

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON

The Chain of Influences.

"Make a chain."—Ezek. 7:23.

At school and in college, in announcing the mechanical powers, we glorified the lever, the pulley, the inclined plane, the screw, the axle and the wheel, but my text calls us to study the philosophy of the chain.

THE CHAIN IN THE BIBLE.

To do him honor, Pharaoh hung a chain of gold about the neck of Joseph, and Belshazzar one about the neck of Daniel. The high priest had on his breast-plate two chains of gold.

The Bible refers to the Church as having such glittering adornments, saying: "Thy neck is comely with chains of gold."

What I wish to impress upon myself and upon you is the strength, in right and wrong directions, of consecutive influences above one influence, the great advantage of a CONGREGATION OF LINKS

above one link; and in all family government, and in all effort to rescue others, and in all attempt to stop iniquity, take the suggestion of my text and make a chain!

That which contains the greatest importance, that which encloses the most tremendous opportunities, that which of earthly things is most watched by other worlds, that which has beating against its two sides all the eternities, is the cradle.

A CRADLE WITH A CHILD IN IT all unborn, wrapped up snug and warm, and its blue eyes looking into the blue of the open heavens.

Each one of these influences is only a link, and it will not hold him in the tremendous emergencies of life. Let it be constant instruction, constant prayer, constant application of good influences, a long line of consecutive impressions, reaching from his first year to his fifth, and from his fifth year to his tenth, and from his tenth year to his twentieth.

Spasmodic education, paroxysmal discipline, occasional fidelity, amount to nothing. You can as easily hold an anchor by one link as hold a child to the right by isolated and

INTERMITTENT FAITHFULNESS. The example must connect with the instruction. The conversation must combine with the actions.

What a rough time that young man has in doing wrong, carefully nurtured as he was! His father and mother have been dead for years, or over in Scotland, or England, or Ireland; but they have stood in the doorway of every dreamship that he entered, and under the chandelier of every house of dissipation, saying: "My son, this is no place for you."

What a musician cannot afford to dwell among discords, nor can a writer afford to peruse books of inferior style, nor an architect walk out among disproportioned structures.

And we shall be the loving subjects of his reign, or the victims of our own obduracy. So, I urge you to precipitate rather than slow deliberation, and I write all over your soul the words

You cannot shake off the influences of those prayers long ago offered, or of those kind admonitions. You cannot make them go away, and you feel like saying: "Father, what are you doing here? Mother, why do you bother me with suggestions of those olden times?"

THE CHAIN THAT IS

mightily this morning on five hundred of you. You may be too proud to shed a tear, and you may, to convince others of your imperturbability, smile to your friend beside you; but their is not so much power in an Alpine avalanche after it has slipped for a hour, as there is in the otherworldly bound for five hundred feet more of plunge, as there is power in the chain that pulls you this moment toward God and Christ and Heaven.

But all people between thirty and forty years of age, yes, between forty and fifty—aye, between fifty and sixty years—and all septuagenarians as well, need a surrounding conjunction of good influences. In Sing Sing, Auburn, Moyamensing, and all the other great prisons, are men and women who went wrong in mid-life and old age.

ITS WEAKEST LINK.

If the chain be made up of a thousand links, and nine hundred and ninety-nine are strong, but one is weak, the chain will be in danger of breaking at that one weak link.

Let me see what further can I suggest in that direction. Become more defiant of all decency, more loud-mouthed in your atheism, more thoroughly alcoholized, and instead of the small stakes that will do well enough for games of chance in a ladies' parlor, put up all you have. Well done! You have succeeded. You have made a chain—the tobacco habit, an impure club, an rum habit, an infidelity, another link, Sabbath desecration, another link, uncleanness, another link, and altogether they make a chain.

A CHAIN ON YOUR SOUL. Some day you wake up and say: "I am tired of this, and I am going to get loose from this shackle."

Most excellent is it for us to get into company better than ourselves. If we are given to telling vile stories, let us put ourselves among those who will not abide such utterances.

For many of the circumstances of our life we are not responsible. For our parentage we are not responsible. For the place of our nativity, not responsible; for our features, our stature, our color, not responsible; for the family relation in which we were born, for our national tastes, for our mental character, not responsible.

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are ignorant of yourself. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

THE CHAIN OF CAPTIVITY.

But, as I remarked in the opening, in sacred and in all styles of literature a chain means not only adornment and royalty of nature, but sometimes captivity. And I suppose there are those in that sense deliberately and persistently making a chain. Now here is a young man of good physical health, good manners, and good education.

First, let him smoke. If he cannot stand cigars, let him try cigarettes. I think cigarettes will help him on his road a little more rapidly, because the doctors say there is more poison in them, and so he will be helped along faster; and I have the more confidence in proposing this because about fifty of the first young men of Brooklyn during the last year were, according to the doctors' reports, killed by cigarettes.

Let him drink light wines first, or ale or lager, and gradually he will be able to take something stronger, and as all styles of strong drink are more and more adulterated, his progress will be facilitated. With the old-time drinks a man seldom got delirium tremens before thirty or forty years of age; now he can get the madness by the time he is eighteen.

Let him play cards, enough money put up always to add interest to the game. If the father and mother will play with him, that will help by the way of countenancing the habit. And it will be such a pleasant thing to think in the day of judgment, when the parents give account for the elevated manner in which they have reared their children.

Every pleasant Sunday afternoon take a carriage ride, and stop at the hotels on either side the road for Sabbath refreshments. Do not let the old-fogy prejudices against Sabbath-breaking dominate you.

There have been chains famous in the world's history, such as the chain which fastened the prisoner of Chillon to the pillar—into the staple of which I have thrust my hand—on the isolated rock of the Lake of Geneva; such as the chain which the Russian exile clanks on his way to the mines of Siberia.

but, thank God, the last one of them shall be broken, and, under the liberating power of the omnipotent Gospel, the shackles shall fall from the last neck and the last arm and the last arm and the last foot. But these shattered fetters shall all be gathered up again from the dungeons and the workhouses and the mines and the rivers and the fields, and again shall be welded and polished and transformed until this world, which has wandered off and been a recreant world and a lost world, shall be that chain be lifted and hung to the throne of God, no longer the iron chain of oppression, but the golden chain of redeeming love.

THE CHAIN FINISHED. Let me see what further can I suggest in that direction. Become more defiant of all decency, more loud-mouthed in your atheism, more thoroughly alcoholized, and instead of the small stakes that will do well enough for games of chance in a ladies' parlor, put up all you have.

Some day you wake up and say: "I am tired of this, and I am going to get loose from this shackle." You found away with the hammer of good resolution, but cannot break the thrall. Your friends join you in a conspiracy of help, but fail exhausted in the unavailing attempt. Now you begin, and to break away, and the muscles are distended, and the head, and with the concentration of energies of body, mind, and soul you attempt to get loose, but have only made the chain sink deeper.

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of Christ I saw inscribed on the monument of Princess Elizabeth, in the Isle of Wight, the words to which her index-finger pointed in the open Bible when she was found dead in her bed, "Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Is there a drunkard here? You may be the Saviour's grace, have that fire of thirst utterly extinguished. Is there a defrauder here? You may be made a saint. Is there a libertine here? You may be made as pure as the light.

But why take extreme cases, when we all have been or are now the captives of sin and death? And we may, through

THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR, drop our shackles and take a throne. You have looked at your hand and arm only as being useful now, and a curious piece of anatomy, but there is something about your hand and arm that makes me think they are an undeveloped wing.

There have been chains famous in the world's history, such as the chain which fastened the prisoner of Chillon to the pillar—into the staple of which I have thrust my hand—on the isolated rock of the Lake of Geneva; such as the chain which the Russian exile clanks on his way to the mines of Siberia.

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THE TOILERS OF THE NILE. We are in Nubia, the climate, the different types of the negro race, their black skins displayed with a lavish disregard of dress, all remind us that we are indeed in Africa, for all about us are the very scenes we used to see in the geography pictures when but children.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1888.

The Commission of Joshua.

LESSON TEXT.

(Josh. 1:1-9. Memory verses, 8-9)

LESSON PLAN.

TOPIC OF THE QUARTER: God's Promises Fulfilled.

GOLDEN TEXT FOR THE QUARTER: There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.—Josh. 21:45.

LESSON TOPIC: Receiving New Encouragement.

The New Leader, vs. 1, 2. The Great Opportunity, vs. 5, 6. The Supreme Encouragement, vs. 7, 8.

GOLDEN TEXT: Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.—Eph. 6:14.

DAILY HOME READINGS:

M.—Josh. 1:1-9. The new leader. T.—Exod. 17:8-16. Joshua as a soldier.

W.—Exod. 32:1-19. Joshua on Mount Sinai.

T.—Num. 14:1-10, 26-34. Joshua as a spy.

F.—Num. 27:12-23. Joshua designated as the leader.

S.—Deut. 1:22-39. Joshua's appointment retold.

S.—Deut. 31:14-23. Joshua's appointment confirmed.

LESSON ANALYSIS.

I. THE NEW LEADER.

I. The Dead Leader:

Moses my servant is dead (2). I must die in this land (Deut. 4:22). Behold, thy days approach that thou must die (Deut. 31:14).

Die in the month whither thou goest up (Deut. 32:50).

Moses... died... according to the word of the Lord (Deut. 34:5).

II. The Promised Successor:

After the death of Moses, the Lord spoke unto Joshua (1). Take thee Joshua, and lay thine hand upon him (Num. 27:18).

Encourage thou him; for he shall cause Israel to inherit it (Deut. 1:38).

Thou shalt go with this people into the land (Deut. 31:7).

Thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land (Josh. 1:6).

III. The Promised Advance:

Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan (2).

I am coming... to bring thee... unto a good land (Exod. 3:8).

I will bring you in unto the land... I am Jehovah (Exod. 6:8).

Mine anger shall go before thee, and bring thee in (Exod. 23:23).

They shall know the land which ye have rejected (Num. 14:31).

1. "After the death of Moses, the Lord spoke unto Joshua." (1) The departed leader; (2) The abiding Lord; (3) The coming leader.

2. "Arise, go over this Jordan." (1) The people's position; (2) The land beyond; (3) The intervening river; (4) The arousing command.

3. "The land which I do give to them." Canaan: (1) A land of promise; (2) A land of plenty; (3) A land of symbolism.

II. THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

I. A Broad Possession:

Every place that... your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it (3).

All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it (Gen. 13:15).

In the length of it and in the breadth of it... will I give it (Gen. 13:17).

To him will I give the land that he hath trodden (Deut. 1:36).

Every place... your foot shall tread shall be yours (Deut. 11:24).

II. The Divine Fellowship:

As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee (5).

Certainly I will be with thee (Exod. 3:12).

He will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee (Deut. 31:8).

Fear thou not, for I am with thee (Isa. 41:10).

If God is for us, who is against us? (Rom. 8:31).

III. A Sure Inheritance:

Thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land (6).

To thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever (Gen. 13:15).

Unto thee the land shall be divided for an inheritance (Num. 26:53).

Canaan, the lot of your inheritance (Isa. 105:11).

A place which he was to receive for an inheritance (Heb. 11:8).

1. "Every place that... your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it." (1) Unlimited opportunity; (2) Actual occupancy; (3) Unqualified assurance.

2. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee." (1) Enemies presupposed; (2) Triumph assured; (3) "He strong and of a good courage." Divine encouragement; (1) Its necessity; (2) Its quality; (3) Its consequence.

III. THE SUPREME ENCOURAGEMENT.

I. The End to be Sought:

Observe to do according to all the law (7).

Observe thou that which I command thee this day (Exod. 34:11).

Moses... took Joshua, and gave him a charge (Num. 27:22, 23).

Observe and hear all these words which I command thee (Deut. 12:28).

So did Moses command Joshua; and so did Joshua (Josh. 1:14).

II. The Means to be Used:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth (8).

He shall write him a copy of this law in a book (Deut. 17:18).

He shall read therein all the days of his life (Deut. 17:19).

In his law doth he meditate day and night (Isa. 1:2).

The sacred writings which are able to make thee wise (2 Tim. 3:15).

III. The Power to be Trusted:

The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (9).

He will be with thee, he will not fail thee (Deut. 31:8).

I will be with thee (Deut. 31:23).

This day will I begin to magnify thee (Josh. 3:7).

So the Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land (Josh. 6:27).

1. "Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law." How to keep God's laws: (1) Supremely; (2) Forcefully; (3) Courageously; (4) Scrupulously; (5) Completely.

2. "Turn not from it, ... that thou mayest have good success." (1) Steadfast in obedience; (2) Abundant in success.

3. "The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest." (1) Exalted companionship; (2) Constant companionship; (3) Profitable companionship.

LESSON BIBLE READING. GOD PRESENT WITH HIS CHILDREN.

With Jacob (Gen. 3:12); With Moses (Exod. 3:12; Deut. 2:7; 34:10).

With Joshua (Deut. 31:23; Josh. 1:5, 9; 6:27).

With David (1 Kings 1:37).

With the apostles (Matt. 28:20; Mark 16:20).

With all the saints (John 14:23; 1 John 4:12).

In the tabernacle (Exod. 25:22; 29:42; 30:36).

In the temple (1 Kings 8:10, 11; 2 Chron. 5:13, 14).

By the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:14).

By his Son Jesus (Matt. 1:23).