

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE BROOKLYN DIVINES SUNDAY SERMON.

Subject: "Things Which Men and Women May Do."

TEXT: "The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."—Daniel xii, 32.

Antiochus Epiphanes, the old sinner, came down three times with his army, to desolate the Israelites, wretched and wretched, with a hundred and twenty trained elephants, swinging their trunks this way and that, and six thousand cavalry troops, and they were driven back. In the second time he advanced with seventy thousand armed men, and had again defeated. But the third time he laid siege until the navy of Rome came in with the flash of their long brass guns, and demanded that the siege be lifted. And Antiochus Epiphanes said he wanted time to consult with his friends about it, and Popilius, one of the Roman ambassadors, took a staff and made a circle on the ground around Antiochus, and said, "I will not allow you to decide before he came out of that circle, whereupon he lifted the siege. Some of the Hebrews had submitted to the invader, but some of them resisted, valourously, as did Eleazer when he had swine's flesh forced into his mouth, spit it out, although he knew he must die for it, and did die for it; and others, as my text says, did exploits.

An exploit I would define to be a heroic or a brave feat, a great achievement, so as to say, "I admire such things but there is no chance for me; mine is a sort of humdrum life. If I had an Antiochus Epiphanes to fight, I could do exploits." You are right, so far as great wars are concerned. They will probably be no opportunity to distinguish yourself in battles. The most of the brigadier generals of this country would never have been heard of had it not been for the war. Neither will you probably become a great inventor. The present war has introduced out of every two thousand inventions found in the patent office at Washington never yielded their authors enough money to pay for the expenses of securing the patent. So you will probably never be a Morse or an Edison or a Bell or a Whitney or an Eli Whitney. There is not much probability that you will be the one out of the hundred who achieves extraordinary success in commercial or legal or medical or literary sphere. What you can do is to go to work, and to do it well, and to do it with a spirit that shows there are three opportunities open that are grand, thrilling, far-reaching, stupendous and overwhelming. They are before you now. In one, if not all three of them, you may do exploits. The three greatest things on earth to do are to save a man, or save a woman, or save a child.

During the course of his life almost every man gets into an exigency, is caught between two fires, and is brought to a millstone, sits on the edge of some precipice, or in some other way comes near destruction. It may be a financial or a moral or a domestic or a social or a political exigency. You sometimes see it in courtrooms. A young man goes into a law company and he has offended the law, and he is arraigned. All blushing and confused he is in the presence of judge and jury and lawyers. He can be sent right on in the wrong direction, or he can feel disgraced and he is almost desperate.

Let the district attorney overhaul him as though he were an old offender; let the ablest attorneys at the bar refuse to say a word for him, because he cannot afford a considerable fee; let the judge give no opportunity for presenting the mitigating circumstances, hurry up the case and hustle him up to Auburn or Sing Sing. If he live seventy years, for seventy years he will be a criminal, and each decade of his life will be blacker than the one before. In the interregnum of prison life he can get no work, and he is glad to break a window glass or blow up a safe or play the highwayman so as to get back within the walls where he can get something to eat and hide himself from the gaze of the world.

Why don't his father come and help him? His father is dead. Why don't his mother come and help him? She is dead. Where are all the ameliorating and salutary influences of society? They do not touch him. Why did not some one long ago in the case understand that there was an opportunity for the exploit which would be famous in heaven a quadrillion of years after the earth has become scattered ashes in the last whirlwind? Why did not the district attorney take that young man into his private office and say: "My son, I see that you are the victim of circumstances. This is your first crime. You are sorry. I will bring the person you wronged into your presence, and you will apologize and make all the reparation you can, and I will give you another chance." Or that young man is presented in the courtroom, and he has no friends present, and the judge says, "Who is your counsel?" And the judge says, "I have none." And the judge says, "Who will take this young man's case?"

And there is a dead halt, and no one offers, and after awhile the judge turns to some attorney, who never had a good case in all his life and never will, and some attorney would be enough to secure the condemnation of innocence itself. And the professional incoherence crawls up beside the prisoner, helpless to rescue despair, where there ought to be a struggle among all the best men of the profession, and he should have the honor of trying to help that unfortunate. How much would such an advocacy? Nothing in dollars, but much every way in a happy consciousness that would make his life brighter, and his own dying pillow sweeter, and his own heaven happier—the consciousness that he had saved a man!

So there are commercial exigencies. A very late spring overcasts the demand for spring overcoats and spring hats and spring apparel of all sorts. Hundreds of thousands of people say, "It seems we are going to have no spring, and we shall go straight out of winter into warm weather and we can get along with our winter spring attire." Or there is no autumn weather, the heat plunging into the cold, and the usual clothing which is a compromise between summer and winter is not required. It makes a difference in the sale of millions and millions of dollars in the garment and oversanguine young merchant is caught with a vast amount of unusable goods that will never be salable again, except at prices ruinously reduced.

The young merchant with a somewhat limited capital is in a predicament. What shall the old merchants do as they see this young man in this awful crisis? His father's hands and laugh and say: "Good for him. He might have known better. When he has been in business as long as you have, you will not load his shelves in that way. Ha! Ha! He will burst up before long. He had no business to open his store so near to ours anyhow." Sheriff's sale! Red flag, in the window! "How much is bid for these out-of-fashion spring overcoats and spring hats or fall clothing out of date?" What do I hear in the way of a bid? "Four dollars." "Absurd! I cannot take that bid of four dollars apiece. Why, these coats when first put upon the market were offered at fifteen dollars each, and now I am offered only four dollars. Is that all? Five dollars do I hear? Going at that! Goes at five dollars," and he takes the whole lot.

The young merchant goes home that night and says to his wife: "Well, Mary, we will have to move out of this house and sell our piano. That old merchant that had an evil eye on me ever since I started has bought out all that clothing, and he will have it rejuvenated, and next year put it on the market as new while we will do well if we keep out of the poor-house." The young man, broken spirited, goes to hard drinking. The young wife with her baby goes to her father's house, and not

only is his store wiped out, but his home, his only joy, his prospect for two worlds—this and the next. And devil make a man quiet of fire and fill their cups of gall, and drink deep to the health of the old merchant who swallowed up the young merchant who got stuck on spring goods and went down. That is one way, and some of you have tried it.

But there is another way. That young merchant who found that he had miscalculated in laying in too many goods of one kind, and been flung of the unusual season, is standing behind the counter, feeling very blue and biting his finger nails, or looking over his account books, which read darker and worse every time he looks at them, and thinking how his young wife will have to be put in a plain room, and what she is expected to live in, or go to a third rate boarding-house, where they have tough liver and sour bread five mornings out of the seven.

An old merchant comes in and says: "Well, Joe, this has been a hard season for young merchants, and this prolonged cool weather has put many in the doldrums, and I have been thinking of you a good deal of late, for just after I started in business once got into the same scrape. Now, if I can do anything for you, I will do it. I will gladly do it. Better just put those goods out of sight for the present, and next season we will plan something about them. I will help you to some goods that will sell for me on commission, and I will go down to one of the wholesale houses and tell them that I know you and will back you up, and if you want a few dollars to bridge over the present I can let you have them. Be economical as you can, keep a sharp eye on your expenses, and you can't do two friends, God and myself. Good morning!"

The old merchant goes away and the young man goes behind his desk, and the years roll down his cheeks. It is the first time he has cried. Disaster made him mad at everything, and mad at man and mad at God. But this kindness melts him, and his tears seem to relieve his brain and his spirit rises from ten below zero to eighty in the shade, and he comes out of the crisis.

About three years after, this young merchant goes into the old merchant's store and says: "Well, my old friend, I was this morning thinking over what you did for me three years ago. You helped me out of a awful crisis in my commercial history. I learned wisdom, prosperity has come, and the pallor has gone out of my wife's cheeks, and the roses that were there when I courted her in her father's house have blossomed again, and my business is splendid, and I thought I ought to let you know that you saved a man!"

In a short time after, the old merchant, who had been a good while shaky in his limbs and who had poor spells, is called to the world, and one morning after he had had the twenty-third Psalm about "The Lord is my shepherd, he closes his eyes on this world, and an angel who had been for many years appointed to watch the old merchant, cries upward to the news that the patriarchal spirit is about ascending, and the twelve angels who keep the twelve gates of heaven, unite in crying down to this approaching spirit of the old man, "Come in and welcome, for it has been told us of these celestial lands that you saved a man!"

There sometimes come exigencies in the life of a woman. One morning a few years ago I saw in the newspaper that there was a young woman in New York whose pocket-book contained thirty-seven dollars and thirty-three cents, had been stolen, and she had been left without a penny at the beginning of winter in a strange city, and no work. And although she was a stranger, I did not allow the 9 o'clock mail to leave the lamp-post on the corner without carrying the thirty-seven dollars and thirty-three cents, and the case was proved genuine.

Now, I have read all Shakespeare's tragedies, and all Victor Hugo's tragedies, and all Alexander Smith's tragedies, but I never read a tragedy more thrilling than that case, and similar cases by the hundreds and thousands in all our large cities. Young women without money and without home and without work in the great metropolis of the world, are in such a case, and you can observe, how do you treat it? "Get out of my way. We have no room in our establishment for any more hands. I don't believe in women anyway. They are a lazy, idle, worthless set. Please show this person out of the door."

Or do you compliment her personal appearance and say things to her which if any man said to your sister or daughter you would kill him on the spot? That is one way to treat every day in the large cities, and many of those who advertise for female hands in factories and for governesses in families have proved themselves unfit to be in any place outside of the next best place in another way, and I saw one day in the Methodist Book Concern in New York, where a young woman applied for work, and the gentleman in tone and manner said in substance: "My daughter, we employ women here, but I do not want you in this place in our department. You had better inquire at such and such a place, as I hope you will be successful in getting something to do. Here is my name, and tell them I sent you."

The embarrassed and humiliated woman came to me. I said to her, "What is the matter?" She started out with a hopeful look that I think must have won for her a place in the world to earn her bread. I rather think that considerate and Christian gentleman saved the woman. New York and Brooklyn found last year about thirty thousand young women and would like to grind up about as many this year. Out of all that long procession of women who march on with no hope for this world or the next, but with a crushed and bruised and flung off the precipice, not one but might have been saved for home and God and heaven. But good man and good women are not in that kind of business. Alas for that poor thing! Nothing but the thread of the seven girls' needle held her, and the thread broke.

I have heard men tell in public discourses what a man is, but what is a woman? Until some one shall give a better definition, I will tell you what woman is. Derived from the Greek, she means a creature of great and great that no measuring line short of that of the infinite God can tell their bound. Fashioned to refine and soothe and lift and irradiate home and society and the world, which means that no one can appropriate what she has done or lived long enough to let him understand it, or who in some great crisis of life, when all else failed him, had a wife to re-enforce him with a faith in God that nothing could disturb.

Speak out, ye oracles, and tell of the feet that rock you and the anxious faces that hovered over you! Speak out, ye answers of all Christendom, and ye homes, whether desolate or still in full bloom with the faces of wife, mother and daughter, and help in a definite way that woman is. But as you are told us that the depths of the sea correspond to the heights of the mountains I have to tell you that a good womanhood is not higher up than bad womanhood is deep down. The grander the palace the more a wife the configuration that destroys. The grander the steamer Oregon the more terrible her going down just off the coast.

Now I should not wonder if you trembled a little with a sense of responsibility when I say that there is hardly a prison in this house but may have an opportunity to save a woman. It may be in your case by good advice, or by financial help, or by trying to bring to bear sons of a thousand Christian influences. If, for instance, you find a woman in financial distress and breaking down in health and spirits trying to support her children, now that her husband is dead or an invalid, doing that very important and honorable work—but which is little appreciated—inspiring a bearing home, where all the gasps, sweeping as they pay small board, or propose, without paying any board at all, to despise, are critical of everything and hard to please, buy yourself in trying to get her more patrons, and tell her of divine sympathy. Yes, if you see a woman favored of fortune and with all kindly surrounding friends in the hollow batteries of the world her chief regimen, living for herself and for times as

if there were no eternity, strive to bring her into the kingdom of God, as did the other day in the presence of her teacher who was the means of the conversion of the daughter of a man of immense wealth, and the daughter resolved to join the church, and she went home and said, "Father, I am going to join the church, and I want you to come." "Oh," said the father, "I never do church." "Well," said the daughter, "if I were going to be married would you not go to some married man?" And he said, "Oh, yes." "Well," said she, "this is of more importance than that."

So he went and has gone ever since, and loves to go. I do not know but that faithful Sabbath-school teacher not only saved a woman, but saved a man. There may be in this audience gathered from all parts of the world, there may be a dear woman of behavior toward womanhood has been perfidious. Repeat! Stand up, thou masterpiece of sin and death, that I may charge you! As far as possible make reparation. Do not boast that you have been in your power and that she cannot help herself. When that fine collar and cravat, and that elegant suit of clothes comes off and your uncovered soul stands before God, you will be ashamed of your own woman.

There is another exploit you can do, and that is to save a child. A child does not seem to amount to much. It is nearly a year old before it can walk at all. For the first year and a half it cannot speak a word. For the first ten years it would starve if it had to earn its own food. For the first fifteen years its opinion on any subject is absolutely valueless. And then there are so many of them. My, what lots of children! And some people have contempt for children. They are good for nothing but to wear out the carpets and break things and keep you awake nights crying.

Well, your estimate of a child is quite different from that mother's estimate who loves her child this summer. They took it to the salt air of the seashore and to the tonic air of the mountains, but no help came, and the brief paragraph of its life is ended. Suppose that life could be restored to such a child, how much would that be worth to the mother? She would give all the jewels from her fingers and neck and braid and put them down. And if told that that was not enough she would take her house and make over the deed for it, and that was not enough she would sell all her investments and put down all her mortgages and bonds, and if told that was not enough she would say: "I have made over all my property, and if I can have that child, I will pledge that I will toil with my own hands and with my own shoulders in any kind of hard work and live in a cellar and die in a garret. Only give me back that lost darling!"

I am glad that there are those who know something of a woman's child. Its possibilities are tremendous. What will their hands yet do? Where will those feet yet walk? Toward what destiny will that never dying soul betake itself? Shall those lips be the throne of blasphemy or benediction? Shall some chronic ailment be the cause of its life, or shall it be the cause of its life? Am I not right in putting that among the great exploits?

But what are you going to do with those children? What are you going to do with those father and mother had died the day they were born? There are tens of thousands of such. Their parentage was against them. Their name is against them. Their nerves and muscles are against them. They are practically at their birth laid out on a plank in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, in an equinoctial gale, and told to make for shore. What are you going to do with them? What are you going to do with them?

There is another question quite as pertinent, and that is, What are they going to do now? They will, ten or eleven years from now, have as many votes as the same number of well-bred children, and they will hand this land over to the anarchy and political demagogues just as sure as we neglect them. Suppose we each of us save a boy or save a girl. You can do it. Will you? How shall we get ready for one or all of these three exploits? We shall make a dead failure if in our own strength we try to save a man or woman or child. But my text suggests where we are to get equipment for these exploits. It is, "The Lord is God that is strong and do exploits." We must know Him through Jesus Christ in our own salvation, and then we shall have His help in the salvation of others. And while you are saving strangers you may save your own children, and they will hand this land over to the anarchy and political demagogues just as sure as we neglect them. Suppose we each of us save a boy or save a girl. 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