes him weekly, telling him of the blessing he is receiving by reading the weekly message it brings. He requested also that his name and his friend's be added to the list of subscribers for the weekly Bible Lecture. For this he promised to send a cheque for \$15.00.

Not a few have subscribed for others beside themselves, and have sent a contribution to *The Witness* fund over and above the subscription. We are sending *The Witness* to many who do not pay us anything—in country places, to lumber camps, and elsewhere as a bit of missionary work. But we regard this venture as a missionary enterprise, and invite all who receive blessing from its pages to pray for its success, and as many as can, to contribute to its support.

THE GENERAL BIBLE CLASS.—This class, which meets in the church parlor every Sunday afternoon, has recently invited Mr. Fred Syme to become their teacher. We are glad to announce that Mr. Syme has accepted and is now the regular teacher of the class. Mr. Syme is beloved by all who know him. He is a fine singer of the Gospel and we believe sings in the power of the Holy Spirit. The same sense of responsibility to and dependence upon God we feel sure will characterize his teaching as does his singing. A hearty invitation is extended to all men and women to attend this Sunday afternoon class for the study of the Word of God.

THE WEEKLY BIBLE LECTURE.—The reception accorded the printed lectures is most encouraging. The sales at ten cents per copy have exceeded our expectations. We have been especially gratified by the number of subscriptions which have reached us from out of town. One brother sends five dollars for five copies weekly for distribution. The attendance on Tuesday evenings has been magnificent, notwithstanding the weather, which seems to have been especially severe ever since we began. The subject next Tuesday will be "The Gospel According to Moses."

TO THE SICK AND THE AGED AND INFIRM.—Whenever the church meets for prayer you are lovingly commended to God in prayer, and we earnestly hope that the weekly visit of *The Gospel Witness* may in some small measure compensate you for your loss of the privileges of the sanctuary. This paper is mailed to you weekly to let you know that you are not forgotten.

YOUNG WOMEN'S MISSION CIRCLE.—Monday, Feb. 12th, 8 o'clock; subject, Bolivia. Speakers, Miss E. Brumby and Mrs. H. Roach. Special offering for Grande Ligne. All young women invited.

The Church Calendar

Sunday. For the week beginning Sunday, February 11th, 1923.
10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.
10.30—Monthly Communion Service.
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.
Monday, 8.00, Young Women's Mission Circle.
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 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.