

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.

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

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

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No. 5

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

HOW TO RECEIVE A BLESSING.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday morning, June 10th, 1923.
(Stenographically Reported)

"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."—Hebrews 7:4

LAST Thursday evening I was requested by vote of the church to speak to you on the subject of Christian stewardship, with special reference to the privilege of tithing, in its relation to the teaching of the New Testament. I hope you will not be afraid of the subject. It is very important that we should approach the Scripture in a right way. There is no reason for any believer to be afraid of the will of God. We should come to the Scriptures, not to discover what pleasures, what joys, are prohibited, but to ascertain what delights are commanded. The highest expression of the will of God is to be found in His supreme Gift—the gift of His Son at the place called Calvary. And it is inconceivable that He Who thus, planned our highest good at the greatest possible cost to Himself should ever plan other than our highest joy. And therefore, as we come to the Word of God to learn His will with respect to any subject, we should remember that we are coming to a mine of gold from which we are to be enriched, not to something by which we are to be impoverished: we are coming to the King's treasury out of which He delights to bestow tokens of love upon His children; to the royal banquetting table where our hungry souls are to be fed delicately; to the well-spring that springeth up unto everlasting life; to the King's armoury wherein we shall find the divine panoply, that we may be armed against the evil day; we are turning our eyes to the light-house that we may follow its light of direction. You may multiply metaphors, but whatever figure you employ, be sure only of this, that it represents safety and satisfaction. That is the plan and purpose of God.

And in this matter of Christian stewardship, we should come with the desire to discover and to understand the secret of peace, and progress, and

prosperity, and abounding joy, in the Christian life. Be assured, God needs nothing from you or from me. Let us have a clear conception of His greatness, of His sovereignty. Let us hear Him say: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." God can supply His own need. He has no need of your silver, or of your gold; He has no need of your talents, how great soever they may be. He could, did He so will it, accomplish all His purposes without your co-operation and mine. I have no patience whatever with that paltry conception of God which says, "If you do not do your part, God cannot get His work done." It is not true; God will get His work done whether you do it or not. And if you and I do not fulfil our mission, if we do not allow ourselves to be brought by His grace into co-operation with Him, then we shall miss the blessing of participation in the progress of the kingdom of God. But God's work will be done beyond a shadow of a doubt. It is an act of condescension on His part that He has so planned His work as to include us in it, that He has permitted us to have a part in His work. Just as you see a father building something in his garden, and his little boy carries a piece of wood or fetches a hammer, or does some other thing, that he may have a part in it, so the Lord permits us to have a place in the building of His temple, because we require the blessing that is to be derived from doing it.

Now, I say, that is the attitude in which we ought to come. And if anybody should say at the outset, "O now, the Pastor is going to talk about giving, and if I had known it I would not have come"—I do not think there are any here like that, but if there should be one individual here this morning, let me tell you, I am not going to talk about giving at all; I am going to speak about receiving. And I want to make it plain to such an one that until he learns to take his place in God's plan and recognize God in this matter of Christian stewardship, he is shutting off from his life avenues of indescribable blessing. It is as necessary to the Christian that he should recognize God in temporal affairs, that he should give as it is necessary that he should pray and study the Bible. And I venture the assertion that you may search the world around, and you will never anywhere find one single man who fails to recognize his privilege in this great matter of giving to God—no, rendering back to God that which we have first received at His hand, who is at the same time bearing fruit to the glory of God.

I. I begin with a word or two about the tithe in the Old Testament. As this sermon will be printed to-morrow, I intend to print all the Scriptures relating to the tithe, so that you will have them before you at the end of the sermon, that you may make a study of them for yourself.

What was the origin of the tithe? The first reference to tithing in Scripture is the case of Abraham when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings, and he met that mysterious personage, Melchisedec, the King of righteousness, and King of peace. He is described as one who was without descent, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." We do not know who he was; I believe He was an Old Testament revelation of Jesus Himself. He was not wholly human; for he was without beginning of days, or end of years; he had neither father nor mother; but abideth a priest continually. And when Abraham, the great patriarch met Him, instinctively he recognized Him as his Lord; he bowed before Him, and received the blessing of Melchisedec; and of the spoils of war he yielded a tenth to his superior. And that incident is used in the chapter which I read to you this morning to show the superiority of the Priesthood of Jesus over the priesthood of Levi. It is said that Jesus did not come of the tribe of Levi: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." But

there is a sense, that Scripture teaches us, in which Levi, who was commanded to receive tithes, paid tithes himself to One Who was greater than he, and recognized that greater and abiding Priesthood, namely, the Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Himself.

The next reference to the giving of a tenth is the story of Jacob, when, you remember, at Bethel he saw "the ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." And there he registered a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on . . . of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Then, again, when the law was given before the children of Israel advanced into the promised land, it was required that every person in Israel should give a tenth of all they had to the Lord—not that they should give it, but that they should render it to Him, that they should recognize God, recognize His proprietorship by yielding to Him that which was His own. And when they came into the land of promise, the land was divided by lot to the various tribes. But Levi, the tribe of which the priests were chosen, was given no lot at all; he had no portion whatever in that land of promise; but his portion was with his brethren. And so of the tithes which they brought, part was given to the Levites; they were commanded to take tithes of their brethren. But, on the other hand, the Levites were themselves required to tithe the tithe. They had to give a tenth, or yield back to God a tenth of everything they received. That was the law of the tithe.

You will find also in certain periods of Israel's history the people of God failed to yield their tenth. The familiar passage in Malachi asks the question: "Will a man rob God?" And the answer is that the people of that day had robbed God by withholding their tithe; that is to say, it was not a gift, it was merely a recognition of God's part in all they had: it was not theirs at all. That was recognized by the Levitical law. You will find it in the twenty-seventh chapter of Leviticus, and it was there stipulated that the tenth of all, whether it should be good or bad, belonged to the Lord. And if any man would redeem the tenth, the tenth of the product of the field, or of the flock,—if he desired to keep it to himself, then he must add thereto one-fifth. God said, "That is my property, and if you want it, I put my price upon it. If you keep back that tenth, then you must add one-fifth, and convert it into money, and thus produce your offering." It was not a gift at all; it was God's property. And any man or woman, under that Old Testament dispensation, who used the tenth, is described as a robber, as being dishonest, as not being fair with God.

And there are at least two instances in the Old Testament where a great spiritual revival was characterized by the renewal of the recognition of God in the matter of the tenth. When the great passover was declared in the days of Hezekiah, when the people came together to observe the law, when they turned with one heart back to God to do what God had commanded them to do, one of the elements of that revival was a renewal of the payment of the tithe; the people brought the tithes into the storehouses. And then in the days of Nehemiah when they began to read the law, they discovered that it was written in the law that "the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever." And so "they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude"; they cleansed the congregation when they saw the teaching of the law. Then they discovered that there was a man who was allied with Tobiah, who had prepared for himself a chamber in the courts of the house of God. But Nehemiah commanded that they cleanse the Lord's treasuries and bring thither again the vessels of the house of God. And then the people

began to bring their tithes; that great religious awakening was characterized by the payment of the tithe.

Now, that is the Old Testament standard. God demanded there a recognition to the extent of the tenth. Let us carry this into the New Testament, to see what relation the teaching of the Old has to the New in this respect.

II. You will remember, in the first place, that our Lord expressed approval of the tenth when He said to the scribes and Pharisees: "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith,—you have been giving your tenth but you have failed to do the other thing—these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Now, I said, the Lord Jesus approved of the giving of the tithe. But what, in principle, did the tithe involve? It was first practised as they entered into the promised land: Now that land was given to them by promise; it was God's gift; everything they had came from God. And the Lord simply stipulated, "You shall recognize Me by setting aside one tenth of all that you get from my hand, that you may acknowledge to yourselves, and proclaim to the world that I am the Proprietor, that I am God, and beside me there is none else." It was not that God needed the tenth. He could have had the ten-tenths if He had wanted it; it was all His. But He demanded that they should voluntarily yield a tenth as a recognition of God.

Well, then, there should be some recognition of God under New Testament principles, surely, as well as under the Old. Where do you find that the New Testament sets in any respect a lower standard than the Old? Somebody says, "The law was done away." How was it done away? "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And the objective standard of the law was taken from the tables of stone and written upon the fleshly tables of the heart; the Spirit of God was given in order that the objective standard might be realized by those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." But surely in material things there should be a recognition of God under the New Testament dispensation equal to that which was observed under the Old.

There came a rich young ruler to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And you are familiar with His reply: "Keep the commandments." And he said, "Which?" Jesus enumerated them, and he said, "All these have I kept from my youth up." And Jesus said, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich." Why? He refused to recognize the Lordship of Jesus over his property. He wanted eternal life, he wanted "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," but he wanted to keep all that he had here, too. And Jesus put him to the test, and demanded in the material realm the first place as a condition of an acceptance as a disciple.

Come now into the post-Pentecostal days. What do you find in the second chapter of Acts? After the Holy Spirit was given, people recognized the authority of their ascended Lord: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." There was an immediate recognition of the Proprietorship of Jesus Christ, of His absolute Lordship in material affairs. Then, if you come into the fourth chapter, there is a very solemn word: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the

word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." I point out to you that when they prayed, and the Holy Ghost came upon that congregation, there was a recognition on the part of every one of the fact that Jesus was the owner of everything they had; they consecrated all they had to His service—not only a tenth but everything.

And then, did you ever hear a sermon on the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles? I never did. You know the story in those opening verses of a man who came and laid some money at the apostles' feet. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God? And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Did you ever hear a sermon preached from those passages? I never did. Why? Because we are nearly all afraid of them. But if there is anything that those verses teach, it is this: that God takes account of our giving, and that He will not be trifled with, and that in this solemn matter we have to be true to God and yield to Him that which is His own.

I have not time this morning, but I want you, at your convenience, to read the eighth and ninth chapters of II Corinthians, which are full of teaching on this matter of Christian stewardship. They are too long for me to attempt to expound; but I ask you to take those chapters and prayerfully read them before the Lord; pray that the Holy Ghost, who is concerned with the matter of giving, may lead us that we may understand the teaching of those scriptures.

You can see from the chapter I read to you this morning that this giving of the tenth is carried forward into the New Testament. We are told that before the law was given Abraham met Melchisedec, that he recognized him in the giving of the tenth. "The scripture . . . preached before the gospel unto Abraham"—Abraham had the Gospel in principle, as we have, and it was by faith Abraham was saved. Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, and this special act of his is referred to in the New Testament as a recognition of His superiority.

Now, surely, it must follow that we cannot recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ by giving less than a tenth, can we? Does anybody here say, "We are delivered from the obligation to give a tenth. The Gospel rendered the ceremonial law obsolete." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"—does that

still obtain? "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not steal"—does anybody say that the Decalogue has been rendered obsolete by the Gospel? Does anybody say that the New Testament requires a lesser recognition of God than the Old, now that we have the full-orbed revelation of His grace in Jesus Christ?

That cannot be. The tenth is a useful minimum. Personally, I believe that the New Testament requires far more than the tenth; but we will let that pass for the moment.

III. I want to quote you two or three promises: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." And the familiar passage to which I have already referred: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The Scriptures abound with promises of blessing to those who thus recognize God.

Are there some objections to that? Do you object to the tenth? Do you say, "We are not under the law, but under grace." Very well, then; take the standard of the New Testament, and you shall find that the standard of the New Testament is much more exacting; it requires the dedication of spirit, soul and body to the service of the Lord; it requires the recognition of God in everything—in our business, in our families, in our recreations: in everything God is to have the first place; not only one-tenth, but ten-tenths belong to Him. Every dollar that He gives to us is to be administered under the direction of the Holy Ghost, and we have no right to spend any of our money without reference to the will of God. A tenth is, at least, a useful minimum for setting aside for the work of the Lord. And I venture to say that if God's people were to recognize Him even to that extent, our Mission treasuries would be overflowing; we should have no difficulty at all in carrying on God's work. Perhaps somebody will say, "You quoted just now some promises, and it seems to me that it is rather a mercenary view of things. I do not want to give for the sake of the blessing I get out of it. I want to give as a matter of duty, and as an expression of my gratitude to God." But, my friend, you cannot give as an expression of your gratitude to God without getting a blessing. You bestow a gift upon somebody you love; let the love which is in your heart find expression somehow. And it does not matter whether they say "thank you" or not, the blessing comes in spite of yourself. You cannot render an act of devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ without getting a blessing. When Mary brought her alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and broke it upon the Saviour's head, do you think she needed to hear the Master say, "Let her alone"? She had witness in her own heart the moment she did it that her love had found expression, and she was in Heaven in the very act of doing it. You cannot, with full purpose of heart, yield anything to Jesus Christ, without having a little taste of Heaven. You talk about this bargaining principle in these promises; you say it is a low level. Is it? "What is your income?" Well, do not tell me; it is so much. You have so much you do not know what to do with it? "No, sir; to tell you the truth I do not know how to make ends meet." Well, take a tenth off. How much more will you have when you take the tenth off? "Well, it is a tenth shorter, that is all." Now, can you take God at His Word, and take Him into partnership and live on nine-tenths instead of on ten-tenths? Don't you see that every promise of blessing that God gives requires

you to do something that is contrary to the nature of things? It requires you to smash the multiplication table to pieces; it requires you to say, "I have more when I have only nine-tenths than when I have ten-tenths." Only God can make nine-tenths go farther than ten-tenths. Don't you see it requires a recognition of God, a recognition of the supernatural, an acknowledgment that God has power to bless the man who trusts Him? "Honour the Lord with thy substance—I will quote it again—and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Who says so? What professor of agriculture is going to fulfil that promise? Just because I honour the Lord with my substance, and with the first fruits of all my increase, who is to see to it that my barns shall be filled with plenty? Only God! And God will forgive you for being mercenary if it is to Him you look for reward.

IV. Let me give you two or three illustrations of this principle. When Jacob comes back and the angel meets him, he recognizes God, and he says, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." God did acknowledge and reward His faith; He did bless him. Look also at the story of the woman of Sarepota, or of Zarephath, as she is called in the Old Testament, to whom Elijah came, as God's representative, and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." And she said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." But Elijah said, "Go and make me a little cake first." Oh, how unreasonable of the prophet! But he said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." And somehow or another, when that widow put God first, before herself and her son, that little bit of meal never came to an end; it was multiplied. The Lord of all harvests saw to it that she had enough and to spare.

And yonder there in the wilderness the people were gathered, and the disciples said, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place." But Jesus said unto them, "They need not depart. Give ye them to eat." And they said, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." And in effect Jesus said: "If anybody becomes my guest, he is never served with a little. I am not content that any one should take a little where I am. How many loaves have you?" "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" "Bring them to me." And those five barley loaves were put into the hands of Jesus, and "when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." And note: "They did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up fragments that remained to them twelve baskets." I wonder if that little lad came and looked at the great baskets there, and said, "Well, how did it happen? I had but five loaves and two fishes, but they put them into the hands of Jesus and He fed five thousand people. And after they had all they wanted to eat, there are twelve baskets left. I could not carry them home now if I tried." That is God's way. He has done it since then. It is a blessing to be poor. It is a kind of blessing we none of us covet, I grant you. But, at the same time, there is a blessing in being poor: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" And the Lord just loves to get His work done through poor people. You go to Mueller's Orphanage and ask them from what sources the Lord supplies their need, and I think you will generally find that, while there are some large contributions, it is mostly very small gifts from poor people. You go to any missionary organization like the China Inland Mission, which learns to trust God for supplies, and while God proves that He can bless a rich man and take the first place in his life, and there are some large gifts, the greater proportion comes from poor people who recognize God.

I pray that God by His Spirit may help us to understand His Word, and that He will give us all grace to obey its teaching.

Note—Scriptures relating to tithing appear on next page.

SCRIPTURES RELATING TO TITHING.

Paid by Abraham to Melchizedec, Gen. 14: 20; Heb. 7: 2-6.
Jacob vows to give a tenth, Gen. 28: 22.
Mosaic laws instituting, Lev. 27: 30-33; Num. 18: 21-24; Deut. 12: 6, 7, 17-19;
14: 22-29; 26: 12-15.
Customs relating to, Neh. 10: 37-38; Amos 4: 4; Heb. 7: 5-9.
Tithe of tithes for priests, Num. 18: 26; Neh. 10: 38.
Stored in the temple, Neh. 10: 38-39; 12: 44; 13: 5, 12; II Chron. 31: 11, 12;
Mal. 3: 10.
Payment resumed during revival, II Chron. 31: 5-10; Neh. 13: 12. Withheld,
Neh. 13: 10; Mal. 3: 8.
Approved by Christ, Matt. 23: 23; Luke 11: 42.
Payment of tithes made a substitute for a spiritual religion, Matt. 23: 23; Luke
11: 42; 18: 12; Amos 4: 4-5.

These scriptures are given here as a guide to those who would study the question of tithing—and we hope every member will do so. But read also the eighth and ninth chapters of II Corinthians.

CHURCH NEWS.

The Pulpit To-day.—Rev. C. J. Brading, Secretary of the Scripture Gift Mission, London, England, will occupy the pulpit at 11 o'clock. Mr. Brading is a most gifted speaker, and we rejoice to have him with us for the morning service. At 7 o'clock the Pastor will preach on "The Coming of Christ the Hope of the Bereaved," second in a series of sermons on "The Blessed Hope"—The Coming of Christ.

Ordination of Mr. W. L. McKay.—On Thursday afternoon, June 21st, at 2.30 p.m. a Council consisting of delegates from the churches of the Toronto Association will convene in Jarvis Street Lecture Hall, to consider the advisability of setting apart to the work of the Gospel ministry, Mr. W. L. McKay, Superintendent of our Parliament Street Branch. It is expected that the proceedings will be completed at the afternoon service. The meeting will be open to all, and we hope Jarvis Street will be well represented.

Jarvis Street Church and Sunday School Picnic.—This important event will take place July 4th, at Centre Island, and will be bigger and better than ever. Everybody and his wife and family will be there, so be sure to keep this date open. Will the ladies of the church and congregation who can render help with the tea arrangements, etc., kindly give their names at once to Mrs. W. W. Brown, who will be glad to make use of every available worker?

Parliament Street Branch Picnic will be held Tuesday, June 26th, at Scarborough Heights. Contributions toward the expenses would be much appreciated, and may be given to Mr. W. L. McKay, or left at the church office.

At the last "Open" meeting of the Women's Home Mission Board, several expressed the desire to meet the third Thursday of each Summer month, to pray for a revival and for our mission fields. The Women's Home Mission Board has, therefore, arranged for a united prayer meeting for Thursday, June 21st, at 2.30, in the S. S. Hall of Bloor Street Church. All women of the church are earnestly requested to come and make this a time of real intercession that God may visit our churches in revival power, and pour forth blessing on our mission fields.

The Church Calendar

Sunday For the week beginning Sunday, June 17th, 1923.
10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.
10.30—Communion Service.
11.00—Public Worship. Rev. C. J. Brading.
3.00—The Bible School will meet.
6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.
7.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.
Tuesday, 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 Rev. W. J. Thompson of Long Branch.

Wednesday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting.