

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

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

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PASTOR AND EDITOR

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS."

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, March 4th, 1923.
(Stenographically reported.)

"Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews."—John 7: 13.

THAT word has come to me again and again during the week, I do not know why—"For fear of the Jews"—and I thought I would turn it over with you this evening with a prayer that God the Spirit may deliver us all from the fear of man that "bringeth a snare."

In the third chapter of John we are told of a certain ruler, Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night: he was afraid of the Jews. Here we find the people quietly talking about the Lord Jesus among themselves; but they were afraid to speak openly about Him "for fear of the Jews." There was a man whose eyes were opened; he had been born blind, and he had been given sight by Jesus of Nazareth. The miracle attracted a great deal of attention, and the Pharisees inquired concerning Jesus, who He was. They called the parents of him who had been born blind, and asked them about Jesus, and whether this man were really their son. "His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or, who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him; he shall speak for himself." And the explanation is that notwithstanding the great blessing which had miraculously come to their son, these parents were afraid to confess Jesus, "because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." Long before it was adopted as a motto for motorists, and railway men, and all who handle machinery, the parents of this blind man adopted the motto of "Safety First." At another period we are told that "among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be

put out of the synagoguc." When Jesus of Nazareth was being discussed by the Sanhedrin, one Joseph of Arimathaea, registered a protest as to their methods of procedure, and asked, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" But he did not go any farther: he was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews." And when Jesus had been crucified, as I read to you this evening, both Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus came to Pilate, Joseph taking the lead, and begged the body of Jesus, and Nicodemus brought spices: John said it is the same who came to Jesus by night—the same man, still cautious, still careful, always considering how his action would affect his future. But they came at last to bury the body of Jesus.

This is not ancient history, for the principles of this Book are living principles, and the same conditions obtain to-day: still "the fear of man bringeth a snare."

I. I remind you first of all in a very simple way of SOME OF THE SPHERES OF LIFE IN WHICH MEN AND WOMEN ARE STILL HELD IN BONDAGE FROM THE FEAR OF MAN. We boast to-day of freedom; we are proud of the democracy; we declare that we have thrown all religious shackles aside, that we have broken all bands, and that we are the freest people of any age. And yet it is probable that there never was a day in the world's history when men were less free than they are to-day. If you look abroad you will find that a great majority of people are living more or less artificially; they are not allowing the soul within them to find full and free expression; they are held in bondage to the fear of man; they are just as much afraid of the Jews, or of those who represent the Jews, as was Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathaea.

You will find this fear of man operating sometimes *in the domestic realm*. I have seen Christian women living in terror of their husbands—perfectly respectable, perfectly amiable in their family relations, and yet having no freedom of soul; not free to pray, nor to teach the children, nor to follow after Jesus, because of the presence in the home of one who was out of sympathy. And you may be surprised to know it, but I have observed some husbands who were almost as much afraid of their wives as Elijah was of Jezebel when he suffered from an attack of nerves. I have seen Christian men crippled, handicapped, their lives made utterly useless because of the influence exerted over them by their wives who were not given up to the service of Christ. Such fear restrains the children in relation to their parents. God forgive the parents who ever make it hard for a little boy or a little girl to love and follow Jesus. Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." A heavy responsibility rests upon any father or mother who makes it difficult for their children to exercise their conscience toward God, and to do His will from the heart. And I have known parents who were afraid of their children. There is a great deal of "Bringing up father" nowadays outside the family of Mr. and Mrs. Jiggs. When I became pastor of this church there was one gentleman—he has gone home to glory now—who spoke in the strongest possible condemnation of that religious attitude which measured people by their social standing; he insisted that the poor man ought to be valued as highly as the rich in the house of God, that if there was one place in the world where these artificial distinctions should find no recognition it was in the church. And yet I lived to hear that man say that he did not believe

any man should be elected to the diaconate of this church until he had attained a certain social standing. Why? Not that he had changed, but because his children had become possessed of these foolish worldly notions. I call this evening upon Christian wives, and Christian husbands, and Christian parents, and Christian children to assert your liberty in Christ, and refuse absolutely to be brought into bondage by the fear of anybody.

These regrettable conditions obtain *in business associations*. Again and again you will find men stifling their convictions, suppressing their own souls, because of certain business relationships: "Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews." My brother, why don't you stand up boldly in the office where you work and say, "I am a Christian seven days a week, and I am here to bear witness for Christ." There are times when you could do it; there are times when you ought to do it; there are times when you ought to preach Christ in the place where you work; and you know you ought to do it: the voice of the Spirit calls you; your own experience of God's abounding grace should drive you on; and yet you do not do it "for fear of" somebody. Our Brother McFaul was speaking to us this morning about carrying the gospel to our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens. We accord them the fullest liberty; they have a right to worship God as they see fit; and I hope we all believe that we have no right to fetter any man's conscience, however wrong we may believe his religion to be: he has a right to worship God as he will. But we are under obligation to bear witness to them; I am under obligation to say to every Roman Catholic that I can touch, "My brother, you do not need any priest but Jesus. It is your privilege to have direct access to the Throne of God through the one great High-Priest." The sacramentarianism of Rome is wrong and contrary to God's word, but there are multitudes of people who are afraid to say so for fear it would injure their business. Are we to withhold our testimony for Christ because we are associated in business with people of other religious persuasions who do not like it? Any association which shackles the conscience and muzzles the lips must be wrong. It is emphatically true *in religious circles*, that many are influenced by "fear of the Jews," and many people are afraid of a kind of religious ostracism. Do you know why a great number of young ministers, and others who are not particularly young, are following the Modernist School in their teaching? It is "for fear of the Jews." It is the same principle. Many men are departing from the truth of the Bible and are preaching anything and everything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, not because they have changed their views from personal investigation of the Scripture; but because it is the popular thing, and because it is unpopular to preach that men are sinners and that they must repent, and believe, and turn to God or be lost. Everywhere to-day that terror seems to be taking possession of men. As Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came to beg the body of Jesus, there are people to-day who will express their sympathy for what they think to be a lost cause, but only privately where no one will object. In all denominations to-day the devil is using this emotion of fear to shackle and to muzzle men, to hold them back from giving a clear testimony to the power of divine grace. I wonder sometimes how some devout people manage comfortably to submit to their church's giving a testimony that is exactly contrary to the truth they believe. I borrowed an old-fashioned hymn-book belonging to a certain denomination; it was published in 1894. There is one section in that hymn-book, "Warnings and Invitations"; and how full of the gospel it is! I read it last night with

glowing heart—it is full of the cross of Christ, and the blood of the Lord Jesus, and the abounding grace of God. Then there is another section in that hymn-book under the heading, "Full Salvation"; and many of the glorious hymns of Charles Wesley are printed there, glorifying Jesus as the incarnate God, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the divine Saviour. And as I read them, I said, "I do not wonder they have a new hymn-book. How would it be possible for a congregation in churches of that denomination to-day to sing those glorious hymns when there is so little of the doctrine of the blood of Christ taught? Why is it that men and women do not rise up in protest and say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, and I will not submit to hear His Deity denied, and His authority impugned." I will dare to mention again those printed pamphlets of the Methodist Church on the Second Coming of Christ, issued under the authority of the Department of Evangelism and Social Service. They ought to have provoked a storm of protest; they should have shaken that church to its foundation. I know of nothing so anti-Christian ever being published by a so-called Christian church, denying the authority of God's Word, and the truth that the Lord is coming again, and utterly discrediting the whole Bible. Surely multitudes of Methodists believe the opposite. And yet it is accepted, and nobody protests. Why? "For fear of the Jews;" it is because of the terror of a great organization. "Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews." It is just as bad in the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America to-day. It seems to me that the Baptist Denomination in some quarters officially aspires to lead the whole world in its apostasy from the truth; for by subtle manipulation and organization they seek to make it impossible for men who still love the Lord Jesus, to bear witness for Him. The same movement is on here, although not to the same extent.

But I am appealing to you this evening, to every lover of the Lord Jesus, to insist upon liberty, and to "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." What terrible results have followed from this moral and spiritual cowardice on every hand—drifting with the tide, allowing things to become worse and worse until it becomes increasingly difficult to stem the tide of unbelief and worldliness in our churches! If only God would put His fear in our hearts, so that fearing Him we should fear none other; if godly professors in our colleges would boldly stand for that Book, and not only stand for the Book but stand against everybody who attempts to mutilate it: instead of that, it is left to people outside to do the business; hardly ever do you find a protest from those who are within.

II. Well; Is THERE ANY CURE? Is THERE ANY REMEDY FOR THIS KIND OF THING? There is only one that I know of: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; and not until we so fear the Lord that we are afraid to offend Him, or to grieve Him, shall we have the courage to stand against enemies of the Truth.

Let me appeal to any one here who is unconverted. A certain man said the other day, according to a report I read, that the time had passed when it was possible to frighten people into being Christians. You must woo them with love. Well, blessed be God! there is enough in the gospel to do that: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved

us, and sent his Son; to be the propitiation for our sins." The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to break our hearts; but remember, Joseph of Arimathaea saw Him die and remained silent; Nicodemus, I doubt not, heard His great cry, "It is finished," and saw Him bow His head and give up the ghost, yet he remained in hiding: he did not step forward and say, "I will die with Him;" he let Him die without breaking his silence "for fear of the Jews;" and only when He was dead did they come and beg His body.

But, my friends, the difficulty is that we have become so hardened with the deceitfulness of sin that it takes a lot to break our hearts: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" What are you going to do with the man who breaks the heart of his wife and mother, and tramples all holy affection under his feet, and seems determined to go right over the precept? How are you going to appeal to him? It is characteristic of the wicked that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." There are men who say, "I am not afraid of God," but they are afraid of everything and everybody else. These brave men who boast that they have no fear of God before their eyes, are among the greatest of all cowards: it is not difficult to frighten them.

My brother, *every wise man is afraid of God*: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." We none of us begin to be wise until we are afraid of God: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire." His judgments are abroad in the earth to-day: He is judging nations; and the day will surely come when He will judge individuals, and when we shall have to give an account for the deeds done in the body; and if we have no defence we do well to be afraid of that great and terrible day of the Lord. Wise men have always been afraid. What made Joseph say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" It was the fear of God that restrained him. "Noah . . . moved with fear prepared an ark to the saving of his house." I beg of you to be afraid of God, and then you need be afraid of no one else. That is what Jesus said: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." I freely acknowledge that I am so much afraid that I would not dare to speak to-night if I were without a refuge; my sins are so many, the record of my life is so black, that I should be terrified at the thought of standing before God if I did not know that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth me from all sin." And if you do not know that I conjure you in the name of the Lord to settle that matter first; and then, when you are right with Him, you need not be afraid of anybody else.

Let us who are Christians be afraid to offend Him, afraid to grieve Him, afraid to ignore the authority of Scripture. For it is like ignoring an alarm clock; if you do not get up when it goes off, after a while you will not hear it. I have heard of a man who worked in a boiler-making shop where they riveted boilers. One day after he had had his lunch he lay down in the boiler upon which he had been working and he overslept himself. The other men began riveting and hammering away, but it did not disturb him; he slept on. By and by one of his fellow-workmen had to come to him and shake him to waken him up. I have heard men say who worked in noisy factories that they cannot work when the machinery is stopped: they get so accustomed to the noise that they cannot work com-

fortably when the machinery is stopped. And if you neglect the voice of conscience, the time will come when you will have become so accustomed to its admonitions that you cannot hear it if you want to. Did you ever listen to hear a clock tick? Sometimes you think it has stopped: you go over and put your ear to it because you have become so accustomed to its regular tick that you cannot hear it when you listen for it. And that is the difficulty with many people who go to church. You have come here year after year, but still you have not yielded to Christ; while some others are converted the first time they come. You get so used to hearing the Word of the Lord, and to rejecting it, that at last it has no authority over you. Let us be afraid to disobey when God's Word summons us to duty.

Some of you have been facing the question of baptism for some time, perhaps for years. You do not doubt that what you saw to-night is in strict accord with the teaching of Scripture. Do you not love the Lord Jesus? "Yes, I believe I do," you answer. Have you not by faith appropriated the death and burial and resurrection of Christ, as yours? "Yes." Then why don't you obey His command and by baptism proclaim your union with Him in death and resurrection? Is it a case of putting it off? Let us be afraid to put off our obedience to Christ.

I could not have brought you a simpler word than I have brought you this evening; and I wish we might now in the presence of God resolve that we will put Him first; and that we will be so afraid to walk contrary to His will that we will make that the supreme consideration of our lives, and knowing His will we will do it no matter what it costs: if it means breaking our friendships; if it has to disturb our business; if we find difficulty in our own home; if it means severing our church connection—whatever it may mean, we will put Jesus Christ first, and we will be afraid to grieve His Holy Spirit. If that were done to-night, we should have a great revival here and now.

Let me appeal to those who have long considered their relationship to Christ, but who have never made any profession of faith in Him—I summon you in His Name to-night to come out on His side. I want to know whether you will do it? Appeal to the heroic? Yes, indeed; our Lord Jesus has plenty of room for you; He will give you every possible chance to display the valor that wins the Victoria Cross. Is not that the kind of service you want? We did not appreciate the man in the days of the war who was so brave that he preferred to stay at home with his mother! We had a kind of contempt for able-bodied young men who were unwilling to assume their full responsibility as citizens of this empire; but we had the greatest admiration for men of the quality of those whose names appear on that Tablet, and of the three hundred whose names appear on yonder Roll of Honor. We had not a solitary conscript go from this church; and when conscription came in there was only one eligible man left in the church to be conscripted,—and he by political means secured exemption, and later became one of the leaders of that movement which disrupted the church but which also set us free; he was brave enough for that, but he would not go to war.

O my friends, the Lord Jesus wants men, full-grown men.

"We are poor sinners,
And nothing at all."

but He can make great soldiers of us. I invite you to a hard service, not to

a dainty afternoon tea, not to membership in a social club; but to join the ranks of the army of the Lord for real service at the front. The Lord Jesus calls for men and women who will speak boldly for Him in defiance of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That is the kind of converts the church needs; that is the kind of surrender our Lord Jesus wants. He will save you by His abounding grace.

Is there any one who will confess Him now, who will say, "I want that Saviour for my Saviour; I want Him to be my Captain; I want to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth?" Is there any man or woman here this evening who has never made confession of Christ before, will you do it now? Let not "the fear of the Jews" or the fear of this congregation, or the fear of anybody deter you this evening.

I am going to give every Christian here a chance to show his colours to-night. I do not mean church members merely; but every man, and woman, and boy, and girl, who is resolved with God's help from this forward to put Jesus Christ first in everything—in his pleasure, in his business, in his religious relationships, in his family, in all his relationships—and to be true to Him if it costs him his very life, how many will do that? speaking openly of Him wherever His Spirit leads you so to do?—will you stand up?

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Dr. Riley's Visit. How rapidly those eight days passed! Every service came to us as a Bethel experience with the ladder and the angels, and Heaven was very near. Many will remember Dr. Riley's visit as a time of divine visitation. A large number were converted, others were enriched in their spiritual life, and hundreds were inspired with a deeper love for the Word of God. We are grateful for Dr. Riley's great contribution to our spiritual progress and enjoyment as a church, and for his faithful gospel ministry to the unsaved. We shall follow him in his great ministry in Minneapolis and throughout the United States with most prayerful interest, and shall hope that he may come to us again.

What Jarvis St. Church Stands For. Jarvis St. Church believes the Bible to be the Word of God, and therefore that it is true; and that its principles may be translated into speech, and conduct, and character. We have a conviction that a church founded and fashioned after the principles of the New Testament, composed of believing, regenerated, baptized, persons, who follow Christ in obedience to God's Word as interpreted by the Holy Ghost, is still a possibility. We believe the Holy Spirit is here to administer the affairs of the church in behalf of Christ Who is our Head; that He requires believers to put the glory of God in the salvation of men before every other consideration in life. We believe the gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and that the church's chief business is to bear witness to that fact.

There is a growing conviction on the part of Jarvis St. people that God is leading us out to a wider ministry. We desire first of all to be a witness to the power of the gospel in the heart of this great city; to prove that any company of people who believe in God's Son, and God's Word, and will witness to their faith in the power of the Holy Ghost, can be used of God. We hope therefore that Jarvis St. will become increasingly active in evangelistic effort, and that while individuals must occasionally rest, the church as such will be always at work twelve months of the year.

Only Two More Sundays. From the date of this issue to the end of our church year only two Sundays remain. In many ways it has been a great year. We have had many additions including, at this writing, more baptisms than last year. A spirit of unity has characterized our church life which is both "good and pleasant." The prayer-life of the church is becoming stronger and deeper, and more and more we are being taught that prayer is the very breath of life to us as a church.

Financially our record is full of encouragement. We have no rich people in our membership, but many whose spirit God has made willing. New members, however, do not always immediately realize how necessary it is that every one should bear his share of financial responsibility; but when the spirit is willing they soon learn. For the last three months there has been a great deal of sickness, and doubtless some have been unable to give all they desired; but it is hoped that every member of the church will endeavour to make up any arrears by Sunday, March 25th, or at the latest by Friday, the 30th, so as to avoid even the possibility of closing the year with a deficit.

To non-members who worship with us we venture this word: During the last church year—April 1921-March 1922—many of the Lord's people not actually in membership with us generously assisted us to weather the storm. Our revenue from this source this year has been much less than last. We have attempted at least one expensive enterprise, and that is *The Gospel Witness*; and nothing we have tried to do has brought us greater encouragement. But *The Witness* is purely a missionary enterprise and is far from self-supporting. We believe the Lord will raise us up more friends as our needs increase. We do not now beg, but praise God for what He has made possible. At the same time we frankly tell our friends and helpers that **we need a good deal of money to balance our books in The Witness Fund by the end of March.** If the many who have so generously helped us through the year have exhausted their compartment of the Lord's treasury please join us in praying that the stream may flow from other reservoirs. We do not doubt that somehow from somewhere our Jarvis St. Millionaire will supply the necessary money to close the year with a balance on the right side.

The Bible Lecture on "The Gospel in Samuel—David a Type of Christ," Tuesday, 8.15. Prayer 7.45 to 8.15. The lecture delivered Feb. 27th, "The Gospel in Ruth," may be obtained at the church office.

The Junior Service will be held as usual, Wednesday, 7.15 p.m.

Young Women's Mission Circle, which was cancelled last Monday evening, owing to Dr. Riley's meetings, will be held Monday evening, March 19th, at 8 o'clock, in the church parlour. Mrs. E. A. Brownlee will be the speaker.

Let us pray with increasing earnestness for the interests of the Church of Christ everywhere. Remember therefore the prayer meetings Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock.

JARVIS STREET CHURCH DIRECTORY.

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The Church Calendar

Sunday. For week beginning Sunday, March 18th, 1923.

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

10.30—**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.

Tuesday—7.45 to 8.15—Prayer, followed by ninth Bible lecture on "How to Study the Bible—the Gospel in Samuel."

Wednesday—7.15. Junior Service.

Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock, Prayer-meeting.

The Parliament Street Branch, 250 Parliament Street—Sunday: 3.00—Bible School. 7.00 Evangelistic Service, conducted by W. L. McKay.

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