Kent News

ESTABLISHED 1841.

Subscription - - - $1 Per Year

WM. B. USILTON'S SONS, Publishers.

Fred. G. Usilton. - - Wm. B. Usilton, J

"TREATING A SINNER"

Sunday Discourse by Dr. Chapman, the Noted Evangelist.

He tells of the World's Treatment, the Law's Treatment and the Saviour's Treatment of the Erring.

NEW YORK CITY.—The distinguished evangelist, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, has prepared the following sermon for the press. It is entitled "Three Ways of Treating a Sinner," and was preached from the text: "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." John 8: 11.

There is something exceedingly pathetic in the beginning of this chapter where we read Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. I know the critics say that this story does not belong to the New Testament, but did you ever see a better representation of Christ, first, in His going out to the Mount of Olives as He was accustomed to, secondly, in His rising early in the morning that He might come again in touch with the great throbbing mass of people so much in need of His service. Thirdly, in His sitting down and teaching, showing that He spoke with authority. Fourth, in the scorn with which He treated the Pharisees as they condemned this poor, unfortunate woman, when He said, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her," and finally in His tender treatment of the sinner herself when He said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." This is all very like Him, and somehow I cannot get it out of my mind that it belongs just where we have ever found it, and that anything which has so genuine a ring as this must have been given to us by inspiration of God. But the pathos of the first verse comes to us when we connect it with the last verse of the 7th chapter of John, "And every man went unto his own house." Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. They all had houses. His commonest accuser had a home. The people that helped Him all had lodgings somewhere, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. He was rich, but for our sakes He became poor, a homeless wanderer, although the cattle on a thousand hills were His and the very world in which He lived had been only, as it were, His footstool. It is really touching to see Him going to the Mount of Olives. It may be that He went to lodge with a friend, possibly to sleep out in the open air, with only the blue sky above Him; perhaps He went to pray, for again and again do we find Him in communion with His Father on this mountain side, and He may have gone just to wait upon God that He might have some new message from heaven or that some new direction might be given to His life of self-sacrifice. He was always going in the direction of this mountain, and it is for this reason that Christian travelers always are ever delighted to do the same thing, but at this particular time He was up early in the morning. What a worker He was. The most tireless servant the world has ever seen was our Master, beginning in His childhood when He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business," going out in His ministry when He declares, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work," saying as He said on the well curb, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me," and then stepping into a boat and pushing off from the shore when the crowd is too great to make His ministry helpful, thus using the boat for His pulpit. By day and by night He toiled, in heat or in cold He labored, with the multitudes following Him shouting hosanna, and the mob close tracking after Him, let Him be crucified. He did nothing but work. What a joy it was to Him to say as He came up to the cross, "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." How few men can say it. Most men feel as if they were but at the beginning of their life's journey when they stop it, and say with regret, if I could but live my life over again I would do something worthy of note, but Jesus finished His work. I like to picture Him rising in the Mount of Olives. The scene must have been most beautiful. There is the city of the king lying at His very feet, the city He loved with passionate devotion. That valley yonder is the Kidron, between Him and Jerusalem, and that stretch of hills in the distance with the peculiar haze of the Holy Land upon them, looking more like a string of jewels than anything else, are the Mountains of Mohab. Looking off in the direction in which Jesus must have ever turned His eyes, that glistening light in the distance comes from the Dead Sea, but He cares not for beautiful scenery, although He was in love with all nature. He taught all day yesterday and He must teach to-day, so down the mountain side He goes, past the garden where later He is to suffer, over the Kidron, in through the gates and He is at the temple and takes His seat, with the people thronging about Him. The day's work is begun.

I shall never take this story out of my Bible, and if others remove it I shall keep it ever in my heart till I see Him. I find in it three ways of treating a sinner.

First, the world's way, which is cruel in the extreme.

Second, the law's way, which is as relentless as death.

Third, the Saviour's treatment, which presents to us a sublimer picture than anything the world has ever seen.

I.

The world's treatment of a sinner. "And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him, and He sat down and taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery, and when they had set her in the midst they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act." Verses 2-4. Sin is an awful thing. You do not need to turn to the Bible to understand this; read the daily newspapers, keep your eyes and ears open as you walk the streets of the city; but still you may read it in this account, which is almost 2000 years old. It is a woman the mob has taken and hurried into the presence of the Master. You can understand how a man could sin, but not a woman, yet if our hearts were known how many of us, without respect to sex, would stand condemned in the presence of Him who has said that anger is murder and an evil imagination is sin.

The other day in a place of sinful resort a man suddenly stood up and rapping on the table with a revolver said, "Hear me," and when other men with frightened faces would have left the room he commanded them to stop and said, "I used to have a happy home, a wife and children; now look at me, a horrible wreck, my family gone, my situation taken from me, my friends have forsaken me," and before they could stop him he had sent his soul into the presence of his maker. This story of a man is of common occurrence, but I know almost identically the same wretched story concerning a woman. Satan has no respect for sex, and since women seem to fall from greater heights than men, somehow, alas, they seem to go to greater depths. I suppose that we all of us fall because we come to trifle with sin. You avoid the house that has the mark of a contagious disease upon it, and yet you can scarcely read a newspaper but in it you will see the awful details of some heartbreaking scene, and before you know it you are as familiar with the circumstances as if you had lived in them yourself, and you place yourself in danger of being inoculated with the virus of a worse disease than the world has ever seen. Possibly we fail all of us because we allow some sin to tarry in our hearts, and with deadening influence which may be so imperceptible at first it blinds our eyes to our danger, and causes us to be indifferent to every appeal made to us. When the old elm on the Boston Common was cut down a flattened bullet was found almost at its heart, and men estimated as they could well do that the bullet had been there for 200 years, and many of us have allowed sins to enter our hearts in the days of our youth which have pursued us until old age and caused our wreck. If women are not exempt from sin God pity the men.

But this mob that hurried this poor woman into the presence of Jesus was not an honest company of men. I know it because in the seventh chapter I read they called Him a deceiver, while in the eighth they addressed Him as Master and Teacher. In the sixth verse of this eighth chapter we also read that they brought this woman, tempting Him, for they wanted to catch Him on either one of these two points, first, if He accepted Moses' law then they would turn the Roman citizens against Him and condemn Him because He would put another to death. If He repudiated the law of Moses the Jewish populace would have been His enemies, but nevertheless it is a true picture of the world. Have nothing to do with it, therefore; as you love your own soule, beware of it. It has slain its thousands and tens of thousands. What ruined Lot's wife? the world; what ruined Achan until he defeated the whole camp of Israel? the world; what ruined Judas until he sold his very soul for greed of wealth? the world; what has ruined ten thousand souls that are to-day shut away from God and hope, this same old world, "And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

First, the world is critical. It will find every flaw that exists in your nature; imperfections to which your loved ones would be blind, and which you yourself were blind to before you became a sinner, are made to appear in your character. Jerry McAuley knew Christ, are but illustrations of the spirit of which I speak. The man who has the spirit of Christ is ever gentle with the erring, and up and down the streets of our cities men go in multitudes longing for just one word of sympathy.

Said a young business man to me this week: "I have been four years in New York, most of the time with a heavy heart. No one has ever spoken to me of Christ, nor invited me to the church, nor asked if he could be my friend, and I have never craved money from any one, for I have not needed it, but my heart has been hungry for sympathy and the touch of a brother's hand." Do you notice the manner of Jesus.

First, "He stooped down and wrote in the dust." Some one has said that He did it just because His mind was occupied with thinking what He should do with the sinner, and it was much the same spirit as you would have if you would scribble upon a piece of paper while your mind was taking in some weighty problem. Some one else has suggested that in the purity of His nature, standing in the presence of the woman of sin, He stooped down to write because He would hide the flushing of His own face. That dust that was then at His feet is gone forever; only God Himself could bring it back, and yet if by miracle He should bring it before us to-night I believe I know what would be written thereon, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." And I am glad that we are not shut up to the sand for a record of that truth. It is written in this book. "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and this record is eternal. "Heaven and earth shall pass, but My word shall never pass away."

Second, when He continued with bowed head to write the crowd became exceedingly anxious, and finally they asked Him what He had to say about the woman who was a sinner, and then comes one of the grandest sentences that ever fell from His lips, and gives us all the beauty of His manhood, as well as the power of His Godhood when He said, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." I doubt not the woman began to tremble, and she must have said to herself, "My punishment is upon me, for here are these Pharisees who have made loud professions of their purity, surely they will cast the first stone," but never a hand was lifted and never a stone was thrown, which only reveals to me the fact that when men are cast with those men who are sinful, not outbreakingly sinful, but nevertheless wrong in the sight of God, who of us could cast the first stone in this assembly to-night? The very fact that hands are not lifted and stones are not thrown is our own condemnation.

Third, in the ninth verse we read. "And they which heard it being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last, and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst." That to my mind is the most dramatic scene in all the chapter, if not in the New Testament. Suddenly the shouts of the mob are hushed, they have taken their hands off from the trembling woman, they are speechless in the presence of this Son of God, and without consultation they begin to slink away. I can see them go, until finally the last one is gone and there is the hush of death upon the two as they stand together. You can all but hear the throbbing of their hearts; you can detect the quick breathing of the woman, who thinks that the time for sentence has come. Mercy and pity face each other, and mercy waits for pity to speak. "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." And we are ever to remember three things in connection with our Saviour:

First, there is never a question as to how deeply we have sinned; the stories of the greatest sinners are told in the New Testament for our hope.

Second, there is power enough in the blood of the Son to blot out the deepest sin. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be crimson they shall be as wool.

And the third thing to remember is if the man with sin is like the sands of the sea for number if he would feel the power of the shed blood of the Son of God he must by real faith and honest confession lay hold upon Him for eternal life.

His kindness lifted her burden, and the world is just dying to-day for the want of sympathy. I think the time is long past when men are willing in these days to spend an hour in listening to abstract reasoning or deep theological discussions. I feel confident that the time is upon us when men are ready to explain to that church, or that minister ready to bestow a word of cheer, ready to help a little in bearing the burden of life.

A woman came with a handful of sand to her minister and said, "My sins are like that for number," and he said, "Take the sand back to the sea and let a wave roll over your handful of sand and they will be gone. To-night I bring you to the sea greater than any the world has ever looked upon.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's vein,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

"Neither do I condemn thee," said Jesus when all her accusers had slipped away. We do not know what became of this woman, but I am perfectly sure that she never sinned again. This is the secret of victory over sin: Catch a glimpse of the face fairer than all the sons of men, listen but once to the sound of His voice, sweeter than all the music of earth. How the man that preaches the development of character can match this matchless story I cannot see: how the man who takes the blood out of the word of God and the sacrificial part away from the death of Christ can for a moment compare his message with this story of the divine Son of God is more than I can tell. I bid all burdened ones weighed down because of sin to come into His presence to-night and you can hear Him say "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

The Example of Patience.

The example of God's forbearance and the incentive of His trust help to prepare us for that self-control and patient waiting which are, perhaps, the most difficult arts of living. Preachers of the strenuous life often forget that for one who dares to act there must be many who are compelled to wait and to endure. It is not the charge which commanders dread for their commands, it is the waiting before the word to charge is given. Action relieves the tension of the nerves and occupies the thought. The example of God's patience is not in itself a sufficient incentive in our time of need. God waits because He knows. He sees the end from the beginning, and is never tempted to gather unripe fruit as we so often are. He asks us to be sharers of His patience by the exercise of faith. We can wait because we believe. He trusts us in the partnership of work and waiting, and we renounce and have patience because we trust Him for the end He promises.—The Congregationalist.

WORK.

Work is given to men not only, nor so much, perhaps, because the world needs it. Men make work, but work makes men. An office is not a place for making money; it is a place for making men. A workshop is not a place for making machinery, for fitting engines and turning cylinders; it is a place for making souls, for fitting out honest, modest, whole natured men. For Providence cares less for winning causes than that men, whether losing or winning, should be great and true; cares nothing that reforms should drag their cause from year to year bewilderingly, but that men and nations, in carrying them out, should find there education, discipline, unselfishness and growth in grace.—Henry Drummond.

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