

THE PULPIT.

AN ELOQUENT SUNDAY SERMON BY
REV. CHARLES D. TREXLER.

Theme: The Christian Stadium.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—The Rev. Charles D. Trexler, pastor of the English Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Bay Ridge, preached Sunday morning on "The Christian Stadium." The text was I. Corinthians, 9:24: "So run that ye may obtain." Mr. Trexler said:

The life of a Christian is portrayed by many magnificent metaphors. He is represented as a mariner crossing the sea of life, subject to storms and tempests that frequently cause the shipwreck of faith and the collapse of a good conscience. Again, he is a warrior, putting on the armor of God, fighting not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. The epistle appointed for this day characterizes his life under the figures of a runner and a combatant. "I therefore so run," says Saint Paul, "as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and bring it into bondage; lest by any means after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected."

The former of these figures is especially helpful to the Christian today, even as it was suggestive to the Corinthians in the days of the apostle. To them it was replete with meaning. Every two years the Isthmian festival was held within full view of the city. Each citizen of Corinth attended the games connected with the festival. They had seen the stadium with its seats crowded with eager and excited spectators. They knew the rigid requirements made of the runners before they were allowed to enter the race. They had witnessed the runners straining every muscle, and running with patience the race, each one striving to be the first to reach the goal. They had cheered the victor as the crown of pine leaves, the reward of his efforts, was placed upon his head. All these points Saint Paul seizes that he may enforce the lessons of the Christian life and encourage men to put forth as great an effort to win an incorruptible crown. The runner has endured a season of severe training; he has strained every muscle to achieve success, and what has he received? A twist of pine leaves that will wither and fade in a few days. So run that ye may obtain a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.

But before a man was allowed to compete he had to meet the requirements of the race. At the opening of the Isthmian festival each athlete who desired to enter as a candidate for the crown was called into the arena. The crier, having commanded silence, laid his hand upon the head of each in succession and demanded of all the assembly, "Is there any one here who can accuse this man of being a slave or guilty of any moral wrongs of life?" If any stain was found, he was excluded, but if his character was clear, he was led to the Altar of Jupiter, there to make a solemn oath that he would conform to all the regulations of the race.

A similar demand is made of him who wishes to enter the Christian Stadium. Through the fall of Adam the whole human race has come under bondage. Man in his natural state is a slave of sin. He cannot compete for the crown; he is not a free man. Here is the graciousness of the gospel. Jesus Christ has instituted a sacrament, the sacrament of holy baptism, through which we are made heirs with Him and sons of God. Who dare question the privilege of any man to enter the race when he has received this sacrament, for he is now, not a servant, but the son of God and an heir of eternal life.

After the eligibility of the candidate has been proven he must make his vows to observe the rules of the race. These vows are made by the Christian through his sponsors in holy baptism. They are renewed at his confirmation. But preceding the confirmation there is a season of spiritual training. The Scriptures are studied, spiritual faculties are developed, and knowing the demands of the races and the resources there are to meet them, the Christian is prepared to make the last requirement—stripping for the race. This part of the preparation is graphically described by the apostle when he says, "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and run with patience the race that is set before us." An athlete could not consider the possibility of success who should enter the race wrapped in his tunic. Nor can the Christian, hindered by weights and sin, successfully compete for the crown. There are many weights that hinder, obstacles that in themselves are not wrong, but which impede the progress of the runner. Perhaps you strive to achieve success as a scholar or an orator; perhaps you wish to see your name written among the famous; it may be that you desire to become a great financier or a statesman, or a leader in some other walk of life.

In none of these ambitions would I discourage you for a moment. To acquire greatness, to amass riches, to achieve fame—none of these is sinful, but each may be a weight that will hinder you in the heavenly race. Never become so imbued with the spirit of the world that you forget to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The order becomes reversed; ambition first, then the kingdom of God. Under these conditions ambition becomes a weight and a sin.

One of the greatest difficulties of the present century is the fact that men place entirely too much emphasis upon the sordid successes of this life. If there is anything that will bring our country to ruin and destruction more rapidly than another, it is that a majority of men are selfishly striving to further their own purposes as far as worldly gain is concerned, and after all, having been successful in the various fields of activity, where do they stand? They have merely taken upon themselves a greater weight, burdened themselves more grievously and have not reached the goal. The words spoken twenty centuries ago have not become antiquated, they will stand: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Wherefore lay aside every weight—and sin. For a man to strip himself of sin is not a great task. The penalty of sin has been paid and he needs only to repent of past offenses and look to a Saviour who is ready to forgive, and he will be pardoned of all his iniquities.

Thus having met all the requirements, the Christian is prepared for the race, in which the exertion was so violent and yet so short as the Greek race. This is a fitting emblem of the Christian life; it begins with the Cross and ends with the Crown. It may cover a period of many years, but viewed in the light of eternity the course is very short.

In the Greek race only one of the competitors could win the prize; in the Christian race all may receive the crown of life. This makes the exhortation of the text still more emphatic, "So run that ye may obtain."

A great deal depends upon the beginning. Notice the runners at the games. The signal to start has been given—they are off with a dash. If there is one who has failed to make a good start his chances to win are few. So with the Christian. Not all, but a great deal depends upon a good beginning—a beginning with determination and decision. Keep the object of the race before you and allow nothing to hinder you in the course.

We need more men to-day who, like the Reformer of the Church, stand firm upon their convictions. Had he not decided with so much determination that the church needed cleansing, had he not stood so firmly at Worms before the papal prelates and declared, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me," his mission might have failed and his effort spent in vain. Set about any task languidly, half heartedly and failure is inevitable. When General Grant determined that the course he was about to pursue was the proper one, and said, "I shall fight it out along these lines if it takes all summer," his battles were half won. So is the life of a Christian. Confess Christ, not half heartedly, not weakly, but with determination that come what will you will always be a faithful follower. This is essential; make a good start, and having started, concentrate all effort. "This one thing I do," says Saint Paul. "I press toward the mark." Concentration, like decision, is essential to success. The difference between the amateur and the artist is that the one pursues his art only occasionally and subordinately, the other continuously and primarily. There are too many amateurs among Christians, too many who are religious only spasmodically. Make your Christian life your highest aim. It does not demand that you remove yourself to a monastery or a cloister or wander alone in the wilderness. It does not need to interfere with the legitimate aims of life, but in them all we may be striving for the one end—to mold our lives that we may please Him. Concentrate your effort: it is very essential that you should run with all your speed. How ridiculous a sluggard would have appeared lounging about the ancient Stadium, professing to be a runner, but never progressing beyond the starting point. Why shall he enter the race if he does not determine to run and run hard?

The secret lies in filling our lives with good acts that we have no room for evil. "Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Ours is a positive life, a life of creating new desires rather than the crushing of old ones. It must be a life of progress.

It is also essential that one keep to the course. To leave it may demand a return to the starting point. The prodigal son had traveled far from home, but he had left the course and had to plod wearily back to his father's home step by step. It is not difficult to know the course. The first Victor has gone before us and we need only follow Him. The Word enlightens the way for us. The chief requirement is that we obey it.

Again, having begun the race, it is essential that you persevere to the end. The competitors in the Olympian games had only short distances to run, consequently they put all their effort in one short spurt. Our life is not so viewed from the finite standpoint. We cannot put all our effort into a few moments and then, weary and enfeebled, be forced to relinquish the race. Let us run with patience the race and not start at such a pace that we will be exhausted before we have finished the course. There are some Christians who, in their first enthusiasm, spend all their effort and then become disheartened. Realize that the race of a Christian requires one continuous effort, and strive accordingly. Persevere to the end. Then what is the result of all this effort?

The reward—It has its recompense upon earth. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of the life to come." The man who lives the life of the Christian athlete profits physically, for it inculcates temperance, self-respect, industry and cleanliness.

It helps him mentally. All other things being equal, the man who follows the rules of the Christian will be capable of the highest mental results. His mind has not become clouded with sin. But above all this, it is profitable now in a spiritual sphere. It gives to him a quietness of conscience, a sense of security under the fatherly protection of God, the assurance of pardon for sins and the joy and helpfulness of prayer. This is but the earnest of a greater and grander prize.

In the Stadium the prize, like all earthly honors, was perishable. But the faithful Christian wins an incorruptible crown. A proud moment it was when the successful racer had the chaplet placed upon his brow amid the applause and admiration of the multitude. A grander moment for the Christian conqueror when, amid the shouts of rejoicing myriads, the pierced hands of the Saviour place upon his head the crown of glory, and he hears the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy reward."

EPWORTH LEAGUE LESSONS

SUNDAY, APRIL 3

The Sabbath Rest and the Week-Day
Toil—Mark 2: 23-28; Luke 23: 56.

Mark 2: 23-28. This act was expressly permitted (Deut. 23: 25), but in the eyes of the critical Pharisees the disciples were guilty on two serious counts—they "plucked" the corn, which was "reaping," and they "rubbed" it in their hands, which was "grinding." This was work not permissible on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees were strong on technicalities, but weak on spiritualities. They were anxious that man should save the Sabbath; Jesus would have the Sabbath save the man. The Pharisees stood for the salvation of the law; Jesus stood for the salvation of life. He allowed nothing to hinder that purpose.

Jesus is "Lord of the Sabbath." It "was made for man." He taught the keeping of the day in its true spirit as a day of personal privilege and beneficent usefulness. Jesus gave the Sabbath a new skyline. He lifted it out of the legalism into liberty. The Pharisees missed the soul of the Sabbath rest and made it a shackle. Love lifts life above law.

Luke 23: 56. The women had broken hearts and plenty of tears, but that hindered them not at all in their preparations to "keep the Sabbath." It is no amazing surprise that the next morn their eyes were opened to see the empty sepulcher and to behold the risen Christ. There are rich rewards for those who still live "according to the commandment." The fourth commandment is the first with a promise.

Jesus amplified the Sabbath. Whatever he touched grew larger. It was an institution in bondage to small men. He set it free. The Sabbath is not a slave to form, it is a minister to life. It is too big for a commandment. It has continental relations to our day. It means more since Jesus interpreted it.

Jesus emphasized the Sabbath. The Pharisees emasculated it. "The Sabbath was made for man." Man needs the day of rest. It has been shown by actual test that men who keep their rest day are able to do more and better work than those who violate the commandment. Dr. Haegler's charts show clearly that the usual night's rest is not quite enough to restore the body to normal efficiency, and that the rest day is needed to bring the physical body up to the normal condition.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR NOTES

APRIL THIRD

Topic—Christ Our Teacher. John 12: 44-50. (Consecration Meeting.)

A lesson on the kingdom. Matt. 5: 1-11.

On righteousness. Matt. 5: 20-30.
On prayer. Matt. 6: 5-15.
On fear-thought. Matt. 6: 25-34.
On service. John 13: 1-17.
On obedience. John 14: 15-24.

We are to believe Christ because what He says is true; but if we cannot understand how it is true, we are to believe it anyway, because He who is the Truth has said it (v. 44).
Belief in Christ gives understanding of what He says, just as the opening of certain doors automatically turns on the light in rooms otherwise dark (v. 46).

Every word of Christ's is a judge on a bench, and that bench is the throne of the universe (v. 48).

Christ's words are life because He who is the Life is also the Word. If we receive them, they become our life (v. 50).

Suggestions.

Christ is your teacher not if you enter His class merely, but if in your turn you become a teacher.

In Christ's school no lesson is learned until it is lived. No other school is so practical.

There is progressive scholarship in Christ's school. Every lesson is learned before the next can be learned, or even is given out.

Burbank says cactus offers a satisfying substitute for meat. It should be served piping hot, prescribes the New York Herald, and eaten with a safety razor.

NEW Spring and Summer styles on sale—Now!

If anything a little bit smarter and more exclusive than usual. The kind you see on Paris boulevards—Fifth Avenue too. Every last and leather that a woman could possibly want at any time.

T. B. BUDINGER
SNOW SHOE, PA.

How to Build Fire in a Cook Stove or Range For CANNEL COAL

- 1st. Empty the Ash-pan.
- 2nd. Take off one or two griddles, (and the short spider over the fire, if necessary) and with a stiff poker, rake down all fine ashes, even to the grate.
- 3rd. Pick out all large "chunks" (not clinkers, for Cannel-Coal makes no clinkers) and you are then ready to start the fire.
- 4th. Use DRY kindling, light it in the way it suits best, and let it burn for a few minutes, (until you get the tea-kettle filled, then place a few lumps on the fire, and let it burn until a good fire is secured, afterward fire in the usual way.

A pair of Cotton Gloves is an excellent thing to wear while making a fire.

Always keep the Ash-pan from getting TOO FULL.

Keep the stove, pipe and chimney clear of soot; the tubes of all boilers have to be cleaned frequently.

If any dirt is made in building a fire, clean it up immediately; and do not blame the coal for making dirt—all coal is dirty, in a sense.

Follow these instructions and you will have no trouble to burn the BEST coal, for household use.

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Most of us are saved a lot of embarrassment, confesses the Commander, by the fact that the man in the moon is not connected with the local telephone switchboard.

If President Taft is "really fairy-like on his feet," as a Southern woman who waltzed with him is reported to have said, submits the Albany Journal, he must be a wizard.