

LIFE'S SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS

DR. TALMAGE PREACHES AN ELOQUENT SERMON.

The Fierce Combat With an Unknown Visitor That Lasts Until Day-break--The Cry to God of a Dying Soul.

BROOKLYN, April 29.—The Tabernacle was crowded this morning with the usual throng of eager listeners. Dr. Talmage preached on the spiritual conflicts of life, taking for his text Genesis xxiii, 24-26: "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except that bless me."

The dust arose from a traveling herd of cattle and sheep and goats and camels. They are the present that Jacob sends to gain the good will of his offended brother. That night Jacob hails by the brook Jabbock. But there is no rest for the weary man, no shining ladder to let the angels down into his dream, but a fierce combat, that lasts until the morning with an unknown visitor. They each try to throw the other. The unknown visitor, to reveal his superior power, by a touch wrenches Jacob's thigh bone from its socket, perhaps maiming him for life. As on the morning sky the clusters of purple cloud begin to ripen Jacob sees it is an angel with whom he has been contending, and not one of his brother's coaches. "Let me go," cries the angel, lifting himself up into increasing light, "The day breaketh."

Christian Struggles.

You see, in the first place, that God allows good people sometimes to get into a terrible struggle. Jacob was a good man, but here he is left alone in the midnight to wrestle with a tremendous influence by the brook Jabbock. For Joseph, a pit; for David, a wild beast; for Daniel, dethronement and exile; for John the Baptist, a wilderness diet and the executioner's ax; for Peter, a prison; for Paul, shipwreck; for John, desolate Patmos; for Wavseth, most insulting cruelty; for Josephine, banishment; for Mrs. Signorey, the agony of a drunkard's wife; for John Wesley, stones hurled by an infuriated mob; for Catherine, the Scotch girl, the drowning surges of the sea; for Mr. Burns, the butchering of the Montreal populace; for John Brown of Edinburgh, the pistol shot of Lord Claverhouse; for Hugh McNeil, the scaffold; for Latimer, the stake; for Christ, the cross. For whom the rocks, the gibbets, the guillotines, the thumbscrews? For the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Some one said to a Christian reformer: "The world is against you." "Then," he replied, "I am against the world."

I will go further and say that every Christian has his struggle. This man had his combat in Wall street; this one on Broad street; this one on Fulton street; this one on Chestnut street; this one on State street; this one on Lombard street; this one on the bourse. With financial misfortune you have had the midnight wrestle. Redhot disasters have dropped into your stone from loft to cellar. What you bought you could not sell. Whom you trusted fled. The help you expected would not come. Some giant panic, with long arms and grip like death, took hold of you in an awful wrestle from which you have not yet escaped, and it is uncertain whether it will throw you or you will throw it.

Here is another soul in struggle with some bad appetite. He knew not how stealthily it was growing upon him. One hour he woke up. He said, "For the sake of my soul, of my family, and of my children, and of my God, I must stop this!" And, behold, he found himself alone by the brook Jabbock, and it was midnight. That evil appetite seized upon him, and he seized upon it, and, oh, the horror of the conflict! When once a bad habit had aroused itself up to destroy a man and the man has sworn that, by the help of the eternal God, he will destroy it, all heaven draws itself out in a long line of light to look from above, and hell stretches itself in myridons of spite to look up from beneath. I have seen men rally themselves for such a struggle, and they have bitten their lip and clinched their fists and cried with a blood red earnestness and a rain of scalding tears, "God help me!"

The Giant Habit.

From a wrestle with habit I have seen men fall back defeated. Calling for no help, but relying on their own resolutions, they have come into the struggle, and for a time it seemed as if they were getting the upper hand of their habit, but that habit rallied again its infernal power and lifted a soul from its standing, and with a force born from the pit hurried it into utter darkness. First I saw the auctioneer's malafit fall on the pictures and musical instruments and the rich upholstery of his family parlor. After awhile I saw him fall into the ditch. Then, in the midnight, when the children were dreaming their sweetest dreams and Christian households are silent with slumber, angel watched, I heard him give the sharp shriek that followed the stab of his own poniard. He fell from an honored social position; he fell from a family circle of which once he was the grandest attraction; he fell from the house of God, at whose alters he had been consecrated; he fell--forever! But, thank God, I have often seen a better termination than that.

I have seen men prepare themselves for such a wrestling. They laid hold of God's help as they went into combat. The giant habit, regarded by the cup of many temptations, came out strong and defiant. They clinched. There were the writhings and distortions of a fearful struggle. But the old giant began to waver, and at last, in the midnight gloom, with none but God, to witness, by the brook Jabbock, the giant fell, and the triumphant wrestler broke the darkness with the cry, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a widow's heart that first was desolated by bereavement and since by the anxieties and trials that came in the support of a family.

It is a sad thing to see a man contend for a livelihood under disadvantages, a delicate woman, with help-

less little ones at her back, fighting the giants of poverty and sorrow, is most affecting. It was a humble home, and passerby knew not that within those four walls were displays of courage more admirable than that of Hannibal crossing the Alps, or the pass of Thermopylae or Balaklava, where "into the jaws of death rode the six hundred."

These heroes had the whole world to cheer them on, but there were none to applaud the struggle in the humble home. She fought for bread, for clothing, for fire, for shelter, with aching head, and weak side, and exhausted strength, through the long night by the brook Jabbock. Could it be that none would give her help? Had God forgotten to be gracious? No, contending soul! The midnight air is full of wings coming to the rescue. She hears it now in the sough of the night wind, in the ripple of the brook Jabbock--the promise made so long ago ringing down the sky, "Thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me!"

Some one said to a very poor woman, "How is it that in such distress you keep cheerful?" She said: "I do it by what I call cross prayers. When I had my rent to pay and nothing to pay it with, I used to buy and nothing to buy with it. I used to sit down and cry. But now I do not get discouraged. If I go along the street, when I come to a corner of the street, I say, 'The Lord help me.' I then go on until I come to another crossing of the street, and again I say, 'The Lord help me!' And so I utter a prayer at every crossing, and since I have got into the habit of saying these 'cross prayers' I have been able to keep up my courage."

Partured by Fire.

Learn again from this subject that people sometimes are surprised to find out that what they have been struggling with in the darkness is really an "angel of blessing." Jacob found in the morning that this strange personage was not an enemy, but a God dispatched messenger to promise prosperity for him and for his children. And so many a man, at the close of his trial, has found out that he was being tried to throw down his own blessing. If you are a Christian man, I will go back in your history and find that the grandest things that have ever happened to you have been your trials. Nothing short of scourging, imprisonment and shipwreck could have made Paul what he was.

When David was fleeing through the wilderness pursued by his own son, he was being prepared to become the sweet singer of Israel. The pit and the dungeon were the best schools at which Joseph ever graduated. The hurricane that upset the tent and killed Job's children prepared the man of God to write the magnificent poem that has astonished the ages. There is no way to get the wheat out of the straw but to thresh it. There is no way to purify the gold but to burn it. Look at the people who have always had it their own way. They are proud, discontented, useless and unhappy. If you want to find cheerful folks, go among those who have been purified by the fire. After Rossini had rendered "William Tell" the five hundred times a company of musicians came under his window in Paris and serenaded him. They put upon his brow a golden crown of laurel leaves. But amid all the applause and enthusiasm Rossini turned to a friend and said, "I would give all this brilliant scene for a few days of youth and love." Contrast the melancholy feeling of Rossini, who had everything this world could give him, to the joyful experience of Isaac Watts, whose misfortunes were innumerable, when he was.

The hill of Zion yields A thousand sacred sweets Before we reach the heavenly fields Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound And every tear be dry We are marching through Immanuel's ground To fair realms on high.

Marks of the Combat.

It is prosperity that kills and trouble that saves. While the Israelites were on the march, amid great privations and hardships, they behaved well. After awhile they prayed for meat, and the sky darkened with a great flock of quails, and these quails fell in large multitudes all about them, and the Israelites ate and ate and stuffed themselves until they died. Oh, my friends, it is not hardship or trial or starvation that injures the soul, but abundant supply. It is not the vulture of trouble that eats up the Christian's life; it is the quails, it is the quails! You will find out that your midnight wrestle by the brook Jabbock is with an angel of God, come down to bless and save.

Learn again that while our wrestling with trouble may be triumphant we must expect that it will leave its mark upon us. Jacob prevailed, but the angel touched him, and his thigh bone sprang from its socket, and the good man went limping on his way. We must carry through this world the mark of the combat. What plowed those premature wrinkles in your face? What whitened your hair before it was time for frost? What silenced forever so much of the vitality of your household? Ah, it is because the angel of trouble hath touched you that you go limping on your way. You need not be surprised that those who have passed through the fire do not feel as gay as they once did.

Do not be out of patience with those who come not out of their despondency. They may triumph over their loss, and yet their gait shall tell you that they have been trouble touched. Are we stoics that we can, unmoved, see our cradle tilted of the bright eyes and my sweet lips? Can we stand unmoved and see our gardens of earthly delight uprooted? Will Jesus, who wept himself, be angry with us if we pour our tears into the graves that open to swallow down what we love best? Was Lazarus more dear to him than our beloved dead to us? No. We have a right to weep. Our tears must come. You shall not drive them back to seal their heart. They fall into God's bottle. Afflicted ones have died because they could not weep.

Thank God for the sweet, the mysterious relief that comes to us in tears! Under this gentle rain the flowers of corn put forth their bloom. God pity that dry, withered, parched, all consuming grief that wrings its hands and grinds its teeth and bites its nails, unto the quick, but cannot weep! We may have found the comfort of the cross, and yet ever after show that in the dark night and by the brook Jabbock we were trouble touched.

The Day Breaketh.

Again, we may take the idea of the text and announce the approach of the day dawn. No one was ever more glad to see the morning than was Jacob after

that night of struggle. It is appropriate for philanthropists and Christians to cry out with this angel of the text, "The day breaketh." The world's prospects are brightening. The church of Christ is rising up in its strength to go forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."

Clap your hands, all ye people, the day breaketh. The bigotries of the earth are perishing. The time was when we were told that if we wanted to get to heaven we must be immersed or sprinkled, or we must believe in the perseverance of the saints, or in falling away from grace, or a liturgy, or no liturgy, or they must be Calvinists or Arminians in order to reach heaven. We have all come to confess now that these are nonessentials in religion.

During my vacation one summer I was in a Presbyterian audience, and it was a sacramental day, and with grateful heart I received the holy communion. On the next Sabbath I was in a Methodist church and sat at a love feast. On the following Sabbath I was in an Episcopalian church and knelt at the altar and received the consecrated bread. I do not know which service I enjoyed the most. "I believe in the communion of saints and in the life everlasting." "The day breaketh."

As I look upon this audience I see many who have passed through waves of trouble that came up higher than their girdle. In God's name I proclaim cessation of hostilities. You shall never go always saddened and heartbroken God will lift your burden. God will bring your dead to life. God will stanch the heart's bleeding. I know he will. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities you. The pains of earth will end. The tomb will burst. The dead will rise. The morning star trembles on a brightening sky. The gates of the east begin to swing open. The day breaketh.

Luther and Melanchthon were talking together gloomily about the prospects of the church. They could see no hope of deliverance. After awhile Luther got up and said to Melanchthon: "Come, Philipp, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm of David: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Se- lah.'"

The Death Struggle.

Death to rump, may all, is a struggle and a wrestle. We have many friends that will be hard to leave. I care not how bright our future hope is. It is a better thing to look upon this fair world and know that we shall never again see its blossoming spring, its falling fruits, its sparkling streams, its aegis. There is no way to get the wheat out of the straw but to thresh it. There is no way to purify the gold but to burn it. Look at the people who have always had it their own way. They are proud, discontented, useless and unhappy. If you want to find cheerful folks, go among those who have been purified by the fire. After Rossini had rendered "William Tell" the five hundred times a company of musicians came under his window in Paris and serenaded him.

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So I would have it when I die. I am in no haste to be gone. I have no grudge against this world. The only fault I have to find with the world is that it treats me too well, but when the time comes to go I trust to be ready, my worldly affairs all settled. If I have wronged others, I want to be sure of their forgiveness. In that last wrestling, my arm encircled with sickness and my head faint, I want Jesus beside me. If there be hands on this side of the flood stretched out to hold me back, I want the heavenly hands stretched out to draw me forward. Then, O Jesus, help me on and help me up. Unfeeling, undomineering, may I step right out into the light and be able to look back to my kindred and friends who would detain me here, exclaiming: "Let me go; let me go." The day breaketh."

An Early Closing Movement.

The merchants of Gaffney should consider the practicability of closing their stores early in the evenings. The merchants of Charleston, Columbia, Greenville, Spartanburg and other places have found by experience that it pays to close their stores at an early hour. The clerks should make a canvass and see what can be done. If every merchant were to close at an early hour no one would be affected, the housekeepers would soon learn the lesson of purchasing their needs in the daytime, the oil would be saved and the clerks would be able to enjoy themselves more, and there would not be so many of the bachelors in town--consequently population would increase and the sales of the day would be heavier than that of the day and night which are now combined. Try it!

Some Additional Ads.

The new advertisers this week confine themselves principally to the study of law. Messrs. Bonar & Simpson, Nichols & Jones, Carlisle & Hydrick, all of Spartanburg, offer counsel to the transgressor and transgressor to the transgressor and transgressor.

"Doc" Spencer advertises a note book lost; second-hand buggies and harness for sale, and houses to rent.

Cook & Gaffney offer all the palatable cooking beverages in the decoupage and invite the especial attention of the ladies.

Ben Kelly, a young man living about four or five miles above Bishopville, got into a difficulty with one of his negro hands one day last week and shot him in the head with a pistol, inflicting very probably a mortal wound.

Major B. M. McCreasy, one of the largest and most widely known merchants of Columbia, died in that city last Saturday.

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