

WORD OF THE LORD

Dr. Talmage Delivers One of His Peculiar Sermons

IN THE TABERNACLE PULPIT

He Given a Fresh Display of His Ability as the Eloquent and Novel in Pulpit Oratory.

MONDAY, May 29.—Dr. Talmage gave a fresh illustration this morning of the power he possesses of extracting valuable lessons from a text which preachers have generally neglected as barren ground. His sermon was based on the text Psalm lxxvii, 7, "I answered when the secret place of thunder."

It was just midnight, and two o'clock in the morning, far enough from sunset and sunrise to make the darkness very thick, and the Egyptian army in pursuit of the smugling Israelites are on the banks of the Red sea, the waters having risen up on either side in masonry of confusion, for God can make a wall as high as he will, and out of granite, and the Israelites with which these two walls were built were none the less powerful because invisible. Such walls had never before been lifted.

When I saw the waters of the Red sea rising through the sea canal they were like and beautiful and flowing like other waters, but tonight, as the Egyptian host up to them built into walls, now on one side and now on the other, they must have been flowing waters, they were probably that the same power had lifted them up might suddenly fling them prostrate. A great lantern of eld had been set up on either side in masonry of confusion, for God can make a wall as high as he will, and out of granite, and the Israelites with which these two walls were built were none the less powerful because invisible. Such walls had never before been lifted.

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thing" his father and mother had said and which he had about his soul's welfare. On another side of the same church sat an old miser. He paid his pew rent, but was hard on the poor, and had no interest in any philanthropy. Piles of money! And people said, "What a struggle he will have when he quits this life to part with his hoards and mortgages." One day he wrote to his minister: "Please to call immediately. I have a matter of great importance about which I want to call you." When the pastor came in the man could not speak for emotion, but after awhile he gathered self control enough to say: "I have lived for this world too long. I want to know if you think I can be saved, and, if so, I wish you would tell me how." Upon his soul the light soon dawned, and the old miser, not only revolutionized in heart but in life, began to castor benefactions, and toward all the great charities of the day he became a cheerful and homelike almsman. What was the cause of this change? Everybody asked, and no one was capable of giving an intelligent answer.

In another part of the church sat, Sabbath by Sabbath, a beautiful and talented woman, who was a great society leader. She went to church because that was a respectable thing to do, and in the neighborhood where she lived it was hardly respectable not to go. Worldly was she to the last degree, and all her family worldly. She had at her house the finest gowns that were ever danced, and the costliest favors that were ever given, and though she attended church she never liked to hear any story of pithos, and as to religious emotion of any kind, she thought it positively vulgar. Wines, cards, theaters, rounds of costly gaiety were to her the highest satisfaction.

One day a neighbor came in a visiting card, and this lady came down the stairs in tears and told the whole story of how she had not slept for several nights, and she feared she was going to lose her soul, and she wondered if some one would not come around and pray with her. From that time her entire demeanor was changed, and though she was not called upon to sacrifice any of her amenities of life, she consecrated her beauty, her social position, her family, her all to God and the church and usefulness. Everybody said in regard to her, "Have you noticed the change, and what in the world caused it?" and no one could make a satisfactory explanation.

In the course of two years, though there was no general reviving in that church, many such isolated cases of such unexpected and unaccountable conversions took place. The very people whom no one thought would be affected by such considerations were converted. The pastor and the officers of the church were on the lookout for the solution of this religious phenomenon. "Where is it?" they said, "and who is it and what is it?" At last the discovery was made and all was explained. A poor old Christian woman standing in the vestibule of the church one Sunday morning, trying to get her breath again before she went up stairs to the gallery, heard the inquiry and told the secret.

For years she had been in the habit of concentrating all her prayers for particular persons in that church. She would see some man or some woman present, and though she might not know the person's name, she would pray for that person until he or she was converted to God. All her prayers were for that one person—just that one. She waited and waited for communion days to see when the candidates for membership stood up whether her prayers had been effectual. It turned out that these marvelous instances of conversion were the result of that old woman's prayers as she sat in the gallery Sabbath by Sabbath, bent and wrinkled and poor and unnoticed.

A little cloud of consecrated humanity hovering in the galleries. That was the secret place of the thunder. There is some hidden, unknown, mysterious source of almost all the moral and religious power demonstrated. Not one out of a million—not one out of ten million—prayers ever strikes a human ear. On public occasions a minister of religion voices the supplications of an assembly, but the prayers of all the congregation are in silence. There is not a second in a century when prayers are not ascending, but myriads of them are not even as loud as a whisper, for God hears a thought as plainly as a voice. That silence of supplication—hemispheric and perpetual—is the secret place of thunder.

THE SECRET PLACE OF THUNDER. In the winter of 1875 we were worshipping in the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the interregnum of churches. We had the usual great audience, but I was oppressed beyond measure by the fact that conversions were not more numerous. One Tuesday I invited to my house five old, consecrated Christian men—all of them gone now, except Father Pearson, and he, in blindness and old age, waiting for the Master's call to come up higher.

These old men came, not knowing why I had invited them. I took them to the roof of my house. I said to them: "I have called you here for a special reason. I am in an agony for a great truth to God of the people. We have vast multitudes in attendance and they are attentive and respectful, but I cannot see that they are saved. Let us kneel down and each one pray and not leave this room until we are all assured that the blessing will come and has come." It was a most intense crying unto God. I said, "Brethren, let this meeting be a secret," and they said it would be. That Tuesday night special service ended.

On the following Friday night occurred the usual prayer meeting. No one knew of what had occurred on Tuesday night, but the meeting was unusually thronged. Men accustomed to pray in public in great companies broke down under emotion. The people were in tears. There were sobs and sobs and solemnities of such unusual power that the worshippers looked into each other's faces, as much as to say, "What does all this mean?" And when the following Sabbath came, although we were in a secular place, over four hundred arose for prayers, and a religious awakening took place that made that winter memorable for time and for eternity. There may be in this building many who were brought to God during that great gathering, but few of these know that the upper room in my house on Quincy street, where these five old Christian men poured out their souls before God, was the secret place of thunder.

The day will come—God bests it—when the world will find out the velocity, the majesty, the multi-plied power, the

we wrap around our "innocent" spirit trains which put us down a thousand miles away in twenty-four hours, but here is something by which in a moment we may confront people five thousand miles away. We brag about our telephones, but here is something that beats the telephones in utterance and reply, for God says, "Before they call, I will hear." We brag about the phonograph, in which a man can speak, and his words and the tones of his voice can be kept for ages, and by the turning of a crank the words may come forth upon the ears of another century, but prayer allows us to speak words into the ears of everlasting remembrance, and on the other side of all eternities they will be heard. Oh, ye who are wasting your breath, and wasting your brains, and wasting your nerves, and wasting your lungs wishing for this good and that good for the church and the world, why do you not go into the secret place of thunder.

"But," says some one, "that is a beautiful theory, yet it does not work in my case, for I am in a cloud of trouble, or a cloud of sickness, or a cloud of persecution, or a cloud of poverty, or a cloud of bereavement, or a cloud of perplexity." How glad I am that you told me that. That is exactly the place to which my text refers. It was from a cloud that God answered Israel—the cloud over the camp that led through the Red sea—the cloud that was light to the Israelites and darkness to the Egyptians. It was from a cloud, a tremendous cloud, that God made reply. It was a cloud that was the secret place of thunder. So you cannot get away from the consolation of my text by talking that way. Let all the people under a cloud hear it. "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder."

INFLUENCE OF THE OLD HOME. This subject helps me to explain some things you have not understood about men and women, and there are multitudes of them, and the multitude is multiplying by the minute. Many of them have not a superabundance of education. If you had their brain in a post-mortem examination, and you could weigh it, it would not weigh any heavier than the average. They have not anything especially impressive in personal appearance. They are not very fluent of tongue. They pretend to nothing unusual in mental faculty or social influence, but you feel their power; you are elevated by their presence; you are a better man or a better woman, having confronted them. You know that in intellectual endowment you are their superior, while in the matter of moral and religious influence they are vastly your superior. Why is this?

To find the revelation of this secret you must go back thirty or forty or perhaps sixty years to the homestead where this man was brought up. It is a winter morning, and the tallow candle is lighted, and the fire is kindled, sometimes the shavings hardly enough to start the wood. The mother is preparing the breakfast, the blue edged dishes are on the table, and the lid of the kettle on the hearth begins to rattle with the steam, and the shadow of the industrious woman by the flickering flame on the hearth is moved up and down the wall. The father is at the barn feeding the stock—the oats thrown into the horse's bin and the cattle crumpling the corn. The children, earlier than they would like and after being called twice, are gathered at the table.

The blessing of God is asked on the food, and the meal over, the family Bible is put upon the white tablecloth and a chapter is read and a prayer made, which includes all the interests for this world and the next. The children pay no much attention to the prayer, for it is about the same thing day after day, but it puts upon their impression that ten thousand years will only make more vivid and tremendous. As long as the old folks live their prayer is for their children and their children's children. Day in and day out, month in and month out, year in and year out, decade in and decade out the sons and daughters of that family are remembered in earnest prayer, and they know it, and they feel it, and they cannot get away from it.

Two funerals after awhile—not more than two years apart, for it is seldom that there is more than that lapse of time between the father's going and mother's going—two funerals put out of sight the old folks. But where are the children? The daughters are in homes where they are incarnations of good sense, industry and piety. The sons, perhaps one a farmer, another a merchant, another a mechanic, another a physician, another a minister of the Gospel, useful, constant, admired, honored. What a power for good those seven sons and daughters! Where did they get the power? From the schools, and the seminaries, and the colleges? Oh, no, though these may have helped. From their superior mental endowment? No, I do not think they had unusual mental caliber. From accidental circumstances? No, they had nothing of what is called astounding good luck.

THEY FORGOT OF FROM MY LUCK. I think we will take a train and ride to the depot nearest to the homestead from which those men and women started. The train halts. Let us stop a few minutes at the village graveyard and see the tombstones of the parents. Yes, the one was seventy-four years of age, and the other was seventy-two, and the epitaph says that "after a useful life they died a Christian death." How appropriately the Scripture passage out on the mother's tombstone. "She hath done what she could." And how beautiful the passage cut on the father's tombstone. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

On over the country road we ride—the road a little rough, for the spring weather is not yet from mud, and once down in a rut it is hard to get the wheels out again without breaking the shafts. But at last we come to the lane in front of the farmhouse. Let me get out of the wagon and open the gate while you drive through. Here is the arbor under which those boys and girls many years ago used to play. But it is quite out of order now, for the property is in other hands. Yonder is the orchard where they used to throw the trees for apples, sometimes before they were quite ripe. There is the mow where they hunted for eggs before Easter. There is the doornail upon which they used to sit. There is the room in which they had family prayers, and where they all knelt—father, mother, the mother there and the boys and girls there. We have got to the fountain of piety and emotion, influence of last. That is

the place that decided those seven earthly and immortal destinies. Behold! Behold! That is the secret place of thunder. Boys are seldom more than their fathers will let them be. Girls are seldom more than their mothers will let them be. But there come times when it seems that parents cannot control their children. There come times in a boy's life when he thinks he knows more than his father does, and I remember now that I knew more at fifteen years of age than I have ever known since.

There come times in a girl's life when she thinks her mother is notional and does not understand what is proper and best, and the sweet child says, "Oh, papa!" and she longs for the time when she will not have to be dictated to, and she goes out of the door or goes to bed with pouting lips, and these mothers remember for themselves that they knew more at fourteen years of age than they have ever known since. But, father and mother, do not think you have lost your influence over your child. You have a resource of prayer that puts the sympathetic and omnipotent God into your parental undertaking. Do not waste your time reading flimsy books about the best ways to bring up children. Go into the secret place of thunder.

FRAY FOR THE PREACHERS. The reason that we ministers do not accomplish more is because others do not pray enough for us and we do not pray enough for ourselves. Every minister could tell you a thrilling story of sermons—sermons hasty and impromptu because of funerals and sickbeds and annoyances in the parish, yet those sermons harvesting many souls for God. And then of sermons prepared with great care and research and toil uninterrupted, yet those sermons falling flat or powerless, or of the same sermon mightily blessed on one occasion and useless on another. How well I remember a sermon I preached at a great outdoor meeting in the upper part of this state. For several days in that place prayers had been offered for the success of the service, and I had myself been unusually prayerful, and we had a Pentecostal blessing while I was preaching it.

That afternoon I took the train for a great outdoor meeting in Ohio. I said to myself, "This sermon was blessed today and it is fresh in my mind, and I will preach it tomorrow in Ohio." And I did preach it, but not in as prayerful a spirit, and I think no one else had been praying about it, and it turned into a "Cretion," or let the painters go to fix up Raphael's "Transfiguration," or architects go to fixing up Christopher Wren's St. Paul's. But I will tell you what is the matter. There are too many unconverted ministers. Their hearts have never been changed by the grace of God.

A mere intellectual ministry is the deadliest failure this side of perdition. Alas for the Gospel of icicles! From apologetics and hermenutics and dogmatics, good Lord deliver us! They are trying to get from transcendental theology, or from profane exegesis, or from the art of splitting hairs between north and northwest side instead of getting their power from the secret place of thunder. We want the power a man gets when he is alone at the door looking on his knees; at midnight; with such a burden of souls upon him that makes him cry out, first in lamentation and then in raptures.

Let all the Sabbath school teachers and Bible class instructors and all reformers and all evangelists and all ministers know that diplomas and dictionaries and encyclopedias and treatises and libraries are not the source of moral and spiritual achievement, but that the room of prayer, where no one but God is present and no one but God hears, is the secret place of thunder. Secret? Ah, yes! So secret that comparatively few ever find it. At Boscebel, England, we visited a house where a king was once hid. No one, unless it was pointed out to him, could find the door in the floor through which the king entered his hiding place. When there hidden the armed pursuers looked in vain for him, and afterward through an underground passage, far out in the fields, he came out in the open air. So this imperial power of spiritual influence has a hiding place, a secret place which few know, and it comes forth sometimes in strange and mysterious ways and far from the place where it was hidden you can find it only by diligent searching. But you may find it, and some of you will find it, and I wish you might all find it—the secret place of thunder.

THE TABERNACLE GOING AHEAD. At nine o'clock Wednesday morning, June 15 next, on the steamer City of New York, I expect to sail for Liverpool, to be gone until September. It is in acceptance of many invitations that I am going on a preaching tour. I expect to devote my time to preaching the Gospel in England, Scotland, Ireland and Sweden. I want to see how many souls I can gather for the kingdom of God. Those countries have for many years belonged to my parish, and I go to speak to them and shake hands with them. I want to visit more thoroughly than before those regions from which my ancestors came, Wales and Scotland.

But who is sufficient for the work I undertake? I call upon you who have longed my confidants to go into the secret place of the Almighty, and every day from now until my work is done on the other side of the sea, to have me in your prayers. In proportion to the intensity and continuance and faith of the prayers, yours and mine, will be the results. If you remember me in the devotional circle, that will be well, but what I most want of you is important, your wrestling application in the secret place of thunder.

God and you alone may make me the humble instrumentality in the redemption of thousands of souls. I shall preach in churches, in chapels and in the fields, but it will make it a campaign for God and eternity, and I hope to get divine this absence a baptism of seven

that will make me of more service to you when I return than I ever yet have been. For, brethren and sisters in Christ, our opportunity for usefulness will soon be gone, and we shall have our faces uplifted to the throne of judgment, before which we must give account. That day there will be no secret place of thunder, for all the thunders will be out. There will be the thunder of the tumbling rocks. There will be the thunder of the bursting waves. There will be the thunder of the descending chariots. There will be the thunder of the parting heavens. Boom! Boom!

But all that din and uproar and crash will be unafraid, and we will leave us undismayed, if we have made Christ our confidence, and as after an August shower, when the whole heavens have been an unlimbered battery cannonading the earth, the fields are more green, and the sunrise is the more radiant, and the waters are the more opaline, so the thunders of the last day will make the throes of life appear more emerald, and the carbuncle of the wall more crimson, and the sapphire sea the more shimmering, and the sunrise of eternal gladness the more empurpled. The thunders of dissolving nature will be followed by a celestial psalmody the sound of which St. John on Patmos described, when he said, "I heard a voice like the voice of mighty thunders!" Amen!

THE PRESS CLUB EXCURSION. Take advantage of the Grand Rapids Press club excursion to Niagara, June 1. It will cost you but \$5.00 for the round trip fare, and \$2.00 per day at the hotel. It's the sight of a life-time, you know, and this is the first and only low rate excursion of the season to the world's greatest natural wonder. The train will leave the D., G. H. & M. depot Wednesday, June 1, at 7 a. m., and will stop at the following named Canadian points: Woodville, Catherines, Windsor, London, Ingersoll, Paris, Harrisburg and Hamilton. Tickets for sale at all newspaper offices, the D., G. H. & M. city ticket office, and by all members of the Press club. All tickets good until the following Monday.

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MINNEAPOLIS AND RETURN—\$13.00. For the republican convention at Minneapolis the D., G. H. & M. Railway company will sell tickets to Minneapolis and return, via Milwaukee, at \$13.00, tickets good June 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and good for return up to and including June 25, 1892. These rates are open to all. For full particulars apply to any agent of the D. G. H. & M. or to JAMES CAMPBELL, city agent, No. 22 Monroe street.

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Valley City Social Hop. The Valley City Social club will give their first annual social ball at Macomber hall, No. 6 Pearl street, Thursday evening June 2. Prizes will be given for the finest apron worn by any lady and for the most comical necktie worn by any gentleman. Music by Wurzberg and Bronson's full orchestra. Admission, lady or gentleman, 25 cents.

Another special train will run on Tuesday, June 1, from Grand Rapids to Niagara, and return, via Milwaukee, at \$13.00, tickets good June 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and good for return up to and including June 25, 1892. These rates are open to all. For full particulars apply to any agent of the D. G. H. & M. or to JAMES CAMPBELL, city agent, No. 22 Monroe street.

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