

## COMMENDABLE ANGER

Talmage on How to Be Angry and Still Sin Not.

Discriminates Between the Offense and the Offender—We Should Be Indignant at One and Pity the Other.

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A delicate and difficult duty is by Dr. Talmage in this discourse urged upon all, and especially upon those given to quick temper; text, Ephesians iv, 26: "Be ye angry and sin not."

Equipose of temper, kindness, patience, forbearance, are extolled by most of the radiant pens of inspiration, but my text contains that which at first sight is startling. A certain kind of anger is approved—aye, we are commanded to indulge in it. The most of us have no need to cultivate high temper, and how often we say things and do things under affronted impulse which we are sorry for when perhaps it is too late to make effective apology! Why, then, should the apostle Paul dip his pen in the ink horn and trace upon parchment, afterward to be printed upon paper for all ages, the injunction, "Be ye angry and sin not?"

My text commends a wholesome indignation. It discriminates between the offense and the offender, the sin and the sinner, the crime and the criminal.

To illustrate: Alcoholism has ruined more fortunes, blasted more homes, destroyed more souls, than any evil that I think of. It pours a river of poison and fire through the nations. Millions have died because of it, and millions are dying now, and others will die. Intemperance is an old sin. The great Cyrus, writing to the Lacedaemonians of himself, boasted of many of his qualities, among others, that he could drink and bear more wine than his distinguished brother. Louis X. and Alexander the Great died drunk. The parliament of Edinburgh in 1661 is called in history "the drunken parliament." Hugh Miller, first stone-mason and afterward a world-renowned geologist, writes of the drinking habits of his day, saying: "When the foundation was laid, they drank. When the walls were leveled for laying the joists, they drank. When the building was finished, they drank. When an apprentice joined, they drank." In the eighteenth century, the giver of an entertainment boasted that none of the guests went away sober. Noah, the first ship captain, was wrecked—not in the ark, for that was safely landed—but he was wrecked with strong drink. Every man or woman rightly constructed will blush with indignation at the national and international and hemispheric and planetary curse. It is good to be aroused against it. You come out of that condition a better man or a better woman. Be ye angry at that abomination, and the more anger the more exaltation to character. But that aroused feeling becomes sinful when it extends to the victim of this great evil. Drunkenness you are to hate with a vivid hatred; but the drunkard you are to pity, to help to extricate.

Just take into consideration that there are men and women who once were as upright as yourself who have been prostrated by alcoholism. Perhaps it came of a physician's prescription for the relief of pain, a recurrence of the pain calling for a continuance of the remedy; perhaps the grandfather was an inebriate and the temptation to inebriety, leaping over a generation, has swooped on this unfortunate; perhaps it was under an attempt to drown trouble that was sought after; perhaps it was a very gradual chaining of the man with the beverage which was thought to be a servant, when one day it announced itself master. Be humble now, and admit that there is a strong probability that under the same circumstances you yourself might have been captured. The two appropriate emotions for you to allow are indignation at the intoxicant which enthralled and sympathy for the victim. Try to get the sufferer out of his present environment; recommend any hygienic relief that you know of and, above all, implore the divine rescue for the struggle in which so many of the noblest and grandest have been worsted. Do not give yourself up to too many philippics about what the man ought to have been and ought to have done. While your cheek flushes with wrath as the foe that has brought the ruin, let your eye be moistened with tears of pity for the sufferer. In that way you will have fulfilled the injunction of the text: "Be ye angry and sin not."

There is another evil the abhorrence of which you are called to, and it is on the increase—the gambling practice. Recent developments show that much of this devastation is being wrought in ladies' parlors. It is an evil which sometimes is as polite and gracious as it is harmful. Indeed, there never were so many people trying to get money without

earning it. It is a heinous transgression that comes down to us from the past blighting all its way.

I have seen in the archives of the nation in this national capital a large book in which one of the early presidents of the United States kept an account in his own handwriting of gains and losses at playing cards—on one page the gains and on the other the losses, and there are many pages. In other days many of national reputation went from the halls of congress and the senate chamber to spend the night in notorious gambling saloons. One of the ablest men of the centuries, Charles Fox, got ready for his speech against "The Petition of the Clergy" by spending 22 hours at the gambling table. Irving's file of Oliver Goldsmith says that the great poet lost £30, all his earnings, in a short tour to see the world. Gibbon, the author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," came to his own decline and fall through gaming practices and in a letter in 1776 said: "I have undone myself, and it is to no purpose to conceal from you my abominable madness and folly. I have never lost so much in five days as I have tonight, and I am in debt to the house for the whole."

But while you are hotly indignant against the crime, how do you feel about those who were fleeced and slain? They did not know that their small boat was so near the maelstrom. Some of them were born with a tendency to recklessness and experiment and hazard. They inherited a disposition to tempt chance. Do not heap on them additional discouragements; do not deride their losses. Help them to start again. Show them that there are more fortunes yet to be gained than have yet been gathered and that with God for their friend they will be provided for her and through the Saviour's mercy they may reign forever in the land where there are no losses and infinite gains. While you may rdden in the face at the fact that gambling is the disgraceful mother of multitudinous crimes, of envy, jealousies, revenge, quarrels, cruelties, falsehoods, forgeries, suicides, murders and despair, be careful what you say of the victim of the vice and what you do. He needs more sympathy than the man who came up from inebriety and debauch and assassination, for many such repent and are saved, but confirmed gamblers hardly ever reform.

During the course of a prolonged ministry I have seen thousands redeemed, many of them who were clear gone in sin, by Almighty grace rescued. In all parts of this land and in some parts of other lands I have seen those who were given up as incorrigible and lost recovered for God and Heaven, but how many confirmed gamblers have I seen converted from their evil ways? A thousand? No. Five hundred? No. Fifty? No. Two? No. One? No. I read in a book of one such rescued. I have no doubt there have been other cases, but no evil does its work so thoroughly and eternally as gambling. Such almost hopeless of reformation ought to call forth from you deeper sympathy than you feel for any other unfortunate. Pity by all means, for those who, shipwrecked and bruised among the timbers, have nevertheless clung up to the fisherman's cabin and found warmth and shelter, but more pity for those who never reach shore, but are dashed to death in the breakers. Be angry at the sin, but sympathize with its victims.

One act of fraud told of in big headlines in the morning papers rightfully arouses the nation's wrath. It is the interest of every good man and good woman who reads of the crime to have it exposed and punished. Let it go unscathed, and you put a premium on fraud, you depress public morals, you induce those who are on the fence between right and wrong to get down on the wrong side, and you put the business of the world on a down grade. The constabulary and penitentiary must do their work. But while the merciless and the godless cry: "Good for him!" "I am glad he is within the prison doors!" be it your work to find out if that man is worth saving and what were the causes of his moral overthrow. Perhaps he started in business life under a tricky firm, who gave him wrong notions of business integrity; perhaps there was a combination of circumstances almost unparalleled for temptation; perhaps there were alleviations; perhaps he was born wrong and never got over it; perhaps he did not realize what he was doing, and if you are a merciful man you will think of other perhapses which, though they may not excuse, will extenuate. Perhaps he has already repented and is washed in the blood of the Lamb, and is as sure of Heaven as you are. What an opportunity you have for obeying my text. You were angry at the misdeed, but you are hopeful for the recovery of the recalcitrant. Blessed all prison reformers! Blessed are those governors and presidents who are glad when they have a chance to pardon! Blessed the forgiving father who welcomes home the prodigal! Blessed the dying thief whom the Lord took with Him to glory, saying: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!"

There is another evil that we ought to abhor, while we try to help the victim, and that is infidelity. It snatches the life preserver from the

man afloat and affords not so much as a spar or a plank as substitute. It would extinguish the only light that has ever been kindled for the troubled and the lost. Let the spirit of infidelity take hold of a neighborhood, and in that town the marriage relation is a farce and good morals give place to all styles of immorals. Let it take possession of this earth, and there will be no virtue left in all the world's circumference. All the sins rebuked in the Ten Commandments would be dominant. The torch that shall kindle the conflagration of the earth in its last catastrophe will not do as much damage as would infidelity and agnosticism, if they got the chance. Be angry with such theories of unbelief and hatred of God. Never laugh at the witticisms of those who would belittle the Bible with their jocularity. Quote to them the four lines of Whittier:

And weary seekers of the best  
We come back laden with our quest  
To find that all the sages said  
Is in the book our mothers read.

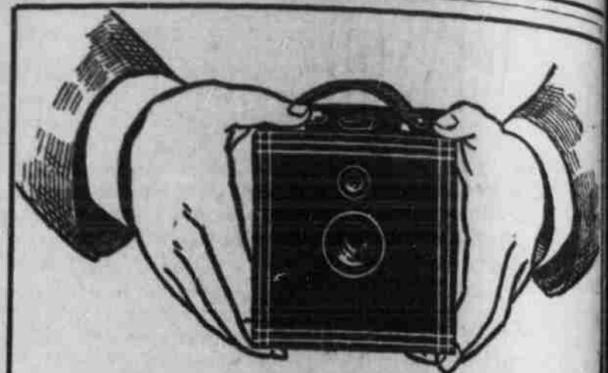
Have a lightning in your eye and a flush in your cheek and a frown on your brow for a dastard that would blot out the sun and moon and stars of Christianity and leave all things in an arctic night, the cold equal to the darkness. You do well to be angry, but how about those who have been stung of scepticism, and that is more millions than you will ever know of until the judgment day reveals everything. Ah, here comes your opportunity for gentleness, kindness and sympathy. The probability is that if you had been plied with the same influences as this unbeliever there would not be a Bible in all your house from cellar to attic. Perhaps he was in some important transaction swindled by a member of the church whose taking of the sacrament was a sacrilege. Perhaps he read agnostic books and heard agnostic lectures and mingled in agnostic circles until he has been befogged and needs your Christian help more than anyone that you know of. Do not get into any labored argument about the truth of Christianity. He may beat you at that. He has a whole artillery of weapons ready to open fire.

Remember that no one was ever reformed for this life or saved for the life to come by an argument, but in humblest and gentlest way, your voice subdued, ask him a few questions. Ask him if he had a Christian parentage, and if he says yes ask him whether the old folks died happy. Ask him if he has ever heard of anyone going out of this life in raptures of infidelity and agnosticism. Ask him if it is not a somewhat remarkable fact that the Bible, after so many years, sticks together and that there are more copies of it in existence than ever before. Ask him if he knows of any better civilization than Christian civilization and whether he thinks the teachings of Confucius or Christ are preferable. Ask him if he thinks it would be a fair thing in the Creator of all things to put in this world the human race and give them no direct communication for their guidance and, if they did wrong, tell them of no way of recovery. I think if a famous infidel of our time, instead of being taken away instantaneously, had died in his bed after weeks and months of illness he would have revoked his teachings and left for his beloved family consolations which they could not find in obsequies at which not one word of Holy Scripture was read, or at Fresh Pond crematory, where no Christian benediction was pronounced. I do not positively say that in a prolonged illness, there would have been a retraction, but I think there would.

But let me confess at this crisis of my sermon that there is not an injunction in the Bible more difficult to obey than the words of the text. While it applauds a wholesome indignation, it warns against sinful anger. And there is in all the realm of passion nothing more destructive than indiscriminate hate. First of all, it frenzies the nervous ganglia. Those people who easily flare up on little provocation go into high dudgeon, take umbrage without reason, snap you up quick, have ruined their nerves, and there is only one thing worse to ruin, and that is the brain, and we say of one that is given to frequent ebullitions of temper that he is an unbalanced man. A business man of our acquaintance said: "I cannot afford to get mad. It hurts me so."

A man thoroughly mad can say enough in two minutes to damage him for 20 years. It only took five minutes for the earthquake to destroy Caracas. One unfortunate sentence uttered in affront in a speech in the United States senate shut forever the door of the white house against one of the most brilliant men of the last century.

Surpassing all other characters in the world's biography stands Jesus Christ, wrathful against sin, merciful to the sinner. Witness His behavior toward the robed ruffians who demanded capital punishment for an offending woman—denunciation for their sinful hypocrisy, pardon for her sweet penitence. He did not speak of Herod as "his majesty" or "his royal highness," but dared to compare him to a cunning fox, say-



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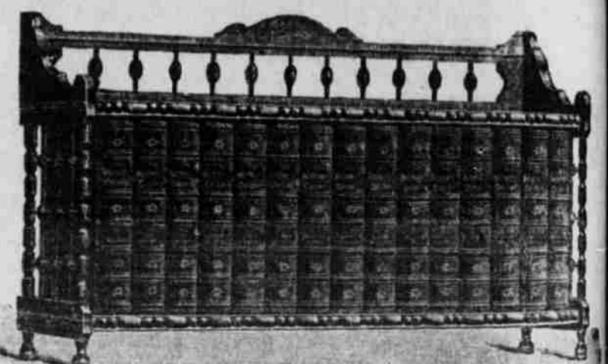
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ing: "Go ye and tell that fox." But, alert to the cry of suffering, He finds ten lepers and to how many of the ten awful invalids did He give convalescence and health? Ten. Rebuking Pharisaism in the most compressed sentence in all the vocabulary of anathema—"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"—yet looking upon Peter with such tenderness that no word was spoken—and not a word was needed, for the look spoke louder than words. "And the Lord looked upon Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly." Oh, what a look it must have been to break down the swarthy fisherman apostle! It was such a hurt look, such a beseeching look, such a loving look, such a forgiving look! Was there any other being since time began, such a combination of wrath against wrong and compassion for the wrongdoer? "Lion of Judah's tribe! Hear that! 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world!' Hear that!"

Like Him, let us hate iniquity with complete hatred; but, like Him, may we help those who are overthrown and be willing to suffer for their restoration. Then, although at the opening of this discourse our text may have seemed to command us to do an impossible thing, we will at the close of this sermon, with a prayer to God for help, be more rigid and determined than ever before against that which is wrong, while at the same time we shall feel so kindly toward all the erring and work so hard for their rescue that we will realize that we have scaled the Alpine, the Himalayan, height of my text, which enjoins: "Be ye angry and sin not."

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