

A FAMILY RELIGION.

WHAT CHRISTIANITY DOES FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

Dr. Talmage at Chicago Prepares a Sermon For the Press—The Mothers of Greatness—The Revival of Joshua—No One Too Busy For Prayers.

CHICAGO, March 19.—Rev. Dr. Talmage, who is now in this city on a brief visit, did not preach today. He prepared a sermon for the press, the following discourse on "Religion at Home," the text selected being Joshua xxiv, 15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Before we adopt the resolution of this old soldier we want to be certain it is a wise resolution. If religion is going to put my piano out of tune and clog the feet of the children racing through the hall, and send the husband and put upon the doorbell, do not want it in my house. I once gave to a dear little child a book. I have never been able to hear any more of it. Will this religion spoil my text, do anything for the dining hall, for the nursery, for the parlor, for the sleeping apartment? It is a great deal easier to invite a disagreeable guest than to get rid of him. If you do not want religion you had better not ask it to come, for coming it may stay a great while. Isaac Watts went to visit Mrs. Thomas and they placed in place in Theobald and was to stay a week and said 35 years, and if religion once gets into your household the probability is it will stay there forever.

THE FAMILY ALTAR. Now, the question I want to discuss is: What will religion do for the household? Question the first: What did it do for your father's house if you were brought up in a Christian home?

That whole scene has vanished, but it comes back today. The hour for morning prayers came. You were invited in. Some what fidgety, you sat and listened. Your father made no pretension of rhetorical reading, and he just went on through the center in a plain, straightforward way. They you knelt. It was about the same prayer morning by morning and night by night, for he had the same words in his mouth, and he had the same blessings for which to be grateful day after day and year after year.

The prayer was longer than you would like to have had it, for the game at ball was waiting, or the skates were lying under the shed, or the schoolbooks needed one or two more looking at the lessons. Your parents, somewhat impatient and stiffened with age, found it difficult to rise from their kneeling. The father, who had been kneeling for some time, turned to his wife and said: "What a long prayer!"

Was that morning and evening exercise in your father's house degrading or elevating? Is it not among the most beautiful scenes of our life? You were devoted as some of the other members of your father's house who were kneeling with you at the time, and you did not look your head up closely as they did, and you took your part, and you saw just the posture your father and mother assumed while they were kneeling on the floor. The whole scene is so photograph on your memory that if you were an artist you could draw it now just as they knelt.

For what would you have that scene obliterated from your memory? It all comes back today, and you are in the household again. Father is there, mother is there, all of you children are there. It is the same old picture, but you are kneeling, petition, closing with the same thanksgiving. The family prayers of 1850, 1852, 1854, as fresh in your memory as though they were less than yesterday, and you are kneeling from your knees all that scene. Gone is it? Why, many a time it has held you steady in the struggle of life. You once started for a place, and you were jerked back, and you could not enter.

FAITHFUL PRAYERS. The broken prayer of your father has had more effect upon you than you realize. In Shakespeare and Milton and Tennyson and Dante. You have gone over mountains and across seas. You never for a moment go out of sight of that domestic altar. Oh, my friends, is it your opinion this morning that the 10 or 15 minutes subtracted from each day for family devotion was an economy or a waste of time? If you are a householder, I think some of us are coming to the conclusion that the religion which was in our father's house would be a very appropriate religion for our homes. The prayers did not damage that household, there is no probability that they will damage our household.

"Is God dead?" said a child to her father. "No," he replied; "why do you ask that?" "Well," she said, "when mother was living we used to have prayers, but since her death we haven't had family prayers, and I didn't know that God was dead too?" A family that is launched in the morning with family prayers is well launched, breakfast over, the family gather, some to school, some to household duties, some to business. During the day there will be a thousand perils abroad—perils of the street, of the country, of the unguarded horse, of the mischief of the roused temper, of multitudinous temptations to do wrong.

Some time between 7 o'clock in the morning and 10 o'clock at night there may be a moment when you will be in urgent need of God. Besides that, family prayers will be a secular advantage. A father who enters the war to serve his country. His children stand and cultivated the farm. His wife precept. One of the sons said afterward: "Father is fighting, and we are fighting, and mother is praying!" "Ah!" said some one, "praying and digging and fighting will bring us out of our national troubles." "We may pray this morning," "Give us this day our daily bread," and sit down in idleness and starve to death, but prayer and hard work will give a livelihood to any family. Family religion pays for itself a hundred times over. Let us have again in each one of our households. You may not be able to formulate a prayer. Then there are Philip Henry's prayers, and there are Methodists' prayers, and there are Philip Doddridge's prayers, and there are scores of books with supplications just suited to the domestic circle.

"Oh," says some man, "I don't feel competent to lead my household in prayer."

Well, I don't know that it is your duty to lead. I think perhaps it is sometimes better for the mother of the household to lead. She knows better the wants of the household. She can read the Scriptures with a more tender enunciation. She knows more of God. I will put it plainly and say she prays better. Oh, these mothers decide almost everything. Byron's mother was a murderer. Lord Byron's mother was haughty and impious. You might have guessed that these sons their children. Walter Scott's mother was fond of poetry. Washington's mother was patriotic. Samuel Judge's mother was a thorough Christian. Dr. Deming's mother was noble minded. So you might have guessed from their children. Good men always have good mothers. There may be one in 10 or 30 years be an exception to the rule, but a young man received a furlough to return from the army to his father's house. Afterward he took the furlough back to the office, saying, "I would like to postpone my visit for two weeks." At the end of the two weeks he came and got the furlough. He was asked why he waited. He said, "When I left home I told my mother I would be a Christian in the army, and I was resolved not to go home until I could answer her first question as to my present condition of mind. If both the father and the mother be right, then the children are almost sure to be right.

The lands that had tilled for that household so long, folded. The heart cooled off to 20 or 30 years of anxiety about how to put that family in right position. The lips closed after so many years of good advice. There are more tears falling in mother's grave than in father's, but over the father's tomb I think there is a kind of awe. It is at that marble pillar many a young man has been revivified.

Oh, young man with cheek flushed with dissipation how long it is since you have been out to your father's grave! Perhaps the last few days may have been the headstone until it leans far over. You had better go out and see whether the lettering has faded, and if it has, you had better get out and see whether the gate of the lot is closed. You had better go and see if you cannot find a sermon in the springing grass. Oh, young man, go out this week and see your father's grave!

Religion did so much for our Christian ancestry. Are we not ready this morning to be calling to receive it into our own households? If we do receive it, let it come through the front door—not through the back door. In other words, do not let your religion come in through the back door. There are many families who want to be religious, but they do not want anybody outside to know it. They would be mortified to death if it were known that they were praying. They do not sing in the worship for fear their neighbors would hear them. They do not have prayers when they have company.

They do not think about the morality of the western trapper. A traveler going along was overtaken by night and a storm, and he entered a cabin. There were five men lying up around the cabin. He had a large amount of money with him, but he did not dare to venture out into the night in the storm. He hid up in the corner of the room, and after a while the father—the western trapper—came in, gun on shoulder, and when the traveler looked at him he was still more frightened.

After a while the family were whispering together in one corner of the room, and the traveler thought to himself, "Oh, now my time has come. I wish I was out in the storm and the night rather than here." But the swarthy man came up to him and said: "Sir, we are a rough people, we get our living by hunting and we are very hard on our night comes, but before going to bed we always have a habit of reading a little out of the Bible and having prayers, and I think you will have us read a little out of the Bible and have your prayers, and if you don't believe in that kind of thing if you will just step outside the door for a little while I will be much obliged to you."

Oh, how many Christian parents who have not half the courage of that western trapper. They do not want their religion projected too conspicuously. They do not like to have it seen by so many as to call in the case of a funeral, but as to having it dominant in the household from the 1st of January, 7 o'clock a. m., to the 31st of December, 7 o'clock p. m., they do not want it. They would rather die and have their families perish with them than to cry out in the bold words of the soldier in my text, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

INCIDENT IN THE TALMAGE FAMILY. There was in my ancestral line an incident so strangely impressive that it seems more like romance than reality. It has sometimes been so inaccurately put forth that I now give you the true incident. My grandfather, the Rev. Dr. Talmage, living at Somerville, N. J., went to Basking Ridge to witness a revival under the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Finley. They came home so tired and so worn that they were resolved on the salvation of their children. The young people of the house were to go off for an evening party, and my grandfather said: "Now, when you are all ready for the party, come to my room, for I have something very important to tell you." All ready for departure, they came to her room, and she said to them, "Now, I want you to remember, while you are away this evening, that I am all the time in this room praying for your salvation, and I shall be crying prayer until you get back." The young people went to the party, but amid the loudest hilarities of the night they could not forget that their mother was praying for them. The evening passed, and the night passed.

The next day my grandparents heard an angel in an adjoining room, and they went in. Family religion pays for itself a hundred times over. Let us have again in each one of our households. You may not be able to formulate a prayer. Then there are Philip Henry's prayers, and there are Methodists' prayers, and there are Philip Doddridge's prayers, and there are scores of books with supplications just suited to the domestic circle.

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and David went and told the story to a young woman to whom he was affianced, who, as a result of the story, became a Christian. I feel that from the whole region was whelmed by religious awakening, and at the next communion in the village church at Somerville over 200 souls stood up to profess the faith of the gospel. My mother, carrying the memory of his severance from early womanhood into further life, in after years was resolved upon the salvation of her children, and for many years every week she met with other Christian mothers to pray for the salvation of their families. I think that all the members of those families were saved—myself, the youngest and the last.

GRANDMOTHER'S PRAYER. There were 12 of us children. I trace the whole line of mercy back to that hour when my Christian grandmother sat in her room imploring the blessing of God upon her children. Nine of her descendants became preachers of the Christian faith, and five in the Christian church. Did it pay her to spend the whole evening in prayer for her household? Ask her before the throne of God surrounded by her children. In the presence of the Christian church today I make this record of ancestral piety. Oh, there is a heaven and a tenderness and a sublimity in family religion!

There are but four or five pictures in the old family Bible that I inherited, but I have never thought of the Bible as being so illustrated to my eyes. Through it I can see into marriages and burials, joys and sorrows, meetings and partings, Thanksgiving days and Christmas festivals, graves and deathbeds. Old, old, look! speak out and tell of the sorrows comforted and of the dying hours irradiated. Old, old, look! the hours held these are scenes, the eyes that perused them are closed. What a pillow that would make for a dying head! I salute all the memories of these things I press to my heart and when I press it to my lips.

THE OLD FAMILY BIBLE. Oh, that family Bible! The New Testament in small type in worthy of being called by that name. Have a whole Bible in large type, with the family record of marriages and births and deaths. What if the curious should see it? You are younger now than you will ever be again. The curious will find out from those with whom you are placed in your childhood how old you are. Have a family Bible. It will go down from generation to generation full of holy memories. A hundred years after you are dead it will be used for centuries against iniquity in behalf of righteousness.

Oh, when we see what family religion did for our father's household, do we not want to come into the dining room as a large church was built. The year following it was found necessary to enlarge it at almost the expense of a new church. Just as they were getting it paid for it took fire and burned down. Then another large edifice was constructed. But a lightning bolt set fire to it, and this also was destroyed just as the debt upon it was being wiped out. Then the present great structure was erected, which, including the enlargement on the first, practically comprises four churches that this congregation has built within a few years. During Dr. Talmage's pastorate in Brooklyn his people have raised the sum of \$1,000,000 for religious purposes. This, for a congregation of which the members are almost without exception in poor or moderate circumstances financially, is a remarkable example of self sacrifice and liberality. Nor are they weary in this well doing. They say they are willing to work day and night to be rid of this financial embarrassment. Twenty-five thousand dollars of the debt must be paid at once, or the noble institution will pass out of the possession of the congregation. The present pecuniary distress is greater than they or any other average church congregation where the poor far outnumber the rich can carry.

Will they get the needed assistance? There should be no question about it. It need not come as a word of charity or help from any other, but rather from a sense of obligation. Dr. Talmage is the world's preacher and the world's benefactor. At the call of every species of distress his heart and his voice, his aid and his pen, have responded as soon as the cry reached his ears. When Charleston was stricken by an earthquake, he was a leader in the work of relief. When the Johnstown flood catastrophe occurred, his response in deeds and words was most potent.

When the cry of distress came from the starving peasants in Russia, he went 6,000 miles to distribute bread. For every local charity and every case of individual distress his right hand has literally been extended at all times, and his left hand nothing about it.

If this unfortunate financial embarrassment of his church had not occurred, Dr. Talmage would probably never have troubled himself to correct the prevailing opinion that he had been drawing from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year for his services as pastor, but in speaking of the difficulty the other day he remarked incidentally that for the past three years he had received \$650 for his work, the balance of his salary having been turned back to the church.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle is unique. It is crowded at every service in the year. Everybody is just as welcome there as somebody, and it is quite unnecessary to go to the highways and the byways to draw people in. Nor do the masses go to hear fine music or to see a gorgeous altar or rich church decorations, for these are very simple at the Tabernacle.

They go to hear Talmage preach. And his sermons are so luminous, so fresh, so inexhaustible, so full of interest and power, that they never tire of him. Dr. Talmage does not trouble his congregation much about theological dogma. Nobody can tell whether the Tabernacle pulpit is Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian. His religious views are as broad as the poles, as deep as human needs and as high as heaven. He is no half hearted or doubting preacher, but he handles the truth forcibly and fearlessly.

A movement has been started to help Dr. Talmage and his congregation. Perhaps many readers of this paper who have had the rare pleasure of reading his sermons will be glad to contribute to the movement. It is not a matter of dollars, dimes and pennies will be received with equal gratitude. It is hoped that a large number of contributions may be tendered by our readers, to whom Dr. Talmage's utterances have proved helpful. All contributions should be sent to the office of this paper will be acknowledged and forwarded at once to Dr. Talmage in Brooklyn, together with the names of the contributors.



DR. TALMAGE'S APPEAL. HE HELPED OTHERS—NOW HE NEEDS HELP.

A big black cloud of debt hangs over the spacious Tabernacle in Brooklyn, where Rev. Dr. Talmage speaks every Sunday to thousands. If it be not speedily dispelled, this great preacher and teacher must give up his labors in a locality where he can do more good than in any place else on earth. The story of the financial trouble at this church seems to be a simple one. It costs not the slightest reflection upon the care, prudence or foresight of either Dr. Talmage or his congregation. Several years ago a large church was built. The year following it was found necessary to enlarge it at almost the expense of a new church. Just as they were getting it paid for it took fire and burned down. Then another large edifice was constructed. But a lightning bolt set fire to it, and this also was destroyed just as the debt upon it was being wiped out. Then the present great structure was erected, which, including the enlargement on the first, practically comprises four churches that this congregation has built within a few years.

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