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CHRIST THE RESCUER

REV. DR. TALMAGE'S LESSON OF THE STRONG SWIMMER.

The Helpfulness of Religion For Those Who Struggle Against Adverse Circumstances—Putting Implicit Trust in the Saviour.

(Copyright, Louis Klopsch, 1899.)

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage employs a very bold figure of the Bible to bring out the helpfulness of religion for all those in any kind of struggle. The text is Isaiah xxv, 11, "He shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands."

In the summer season multitudes of people wade into the ponds and lakes and rivers and seas to dive or float or swim. In a world the most of which is water all men and women should learn to swim. Some of you have learned the side stroke introduced by George Peck in 1859, each stroke of that kind carrying the swimmer a distance of six feet, and some of you may use the overhand stroke invented by Gardner, the expert who by it won the 500 yard championship in Manchester in 1862, the swimmer by that stroke carrying his arms in the air for a more lengthened reach, and some of you may read the water as though you had been made to walk the sea, but most of you usually take what is called the breast stroke, placing the hands with the backs upward, about five inches under the water, the inside of the wrist touching the breast, then pushing the arms forward coincident with the stroke of the feet struck out to the greatest width possible, and you thus unconsciously illustrate the meaning of my text, "He shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim."

The fisherman seeks out unfrequented nooks. You stand all day on the bank of a river in the broiling sun and fling out your line and catch nothing, while an expert angler breaks through the jungle and goes by the shade of the solitary tree and, in a place where no fisherman has been for ten years, throws out his line and comes home at night, his face shining and his basket full. I do not know why we ministers of the gospel need always be fishing in the same stream and preaching from the same texts that have been preached for centuries. I understand the policy of the minister who in Blackfriars, London, England, every week for 30 years preached from the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is an exhilaration to me when I come across a theme which I feel no one else has treated, and my text is one of that kind. There are paths in God's word that are well beaten by Christian feet. When men want to quote Scripture, they quote the old passages that every one has heard. When they want a chapter read, they read a chapter that all the other people have heard. I can tell you that the church today is ignorant of three-fourths of the Bible.

You go into the Louvre at Paris. You confine yourself to one corridor of that opulent gallery of paintings. As you come out your friend says to you, "Did you see that Rembrandt?" "No," "Did you see that Rubens?" "No," "Did you see that Titian?" "No," "Did you see that Raphael?" "No," "Well," says your friend, "then you did not see the Louvre." Now, my friends, I think we are too much apt to confine ourselves to one of the great corridors of Scripture truth, and my text is one of that kind. One person out of a million who has ever noticed the all suggestive and powerful picture in the words of my text.

Pushing Down Iniquity.
This text represents God as a strong swimmer, striking out to push down iniquity and save the souls of men. "He shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim." The figure is bold and many sided. Most of you know how to swim. Some of you learned it in the city school, where this art is taught; some of you in boyhood, in the river near your father's house; some of you since you came to manhood or womanhood, while summering on the beach of the sea. It is a good thing to know how to swim, not only for yourself, but because you will after awhile perhaps have to help others.

I do not know anything more stirring or sublime than the story of that like Norman McKenzie leaping from the ship Madras into the sea to save Charles Turner, who had dropped from the royal yacht while trying to loosen the sail, bringing him back to the deck amid the huzzas of the passengers and crew. If a man has not enthusiasm enough to cheer in such circumstances, he deserves himself to drop into the sea and have no one help him. The Royal Humane Society of England was established in 1774, its object to applaud and reward those who should pluck up life from the deep. Any one who has performed such a deed of daring has all the particulars of that bravery recorded in a public record and on his breast a medal done in blue and gold and bronze, anchor and monogram and inscription, telling to future generations the bravery of the man or woman who saved some one from drowning. But if it is such a noble thing to save a body from the deep I ask you if it is not a worthier thing to save an immortal soul. And you shall see this hour the Son of God step forth for this achievement. "He shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim."

In order to understand the full force of this figure, you need to realize that our race is in a sinking condition. You sometimes hear people talking of what they consider the most beautiful words in our language. One man says it is "honesty," another man says it is the word "mother," another says it is the word "Jesus," but I tell you the bitterest word in all our language, the word most angry and baleful, the word saturated with the most trouble, the word that accounts for

all the loathsomeness and the pang and the outrage and the harrowing, and that word is "sin." You spell it with three letters, and yet those three letters describe the circumference and pierce the diameter of everything had in the universe. Sin is a sibilant word. You cannot pronounce it without giving the hiss of the flame or the hiss of the serpent. Sin! And then if you add three letters to that word it describes every one of us by nature—sinner. We have outraged the law of God, not occasionally, or now and then, but perpetually. The Bible declares it. Hark! It thunders two omens: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." What the Bible says our own conscience affirms.

After Judge Morgan had sentenced Lady Jane Grey to death his conscience troubled him so much that he became insane, and all through his insanity he kept saying: "Take her away from me! Lady Jane Grey! Take her away! Lady Jane Grey!" It was the voice of conscience. And no man ever does anything wrong, however great or small, but he is haunted by the specter of it before him, and at every step of his misbehavior it says, "Wrong, wrong!" Sin is a leprosy; sin is a paralysis; sin is a consumption; sin is pollution; sin is death. Give it a fair chance, and it will swamp you and me, body, mind and soul. In this world it will give you a faint intimation of its virulence. You see a patient in the first stages of typhoid fever. The cheek is somewhat flushed, the hands somewhat hot, preceded by a slight chill. "Why," you say, "typhoid fever does not seem to be much of a disease." But wait until the patient has sunk under it. Oh, how his energies have been wrung out, and he is too weak to lift his little finger, and his intellect gone, then you see the full havoc of the disease. Now, sin in this world is an ailment which is only in its first stages, but let it get under full way and it will consume your life. Oh, if we could see our unparoled sins as God sees them, our teeth would chatter and our knees would knock together, and our respiration would be choked, and our heart would break. If your sins are unforgiven, they are bearing down on you like a mountain. "He shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth stretcheth forth his hands to swim." You have noticed that when a swimmer goes to rescue any one he puts off his heavy apparel. He must not have any such impediment about him if he is going to do this great deed. And his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth stretcheth forth his hands to swim." You have noticed that when a swimmer goes to rescue any one he puts off his heavy apparel. He must not have any such impediment about him if he is going to do this great deed. And his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth stretcheth forth his hands to swim."

All Faculties in Play.
If you have ever watched a swimmer, you notice that his whole body is brought into play. The arms are flexed, the hands drive the water back, the knees are active, the head is thrown back to escape strangulation, the whole body is in propulsion. And when Christ sprang into the deep to save us he threw his entire nature into it—all his godhead, his omniscience, his love, his omnipotence, head, heart, eyes, hands, feet. We were far out on the sea and so deep down in the waves and so far from the shore that nothing short of an entire God could save us. Christ leaped out for our rescue, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will!" He took both hands of God to save us—both feet. How do I prove it? On the cross were not both hands nailed? His entire nature involved in our redemption!

If you have lived much by the water, you notice also that if any one is going out to the rescue of the drowning life must be independent, self-reliant, able to go alone. There may be a time when he must spring out to save one, and he cannot get a lifeboat, and if he goes out and has not strength enough to bear himself out and bear another up he will sink, and he will drag down with him. His Father did not help him. Alone in the vine press, alone in the pang, alone in the darkness, alone on the mountain, alone in the sea. Oh, if he saves us, he shall have all the credit, for "there was none to help." No one, no wing, no ladder! When Nathaniel Lyon fell in the battle charge in front of his troops, he had a whole army to cheer him. When Marshal Ney sprang into the contest and plunged in the spurs till the horse's flanks started blood, all France applauded him. But Jesus alone! "Of the people there was none to help." "All forsook him and fled." Oh, it was not a flotilla that sailed down and saved us. It was not a cluster of gondolas that came over the water. It was one person,

independent and alone, "spreading out his hands among us as a swimmer spreadeth forth his hands to swim!"

Christ the Rescuer.

Behold, then, the spectacle of a drowning soul and Christ the swimmer! I believe it was in 1848 when there were six English soldiers of the Fifth fusiliers who were hanging to a capsized boat—a boat that had been upset by a squall three miles from shore. It was in the night, but one man swam mightily for the beach, guided by the dark mountains that lifted their top through the night. He came to the beach. He found a shoreman that consented to go with him and save the other men, and they put out. It was some time before they could find the place where the men were, but after awhile they heard their cry, "Help, help!" and they bore down to them, and they saved them and brought them to shore. Oh, that this moment our cry might be lifted long, loud and shrill till Christ, the swimmer, shall come and take us lest we drop a thousand fathoms under!

You have been much by the water, you know very well that when one is in peril help must come very quickly, or it will be of no use. One minute may decide everything. Immediate help the man wants or no help at all. Now, that is just the kind of relief we want. The case is urgent, imminent, instantaneous. See that soul sinking! Son of God, lay hold of him. Be quick, be quick! Oh, I wish you all understood how urgent this gospel is! There was a man in the navy at sea who had been severely whipped for bad behavior, and he was maddened by it and leaped into the sea, and no sooner had he leaped into the sea than, quick as lightning, an albatross swooped upon him. The drowning man, brought to his senses, seized hold of the albatross and held on. The fluttering of the bird kept him on the wave until relief could come. Would now that the dove of God's conviction, come verting and saving spirit might flash from the throne upon your soul and that you, taking hold of its potent wing, might live and live forever.

The world has had strong swimmers besides the one of the text, perhaps the finest among them Matthew Walker, one of the British mercantile marine service. He leaped from the deck of the Russia, the Cunard steamer, to save the life of a sailor who had fallen overboard. No wonder the passengers subscribed for him a large reward and the Royal Humane Society of London decorated him with honors. A mighty swimmer was he, but the strength of his own arm and foot pushing through the waters from Blackwall pier to Gravesend pier, 18 miles, and from Dover to Calais, 30 miles, where he crossed, yet he was drowned at last in our Niagara's whirlpool. But the strong swimmer of my text put out alone, and swim a wraithier sea and far vaster distance, even from world to world, to save us who were swamped in guilt and woe, and brought us to the shore of safety, although he at last went down into the whirlpool of human and satanic rage. "He shall spread forth his hands to swim." "He shall spread forth his hands to swim."

Rescuing a Drowning Soul.

New modes have been invented for rescuing a drowning body, but there has been no new invention for rescuing a drowning soul. In 1785 Lionel Lukin, a London coach builder, fitted up a Norway yawl as a lifeboat and called it the Insurgible, and that has been improved upon until from all the coasts of the round world perfect lifeboats are ready to put out for the relief of marine disasters. In 16 years the French Society for Saving Life From Shipwreck, by their lifeboats and gun apparatus, saved 2,129 lives. The German Association for the Rescue of Life From Shipwreck, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and our United States life-saving service have done a work beyond the power of statistics to commemorate. What rocket lines and sling life buoys and tally boards and mortars and hammers and cork mattresses and life-saving stations armed with machinery for saving the bodies of the drowning! But let me here and now make it plain that there has been no new way invented for the moral and eternal rescue of a struggling soul. Five hundred attempts at such contrivance have been made, but all of them dead failures. Hear it! "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" than the name of Jesus. The mighty swimmer of my text comes down off the beach of heaven and through the breakers, comes buffeted and bruised, and red-riding waves from his own land, and he cries: "Lay hold of my arm! Put your head on my shoulder! Hear the beating of my loving heart! Be ye saved, for I am God, and there is no other!"

I want to persuade you to lay hold of this strong swimmer. "No," you say; "it is always disastrous for a drowning man to lay hold of a swimmer." There is not a river or lake but has a calamity resultant from the fact that when a strong swimmer went out to save a sinking man the drowning man clutched him, threw his arms around him, pinioned his arms, and they both went down together. When you are saving a man in the water, you do not want to come up by his face. You want to come up by his back. You do not want him to hold you while you take hold of him. But, blessed be God, Jesus Christ is so strong a swimmer he comes not to our back, but to our face, and he asks us to throw around him the arms of our love and then promises to take us to the beach, and he will do it. Do not trust that plank of good works. Do not trust that shivered spar of your own righteousness. Christ only can give you safe transportation. Turn your face upon him, as the dying martyr did in olden times when he cried out: "None but Christ! None but Christ!" Jesus has taken millions to the land, and he is willing to take you there. Oh, what hardness to thrust him back when he has been swimming all the way from the throne of God, where you are now, and is ready to swim all the way back again, taking your redeemed spirit!

I have sometimes thought what a spectacle the ocean bed will present when in the last day the water is all drawn off.

It will be a line of wrecks from beach to beach. There is where the harpoons went down. There is where the line of battle ships went down. There is where the merchantmen went down. There is where the steamers went down, a long line of wrecks from beach to beach. What a spectacle in the last day, when the water is drawn off! But, oh, how much more solemn if we had an eye to see the spiritual wrecks and the places where they foundered! You would find thousands along our roads and streets. Christ came down in their awful catastrophe, putting out for their souls, "spreading out his hands as a swimmer spreadeth forth his hands to swim," but they thrust him in the sore heart, and they smote his fair cheek, and the storm and darkness swallowed them up. I ask you to lay hold of this Christ and lay hold of him now. You will sink without him. From horizon to horizon not one sail in sight, only one strong swimmer, with head flung back and arms outstretched.

Dependence Upon Christ.

I hear many saying: "Well, I would like to be a Christian. I am going to work to become a Christian." My brother, you begin wrong. When a man is drowning, and a strong swimmer comes out to help him, he says to him: "Now be quiet. Put your arm on my arm or on my shoulder, but don't struggle, don't try to help yourself, and I'll take you ashore. The more you struggle and the more you try to help yourself the more you impede me. Now, be quiet, and I'll take you ashore." When Christ, the strong swimmer, comes out to save a soul, the sinner says: "That's right. I am glad to see Christ, and I am going to help him in the work of my redemption. I am going to pray more, and that will help him, and I am going to weep extravagantly over my sins, and that will help him." No, it will not. Stop your doing. Christ will do all or none. You cannot lift an oar, you cannot move an inch, in this matter of your redemption.

This is the difficulty which keeps thousands of souls out of the kingdom of heaven. It is because they cannot consent to let Jesus Christ begin and complete the work of their redemption. "Why," you say, "then is there nothing for me to do?" Only one thing have you to do, and that is to lay hold of Christ and let him achieve your salvation and achieve it all. I do not know whether I make the matter plain or not. I simply want to show you that a man cannot save himself, but that the Almighty Son of God can do it and will do it if you ask him. Oh, fling your two arms, the arm of your trust and the arm of your love, around this omnipotent swimmer of the cross!

Have you ever stood by and seen some one under process of resuscitation after long submergence? The strong swimmer has put him on the beach after a struggle in the waters. To excite breathing in the almost lifeless body what manipulation, what friction of the cold limbs, what artificial movement of the lungs, what breath of the resuscitator blown into the mouth of the rescued one! And when breathing begins, and after awhile the slight respiration becomes the deep sigh, and the eyes open, and the blue lips take on a smile, what rejoicing, what clapping of hands all up and down the beach, what congratulation for the strong swimmer and for all who helped in the restoration, what shouting of "He lives, he lives!" Like this is the gladness when a soul that has been submerged in sin and sorrow is "coming to." What desire on the part of all to help, and, when under the breath of God and under the manipulation by the wounded hands of Christ, the life eternal of the soul begins to show itself, all through the ranks of spectators, terrestrial and celestial, goes the cry: "He lives! Rejoice, for the dead is alive again!" May the living Christ this moment put out for your rescue, "spreading his hands in the midst of you, as a swimmer spreadeth forth his hands to swim!"

He Was Unarmed.

A good story is being told in Germany of the anti-Semite burgomaster of Vienna, Dr. Lueger. Three soldiers waited upon him the other day as a deputation, and during the course of the interview he asked the first one, "What would you do if the emperor ordered you to shoot the burgomaster of Vienna?"

"I should shoot him," was the stolid reply.

"Oh," said the doctor, "what may your religion?"

"I am a Protestant."

"In that case, I am only slightly surprised at you."

The second soldier gave the same kind of an answer, and in reply to an inquiry as to his faith, declared that he was a Catholic. This rather startled the burgomaster, who thereupon turned to the third soldier. The latter replied, "I should not shoot the burgomaster."

"And why not, my friend?" asked the doctor. "What is your religion?"

"I am a Hebrew."

"What?" said the burgomaster. "Don't you know that I am the greatest Hebrew later in all Austria and Hungary? And you would not shoot me?"

"Oh," replied the man, "it is merely because I do not carry a gun. I am the drummer of my regiment."—Washington Post.

Rothschild Among Kings.

Among the anecdotes related by the Hon. John Bigelow in the October Century, in a series of extracts from his conversations with Von Bunsen, is this about the famous banker Rothschild: During the famous congress of Vienna each of the several monarchs present was the guest of some nobleman. On one festive occasion Baron Rothschild was invited per exceptionem. He modestly went to take his place, not among the more exalted guests. When they discovered Rothschild, however, they all rose, one after the other, and saluted him, except the king of Prussia. Some one asked the king why he did not salute the great European banker. "Did I not?" he replied. "Well, I suppose it was because I was the only one who did not owe him anything." This reminds one of a line in one of Pope's satires: I never answered! I was not in debt.