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## GIVEN UP TO IDOLATRY.

### DR. TALMAGE PREACHES ABOUT PAUL IN THE CITY OF ATHENS.

**A Wonderful Oration Before the Greek Wise Men Which Told Them the Greatest Truths Their Ears Had Ever Listened To.**

BROOKLYN, Nov. 22.—The congregation at the Tabernacle, led by cornet and organ, sang this morning with great power the hymn of Isaac Watts, beginning:

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come.

The sermon, which was on the Acropolis, is the sixth of the series Dr. Talmage is preaching on the subjects suggested by his tour in Bible lands. His text was taken from Acts xvii, 16, "While Paul waited for them at Athens his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

It seemed as if morning would never come. We had arrived after dark in Athens, Greece, and the night was sleepless with expectation, and my watch slowly announced to me one and two and three and four o'clock, and at the first ray of dawn I called our party to look out of the window upon that city to which Paul said he was a debtor, and to which the whole earth is debtor for Greek architecture, Greek sculpture, Greek poetry, Greek eloquence, Greek prowess and Greek history.

That morning in Athens we sauntered forth armed with most generous and lovely letters from the president of the United States and his secretary of state, and during all our stay in that city those letters caused every door and every gate and every temple and every palace to swing open before us. The mightiest geographical name on earth today is America. The signature of an American president and secretary of state will take a man where an army could not.

Those names brought us into the presence of a most gracious and beautiful sovereign, the queen of Greece, and her cordiality was more like that of a sister than the occupant of a throne room. No formal bow, as when monarchs are approached, but a cordial shake of the hand and earnest questions about our personal welfare and our beloved country far away. But this morning we pass through where stood the Agora, the ancient market place, the locality where philosophers used to meet their disciples, walking while they talked, and where Paul, the Christian logician, flung many a proud Stoic, and got the laugh on many an impertinent Epicurean.

THE ATHENIAN MARKET PLACE.

The market place was the center of social and political life, and it was the place where people went to tell and hear the news. Booths and bazaars were set up for merchandise of all kinds, except meat; but everything must be sold for cash, and there must be no lying about the value of commodities, and the Agoranomi who ruled the place could inflict severe punishment upon offenders. The different schools of thinkers had distinct places set apart for convocation. The Platoeans must meet at the cheese market, the Decelians at the barber shop, the sellers of perfumes at the frankincense headquarters.

The market place was a space three hundred and fifty yards long and two hundred and fifty wide, and it was given up to gossip and merchandise and lounging and philosophizing. All this you need to know in order to understand the Bible when it says of Paul, "Therefore disputed he in the market daily with them that met him." You see it was the best place to get an audience, and if a man feels himself called to preach he wants people to preach to. But before we make our chief visits of today we must take a turn at the Stadium. It is a little way out, but go we must. The Stadium was the place where the foot races occurred.

Paul had been out there no doubt, for he frequently uses the scenes of that place as figures when he tells us, "Let us run the race that is set before us," and again, "They do it to obtain a corruptible garland, but we are an incorruptible." The marble and the gilding have been removed, but the high mounds against which the seats were piled are still there. The Stadium is six hundred and eighty feet long, one hundred and thirty feet wide and held forty thousand spectators.

There is today the very tunnel through which the defeated racer departed from the Stadium and from the hisses of the people, and there are the stairs up which the victor went to the top of the hill to be crowned with the laurel. In this place contests with wild beasts sometimes took place, and while Hadrian, the emperor, sat on yonder height, one thousand beasts were slain in one celebration.

But it was chiefly for foot racing, and so I proposed to my friend that day while we were in the Stadium that we try which of us could run the sooner from end to end of this historical ground, and so at the word given by the lookers on we started side by side, but before I got through I found out what Paul meant when he compares the spiritual race with the race in this very Stadium, as he says, "Lay aside every weight." My heavy overcoat and my friend's freedom from such incumbrance showed the advantage in any kind of a race of "laying aside every weight."

THE WONDERFUL ACROPOLIS.

We come now to the Acropolis. It is a rock about two miles in circumference at the base and a thousand feet in circumference at the top, and three hundred feet high. On it has been crowded more elaborate architecture and sculpture than in any other place under the whole heavens. Originally a fortress, afterward a congregation of temples and statues and pillars, their ruins an enchantment from which no observer ever breaks. No wonder that Aristides thought it the center of all things—Greece, the center of the world; Attica, the center of Greece; Athens, the center of Attica, and the Acropolis the center of Athens. Earthquakes have shaken it; Verres plundered it.

Lord Elgin, the English embassador at Constantinople, got permission of the sultan to remove from the Acropolis fallen pieces of the building, but he took from the building to England the finest statues, removing them at an expense of eight hundred thousand dollars. A storm overthrew many of the statues of the Acropolis. Morosini, the general, attempted to remove from a pediment the sculptured car and horses of Victory, but the clumsy machinery dropped it, and all was lost.

The Turks turned the building into a powder magazine where the Venetian guns dropped a fire that by explosion sent the columns flying in the air and falling cracked and splintered. But after all that time and storm and war and iconoclasm have effected, the Acropolis is the monarch of all ruins, and before it bow the learning, the genius, the poetry, the art, the history of the ages. I saw it as it was thousands of years ago. I had read so much about it and dreamed so much about it, that I needed no magician's wand to restore it.

At one wave of my hand on that clear morning in 1889 it rose before me in the glory it had when Pericles ordered it and Ictinus planned it and Phidias chiseled it and Protogines painted it and Pausanias described it. Its gates, which were carefully guarded by the ancients, open to let you in, and you ascend by sixty marble steps the propylæa, which Epaminodas wanted to transfer to Thebes, but permission, I am glad to say, could not be granted for the removal of this architectural miracle.

In the days when ten cents would do more than a dollar now, the building cost two million three hundred thousand dollars. See its five ornamented gates, the keys intrusted to an officer for only one day lest the temptation to go in and misappropriate the treasures be too great for him; its ceiling a mingling of blue and scarlet and green, and the walls abloom with pictures utmost in thought and coloring. Yonder is a temple to a goddess called "Victory Without Wings."

So many of the triumphs of the world had been followed by defeat that the Greeks wished in marble to indicate that victory for Athens had come never again to fly away, and hence this temple to "Victory Without Wings"—a temple of marble, snow white and glittering. Yonder, behold the pedestal of Agrippa, twenty-seven feet high and twelve square. But the overshadowing wonder of all the hill is the Parthenon. In days when money was ten times more valuable than now it cost four million six hundred thousand dollars. It is a Doric grandeur, having forty-six columns, each column thirty-four feet high and six feet two inches in diameter. Wondrous intercolumniations! Painted porticoes, architraves tinged with ocher, shields of gold hung up, lines of most delicate curve, figures of horses and men and women and gods, oxen on the way to sacrifice, statues of the deities Dionysius, Prometheus, Hermes, Demeter, Zeus, Hera, Poseidon; in one frieze twelve divinities; centaurs in battle; weaponry from Marathon; chariot of night; chariot of the morning; horses of the sun, the fates, the furies; statue of Jupiter holding in his right hand the thunderbolt; silver footed chair in which Xerxes watched the battle of Salamis only a few miles away.

MINERVA IN FULL ARMOR.

Here is the colossal statue of Minerva in full armor, eyes of gray colored stone, figure of a Sphinx, on her head, griffins by her side (which are lions with eagle's beak), spear in one hand, statue of liberty in the other, a shield carved with battle scenes, and even the slippers sculptured and tied on with thongs of gold. Far out at sea the sailors saw this statue of Minerva rising high above all the temples, glittering in the sun. Here are statues of equestrians, statue of a lioness, and there are the Graces and yonder a horse in bronze.

There is a statue said in the time of Augustus to have of its own accord turned around from east to west and spit blood; statues made out of shields conquered in battle; statue of Apollo, the expeller of locusts; statue of Anacreon, drunk and singing; statue of Olympodorus, a Greek, memorable for the fact that he was cheerful when others were cast down, a trait worthy of sculpture. But walk on and around the Acropolis, and yonder you see a statue of Hygeia, and the statue of Theseus fighting the Minotaur, and the statue of Hercules slaying serpents. No wonder that Petronius said it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. Oh, the Acropolis. The most of its temples and statues made from the marble quarries of Mount Pentelicum, a little way from the city.

I have here on my table a block of the Parthenon made out of this marble, and on it is the sculpture of Phidias. I brought it from the Acropolis. This specimen has on it the dust of ages, and the marks of explosion and battle, but you can get from it some idea of the delicate luster of the Acropolis when it was covered with a mountain of this marble cut into all the exquisite shapes that genius could contrive and striped with silver and aflame with gold. The Acropolis in the morning light of those ancients must have shone as though it were an aerolite cast off from the noonday sun. The temples must have looked like petrified foam. The whole Acropolis must have seemed like the white breakers of the great ocean of time.

THE APOSTLE PAUL ON MARS HILL.

But we cannot stop longer here, for there is a hill near by of more interest, though it has not one chip of marble to suggest a statue or a temple. We hasten down the Acropolis to ascend the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, as it is called. It took only about three minutes to walk the distance, and the two hill tops are so near that what I said in religious discourse on Mars Hill was heard distinctly by some English gentlemen on the Acropolis. This Mars Hill is a rough pile of rock fifty feet high. It was famous long before New Testament times.

The Persians easily and terribly assaulted the Acropolis from this hilltop. Here assembled the court to try criminals. It was held in the nighttime, so that the faces of the judges could not be seen, nor the faces of the lawyers who made the plea, and so, instead of a trial being one of emotion, it must have been one of cool justice; but there was one occasion on this hill memorable above all others.

A little man, physically weak, and his rhetoric described by himself as contemptible, had by his sermons rocked Athens with commotion, and he was summoned either by writ of law or hearty invitation to come upon that pulpit of rock and give a specimen of his theology. All the wiseacres of Athens turned out and turned up to hear him. The more venerable of them sat in an amphitheater, the granite seats of which are still visible, but the other people swarmed on all sides of the hill and at the base of it to hear this man, whom some called a fanatic and others called a madcap and others a blasphemer and others styled contemptuously, "This fellow."

Paul arrived in answer to the writ or invitation, and confronted them and gave them the biggest dose that mortals ever took. He was so built that nothing could scare him, and as for Jupiter and Athenia, the god and the goddess whose images were in full sight on the adjoining hill, he had not so much regard for them as he had for the ant that was crawling in the sand under his feet. In that audience were the first orators of the world, and they had voices like flutes when they were passive and like trumpets when they were aroused, and I think they laughed in the sleeves of their gowns as this insignificant looking man rose to speak.

In that audience were Scholiasts, who knew everything, or thought they did, and from the end of the longest hair on the top of their craniums to the end of the nail on the longest toe they were stuffed with hypercriticism, and they leaned back with a supercilious look to listen. As in 1889, I stood on that rock where Paul stood, and a slab of which I brought from Athens by consent of the queen, through Mr. Tricoupis, the prime minister, and had placed in yonder memorial wall, I read the whole story, Bible in hand.

GOD WHO MADE THE WORLD.

What I have so far said in this discourse was necessary in order that you may understand the boldness, the defiance, the holy recklessness, the magnificence of Paul's speech. The first thunderbolt he launched at the opposite hill—the Acropolis—that moment all aglitter with idols and temples. He cries out, "God, who made the world." Why, they thought that Prometheus made it, that Mercury made it, that Apollo made it, that Poseidon made it, that Eros made it, that Pandrocus made it, that Boreas made it, that it took all the gods of the Parthenon, yea, all the gods and goddesses of the Acropolis, to make it, and here stands a man without any ecclesiastical title, neither a D. D., nor even a reverend, declaring that the world was made by the Lord of heaven and earth, and hence the inference that all the splendid covering of the Acropolis, so near that the people standing on the steps of the Parthenon could hear it, was a deceit, a falsehood, a sham, a blasphemy. Look at the faces of the auditors; they are turning pale, and then red, and then wrathful. There had been several earthquakes in that region, but that was the severest shock these men had ever felt.

The Persians had bombarded the Acropolis from the heights of Mars Hill, but this Pauline bombardment was greater and more terrific. "What," said his hearers, "have we been hauling with many yokes of oxen for centuries these blocks from the quarries of Mount Pentelicum, and have we had our architects putting up these structures of unparalleled splendor, and have we had the greatest of all sculptors, Phidias, with his men, chiseling away at those wondrous pediments, and cutting away at these friezes, and have we taxed the nation's resources to the utmost, now to be told that those statues see nothing, hear nothing, know nothing?"

Oh, Paul, stop for a moment and give these startled and overwhelmed auditors time to catch their breath! Make a rhetorical pause! Take a look around you at the interesting landscape and give your hearers time to recover! No, he does not make even a period or so much as a colon or semicolon, but launches the second thunderbolt right after the first, and in the same breath goes on to say, God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

Oh, Paul! Is not deity more in the Parthenon, or more in the Thescum, or more in the Erechtheium, or more in the temple of Zeus Olympius than in the open air, more than on the hill where we are sitting, more than on Mount Hymettus out yonder, from which the bees get their honey? "No more!" responds Paul, "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

But surely the preacher on the pulpit of rock on Mars Hill will stop now. His audience can endure no more. Two thunderbolts are enough. No, in the same breath he launches the third thunderbolt, which to them is more fiery, more terrible, more demolishing than the others, as he cries out: "Hath made of one blood all nations." Oh, Paul! you forget you are speaking to the proudest and most exclusive audience in the world. Do not say "of one blood." You cannot mean that. Had Socrates and Plato and Demosthenes and Solon and Lycurgus and Draco and Sophocles and Euripides and Eschylus and Pericles and Phidias and Miltiades blood just like the Persians, like the Turks, like the Egyptians, like the common herd of humanity? "Yes," says Paul, "of one blood, all nations."

RESURRECTION AND LAST JUDGMENT.

Surely that must be the closing paragraph of the sermon. His auditors must be let up from the nervous strain. Paul has smashed the Acropolis and smashed the national pride of the Greeks, and what more can he say? Those Grecian orators, standing on that place, always closed their addresses with something sublime and climacteric, a peroration, and Paul is going to give them a peroration which will eclipse in power and majesty all that he has yet said. Heretofore he has hurled one thunderbolt at a time; now he will close by hurling two at once. The little old man, under the power of his speech, has straightened himself up and the stoop has gone out of his shoulders, and he looks about three feet taller than when he began, and his eyes, which were quiet, became two flames of fire, and his face, which was calm in the introduction, now depicts a whirlwind of emotion as he ties the two thunderbolts together with a cord of inconsumable courage and hurls them at the crowd now standing or sitting aghast—the two thunderbolts of Resurrection and Last Judgment. His closing words were: "Because He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Remember those thoughts were to them novel and provocative; that Christ, the despised Nazarene, would come to be their judge, and they should have to get up out of their cemeteries to stand before him and take their eternal doom. Mightiest burst of elocutionary power ever heard. The ancestors of some of those Greeks had heard Demosthenes in his oration on the Crown, had heard Æschines in his speeches against Timarchus and Ctesiphon, had heard Plato in his great argument for immortality of the soul, had heard Socrates on his deathbed, suicidal cup of hemlock in hand, leave his hearers in emotion too great to bear; had in the theater of Dionysius, at the foot of the Acropolis (the ruins of its piled up amphitheater and the marble floor of its orchestra still there), seen enacted the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles, but neither had the ancestors of these Grecians on Mars Hill, or themselves, ever heard or witnessed such tornadoes of moral power as that with which Paul now whelmed his hearers. At those two thoughts of Resurrection and Judgment, the audience sprang to their feet. Some moved they adjourn to some other day to hear more on the same theme, but others would have torn the sacred orator to pieces.

The record says, "Some mocked." I suppose it means that they mimicked the solemnity of his voice, that they took off his impassioned gesticulation, and they cried out: "Jew! Jew! Where did you study rhetoric? You ought to hear our orators speak! You had better go back to your business of tent-making. Our Lycurgus knew more in a minute than you will know in a month. Say, where did you get that crooked back, and those weak eyes from? Ha! Ha! You try to teach us Grecians! What nonsense you talk about when you speak of Resurrection and Judgment. Now, little old man, climb down the side of Mars Hill and get out of sight as soon as possible." "Some mocked." But, that scene adjourned to the day of which the sacred orator had spoken—the day of Resurrection and Judgment.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE.

As in Athens, that evening in 1889, we climbed down the pile of slippery rocks where all this had occurred, on our way back to our hotel, I stood half way between the Acropolis and Mars Hill in the gathering shadows of eventide I seemed to hear those two hills in sublime and awful converse. "I am chiefly of the past:" said the Acropolis. "I am chiefly of the future," replied Mars Hill. The Acropolis said: "My orators are dead. My lawgivers are dead. My poets are dead. My architects are dead. My sculptors are dead. I am a monument of the dead past. I shall never again hear a song sung. I shall never again see a column lifted. I shall never again behold a goddess crowned."

Mars Hill responded: "I, too, have had a history. I had on my heights warriors who will never again unsheath the sword, and judges who will never again utter a doom, and orators who will never again make a plea. But my influence is to be more in the future than it ever was in the past. The words that missionary, Paul, uttered that exciting day in the hearing of the wisest men and the populace on my rocky shoulders, have only begun their majestic roll; the brotherhood of man, and the Christ of God, and the peroration of Resurrection and Last Judgment with which the Tarsian orator closed his sermon that day amid the mocking crowd, shall yet revolutionize the planet. O Acropolis! I have stood here long enough to witness that your gods are no gods at all. Your Boreas could not control the winds. Your Neptune could not manage the sea. Your Apollo never evoked a musical note. Your god Ceres never grew a harvest. Your goddess of wisdom, Minerva, never knew the Greek alphabet. Your Jupiter could not handle the lightnings. But the God whom I proclaimed on the day when Paul preached before the astounded assemblage on my rough heights is the God of music, the God of wisdom, the God of power, the God of mercy, the God of love, the God of storms, the God of sunshine, the God of the land, and the God of the sea, the God over all, blessed forever." Then the Acropolis spake and said, as though in self defense, "My Plato argued for the immortality of the soul, and my Socrates praised virtue, and my Miltiades at Marathon drove back the Persian oppressors."

"Yes," said Mars Hill, "your Plato laboriously guessed at the immortality of the soul, but my Paul, divinely inspired, declared it as a fact straight from God. Your Socrates praised virtue, but expired as a suicide. Your Miltiades was brave against earthly foes, yet died from a wound ignominiously gotten in after defeat. But my Paul challenged all earth and all hell with this battle shout, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, and then on the 29th of June, in the year 66, on the road to Ostia, after the sword of the headsman had given one keen stroke, took the crown of martyrdom.'"

ALAS! AND HOSANNAH!

After a moment's silence by both hills the Acropolis moaned out in the darkness, "Alas! Alas!" and Mars Hill responded, "Hosannah! Hosannah!" Then the voices of both hills became indistinct, and as I passed on and away in the twilight I seemed to hear only two sounds—a fragment of Pentelicon marble from the architrave of the Acropolis dropping down on the ruins of a shattered idol, and the other sound seemed to come from the rock on Mars Hill, from which we had just descended. But we were by this time so far off that the fragments of sentences were smaller when dropping from Mars Hill than were the fragments of fallen marble on the Acropolis, and I could only hear parts of disconnected sentences wafted on the night air—"God who made the world"—"of one blood all nations"—"appointed a day in which he will judge the world"—"raised him from the dead."

As that night in Athens I put my tired head on my pillow, and the exciting scenes of the day passed through my mind, I thought on the same subject on which as a boy I made my commencement speech in Niblo's theatre on graduation day from the New York university, viz., "The Moral Effects of Sculpture and Architecture," but further than I could have thought in boyhood I thought in Athens that night that the moral effects of architecture and sculpture depend on what you do in great buildings after they are put up, and upon the character of the men whose forms you cut in the marble.

Yea! I thought that night what struggles the martyrs went through in order that in our time the Gospel might have full swing; and I thought that night what a brainy religion it must be that could absorb a hero like him whom we have considered today, a man the superior of the whole human race, the infidels but pygmies or homunculi compared with him; and I thought what a rapturous consideration it is that through the same grace that saved Paul, we shall confront this great apostle and shall have the opportunity, amid the familiarities of the skies, of asking him what was the greatest occasion of all his life.

He may say, "The shipwreck of Melita." He may say, "The riot at Ephesus." He may say, "My last walk out on the road to Ostia." But I think he will say: "The day I stood on Mars Hill addressing the indignant Areopagites, and looking off upon the towering form of the goddess Minerva, and the majesty of the Parthenon, and all the brilliant divinities of the Acropolis. That account in the Bible was true. My spirit was stirred within me when I saw the city wholly given up to idolatry!"

THANKS.—Giving thanks without something to be thankful for is not very encouraging. Hence get your dinner supplies of James Aitken, and be happy. 51.


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