

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.

Address correspondence: The Gospel Witness, 130 Gerrard Street E., Toronto.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 22nd, 1923.

Vol. 1. (\$3.00 per year, postpaid, 5c. per copy.)

No. 41

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

SPIRITUAL WRESTLERS.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday morning, Feb. 11th, 1923.

(Stenographically reported.)

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."—Ephesians 6: 10-12.

THE Christian life is a pilgrimage; it ought to be a life of continuous progress. God did not bring His people out of Egypt to die in the wilderness: He brought them out that He might bring them in; He brought them out of the land of bondage that He might fulfil the promise He had made to their fathers, and make them the inheritors of a land "flowing with milk and honey." The Christian life is not one of deprivation. The Lord Jesus did not come into the world to make us poor, but to make us rich: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." He did not come to make our faces long, but to make them broad. He did not come to empty life of every element of sweetness; but so to order our lives that, being His guests, we should confess that the better things come to us as we go on with Him.

But you will recall that when the children of Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, and the land of promise was immediately in prospect, they were filled with fear because of the strength of the people of the land, and instead of going into their inheritance turned back again to their wilderness experience. For forty years they journeyed, making no real progress; and of the older generation who came out of Egypt only Joshua and Caleb really entered into the land of promise. I know it is a commonplace to remind you of it,—but I am afraid that that is a picture of the Church of Christ in all ages. While many are delivered from Egypt, pass under the blood, are "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the

sea," drink of the Rock, and are fed with the spiritual manna, and have some few victories over Sihon and Og, they never cross the Jordan into the full possession of their inheritance in Christ. A great number of believers live always below their privileges—in some measure we all do. You will recall the distinction the Apostle Paul makes in his first Epistle when he describes the Corinthians as being not spiritual but carnal. By which he did not mean that they were subject to any gross or sensual form of sin; but that they viewed life from the carnal plane, that the natural mind was dominant, that the standards of the natural world were the standards by which their life and conduct were regulated; and that they had not come to appreciate their higher privileges in Christ, as He designed they should. In this Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul leads us to very high ground. He said to the Corinthians that he had spoken to them as unto carnal people, "as unto babes in Christ," as to those who had not grown up into Christ in all things. But the Epistle to the Ephesians is evidently written to those who have learned much of divine grace, and who know something of the experiences of those who sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. He addresses then in this text as wrestlers, as those who have found life a conflict; and it is of that aspect of Christian experience I want to speak to you for a little while this morning.

I. To begin with, OUR TEXT IDENTIFIES THE FOES AGAINST WHICH THE TRUE CHRISTIAN MUST CONTEND. Every one of us has had experience of wrestling, if indeed, we are the Lord's. We have discovered that we cannot be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease; we have discovered that though we should like a life of tranquility like certain politicians in England, it is not easily possessed; and that if we are to make any progress at all we shall have to contend for every foot of the way. If I were to ask for a show of hands this morning I have no doubt that every one of you would say, "Well, you need not spend further time in discussing that principle. We know what you are talking about. Go on." We are all wrestlers; but some of us are disposed to think that we do wrestle against flesh and blood. Is there an awkward man in the office where you work? Is there somebody in your home who sometimes makes it difficult for you to shout, Hallelujah? Is it not true that one of the problems of life is that of getting on with people? Sometimes we do appear to have real adversaries clothed with flesh and blood. Paul is not disputing that; he had his full share of it. Read the story of his experience with men, and you will find that he is not one whit behind any one of us. What he means is this: not that we have not to wrestle against flesh and blood—we have: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other!" We have to wrestle against our own flesh and blood, and sometimes we have to contend with men. But what he means is that behind these incarnations of evil there are spiritual powers who are our real enemies, and that it is with these we have to contend if we are to make progress in the Christian life.

You will observe that *he is speaking of "the heavenly places"*: "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." That is where we ought to be living. If we are content with living upon the carnal plane, content to remain babes in the Father's household, then perhaps we may escape some of these more strenuous experiences; but if we cross the Jordan and get into the land of promise, the real fighting will begin. On the wilderness side, I suggested just now, the people of God did have some few victories; but the real warfare began when they entered into the land of

promise. And the real battle begins for the Christian in the hour when he resolves that he will accept God's plan for him; that he will enter into the land of promise; that he will possess every foot of that land in the name of the Lord. The moment he begins that he will discover that the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and all the other enemies of that land will dispute his passage, and he will have to begin his real wrestling there. Is that an explanation for some of you young Christians? You expected smooth sailing; you anticipated a paved street, patrolled by heavenly policemen, where no one would be permitted to disturb your peace, to upset your plans, to dispute your progress; and you say to me this morning, "Pastor, the more I pray the worse it gets. I address myself to the Word of God, and I say I will now seek this day to allow my life to be fashioned by the principles of that Book; and I have scarcely crossed the threshold of my own house when I discover that everything is against me." That is the reason: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." And as sure as any of us seek to realize in our own experiences the divine purpose of grace, we shall come to an experience such as Paul here describes of wrestling and conflict all the way along.

Now that is rather a superstitious view of things, is it not? People do not believe there is a real devil, now, do they? The Apostle Paul believed in the existence of spiritual adversaries who were organized in the heavenly places, and who were set in opposition to the progress of the soul. I do not think I should be doing violence to the text to suggest that there is a real organization of spiritual powers. When Israel went into Canaan you remember they found that certain cities were possessed, commanded, officered by certain men; great fortresses were under the control of certain great giants; and they had definitely to make war upon the principalities. There were princes in those lands who were prepared to hold fast their possession. This is the truth which our Lord Jesus warned us of when He said: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." You have set yourself to accomplish a certain thing in the name of the Lord, perhaps to win a particular man for Christ; and it has seemed as though the principalities and powers in the heavenly places had taken particular possession of that man, as though there were an evil intelligence that was planning to defeat you at every turn in the road. And that is true in this spiritual warfare. We have to do battle against the wisest of all commanders—One only excepted; and it is folly for us to suppose that we can, by the exercise of our own wisdom and of our own power, defeat these principalities in the heavenly places.

They are described here as being of a *particular character*. They are "the world rulers of this darkness." Darkness is the devil's chosen weapon: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The devil will consent to your doing anything as long as you do not turn on the light. But there are "world rulers of this darkness," and when you seek to let the light of the gospel shine, at that moment war is declared against you from the heavenly places. In a few years' experience in the Christian ministry I have observed that many men who began with the simple proclamation of God's Word, who conceived their whole duty to be to let God's light shine, have turned aside to secondary matters that were good enough in themselves, but were short of God's best. I believe there is a reason for that

as a rule. *The most difficult thing in all the world is to be a spiritual light-bearer.* You may engage in all kinds of service to your fellows as long as you make no effort to let God's light shine in upon the heart and conscience, and to light up the whole plane of human life, and to show men their relationship to God. There is nothing in the world the devil is so much afraid of as that; and as you set about it in the individual life, or in any public ministry, you will discover that the world rulers of this darkness will summon their legions and turn them loose against you. There is nothing, I say, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world fears so much as the light which shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and just in proportion as we "walk in the light as he is in the light," shall we discover that we wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against these greater intelligences in the heavenly places, who are equipped with powers inestimably, incalculably superior to our own.

Now that is a simple word, but let us take a moment to think about it, to ask ourselves if that is true,—if, after all, the things we see are not the real things, if there is an invisible realm, a realm of spiritual reality; on the one hand, a realm of light and of grace and glory; and on the other, a realm of darkness, of evil power; and that it is in that spiritual realm we are to live as Christians; it is with these spiritual realities we have to do, with something that is beyond the ken of the natural man; that if apart from God we seek to obtain the mastery of evil, then we are striving against all the rulers of the darkness, without help. O what folly! If the Church of Christ everywhere could realize this simple truth, it would appear to every man that the one and only way of victory is to prostrate ourselves before God, and to invoke His aid; for we are face to face with powers against whom we have no might whatever.

II. Hence, having so glowingly expounded the possibilities of the Christian life, telling them of God's plan and purpose here and hereafter; when he had written about these simple things,—of children obeying their parents, and parents being careful not to provoke their children; of servants carrying the principles of the gospel into their everyday life, "not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart," thus living before Him; and for masters to remember they have a Master in heaven—after dealing with these simple and practical matters, ere he closes his Epistle. Paul seems to have considered, "Now what shall I say to give effect to all my teaching?" It is this: "FINALLY MY BRETHREN, BE STRONG IN THE LORD, AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT;" and he reverts to what has been implied in all his teaching when he touches upon the text I have been discussing,—he reminds them of their wrestling in the heavenly places; but he says, "I throw wide the door into another realm, and I show you the possibilities of victory: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God."

I have not time this morning to speak of the armour, of the elements of this divine panoply. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." There is the Christian's armour—having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and taking the sword of the Spirit.

But *with what are we to use the armour?* "Be strong in the Lord, and in

the power of his might." The fight, I have said, is in the heavenly places; but you remember how Paul begins this glorious Epistle: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." As though the Lord had said, "It is into the heavenlies I am going to lead you; it is into the promised land I shall conduct you; and there in that sphere of My appointment I have laid up for you inestimable treasures of spiritual grace. I have already in My plan and purpose blessed you with all that is requisite to a victorious life, according as I have chosen you before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and without blame before Me in love."

All the spiritual blessings we require are awaiting us in the heavenlies in Christ; and as it is true that the principalities and the powers and the rulers of this world's darkness will dispute our passage and our progress into that heavenly life, it is equally true that all heaven is ready to equip, to energize, to give victory to the man who will go on to possess the land. Our Lord calls us to no impossibilities; He challenges us to no futile campaign, to no life of defeat. It is not true what the people of Israel said: "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" That was not God's plan. He had promised victory in the land of promise.

And there is a land of promise for every one of us. Peter tells us that by His divine power, God hath provided, or given to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Remember, it does not say that He has given us all things that pertain to promotion, and ease, and comfort in this world; but He has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." It may not be possible for every man to come to the top of the tree in his profession, or in his business; it may not be possible for a man to live in the kind of house he desires always; but God has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." And there is no excuse for failure or bankruptcy in the heavenly places: there is victory for every one of us there. If we are defeated it is not because God has not provided the possibilities of victory: "Whereby are given unto us—mark this—exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." By means of these exceeding great and precious promises we may become partakers of the divine nature; we may have strength to overcome; we may make glorious progress in the heavenly places; but it is only in the heavenly places that these spiritual blessings are to be experienced. How many people I have met who have said, "Pastor, in the experience I most dreaded I have found the greatest joy. I went down into the valley; I went into the battle-field; I got to the place where I had to carry unusual burdens; I tried to emulate Caleb, and I said, Give me this mountain; and I discovered that in that very effort God came to me as He never had come to me before. I had a new realization of the promises of God, and a new experience of His abounding grace such as I never had anywhere else." Of course you had. It is in the heavenly places these experiences await you: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." "The principles we have espoused and which we are endeavouring to practise as Christians," some man will say, "have so exposed me to my competitors in business that I am killed all the day long, I am accounted as a sheep for the slaughter; I am as a sheep among wolves; I am perfectly helpless." Or another says, "Practise the golden rule down town? actually endeavour to translate

into human character and conduct the principles of the Gospel of Jesus? why I am killed all the day long; when I do that I am only as a sheep for the slaughter."

That is the carnal view of things. Listen! "Nay, in all these things—in my defeats, in my humiliations, in my losses, in all these experiences which come to me as a Christian, which make me as a lamb for the slaughter, killed all the day long—in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." It is in these very experiences our characters are developed; they bring us new accessions of spiritual strength, and we find ourselves growing up into Christ in all things. But we can never have such experiences apart from the heavenly places; we can never have it unless we attack the enemy on his own ground. Paul believed in the principle of offensive warfare. He was always aggressive in his attitude toward evil: "Abhor that which is evil;" take up a positive attitude toward it; unsheathe your sword against it; go out into the battle and fight, having on "the whole armour of God." Then you will find in the heavenly places there is victory for you.

I come back to the beginning of the Epistle. You will find that Paul always shows us a way to victory. You remember the story of how Joshua, when he was about to lead the people into the promised land had that vision of the great warrior. How wonderfully thrilling! He is going to go forward now in the name of the Lord, and as he waits before God he sees somebody; and I think there came to him a conviction that on whatever side this great Captain fought, there would be victory. And Joshua tremblingly asks the question, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" He receives the answer, "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come;" and I think there was a great Hallelujah in Joshua's heart at that moment. He knew then that victory was certain. And as he walked round about the walls of Jericho he knew he was not wrestling against flesh and blood, and he knew, too, that the weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; for he knew that at the head of the column there rode the Captain of the Lord's host, Who had never lost a battle. How does Paul begin? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." And later in the first chapter he prays for these Ephesian Christians, and what is his prayer? I wish we could learn to pray like this: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened—that you may get a view of the promised land across the Jordan, that floweth with milk and honey—the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,—according to the energy of the grasp of His might—which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:—far above it all is He, and He says, I am praying that you may enter into an experience of that power which caused Him to triumph over the rulers of this world's darkness, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places—and hath put all things under his feet,—what did He make you for? He said, "Have dominion." "Thou

madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." "But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus," Who is the Pledge, the Promise, the divine Guarantee that all things shall be put under our feet, even as they are put under His, and that we shall have the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ: "Thanks be unto God—can you say it this morning?—Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," Who always causeth us to triumph in Him.

May He help us to carry this simple word with us into the office, and the shop; that boys and girls may know and remember that it is in connection with obeying father and mother, face to face with that duty and all the difficulties involved in it that we are exhorted to take unto us "the whole armour of God." I say it again, let parents remember when their children try their patience, that there is victory promised in the Word of the Lord. Servants also with their masters and masters with their servants—just in the dull, drab, workaday world, there spiritual mastery of evil powers is possible. It is promised everybody, in every relationship of life; if only we live in the heavenly places we may invoke the ministry of heavenly powers; and, triumphing through Christ, we may live on milk and honey still. May the Lord help us so to do.

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Bible Lecture.—Remember the lecture Tuesday on "The Gospel in Ruth." See newspapers for fuller announcement.

About Tithing.—We have spoken of this before, but it is wise to say a good thing more than once. Those of us who know we have been bought with blood know we are not our own, but have been bought with a price. And what a price! All that we have belongs to God. What a privilege to be permitted to have a share in the work of the Lord! Under the law the people were required to give a tithe of all they possessed to the Lord. Indeed the tithe was not a gift, it was a debt, and withholding it was described by God Himself as robbery. We believe God has special blessing for those who honor Him with their substance. God has poured His Spirit upon His people in most gracious measure, so that among our members are many who revel in the joy of giving. But some of us need to learn more of our privilege in this respect. How greatly we could extend our work had we the money! Particularly the mission of The Gospel Witness. We ask our readers to pray that God may raise up supporters so that we may be able to increase it to twelve pages, and advertise it so as to increase its circulation. That would greatly reduce the cost. But there are many other ways in which our work could be extended. Therefore let us pray more money into the treasury.

Dr. W. B. Riley Coming.—Jarvis Street is to be privileged to enjoy the ministry of Rev. W. B. Riley, D.D., of Minneapolis, from March 6th to 16th. Dr. Riley is one of the outstanding preachers of America. About twenty years ago he passed through an experience similar to our own. But he stood his ground, and God honored his faith. The great crisis was followed by phenomenal spiritual blessing, which has continued until now. The First Baptist Church, of which he is pastor, now has a membership of well over 2,000. Dr. Riley celebrates his 26th anniversary March 4th. He is known all over the United States as a stalwart defender of the faith, and is one of the chiefs of the Fundamentalist Movement. He is a great evangelist and a great teacher. In this church God has blessed us with many conversions, but we hope that Dr. Riley's visit may mark the coming of the flood of revival which we are awaiting. From this forward let us specially pray for Dr. Riley's mission.

The Children's Service.—We are greatly rejoiced to hear of conversions among the children. It seems as though God had accepted the challenge, and everything that it was said could not be done is now being done; for there has been special blessing among the young people. A little boy, in his eighth year, who gave a marvellously clear testimony, told the examiners that he was con-

verted at an evening service under a sermon on the text, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But in the Sunday School and at the Wednesday evening Junior Service, God has especially shown His power. In Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Turney God has given us two men specially gifted of the Spirit to lead the little ones to Christ. More and more pray for the children.

This Week's Service.—Mr. Vining, who has a passion for Christ and for little children, and who knows about as much about birds as Jack Miner, will speak. He will have stuffed birds of all sorts, and many live birds, too, which he will use to make the way of salvation simple for the children. The greatest of all preachers, our Lord Jesus Christ, used birds for a text. All young folks are invited, and older ones, too, if they can find room.

Women's Mission Circle.—Will all women of the church keep Thursday afternoon, March 1st, for the Women's Mission Circle, which will meet at 3 p.m. in the church parlour. The second programme on "Our Grande Ligne Mission" will be given. We trust many newcomers may be welcomed at that time. Come and bring others with you. Collectors please report.

How God Has Blessed Us.—The Jarvis Street crisis was reached at the annual meeting, April, 1921. We shall complete two years at the end of March. But for the first six months of that time, or until Sept. 21st, 1921, we were in the throes of the great struggle. What has God accomplished since then? In the last 22 months 354 new members have been received, 100 by letter, 82 by experience, and 172 by baptism. From Jan. 1st to Dec. 31st, 1922, 192 have been added, 45 by letter, 42 by experience, and 105 by baptism. To the end of January (22 months) our net loss was 151. Of these over forty were dropped—and should have been dropped years ago. Of the other 110 a considerable number had been nothing but names on our book since before the present pastorate began. And blessing continues. Already baptism has been administered every Sunday but one for 17 weeks, and so far as we can see, is likely to continue for weeks to come. Thus it seems probable that by the end of our year, March 31st, we shall have made up in actual vital members all our losses, while our membership in actual figures will not be much over a hundred less than when the great struggle began. This is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes.

In addition to this, or as reason for this, we are now in the twenty-third month of our three weekly prayer meetings beside the two on Sunday. In that time by a most conservative reckoning an aggregate of at least 40,000 persons have attended the prayer meetings of the church.

Besides this The Gospel Witness of this week is No. 41. This has reached during the 41 weeks thousands of people who do not live within reach of Jarvis St. Church. The printed weekly Bible Lectures are also finding a wide circulation, and we have heard of one copy of The Witness and of the lectures being passed around until it has been read by a large number.

Let us, in view of all these things, lay hold upon God afresh by even more earnest prayer in private and in public, that the month of March may exceed in spiritual blessing all that has gone before.

The Church Calendar

Sunday. For the week beginning Sunday, February 25th, 1923.

10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlour, 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 Parlour.

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

Tuesday, 7.45—Prayer, followed by the eighth Bible Lecture by the Pastor, on "How to Study the Bible,"—"The Gospel in Ruth."

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.