

FROM THE SOUTH SEA

DR. TALMAGE SENDS A LESSON FROM FAR AUSTRALIA.

The Way of Christ With a Pagan and Sinner—Too Often Are Officials Tempted Above What They Are Able to Bear.

BROOKLYN, Sept. 28.—Rev. Dr. Talmage, who is now preparing to leave Australia for India on his round the world tour, has selected as the subject for today's sermon through the press "The Tax Collector's Conversion," the text being taken from Luke xix, 9, "This day is salvation come to this house."

Zacchaeus was a politician and a tax-gatherer. He had an honest calling, but the opportunity for "stealings" was so large the temptation was too much for him. The Bible says he "was a sinner"—that is, in the public sense. How many fine men have been ruined by official position! It is an awful thing for any man to seek office under government unless his principles of integrity are deeply fixed. Many a man upright in an insignificant position has made shipwreck in a great one. As far as I can tell, in the city of Jericho this Zacchaeus belonged to what might be called the "ring." They had things their own way, successfully avoiding exposure, if by no other way perhaps by hiring somebody to break in and steal the vouchers. Notwithstanding his bad reputation there were streaks of good about him, as there are about almost every man. Gold is found in quartz, and sometimes in a very small percentage.

The Thronging to See Jesus. The people turned out in masses to see him. Here he comes, the Lord of glory, on foot, dust covered and road weary, limping along the way, carrying the griefs and woes of the world. He looks to be 60 years of age, when he is only about 30. Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the people's heads while standing on the ground, so he got up into a sycamore tree that swung its arms clear over the road. Jesus advanced amid the wild excitement of the surging crowd. The most honorable and popular men of the city are looking on and trying to gain his attention. Jesus, instead of regarding them, looks up at the little man in the tree and says: "Zacchaeus, come down. I am going home with you." Everybody was disgusted to think that Christ would go home with so dishonorable a man.

I see Christ entering the front door of the house of Zacchaeus. The king of heaven and earth sits down, and as he looks around on the place and the family he pronounces the benediction of the text, "This day is salvation come to this house." Zacchaeus had mounted the sycamore tree out of mere inquisitiveness. He wanted to see how this stranger looked—the color of his eyes, the length of his hair, the contour of his features, the height of his stature. "Come down," said Christ.

Idle Curiosity. And so many people in this day get up into the tree of curiosity or speculation to see Christ. They ask a thousand queer questions about his divinity, about God's sovereignty and the eternal decrees. They speculate and criticize and hang onto the outside limb of a great sycamore, but they must come down from that if they want to be saved. We cannot be saved as philosophers, but as little children. You cannot go to heaven by way of Athens, but by way of Bethlehem.

Why be perplexed about the way sin came into the world when the great question is how we shall get sin driven out of our hearts. How many spend their time in criticism and religious speculation! They take the rose of Sharon or the lily of the valley, pull out the anther, scatter the corolla and say, "Is that the beautiful flower of religion that you are talking about?" No flower is beautiful after you have torn it all to pieces. The path to heaven is so plain that a fool need not make any mistake about it, and yet men stop and cavil. Suppose that, going toward the Pacific slope, I had resolved that I would stop until I could kill all the grizzly bears and the panthers on either side of the way. I would never have got to the Pacific coast. When I went out to hunt the grizzly bear, the grizzly bear would have come out to hunt me. Here is a plain road to heaven. Men say they will not take a step on it until they can make game of all the theories that bark and growl at them from the thickets. They forget the fact that, as they go out to hunt the theory, the theory comes out to hunt them, and so they perish.

Must Become as a Little Child. We must receive the kingdom of heaven in simplicity. William Pennings was one of the wisest men of this country—a governor of his own state and afterward speaker of the house of representatives—yet when God called him to be a Christian he went in and came down among some children who were applying for church membership, and he said to his pastor, "Talk to me just as you do to these children, for I know nothing about it." There is no use of bothering ourselves about mysteries when there are so many things that are plain.

The Ladlow, my professor in the theological seminary, taught me a lesson I have never forgotten. While putting a variety of questions to him that were perplexing he turned upon me, somewhat in sternness, but more in love, and said, "Mr. Talmaage, you will have to do just as God knows some things that you don't." We tear our heads on the spine of the cactus instead of fastening our eyes on its tropical bloom. A great majority of people now sit wringing themselves on the sycamore tree of their own ideas, and I try to say: "Zacchaeus, come down! Come down out of your pride, out of your inquisitiveness, out of your speculation. You cannot ride into the city of heaven with such a load,

postilion ahead and lackey behind. Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God." God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. Zacchaeus, come down, come down!

What Zacchaeus Did. I notice that this taxgatherer accompanied his surrender to Christ with the restoration of property that did not belong to him. He says, "If I have taken anything by false accusation, I restore fourfold"—that is, if I have taxed any man for \$10,000 when he had only \$5,000 worth of property and put in my own pocket the tax for the last \$5,000, I will restore to him fourfold. If I took from him \$10, I will give him \$40. If I took from him \$40, I will give him \$160.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been sent to Washington during the past few years as "conscience money." I suppose that money was sent by men who wanted to be Christians, but found they could not until they made restitution. There is no need of our trying to come to Christ as long as we keep fraudulently a dollar or a farthing in our possession that belongs to another. Suppose you have not money enough to pay your debts and for the sake of defrauding your creditors you put your property in your wife's name. You might cry until the day of judgment for pardon, but you would not get it without first making restitution. In times of prosperity it is right, against a rainy day, to assign property to your wife, but if, in time of perplexity and for the sake of defrauding your creditors, you make such assignment you become a culprit before God, and you may as well stop praying until you have made restitution. Or suppose one man loans another money on bond or mortgage, with the understanding that the mortgage can be quiet for several years, but as soon as the mortgage is given commences foreclosure—the sheriff mounts the auction block, and the property is struck down at half price, and the mortgagee buys it in. The mortgagee started to get the property at half price and is a thief and a robber. Until he makes restitution there is no mercy for him.

There Must Be Restitution. You say: "I cannot make restitution. The parties whom I swindled are gone." Then I say, "Take the money up to the American Bible society and consecrate it to God." Zacchaeus was wise when he disgorged his unrighteous gains, and it was his first step in the right direction. The way being clear, Christ walked into the house of Zacchaeus. He becomes a different man; his wife a different woman; the children are different. Oh, it makes a great change in any house when Christ comes into it! How many beautiful homes are represented among you! There are pictures on the wall, there is music in the drawing room, and luxuries in the wardrobe, and a full supply in the pantry. Even if you were half asleep, there is one word with which I could wake you and thrill you through and through, and that word is "home!" There are also houses of suffering represented in which there are neither pictures nor wardrobe nor adornment—only one room, and a plain cot, or a bunk in a corner. Yet it is the place where your loved ones dwell, and your whole nature tingles with satisfaction when you think of it and call it home. Though the world may scoff at us and pursue us, and all the day we be tossed about, at eventide we sail into the harbor of home. Though there be no rest for us in the busy world, there is one word with which I could wake you and thrill you through and through, and that word is "home!" There are also houses of suffering represented in which there are neither pictures nor wardrobe nor adornment—only one room, and a plain cot, or a bunk in a corner.

Up to 40 years men work for themselves, after that for their children. Now, what do you propose to leave them. Nothing but dollars? Alas, what an inheritance! It is more likely to be a curse than a blessing. Your own common sense and observation tell you that money, without the divine blessing, is a curse. You must soon leave your children. Your shoulders are not so strong as they were, and you know that they will soon have to carry their own burdens. Your eyesight is not so clear as once. They will soon have to pick out their own way. Your arm is not so mighty as once. They will soon have to fight their own battles.

Oh, let it not be told on judgment day that you let your family start without the only safeguard—the religion of Christ. Give yourself no rest until your children are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Your son does just as you do. He tries to walk like you and to talk like you. The daughter imitates the mother. Alas, if father and mother miss heaven, the children will! Oh, let Jesus come into your house. Do not bolt the hall door, or the parlor door, or the kitchen door, or the bedroom door against him. Above all, do not bolt your heart.

Build your altar tonight. Take the family Bible lying on the parlor table. Call together as many of your family as may be awake. Read a chapter, and then, if you can think of nothing else besides the Lord's Prayer, say that. That will do. Heaven will have begun in your house. You can put your head on your pillow, feeling that, whether you wake up in this world or the next, all is well. In that great ponderous book of the judgment, where are recorded all the important events of the earth, you will read at last the statement that this was the day when salvation came into your house. Oh, Zacchaeus, come down, come down! Jesus is passing by!

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face less some of his wealthy friends see him, but God's spirit arouses him, melts him, overwhelms him. And they go home, husband and wife, in silence, until they get to their room, when he cries out, "Oh, pray for me!" And they kneel down. They cannot speak. The words will not come. But God does not want any words. He looks down and answers sob and groan and outgushing tenderness. That night they do not sleep any of talking of all the years wasted and of that Saviour who ceased not to call. Before morning they have laid their plans for a new life. Morning comes. Father and mother descend from the bedroom. The children do not know what is the matter. They never saw father with a Bible in his hand before. He says, "Come, children; I want you all to sit down while we read and pray." The children look at each other and are almost disposed to laugh, but they see their parents are in deep earnest. It is a short chapter that the father reads. He is a good reader at other times, but now he does not get on much. He sees so much to linger on. His voice trembles. Everything is so strangely new to him. They kneel—that is, the father and mother do, but the children come down one by one. They do not know that they must. It is some time before they all get down. The sentences are broken. The phrases are a little ungrammatical.

The prayer begins abruptly and ends abruptly; but, as far as I can understand what they mean, it is about this: "O Saviour, help us! We do not know how to pray. Teach us. We cannot live any longer in the way we have been living. We start today for heaven. Help us to take these children along with us. Forgive us for all the past. Strengthen us for all the future, and when the journey is over take us where Jesus is, and where the little babe is that we lost. Amen!" It ended very abruptly, but the angels came out and leaned so far over to listen they would have fallen off the battlement but for a stroke of their wings and cried: "Hark, hark! Behold, he prays!"

That night there is a rap at the bedroom door. "Who is there?" cries the father. It is the oldest child. "What is the matter? Are you sick?" "No; I want to be saved." Only a little while, and all the children are brought into the kingdom of God. And there is great joy in the house. Years pass on. The telegraph goes click, click! What is the news flying over the country? "Come home. Father is dying!" The children all gather. Some come in the last train. Some, too late for the train, take a carriage across the country. They stand around the dying bed of the father. The oldest son upholds the mother and says: "Don't cry, mother. I will take care of you." The parting blessing is given. No long admonition, for he has, through years, been saying to his children all he had to say to them. It is a plain "good-by" and the remark, "I know you will all be kind to your mother," and all is over.

Life's duty done, as sinks the clay, Light from its load, the spirit flies, While heaven and earth combine to say, How blest'd the righteous when he dies. A whole family saved forever! If the deluge come, they are all in the ark—father, mother, sons, daughters. Together on earth, together in heaven. What makes it so? Explain it. Zacchaeus one day took Jesus home with him. That is all. Salvation came to that house.

What sound is it I hear tonight? It is Jesus knocking at the door of your house. Behold a stranger at the door! He gently knocks—has knocked before. If you looked out of your window and saw me going up your front steps, you would not wait, but go yourself to open the door. Will you keep Jesus standing on the outside, his locks wet with the dew of the night? This lay is salvation come to thy house. The great want of your house is not a new carpet or costlier pictures or richer furniture. It is Jesus!

Work For the Children. Up to 40 years men work for themselves, after that for their children. Now, what do you propose to leave them. Nothing but dollars? Alas, what an inheritance! It is more likely to be a curse than a blessing. Your own common sense and observation tell you that money, without the divine blessing, is a curse. You must soon leave your children. Your shoulders are not so strong as they were, and you know that they will soon have to carry their own burdens. Your eyesight is not so clear as once. They will soon have to pick out their own way. Your arm is not so mighty as once. They will soon have to fight their own battles.

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