

# 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

UNEQUALLY YOKED.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis St. Church, Toronto, Sunday evening, Nov. 12th, 1922.

(Stenographically reported.)

"And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.—I. Kings 22: 30.

I SPOKE to you three or four weeks ago from this same story of Ahab's attempt to possess himself of Ramoth-gilead, and of his invitation to Jehoshaphat, the good king of Judah, to join forces in that enterprise. I want this evening to bring home another aspect of the same story. Let me in just a few sentences rehearse the history of it so that you may have it clearly before you.

Jehoshaphat went down to visit Ahab, the king of Israel; and while there Ahab asked his co-operation in an attempt to take Ramoth-gilead out of the hand of the king of Syria. Jehoshaphat consented; but suggested that they enquire of the Lord. Ahab summoned his four hundred prophets, and with one voice they said, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?" to which he replied, "There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." However, Jehoshaphat's counsel prevailed; and Micaiah was sent for—the messenger counselling him to let his word be in agreement with the word of the four hundred prophets of Baal; to which the good prophet answered, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." And when he came he first of all said the same thing, "Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Then Ahab with irony in his speech said, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?" Then Micaiah delivered the true prophecy, declaring that if he attempted to wrest Ramoth-gilead from Syria, he would

fail in the attempt. Ahab then commanded, "Put this fellow—the faithful prophet—in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace."

Then follows the text: "I will disguise myself," said Ahab, "and enter into the battle." But to Jehoshaphat he said, "Put thou on thy robes." So he disguised himself and entered into the battle. Now the extraordinary thing about this text is that it tells the story of a fellowship of two opposites. Of Ahab, it is said, "There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up:" and of Jehoshaphat it is said that he "walked in the first ways of David, his father." Here is one man who has sold himself "to work wickedness;" and another man of whose life in general it is said, that he walked in the ways of the Lord: and the two men are engaged in the same enterprise, fighting the same battle, with the same objective. I want you to analyze that story with me this evening.

I. First of all, you have here A DETERMINED SINNER, SET ON A DESPERATE ENTERPRISE. Ahab is determined that at all costs he will have Ramoth-gilead. If you study his character you will find that he was a very covetous man. This is a man who set covetous eyes upon Naboth's vineyard; and procured it at the price of blood. And now he sets his heart upon Ramoth-gilead; and he is inspired to this desperate adventure by his covetous desire to possess Ramoth-gilead, by the master evil passion of his nature: by the one thing upon which all the energies of his life are concentrated—his greed of gain; and that leads him at last to do battle against God, and against all the moral forces of the universe. He says, "I will have it if I have to fight my way through. No one shall deny me the possession of the prize upon which my heart is set."

Now there are many people like that, who have set their hearts upon some forbidden thing; and they are determined that they will have it no matter what it costs. They will enter into the battle; and they will take possession of the thing their hearts desire. Sometimes it is not a flagrantly evil thing. There are few men who do that which is admittedly unlawful; but, generally speaking, the forbidden thing is of another character. For sometimes a man's besetting sin is his pride. He resolves that he will be honoured; that he will obtain a place of pre-eminence among his fellows. In business, it may be, the man desires to be the most prosperous of his kind. Men say he is after gold; and yet if you knew his own heart, perhaps that is but incidental to his desires. The main passion of his life is to be hailed as the chief—as the successful man. It may be that he desires the first place in the profession to which he belongs. He is fired with the passion of Haman: honour after honour was piled upon him; yet said he, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

Read the story of British politics to-day, in illustration of my principle. It is said that certain of the leaders of British political life have grown weary of playing second fiddle to Lloyd George. Well, there are a great many people who never like to play second fiddle to anybody. They like to be the whole orchestra, if possible. There are many who are seized with that passion in the Christian church; who are, indeed, quite like "Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence." There are men who having once embarked upon an evil course, will cut their way right through to the end, rather than humble themselves, and say, "I am wrong." Have you not seen men blinded by their own pride, simply galloping to the precipice because they will not say before

God and man, "I have made a mistake. I am wrong." Ahab was a man of that order. I do not know what the particular master passion of your life may be; but I do say that when a man comes under the dominion of any such evil power he is likely to enter into the battle and fight it out at last with God.

Now Ahab's desire for Ramoth *caused him to harden his heart against the Word of the Lord*. He could not bear to hear Micaiah preach because, he says, "He does not prophesy good concerning me but evil." I think if you had got into his confidence he would have said, "You know whenever I hear that man speak I feel uncomfortable for a whole week afterward. Somehow or another, he has a way of getting at my heart and conscience, and making me uncomfortable everywhere. There is another prophet whom I hate, that man Elijah: I cannot bear to hear anything from his lips."

I want you to follow me in the discussion for just a moment of a very profound principle. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" said they to Peter on the day of Pentecost. And Peter said, "Repent!" He did not say, Believe. He said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." As a matter of fact, he knew that it would be impossible for them to believe without repentance.

Micaiah said to Ahab, "You have set your heart upon Ramoth; if you go you will never return: if you are resolutely set on having your own way, and doing your own will, O king, that way lies death—utter disaster." Now, in the nature of the case, it was impossible for Ahab to believe that word without repenting and turning right about face, and saying to Jehoshaphat, "We will not go." Do you know that some people do not believe because they will not repent? You cannot believe without repenting. Jesus did not come to save us in our sins, but from our sins; and God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you by turning away every one of you from his iniquity. We cannot believe until we repent; and so long as our hearts are set upon some evil course that we are determined to pursue at all costs, there is no prophet in the world whose message can find entrance to our hearts. Elijah was powerless to move Ahab. Micaiah's preaching had no effect upon Ahab. All the prophets of the Lord whose blood was shed because of their testimony, had no effect upon him. It was impossible that he should believe without repenting.

And, my friends, you have flattered yourselves perhaps that your difficulty is an intellectual one. If I were to ask you why you were not a Christian, you would say, "I have read so much; and the seeds of doubt have been sown in my mind; and I have come to question the authority of the Bible. I do not know whether it is the Word of the Lord; and I cannot believe." I want to tell you just as kindly as I know how to do it, that you are all wrong in that assumption: the difficulty is not in the intellect, certainly not primarily; it is in the will. And the moment we are willing to lay down our wills to Jesus Christ, and accept direction from God—that moment we can believe; and until we do that we never can. And one of the weaknesses, it does seem to me, of the modern message, is that the note of repentance is almost lost from the modern pulpit. But you cannot believe in the New Testament sense without repentance; because believing in the Lord Jesus means not only leaving my sins upon Him, where God has placed them; but it means accepting Him as Lord, and submitting my whole life to His dominion. And until I am willing to receive Him as Lord, I cannot trust Him. I cannot believe; but repentance paves the way.

And yet, strangely enough, *this desperate sinner was a very religious man.* He had no less than four hundred preachers all his own! And when it takes four hundred preachers to keep one man straight, you can depend upon it that he is naturally disposed to be a little bit crooked. But Ahab had four hundred prophets to tell him what to do. He was a very religious man.

And most people desire some religious sanction for what they do. If I were to come to you to-night personally, and say, "Are you a Christian?" it may be that you would turn upon me, and say, "Well, what do you think I am, a heathen? I was born in a Christian home; I was born in a Christian country. Certainly I am religious." But Ahab had a religion that would allow him to have his own way. Now mark that! Ahab would never hear a preacher who disturbed his peace the second time, if he could help it: as far as he had power, he cut his head off; and it was not Ahab's fault that there was any voice left on earth to tell him the truth. He was religious; but he desired and determined to have a religion that was agreeable to his natural desires; a religion that required no repentance; no change of life, no right about face, no submission to God; and so he had no less than four hundred preachers who always made it a point of finding out what Ahab wanted to do; and then amiably told him to do it.

And that is a very popular kind of religion to-day. A lot of people will have that sort of religion or none at all. I remember in the beginning of my ministry being a pastor in a small town, or it was a village rather than a town. There were, I think, four churches in the place. There was one young man there who sang in the choir; he worked in the drug store. His name was Clarence. The choir was in one corner of the church. Clarence was there every Sunday for a little while. I said nothing to him; but I found that gradually he was working his way down the side of the church: it seemed every Sunday he would get a little farther back. One Sunday night he was sitting in the centre of the church two or three seats from the back. At the close of the service we had an after-meeting, and nearly everybody stayed. It was a little church; but it was full; and Clarence was in the middle and could not get out—rather an awkward situation. I think that is why some young people like the end seats. Well, Clarence was in the middle, and could not get past the people without inconvenience. So he stayed, until by and by when things began to get a little too warm for him, he got up—I remember it so well—and stepped over the back of the seats, and went out. Next Sunday he was not there; and the next Sunday he was not there. So I called in the store one day a little while after that, and said, "Clarence, I have not seen you for a while." He said, "You need not think that yours is the only church in town." "O," I said, "I do not think anything of the sort; but you used to be one of my regular hearers; and I am a little curious to know why you left us." "Well, I will tell you if you want me to be frank. This is a pretty dull place in the winter time; and," he said, "there is a dance up here in the town hall every Saturday night; and I like to go to it." "What has that got to do with your coming to church?" I enquired. He said, "You do not believe in that kind of thing." I said, "You never heard me say anything about it." "Well no," he said, "not in so many words, but you have a way of speaking that makes a fellow feel mighty uncomfortable, without saying anything about it in so many words. Now," he said, "I want to tell you I have gone there, and I have danced until two or three o'clock Sunday morning, and then I have gone to some other church in this town and have felt perfectly comfortable. And I am going to the church that will just leave me alone."

And there are many people in Toronto doing the same thing. This old Book is up-to-date. Human nature is just the same: a religion that will leave him alone, that will require no change of heart; nor change of life, is the religion the natural man wants.

II. Secondly, Here Was A DISGUISE THAT WAS REALLY A REVELATION. "I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle." Most men assume a disguise when pursuing the forbidden thing. There are very few people who will openly avow their determination to set their wills against God. Did you ever hear a man say, "I know that that thing is wrong; I know that it is contrary to the law of God; I know that I shall have to do battle with God to get it; but I will have it somehow"? Men do not talk like that. They disguise themselves and enter into the battle. They disguise themselves, and their sins; and they attempt to justify the forbidden thing. They say, "After all it is not a bad thing. Ramoth-gilead is ours. I ought to have it,—it is perfectly legitimate—and I will have it; but I will put on a disguise while I get it." And yet his disguise, I say, was a revelation. It showed that he was a worshipper of Baal. It showed that he did not know God; because if he had known God, he would have said, "It is of no use to attempt to disguise myself from Him." "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Had he known God he would have said, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" He would have known that it was impossible to hide his sin from God. And so the truth was, that the thing that was at the root of Ahab's difficulty was this: he had no fear of God before his eyes. He was not afraid of God. "I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle."

But I shall have to pass that by without further elaboration, because before I close this evening I have another duty to perform. We have considered the one character, Ahab.

Now, side by side with that we have another character, Jehoshaphat, the good king of Judah, bent upon the same business. And in him we may see A GOOD MAN IN A BAD COMPANY! Jehoshaphat was a man who had great respect for the Word of the Lord. If you read his story you will find that he honoured God's Word: he honoured the institutions of religion: he honoured the altars of Jehovah: he broke down the high places that had been reared to Baal within his own kingdom: he sought by every means in his power, within the limits of his own kingdom, to lead his people to God. And that is a fine thing, when you can say that of any man—that he had a profound respect for the Word of the Lord; that he listened to it; that, like David, he enquired of the Lord. He never embarked upon any adventure without first of all enquiring of the Lord, asking for the divine counsel, for the way of the divine purpose. He was a good man; and his name is honoured in the record of the kings of Judah.

Then further, observe, that he was true and loyal to his convictions—now mark this!—*he was true and loyal to his convictions within the realm in which he was supreme*: at home, he was king: within the limits of the kingdom of Judah, Jehoshaphat's word was law; he made his own environment; he created his own atmosphere; he led his people valiantly. He was a true man of God in the place where he was king.

There are many people like that. I have known men who were true in their own businesses: within the limits of their own office their word was supreme; they had the power to fashion their surroundings according to their will; and there was a distinctively Christian atmosphere about the whole business. In their home, it was just the same—family worship was observed; God was honoured and exalted before the children. Within the realm where his supremacy was recognized, Jehoshaphat was true to God; but *he was a man of compromise in relation to his equals*. Now mark the difference! Do you see the distinction? In the place where he had no difficulty in making his own surroundings, creating his own atmosphere, determining the course of the currents of life, Jehoshaphat was true; but in the sphere of life where he found there was another will as strong as his, another name as honourable as his, another man whose prestige was equal to his own; then and there he allowed circumstances to mould him. Many a man is a hero in some situations, who is a coward in others. And when Jehoshaphat came into the company of Ahab, he could never say No. While in his heart desiring to walk in the ways of the Lord, he yet allowed Ahab to dominate his life. There are three instances on record in which this good man entered into partnership with evil men. The case before us: on another occasion when he joined affinity with Jehoram, king of Israel, for the invasion of Moab: and also when he went into partnership with Ahaziah for the building of ships to go to Tarshish for gold.

Do you see the application of my principle? *He only is a strong man who*

*makes his own atmosphere everywhere*; or who carries his atmosphere with him. He only is a strong man who can be true to God when everybody else is untrue. At home Jehoshaphat was wonderfully good: away from home, you will find him just a follower of Ahab, who had sold himself "to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord." I have known a number of people who are as orthodox as the Apostle Paul in their religious views when in company with orthodox people; and when they get away into the land of Israel among the Ahab's, and among the prophets of Baal, somehow or another they become apologists for the false prophets and drift with the tide.

Jehoshaphat did not do this, on this particular occasion. He insisted on hearing the Word of the Lord; but having heard the Word of the Lord, he was not strong enough to say to Ahab, "No, I will do God's will if the heavens fall." And when Ahab said, "I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on my robes," it was Jehoshaphat's opportunity. He ought to have said, "No sir, I am not going. God has spoken; and I stand with God. If you want to go to the battle, you will have to go alone: I am not going with you." Can you do that? Having taken one wrong step in even contemplating such a partnership, on such an enterprise, have you the courage to refuse to take the second step?

What is the weakness of the Church to-day? Just this!—you may call me a critic if you like; it will not be the first time—what is the weakness of the modern church to-day? That many a pulpit is doing the business of Tom Paine, and Robert Ingersoll, and Voltaire; and things are being preached in the name of the Lord, on the right hand and on the left, that would have shocked any Christian congregation even a generation ago. And there are men and women who sit in the pew and listen to it; not without inward protest, it is true, but at least they stay there and continue in partnership with Ahab.

And at the end of the day you find Jehoshaphat, notwithstanding his protest against the testimony of the prophets of Baal; notwithstanding his request that he should hear a word from the Lord; *you find Jehoshaphat treading in the course which the prophets of Baal had outlined for him, and keeping step with Ahab, battling against God.*

I have come to the place where I will have no fellowship with the man who denies the Deity of my Lord, no matter who he is. I have come to the place where I will not take the hand of a man as a Christian teacher, who denies the inspiration and authority of this Book, be he Baptist, Methodist, or anybody else. The time has come for Jehoshaphat to say to the Ahab's of our day, "I will not go to the battle in obedience to the prophets of Baal." I do believe a time is coming when God will call upon His people, in the terms of the teaching of the chapter I read this evening, to "come out from among them, and be ye separate." I am not talking to Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Anglicans, or Baptists: there is not one of us can throw stones at the other. There are Ahab's everywhere: there are prophets of Baal everywhere; but surely the day has dawned when it is necessary for the Jehoshaphats to hear the Word of the Lord, and say, "My old companions fare ye well. I have been associated with you for twenty years, or twenty-five years, or a life-time; but if you go in that direction, good bye sir, I am not going with you another step. I will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; but I will not follow the instructions of the prophets of Baal."

But somebody will say, "If Jehoshaphat goes to the battle, perhaps he will help things out a little bit. And after all, if I stay with this sceptical company, perhaps I can mould them to my liking." A young lady went with some others to Japan, to the International Sunday-school Convention. And when she got back she told me about what a lovely time they had had crossing the Pacific. She said they met a lot of most agreeable people on board. She said they had a dance every night—and she was known, of course, as a delegate to the Sunday-school Convention. And she said to me, "Do you not think, Mr. Shields, that we can be too narrow?" Did you notice the lesson I read to you to-night, where Paul said to the Corinthians, "Be ye also enlarged"—live the larger life. How? By lowering the standards? No! But by giving up and being separate, and shutting yourself up to God. Well, that is narrowness! This lady said, "Do you not think we can win people by going a little way with them?" Then she added, "On our trip across on many occasions I joined with the others in the evening dance. And one of the gentlemen on board, who was not a member of any church, or a professing Christian, said, 'You know, Miss

so-and-so, I like the kind of religion you have." And she enquired, "Don't you think, Mr. Shields, we might win people in such ways?" And I said, "Miss so-and-so, are you under the delusion that you were winning that man to Christ? Are you so blind that you cannot see that he was winning you, and that you were going in his way? You did not lift him up to your standard, he dragged you down to his."

Did Jehoshaphat change the course of the battle (by being there? Not at all! He offered a shield for Ahab; when Ahab said "I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes." And when Jehoshaphat had on all his royal robes, this brave Ahab crouched down behind him. "But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." Ahab knew that the darts would be aimed at the man in royal robes; therefore he said to Jehoshaphat, "You put on your robes; and I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle." What courtesy! What comradeship!

And when you enter into the battle in the same enterprise in which Ahab is engaged you only give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, you give a chance for every sinner in the city to hide behind you. That is what they do when they find you at the dance, or at the card-table, or in any questionable place of amusement, or in any doubtful business undertaking: they say, "It cannot be very bad because Mr. so-and-so is there; and he is a church member; and he is doing the same thing as I am." Thus the Ahab's justify themselves by the presence of Jehoshaphat. And in due course Jehu came to Jehoshaphat and said, because he had joined affinity with Ahab, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

And the sad part of it is, Jehoshaphat, good man as he was, not only joined with Ahab in this enterprise, but his son—remember!—his son, "did evil in the sight of the Lord." You wonder sometimes how it is that the children of some people do not turn out well. It is not always right to hold the parents responsible—you must remember that David had a son, Absalom—but I have never known yet a man of compromise whose children pursued a straight course. I have in my mind just now a man who is often in the public eye, and stands out as a very pillar of orthodoxy. I have known him for years; but in the councils of his brethren he invariably advises compromise, even where great principles are at stake. It is not surprising that not one of his children has become an outstanding leader for the Lord Jesus.

My brethren, are we going to be true? I do not know where many of you come from; but is it not time we as Christians, say, "We will not follow the prophets of Baal; we will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: we will not try to worship God in the temple of Baal, because Christ hath no concord with Belial!" It must be one thing or the other. Shall we do that to-night? O, if some Christian here to-night will do that, it may be that the blessing you have asked for will come: it may be that the salvation you have been longing for, in some directions, would come to other hearts, if you yourself would say, "I will have no more association with Ahab; but I will put Christ first in my life, in everything; and I will follow Him!" Who knows that if Jehoshaphat had said that, Ahab might have turned back too; and it may be that if some professing Christian here to-night will turn back from the battle, from all questionable pursuits and be out and out for God, this very night somebody else will follow your footsteps, and turn whole-heartedly to the Lord.

How many Christians are there here to-night who desire from this moment in the sight of God to rely upon the power of the Holy Ghost at all costs—to put Jesus first? I do not know what that may mean. It may disturb your church relationship; it may disturb your family relationship; it may disturb your business relationship; it may disturb all your social relationships, outside your family circle—it may mean nothing less than a revolution in your life, to put Christ first. But if you are willing to do that to-night, would you like to say so? Would you not like to say, "I am willing to go without the camp, bearing his reproach; I am willing to have my name cast out as evil; I am willing, like the man of the house, to be called Beelzebub; I am willing to be a fool for Christ's sake; I am willing to be anything or nothing, if only Christ may be magnified." Who will put Him first?

## CHURCH NEWS.

**The Bible Lecture.** Owing to the Pastor's out-of-town engagements, there has been no Bible Lecture for five weeks. The 10th and last lecture of the series for this season, which will continue the subject "The Gospel in Samuel—or David a Type of Christ," will be delivered Tuesday evening, April 24th. The complete series in printed form will then be in the church office, and may be obtained by calling there, or by mail:—Jarvis St. Church Office, 130 Gerrard St. East.

**Messages from the Pastor.** During the Pastor's absence, the same deep, spiritual tone has characterized the prayer-meetings. Members and friends have had their hearts warmed each service by a telegraph message from the Pastor. These messages have been filled with praise to God for His blessing upon the work in New York. Many have been converted, and scores of Christians have had their spiritual lives deepened, and have openly avowed that they will put Christ first in all things. Hallelujah!

It is interesting to note how God brings into harmony all consecrated effort put forth in His name. A young girl was converted through the **Open Air Work** of this church; was baptized and came into membership, but almost immediately had to leave the city and go to a small town in New Ontario where there was no sound of the Gospel, and only one other Christian, since deceased. A few weeks after this young believer left us, publication of **The Gospel Witness** began, and she called in the neighbors, who together with her own family, formed a congregation to whom she read the printed message week by week. As a result of this eight persons have been converted and five baptized. The son of the deceased believer has since given a house to be used as a Baptist Mission Hall, where under this young disciple's leadership church services, prayer-meetings, and Sunday School are regularly held, the sermon each week being from **The Witness**. Our Pastor is their Pastor; and these people, who, with one exception, have never seen Dr. Shields, love him and praise God for his ministry.

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### JARVIS STREET CHURCH DIRECTORY.

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### The Church Calendar

**Sunday.** For the week beginning Sunday, April 22, 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.

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

Wednesday—Junior Service—7.15.

Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock—Meeting for Prayer.

The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School, 3.00;

Evangelistic Service, conducted by Mr. W. L. McKay.

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