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AN AWFUL STRUGGLE

REV. DR. TALMAGE PREACHES UPON LIFE'S SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS.

The Fierce Combat With an Unknown Visitor That Lasts Until Daybreak—When Waves of Trouble Almost Overwhelm. The Cry to God of a Dying Soul.

BROOKLYN, April 29.—The Tabernacle was crowded this morning with the usual throng of eager listeners. Dr. Talmage preached on the spiritual conflicts of life, taking for his text Genesis xxxii, 24-26: "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

The dust arose from a traveling herd of cattle and sheep and goats and camels. They are the present that Jacob sends to gain the good-will of his offended brother. That night Jacob halts by the brook Jabbok. But there is no rest for the weary man, no shining ladder to let the angels down into his dream, but a fierce combat, that lasts until the morning, with an unknown visitor. They each try to throw the other. The unknown visitor even walks suspender, by a touch wrenches Jacob's thigh bone from its socket, perhaps maiming him for life. As on the morning sky the clusters of purple cloud begin to ripen Jacob sees it is an angel with whom he has been contending, and not one of his brother's confjitors. "Let me go," cries the angel, lifting himself up into increasing light, "The day breaketh!"

Christian Struggles.

You see, in the first place, that God allows good people sometimes to get into a terrible struggle. Jacob was a good man, but here he is left alone in the midnight to wrestle with a tremendous influence by the brook Jabbok. For Joseph, a pit; for Daniel, a wild beast den; for David, dethronement and exile; for John the Baptist, a wilderness diet and the executioner's ax; for Peter, a prison; for Paul, shipwreck; for John, desolate Patmos; for Vashti, most insulting cruelty; for Josephine, banishment; for Mrs. Sigourney, the agony of a drunkard's wife; for John Wesley, stones hurled by an infuriated mob; for Catherine, the Scotch girl, the drowning surges of the sea; for Mr. Burns, the suffering of the Montreal populace; for John Brown of Edinburgh, the pistol shot of Lord Claverhouse; for Hugh Mackail, the scaffold; for Latimer, the stake; for Christ, the cross. To whom the rocks, the gibbes, the guillotines, the thumbscrews? For the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Some one said to a Christian reformer, "The world is against you." "Then," he replied, "I am against the world."

I will go further and say that every Christian has his struggle. This man had his combat in Wall street; this one in Broad street; this one on Fulton street; this one on Chestnut street; this one on State street; this one on Lombard street; this one on the bourse. With financial misfortune you have had the midnight wrestle. Some of the asterisks have dropped into your store loft to cellar. What you bought you could not sell. Whom you trusted fled. The help you expected would not come. Some giant panic, with long arms and grip like death, took hold of you in an awful wrestle from which you have not yet escaped, and it is uncertain whether it will throw you or you will throw it.

Here is another soul in struggle with some bad appetite. He knew not how stealthily it was growing upon him. One hour he woke up. He said, "For the sake of my soul, of my family, and of my children, and of my God, I must stop this!" And, behold, he found himself alone by the brook Jabbok, and it was midnight. That evil appetite seized upon him, and he seized upon it, and, oh, the horror of the conflict! When once a bad habit has aroused itself up to destroy a man and the man has sworn that, by the help of the eternal God, he will destroy it, all heaven draws itself well at in a long line of light to look from tain above, and hell stretches itself in myrisons of spite to look up from beneath. have seen men rally themselves for nce in a struggle, and they have bitten their lip and clinched their fists and opplied, with a blood-red earnestness and a fusion of scalding tears, "God help me!"

The Giant Habit.

From a wrestle with habit I have n men fall back defeated. Calling for help, but relying on their own resolutions, they have come into the struggle, and for a time it seemed as if they were getting the upper hand of their but that habit rallied again its l power and lifted a soul from ding, and with a force borrowed he pit hurled it into utter darkness. First I saw the auctioneer's mallet, then the pictures and musical instruments and the rich upholstery of family parlor. After awhile I saw n fall into the ditch. Then, in the dnight, when the children were dreaming their sweetest dreams and Christian ouseholds are silent with slumber, anxious watched, I heard him give the sharp arick that followed the stab of his own oniard. He fell from an honored social osition; he fell from a family circle of St, hich once he was the grandest attraction; he fell from the house of God, at he whose altars he had been consecrated; e fell—forever! But, thank God, I have often seen a better termination than that.

have seen men prepare themselves for such a wrestling. They laid hold of ers d's help as they went into combat. two a giant habit, regaled by the cup of ing, ny temptations, came out strong and ant. They clinched. There were the any things and distortions of a fearful fan Nowggle. But the old giant began to eel er, and at last, in the midnight e, with none but God to witness, the brook Jabbok, the giant fell, and the triumphant wrestler broke the darkness with the cry, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a widow's heart that first was desolated by bereavement and since by the anxieties and trials that came in the support of a family.

It is a sad thing to see a man contending for a livelihood under disadvantages, but to see a delicate woman, with helpless little ones at her back, fighting the giants of poverty and sorrow, is most affecting. It was a humble home, and passersby knew not that within those four walls were displays of courage more admirable that that of Hannibal crossing the Alps, or the pass of Thermopylæ or Balaklava, where "into the jaws of death rode the six hundred."

These heroes had the whole world to cheer them on, but there were none to applaud the struggle in the humble home. She fought for bread, for clothing, for fire, for shelter, with aching head, and weak side, and exhausted strength, through the long night by the brook Jabbok. Could it be that none would give her help? Had God forgotten to be gracious? No, contrariwise! The midnight air is full of wings coming to the rescue. She hears it now in the sough of the night wind, in the ripple of the brook Jabbok—the promise made so long ago ringing down the sky. "Thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me."

Some one said to a very poor woman, "How is it that in such distress you keep cheerful?" She said: "I don't by what I call cross prayers. When I feel my rent to pay and nothing to pay it with, and bread to buy and nothing to buy it with, I used to sit down and cry. But now I do not get discouraged. If I go along the street, when I come to a corner of the street I say, 'The Lord help me.' I then go on and I come to another crossing of the street, and again I say, 'The Lord help me!' And so I utter a prayer at every crossing, and since I have got into the habit of saying these cross prayers I have been able to keep up my courage."

Purified by Fire.

Learn again from this subject that people sometimes are surprised to find out that what they have been struggling with in the darkness is really an "angel of blessing." Jacob found in the morning that this strange person was not an enemy, but a God-appointed messenger to promise prosperity for him and for his children. And so many a man, at the close of his trial, has found out that he has been trying to throw down his own blessing. If you are a Christian man, I will go back in your history and find that the grandest things that have ever happened to you have been your trials. Nothing short of scourging, imprisonment and shipwreck could have made Paul what he was.

When David was flowing through the wilderness pursued by his own son, he was being prepared to become the sweet singer of Israel. The pit and the dungeon were the best schools at which Joseph ever graduated. The hurricane that upset the tent and killed Job's children prepared the man of Uz to write the magnificent poem that has astounded the ages. There is no way to get the wheat out of the straw but to thrash it. There is no way to purify the gold but to melt it. Look at the pearl in the diver's hand—always had it their own way. They are prond, discontented, reckless and unhappy. If you want to find cheerful folks, go among those who have been purified by the fire. After Rossini had rendered "William Tell" the five hundredth time a company of musicians came under his window in Paris and serenaded him. They put upon his brow a golden crown of laurel leaves. But amid all the applause and enthusiasm Rossini turned to a friend and said, "I would give all this brilliant scene for a few days of youth and love." Contrast the mechanical rendering of Rossini, who had everything this world could give him, to the glorious experience of Isaac Watts, whose musical fortunes were innumerable, when he says:

The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields
Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound
And every tear be dry
We are marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high.

Marks of the Combat.

It is prosperity that kills and trouble that saves. While the Israelites were on the march, amid great privations and hardships, they behaved well. After awhile they prayed for meat, and the sky darkened with a great flock of quails, and these quails fell in large multitudes all about them, and the Israelites ate and ate and stuffed themselves until they died. Oh, my friends, it is not hardship or trial or starvation that injures the soul, but abundant supply. It is not the vulture of trouble that eats up the Christian's life, it is the quails, it is the quail! You only yet find out that your midnight wrestle by the brook Jabbok is with an angel of God, come down to bless and save.

Learn again that while our wrestling with trouble may be triumphant we must expect that it will leave its mark upon us. Jacob prevailed, but the angel touched him, and his thigh bone sprang from its socket, and the good man went limping on his way. We must carry through this world the mark of the combat. What plowed those premature wrinkles in your face? What whitened your hair before it was time for frost? What silenced forever so much of the hilarity of your household? Ah, it is because the angel of trouble has touched you that you go limping on your way. You need not be surprised that those who have passed through the fire do not feel as gay as once they did.

Do not be out of patience with those who come not out of their despondency. They may triumph over their loss, and yet their gait shall tell you that they have been trouble touched. Are we stoics that we can, unmoved, see our cradle rifled of the bright eyes and the sweet lips? Can we stand unmoved and see our gardens of earthly delight uprooted? Will Jesus, who wept himself, be angry with us if we pour our tears into the graves that open to swallow down what we love best? Was Lazarus more dear to him than our beloved dead to us? No. We have a right to weep. Our tears must come. You shall not drive them back to chill the heart. To-day fall into God's bottle. Afflicted ones have died because they could not weep. Thank God for the sweet, the mysterious relief that comes to us in tears! Under this gentle rain the flowers of corn put forth their bloom. Only that dry, withered, parched, all consuming grief that writhes its hands and grinds its teeth and bites its nails into the quick, but cannot weep! We may have found the comfort of the cross, and yet ever after show that in the dark night and by the brook Jabbok we were troubled touched.

The Day Breaketh.

Again, we may take the idea of the text and sum up all the oppression of the day. Jacob was glad to see the coming than was his. It appeared to him long and Christians to cry out with this angel of the text, "The day breaketh." The world's prospects are brightening. The church of Christ is rising up in its strength to go forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners. Cheer your hearts, all ye people, the day breaketh. Let the ransomed of earth are praising. Heaven one who was with us is now with God. We were told that if we would go to heaven we must be translated or die. Elijah and Enoch were translated, but Sarah Kinsher Cox, his wife and the first Legal Tender Cox, never went farther in his carriage, Virginia Lafette and the actress, Emma Lafette, and the actress, Emma Lafette, and the actress, Emma Lafette,