

Patience for the Erring.
God has a mother's patience for the erring. If one does wrong, first his associates in life cast him off; if he goes on in the wrong way, his business partner casts him off; if he goes on, his best friends cast him off—his father casts him off. But after all others have cast him off, where does he go? Who holds no grudge, and forgives the last time as well as the first? Who sits by the murderer's counsel through the long trial? Who carries the longest at the windows of a culprit's cell? Who, when all others think ill of a man, keeps on thinking well of him? It is his mother. God bless her gray hairs, if she be still alive; and bless her grave if she be gone. And bless the rocking chair in which she used to sit, and bless the cradle that she used to rock, and bless the Bible that she used to read! So God, our mother, has patience for all the erring. After everybody else has cast him off, God, our mother, comes to the rescue. God leaps to take charge of a bad case. After all the other doctors have got through, the Heavenly Physician comes in. Human sympathy at such a time does not amount to much. Even the sympathy of the church, I am sorry to say, often does not amount to much. I have seen the most harsh, bitter treatment on the part of those who profess a faith in Christ toward those who were wavering and erring. They tried on the wanderer sarcasm, and billingsgate, and caricature, and they tried tittle-tattle. There was one thing they did not try, and that was forgiveness. A soldier in England was brought by a Sergeant to the Colonel. "What," said the Colonel, "bringing the man here again? We have tried everything with him." "Oh, no," said the Sergeant, "there's one thing you have not tried. I would like you to try that." "What is that?" said the Colonel. Said the man: "Forgiveness." The case had not gone so far but that it might take that turn, and so the Colonel said: "Well, young man, you have done so and so. What is your excuse?" "I have no excuse, but I am very sorry," said the young man. "We have made up our minds to forgive you," said the Colonel. The tears started. He had never been accosted in that way before. His life was reformed, and that was the starting point for a positively Christian life. Oh, church of God, quit your sarcasm when a man falls! Quit your irony, quit your tittle-tattle, and try forgiveness. God, your mother, tries it all the time. A man's sin may be like a continent, but God's forgiveness is like the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, bounding it on both sides.—Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D.

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"SHARPENED AXES."

Subject of Dr. Talmage's Sermon at Madison, Wis.

TEXT: "Now, there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel, etc.—I Samuel xiii, 19-21.

My loving and glad salutation to this unaccounted host, Christians, Christian Endeavors, gospel workers and their friends from all parts of Wisconsin and America, saints and sinners! My text is gloriously appropriate. What a calling subjugation the Israelites had in the land of Israel. These Philistines, although we always admired them and have sometimes thought I ought to have been one myself. The Philistines would not even allow these parties to work their valuable mines of brass and iron, nor might they make any swords or spears. There were only two swords left in all the land. Yes, these Philistines went on until they had taken all the grindstones from the land of Israel, so that if an Israelite farmer wanted to sharpen his plow or his ax he had to go over to the garrison of the Philistines to get it done. There was only one sharpening instrument left in the land, and that was a file. The farmers and the mechanics having nothing to whet up the coulter, and the road, and the pickaxe save a simple file, industry was hindered and work practically done.

The great idea of these Philistines was to keep the Israelites disarmed. They might get iron out of the hills to make swords of, but they would not have any blacksmiths to weld this iron. If they got the iron welded, they would have no grindstones on which to bring the instruments of agriculture or the military weapons up to an edge. Oh, you poor, weaponless Israelites, reduced to a file, how I pity you! But these Philistines were not forever to keep their heel on the neck of God's children. Jonathan, on his hands and knees, climbs up a great rock beyond which were the Philistines, and his armor, bearing on his hands and knees, climbs up the same rock, and these two men, with their two swords, hew to pieces the Philistines, the Lord throwing a great terror upon them. It was then, so it is now. The two men of God on their knees mightier than a Philistine host on their feet.

I learn first from this subject how dangerous it is for the church of God to allow its weapons to stay in the hands of its enemies. These Israelites might again and again have obtained a supply of swords and spears, but they had no grindstones, and they took the spoils of the Ammonites, but these Israelites seemed content to have no swords, no spears, no blacksmiths, no grindstones, no active iron mines, until it was too late for them to make any resistance. I see the farmers tugging along with their pickaxes and plows, and I say, "Where are you going with those things?" They say, "We are going over to the garrison of the Philistines to get these things sharpened." I say, "You foolish men; why don't you sharpen them at home?" "Oh," they say, "the blacksmiths' shops are all torn down, and we have nothing left us but a file."

So it is in the church of Christ to-day. We are too willing to give up our weapons to the enemy. The world boasts that it has got ahead of the schools, and the colleges, and the arts, and the sciences, and the literature, and the printing press. Infidelity is making a mighty attempt to get all our weapons in its hand and then to keep them. You know it is making this boast all the time, and during a while, when the great battle between sin and righteousness has opened, if we do not look out we will be as badly off as these Israelites, without any swords to fight with and without any sharpened instruments. I call upon the superintendents of literary institutions to see to it that the men who go into the classrooms to stand beside the Leyden jars and the electric batteries, and the microscopes or telescopes be children of God, not Philistines. The athletic thinkers of this day are trying to get all the intellectual weapons of this century in their own hands. What we want is scientific Christians to capture the science, and scholastic Christians to capture the philosophy, and literary Christians to take back the lecturing platform. We want to send out against Schenkel and Strauss and Renan of the past men like the late Theodore Christlieb of Bonn, and against infidel scientists a Goethe, a Schelling, a Schiller and a Hegel, and a Goethe, a Schelling, a Schiller and a Hegel. We want to capture all the philosophical apparatus and swing around the telescopes on the swivel until through them we can see the morning star of the Redeemer, and the mineralogical hammer discover the "Rock of Ages," and amid the flora of the realms find the "Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley." We want a clergy learned enough to discourse of the human eye, showing it to be a microscope and telescope in one instrument, with 800 wonderful contrivances and lids closing 30,000 or 40,000 times a day, all muscles and nerves and bones showing the infinite skill of an infinite God, and then winding up with the peroration, "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" And then we want to discourse about the human ear, its wonderful integuments, membranes and vibrations, and its chain of small bones, and its auditory nerves, closing with the question, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" And we want some one able to expound the first chapter of Genesis, bringing to it the geology and the astronomy of the world, until, as Job suggested, "the stones of the field shall be in league" with the truth, and "the stars in their courses shall fight against Sissera." Oh, church of God, get out and recapture these weapons. Let men of God go out and take possession of the platform, all the printing press of this century speak out for Christ, and the reporters, and the typewriters, and the editors and publishers swear allegiance to the Lord God of truth. Ah, my friend, that day must come, and if the great body of Christian men have not the faith, or the courage, or the consecration to do it, then let me, Jonathan on his hands and knees, and on his praying knees climb up to the rock of hindrance, and in the name of the Lord God of Israel slash to pieces those literary Philistines. If these men will not be converted to God, then they must be destroyed.

Philistines for Christ's sake? I like the nickname that the English soldiers gave to Blucher, the commander. They called him "Old Forward." We have had enough retreats in the church of Christ; let us have a glorious advance. And I say to you now as the general said when his troops were frightened, "Blister up in his stirrups, his hand lying in the wind, he lifted his voice until 20,000 troops heard him, crying out, 'Forward, the whole line!'"

Again, I learn from this subject that we sometimes do well to take advantage of the world's sharpening instruments. These Israelites were reduced to a file, and so they were used in the garrison of the Philistines to get their axes and their goads, and their plows sharpened. The Bible distinctly states in the context that they had no other instruments now with which to do this work, and we will use their sharpening instruments to the Philistines to use their grindstones. My friends, is it not right for us to employ the world's grindstones? If there be art, if there be logic, if there be business faculty on the other side, let us go over and employ it for Christ's sake.

The fact is we fight with too dull weapons, and we work with too dull implements. We have and we want when we ought to make a clean shaven. Let us go over among sharp business men and among sharp literary men and find out what their taste is, and then we will use their sharpening instruments to sharpen our axes and our goads, and our plows against it. In other words, let us employ the world's grindstones. We will listen to their music, and we will watch their acumen, and we will use their sharpening instruments to make our own sharpening instruments, and we will borrow their printing presses to publish our Bibles, and we will borrow their railroads to carry our Christian literature, and we will borrow their ships to transport our missionaries.

That was what made Paul such a master in his day, that he was not afraid of the law. He could get of Dr. Gamaliel, but afterward standing on Mars Hill and in crowded thoroughfares quoted their poetry and grasped their logic and wielded their logic as if they were his own. He was a student of their mythology until Dionysius, the Aropeagite, learned in the schools of Athens and Heliopolis, went down under his tremendous powers. He was a student of the power in his day. He conquered the world's astronomy and compelled it to ring out the wisdom and greatness of the Lord, until for the second time the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. That was what gave to Jonathan Edwards his influence in his day. He conquered the world's metaphysics and forced it to sing the praises of God, and he was a student of the old meeting house in Northampton, Mass., and all Christendom, felt thrilled by his Christian power.

Well, now, my friends, we all have tools of Christian power. Do not let them lose their edges. We want no rusty blades in this fight. We want no coiler that cannot rip up the globe. We want no ax that cannot cut through the ice. We want no wheel that cannot start the lay team. Let us get the very best grindstones we can find, though they be in the possession of the Philistines, compelling them to turn the crank, while we revolve our wheels until all our energies and faculties shall be brought up to a bright, keen, sharp, glittering edge.

Again, I learn from this subject on what a small allowance Philistine infidelity puts a man. Yes, these Philistines shut up the mines, and then they took the spears and the swords, then they took the blacksmiths, then they took the grindstones, then they took everything but a file. Oh, that is the way sin works. It grabs everything. It begins with robbery, and it ends with robbery. It despoils the faculty and that faculty at length until the whole nature is gone. Was the man eloquent before, if generally thickens his tongue. Was he fine in personal appearance, it mars his visage. Was he affluent, it sends him to the almshouse. Was he influential, it destroys his popularity. Was he placid and genial and loving, it makes him sullen and cross, and so utterly it changes that you can see he is sarcastic and bitter, and that the Philistines have left him nothing but a file.

Oh, "the way of the transgressor is hard." His cup is bitter. His night is dark. His days are dreary. His life is terrible. Philistine infidelity says to that man, "Now, surrender to me, and I will give you all you want—music for the dance, swift steeds for the race, imperial coaches to slumbers, and you shall be refreshed with the rarest fruits in baskets of golden filigree. He lies. The music turns out to be a groan. The fruits burst the rind with rank poison. The coaches are made up of water and mud. The steeds are crazy. Small allowances of rest, small allowances of peace, small allowances of comfort. Cold, hard, rough—nothing but a file. So it was with Voltaire, the most applauded man of his day. The scripture was his jobbook, whence he drew bonnets to gall the Christian and the Jew. An infidel when well, but when asked, "Oh, then, what next would you do?" Seized with hemorrhage of the lungs in Paris, where he had gone to be crowned in the theater as an idol of all France, he sends a messenger to get a priest that he may be reconciled to the church before he dies. A great terror falls upon him. He makes the place all round about him so dismal that the nurse declares that she would not for all the wealth of Europe see another infidel die. He is reconciled to the church before he dies. A world's garlands, but in the last hour of his life, when he needed solacing, sent tearing across his conscience and his nerves a file, a file.

The church of God to-day wants more backbone, more defiance, more consecrated bravery, more metal. How often you see a man start out in some good enterprise, and at the first blast of newspaperdom he has collapsed, and all his courage gone, forgotten the fact that if a man is right all the newspapers of the earth, with all their columns pounding away at him, cannot do him any permanent damage! It is only when a man is wrong that he can be damaged. Why, God is going to vindicate His truth, and He is going to stand by you, my friends, in every effort you make for Christ's cause and the salvation of men.

I sometimes say to my wife, "There is something wrong; the newspapers have not assumed me for three months! I have not done my duty against public iniquities, and I will stir them up next Sunday." Then I stir them up, and all the following week the devil howls and howls, showing that I have him very hard. Go forth in the service of Christ and do your whole duty. You have one sphere, and I have another sphere. "The Lord of Hosts be with us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge, Selah."

We want more of the determination of Jonathan. I do not suppose he was a very braver man; he got on his knees and clambered up the rock, and with the help of his armor bearer he hewed down the Philistines, and a man of very ordinary intellect, but he had the heart, and he had the will to do anything for God and for the truth. We want something of the determination of the general who went into the war, and as he entered his first battle his knees knocked together, his physical courage not quite up to his moral courage, and he looked down at his knees and said, "Ah, if you knew where I was going to take you, you would shake worse than that!"

Put in the Christian cause every energy that God gives you. "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, and when He doth neither widow nor parent in the grave whither we are all hastening." Oh, is it not high time that we wake out of sleep? Church of God, stir up your head at the coming victory! The Philistines will go down, and the Israelites will go up. We are on the winning side. Hear that just now the King's horses are being led to the chariot, and when He does ride down the sky there will be such a hosanna among His friends and such a wailing among His enemies as will make the earth tremble and the heavens sing. I see in the distance the chariot wheels of the King of Kings, and I see the King of Kings already harnessed to his chariot, and he will put up his golden lions to his own, and he will know the hour, for that hour will make all Nations tremble. Clap your hands, all ye people! Hark! I hear the falling thrones and the dashing down of demolished iniquities.

Slip in Disused Quarries.

One of the most curious and deplorable sights in connection with pauperism during the winter in Paris is the influx of peripatetic beggars who invade at night the disused quarries of Argenteuil and Montmartre, where they huddle together, as close as they safely can, to the limekilns, in order to obtain a little warmth. Along the suburban roads in the direction of Paris they can be seen in twos and threes bent double almost and hungry, hurrying on and footsore, in the hope of being in time to obtain a night's shelter in the isles de nuit—night refuges—of the capital. But in those buildings, according to the Philadelphia Ledger, there is not sufficient room to accommodate all applicants. Their hospitable doors are open only for a short time late at night, and when once they are closed all entreaties for admission are rigorously unheeded. In the disused quarries they can find plenty of room. A whole army of mendicants could easily obtain shelter in their long galleries—a warm corner to huddle up in, and a convenient stone for pillow. Moreover, there are no awkward questions asked as at the isles de nuit, such as "Who art thou? For whence comest thou? What is thy calling?" And so from all directions leading toward Paris they come in large numbers at night, mud-battered, hollow-cheeked, worn out with fatigue, and numbered by hundreds as they descend into the quarries, where, pressed pell mell one against the other, they endeavor by the latest number and deepest of these disused quarries are in the neighborhood of Argenteuil, and there it is that the police often make their raids when in search of some criminal who has escaped capture, and who, it is thought, may be hiding among the "malfrats."

Barefooted Among Snakes.

While we are telling snake stories the following good one comes to us from the mountain regions. E. T. Dulin standing as authority. The country between Little Big Black Mountain is a ginseng region, and the Parker family are noted as "sengers." The girls go out barefooted in the mountains, though the country is infested with rattlesnakes and copperheads, and dig the ginseng, for which they get good prices at the stores, and from which it is taken to Pennington Gap for shipment. But along Clover Gap and up Rattlesnake Creek there are numberless reptiles. Beekie Parker is a girl, about nineteen years of age, strong, healthy-looking and handsome, but with a very determined face. She is a splendid rifle shot and is often seen with her Winchester. She goes after ginseng barefooted and often alone. The roots are gathered in May and September, and during the month just past she did a thriving business. One day, however, she came across a den of rattlesnakes. She had only stones and sticks with which to fight the desperate battle. Some of the snakes were larger than a man's arm, and few of them as large as the calf of a man's leg. For hours she fought them as they hissed and writhed and rattled around her. But the brave, determined girl battled with them until she exterminated every one that did not succeed in hiding among the crevices of rocks and in the dense underbrush. When she had crushed the last one to be seen she counted the dead, and there were just sixty-three.—Fredericksburg (Va.) Star.

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