SPIRITUAL HAPPINESS

Sunday Discourse by Dr. Chapman, the Noted Pastor-Evangelist.

Why Men Do Not Attend Church — Some Reason Given by Non-Goers — The Value of Sympathy.

NEW YORK CITY.—The Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, the popular pastor-evangelist, who is now preaching to overflowing congregations in this city, has furnished the following eloquent sermon to the press. It was preached from the text "And the man said, The woman, whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Genesis 3: 12.

This may be counted a strange text for a sermon with such a theme as this and yet we will all agree, I am sure, that all men are the sons of Adam in this respect as well as in others, for there is always a disposition to excuse self and place responsibility upon some one else for wrong doing and failure. I have sent out letters through some personal friends asking those who were non-attendants upon church to give me the reasons for their position, and I have been amazed to see how many have found fault with the church, and how very many with the ministry and how remarkably few with themselves. I shall give you these excuses as they have sent them to my friends, and yet I doubt not but if men were perfectly honest they would say that they were away from the house of God because of something in their own heart and life which made church attendance a constant rebuke to them.

This is an important question we have to consider. More than half the inhabitants of our country do not attend church; of the non-church goers the majority are men, and there are actually millions of men in this land of ours who have no connection with the church whatsoever. A few of this company attend occasionally, some of them are employed and cannot come, but the vast number have become indifferent. In New York City not more than three per cent. of the male population are members of the Protestant churches, and of the church membership it is said three-fourths are women. Not only is this true in the cities, but in the rural districts as well. All classes of people to-day seem to have become affected with this disease, for there are Christless rich as well as Christless poor. It is true that a crowd is not the only thing to be considered in church attendance. It is easy to get a crowd; a balloon ascension always draws a crowd, if the minister is sensational he usually has a crowd about him, but there is this to be said about sensational preaching, while it draws it does not hold, and yet a crowd is necessary to consider, for there is great inspiration in a great company of people. However, let us not forget that some of the greatest sermons in the world's history have been preached to the few. Jesus spent an evening with one man and preached on regeneration as no man has ever preached, and Nicodemus became a child of God. He must needs go through Samaria and stops at the well curb of Jacob because there is one poor woman there, and she had her life transformed by His teaching.

One cold rainy night in England years ago a minister said, "I do not think I shall attend the church to-night, for no one will be there," and when finally he did go he found a scattered few through the pews. He was then almost persuaded to give up the preaching; when finally he did go on a boy up the gallery heard the text and began to live, and the boy was the preacher who led 13,000 people into his own church and drew a multitude to Christ the wide world round. His name was Charles H. Spurgeon. Yet I am persuaded that what is needed to-day is not so much ministers that will draw, that is what we hear on every side, but rather churches that will hold the people that attend, hold them by their sympathy, hold them by their manifestation of the Spirit of Christ. These are the reasons which men have suggested for non-church attendance.

I.

First—One man wrote, "I am out of the habit of attending church." It is a very easy thing to form any kind of a habit, but if once broken it is difficult to begin again, especially if it be a habit to do good. Our large cities are remarkable in this respect in these days, for with over thousands of people in them professional church members who do not frequent the church, they lower the spiritual atmosphere of the city and their last state is frequently worse than the first.

Second—Another man wrote that he was not a church attendant because he had never been trained to it in his youth, and this is certainly true, for the homes have changed; for while it used to be that the father and mother and the children attended church, now the children are conspicuous for their absence. I can remember in my own boyhood's days that no one of the children, however young or however old, had the right to stay away from the house of God. I tremble when I think of the next generation of non-church goers unless the church reforms speedily.

Third—One young man writes that he has come to believe that it is not manly to attend church. That is a reflection upon the family life, for the father of the house ought to so reflect Christ in his home life that the children could easily say, "If all the good men in the world my father is the best, and if church attendance can produce such a character I shall never be absent."

Fourth—"I do not attend church," says another, "because I am too tired," and in many respects this is the most reasonable excuse presented. I believe the time is coming when the business life of our large cities must be adjusted so as to give those who toil more time on Saturday, thereby giving them a better opportunity on Sunday to worship God, and yet one of the busiest men in this country, with whom it was my privilege for a number of years to be associated, the Hon. John Wanamaker, who attends church every Sunday from early morning until late at night, declares that it rests him, and that he begins Monday always refreshed. Rest is not idleness, but a change of occupation.

Fifth—One man writes that he had rather sleep and read than attend church, but that is pure, unadulterated selfishness. A selfish man is one who is out of proportion. I have no right to consider simply my own comfort. I am a citizen, and I am responsible for the morality of my city. I ought to be willing to do anything that would make my own life better or my brother's life better.

Sixth—"I do not attend church because the sermons are too long," said another, and yet he confesses that he has not been in church for years. I am well aware that the sermons need to be long. I have sat many a time through an hour sermon with my father, but as a matter of fact we have men preach long sermons to-day, and yet strange to say the very men who object to long sermons could sit through hours of a theatrical performance which would be crucifixion to some of us.

Seventh—"I am fed on dry husks when I attend church," writes another, and that is true in some places. There are so-called Christian churches where men preach anything but the gospel. They are a disgrace to the profession and a dishonor to Christ. It is, however, my privilege to know as many ministers as the most of men, and I know comparatively few in all this great company who preach anything but the gospel of Christ. It is true, however, that the world feeds upon dry husks. Remember the story of the prodigal.

Eighth—"I am just as good as the members of the church; why should I attend?" But that is not at all the question that should be considered by the writer of this letter. He may be as good as some members of the church, but to say it is a little strange that men who take this position always pick out the weak members and line up beside them. Why not take the strong characters of the church instead. The question is, "How does your life compare with that of Christ?" He is the ideal.

Ninth—"The reason why I am away from the church is because when I attend the sermon rebukes my manner of living." Then I beseech you, in the name of Christ, change your life, and do the man who writes this letter I send out a special plea that God may lead him speedily to Himself.

Tenth—"If I should attend church," writes another young man, "I should have to give up my evil companions, and I am not prepared now to do that." It is a sinful thing for any young man to say that his love of certain companions renders his desire to be right with God and the reading of this letter presents the strongest reason why he should turn quickly into the straight and narrow way that leads to life.

Eleventh—"The social side of life appeals so strongly to me that I find my spiritual interest is becoming deadened," writes a man who used to be a member of the church, "and for this reason I am not attending." It is easy to understand how men who live in a great city would say this, and I wonder sometimes when I see men in their place of business and in the Stock Exchange that the one hope of gain as they are. It is an alarming condition, and sooner or later such men will find themselves hopelessly enslaved and lost.

These are the reasons presented. I would be better for us to call them excuses, for excuses are very different from reasons. An excuse is a subterfuge behind which men hide; reasons are argued differently. A few reasons have been given in the above remarks, but the most of them are excuses pure and simple.

II.

It is said that an honest confession is good for the soul, and there are some things that we as members of the church and as pastors of the church ought to acknowledge first or last.

First—We ought to recognize that men cannot be driven to the church, but they may be attracted. They will not go simply because it is their duty or because the Bible tells them to do it, but they may be, you and I ought to remember that the average church building, shut up for the week, with the undertaker up the most prominent post in existence, is an attraction to the no-church people. The mold of the building may be beautiful, but doubtless they do not think that.

Second—With each new generation new conditions present themselves. Within twenty-five years the methods of business have entirely changed, and right within ten years a new code of business prevails, and the church must keep up with the times. The old truth is carved out and never be changed. God gives that one who true to present a new truth when cannot be found in the word of God, an old method must be absolutely valueless, and we have a Scripture warrant for changing our methods every Sunday until we have one that will win the indifferent. This warrant is found in the little word "all," in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money and the boy, for the Shepherd searched, and the woman looked, and the father waited until the boy was found.

The Emperor of Japan in passing through the palace with a distinguished visitor one day was asked as they looked out the window why a certain tree standing at a certain place on the pass. The Emperor asked the gardener of the day, and he did not know, and then he summoned the gentleman in command of the forces, and he could not tell, so when the records were studied it was found that years ago the wife of the Emperor had planted a branch of wild flower growing there and had asked a soldier to carry there and guard them. The order had never been reversed, and for years and years the soldier had been standing there, and there are many people in these days who are guarding some withered flower of the days of an old method or an old tradition, instead of showing themselves in the times. We have a gospel which is to-day and its greatness, and we must adapt ourselves to make encouragement apparent to lost men.

Third—We have to remain to be composite man. If a church exists at all to reach the rich only, it is not Christian, whatever else it may be; if it exists simply to reach the poor it is not as Christ would have it. The distinction made between rich and poor are to disappear in the gospel is for all. There is not more electricity to-day in the world than twenty-five years ago, and no more in America than in the heart of Africa, but Heaven harnessed it and makes it useful, and that is the need of the day for the church. Or, for some man who can take the old gospel which has been given to the world for centuries and make it attractive. We need men with the influence of the week of business upon them, and so do the best preacher who finds men as they are and then leads them to Christ. There are many preacher more particular about their pronunciation than about the living of Christ, the kingdom of God has no room for us thankful that there are so few in number.

Fourth—Let it be known that men have never been found in great numbers in any church where the preacher lacks a bold boldness in the presentation of the truth. Men will not come to the church to hear theories or speculations, but want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and a positive theology in the pulpit is the most pressing need to-day.

Fifth—It is the Christlike spirit that draws. Ritualism and ceremonies are not to be despised, culture is a good thing, but the church that makes a boid upon society as the church that has the word and makes its commission a matter of the heart.

In other days when the church bell of St. Paul's in London chimed its midnight hour there used to be heard the gentleman with a lantern and one or two assistants going from room to room and from house to house, arousing them by pounding them on doors, ringing bells, and shaking them, but better than all other things of the Lord Jesus Christ sent a man to His night, robbing the way to the closed door. When the man in his sin heard the knock he knew it was the Master who had come to him, and he opened the door and let Him in. Christ is the composite man. He is the Christ of the Hindu, the Christ of the Mohammedan, the Christ of the Jew, and the Christ of the Gentile. He is the Christ of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament.

Sixth—"Pastor," the man continued, "you must speak plainly to Dublin. You must tell them the wrongs they are doing, the troubles in Canada and in Australia. There is trouble in the United States, and you must speak plainly to them." The great orator replied, "Sir, I am not sent to Dublin, nor to Canada, nor to Australia, nor to the United States, but to preach the gospel of Christ to men." Many preachers are to-day trying to be politicians, and they are failing in their mission. Christ is the great need of the world to-day, and we must preach Him.

Seventh—"Why do you preach to the rich?" asked a poor man of a minister. "Because," was the reply, "I have been sent to preach to the poor, and I find the poor are always with me, and I must preach to the rich also." "Then why do you not preach to the rich?" asked the poor man. "Because," was the reply, "I have been sent to preach to the poor, and I find the poor are always with me, and I must preach to the rich also." "Then why do you not preach to the rich?" asked the poor man. "Because," was the reply, "I have been sent to preach to the poor, and I find the poor are always with me, and I must preach to the rich also."

THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International Lesson Comment for June 12.

Subject: Paul Comes to Rome. Acts 28. Golden Text, Acts 28:31. Memory Verses, 30, 31. Commentary on Acts 28.

Introduction.—With this lesson we begin Paul's second missionary journey. We are now entering upon a new part of the book of Acts, and a new part of the life of the great missionary. Before the present lesson period Paul has visited Macedonia and Greece, and has established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. He has also visited Athens and Corinth, and has had many experiences in connection with the work of the ministry. Paul has been in the city of Ephesus, where he labored for three years, and has written his first two letters to the Thessalonians, his letter to the Galatians, and his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul has been in Jerusalem, and has been arrested and imprisoned in Cæsarea, and has appealed his case to Cæsar, and is now on his way to Rome.

I. "Thence." The ship mentioned in our last lesson, Alexandria, in Egypt, was the vessel in which Paul sailed from Cæsarea. The ship was wrecked on the island of Melita, or Malta, and the crew and passengers were saved. The ship was driven by the storm for fourteen days, and was finally wrecked on the island of Melita, or Malta, and the crew and passengers were saved. The ship was driven by the storm for fourteen days, and was finally wrecked on the island of Melita, or Malta, and the crew and passengers were saved. The ship was driven by the storm for fourteen days, and was finally wrecked on the island of Melita, or Malta, and the crew and passengers were saved.

II. "Certain brethren." Paul was not alone. He had with him Luke, the beloved physician, and Aristarchus, a Macedonian, who had been with him in Ephesus, and who had also been with him in Cæsarea. Paul was not alone. He had with him Luke, the beloved physician, and Aristarchus, a Macedonian, who had been with him in Ephesus, and who had also been with him in Cæsarea. Paul was not alone. He had with him Luke, the beloved physician, and Aristarchus, a Macedonian, who had been with him in Ephesus, and who had also been with him in Cæsarea.

III. "Paul was suffered to dwell by himself." Paul was not a prisoner in the ordinary sense of the word. He was under the charge of a soldier, but he was not confined in a prison. He was allowed to live in a house of his own, and to receive visitors. He was also allowed to preach the gospel. He was not a prisoner in the ordinary sense of the word. He was under the charge of a soldier, but he was not confined in a prison. He was allowed to live in a house of his own, and to receive visitors. He was also allowed to preach the gospel. He was not a prisoner in the ordinary sense of the word. He was under the charge of a soldier, but he was not confined in a prison. He was allowed to live in a house of his own, and to receive visitors. He was also allowed to preach the gospel.

IV. "Three days after." Paul was not idle. He had been in Rome only three days when he called the chief of the Jews together. He had been in Rome only three days when he called the chief of the Jews together. He had been in Rome only three days when he called the chief of the Jews together.

V. "Concerning this sect." Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed of the gospel.

VI. "Persuaded them." Paul was not a preacher of the gospel. He was not a preacher of the gospel. He was not a preacher of the gospel. He was not a preacher of the gospel. He was not a preacher of the gospel. He was not a preacher of the gospel.

VII. "Spake boldly." Paul was not afraid to speak. He was not afraid to speak. He was not afraid to speak. He was not afraid to speak. He was not afraid to speak. He was not afraid to speak.

VIII. "Preaching the kingdom of God." Paul was not preaching himself. He was not preaching himself. He was not preaching himself. He was not preaching himself. He was not preaching himself. He was not preaching himself.

IX. "Teaching those things." Paul was not teaching his own opinions. He was not teaching his own opinions. He was not teaching his own opinions. He was not teaching his own opinions. He was not teaching his own opinions. He was not teaching his own opinions.

X. "No man forbidding him." Paul was not hindered. He was not hindered. He was not hindered. He was not hindered. He was not hindered. He was not hindered.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO MAN

PRECIOUS THOUGHTS FROM THE WORLD'S GREATEST PREACHER.

Poem: A Prayer for Patience—To-Day—Sons of Christ—The Lord Will Provide—Two of Comparison—A Soul Saved—Redemption of the Life.

The summer land, we call it true,
That I may trust thee,
And rest in thee without a doubt,
In every trouble,
Knowing and recognizing thee
As my supreme power.

The summer life we spend it well,
Doing Thy Father's will,
Resting Thee supremely in Israel,
Who's dignity and grace.

The summer day we spend it well,
In the service of God,
And herald in Thee all hours and of night,
The evening star.

Standing summer, Master mine,
Let me a seat be given,
That I, entering Thy vine yards,
Thee to thee abide in me.

Master see Thy vineyard,
Thou I come to pray,
Thou I entering Thy vine yards,
Thee to thee abide in me.

Master see Thy vineyard,
Thou I come to pray,
Thou I entering Thy vine yards,
Thee to thee abide in me.

Master see Thy vineyard,
Thou I come to pray,
Thou I entering Thy vine yards,
Thee to thee abide in me.

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