

# THE PULPIT.

SCHOLARLY SUNDAY SERMON BY THE REV. R. W. McLAUGHLIN.

Theme: Truth, Service, Action.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—In the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church the preacher, Sunday morning, was the Rev. R. W. McLaughlin, of Grand Rapids, Mich. His subject was: "Truth, Service and Action." Among other things he said:

It is said that the masterpieces of literature are rarely, if ever, the pure creation of literary skill, but are usually suggested by some well known forgotten and seemingly incidental event of the past. It is also said that in the writing of such literature four factors are essential, namely: Time, location, characters and sequence of events. And these four conditions of literature are found in this historic statement of fact as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Acts. It is a seemingly unimportant statement, containing but one name, whose only significance is in what once was or may have been the other three, which now is. And the four factors are here.

Location—the Phrygian region and the shore line of two continents, as points marked on a map as Troas and Philippi. Time—the middle of the first century, while the Caesars are still on the throne and the empire rules the world. Characters—An unnamed man, a devout woman, a ventriloquist maiden, a group of selfish traders, a male magistrate, a frightened jailor and Saul of Tarsus. Sequence of events—the historic relation of Paul to Troas and Troas to Philippi, which relation reveals the power of truth as it gains possession of one life and through that life disturbs and transforms the world.

And in the writing of the story based on the well known forgotten names, there must be four conditions: Phrygia, or loyalty to the truth. The narrative states that Paul, starting forth on his second missionary journey, desires to enter the rich and populous province of Asia, but is forbidden by the Holy Spirit. Moving forward, he comes to the province of Bithynia, and is again forbidden to enter by the Spirit of Jesus. And so he turned to the southward and northward, he journeys westward until he reaches the shore line of the Mediterranean at Troas. And this historic statement of fact, with Paul as the commanding personality, suggests mystery enough for the greatest story. What does it mean? A man, apparently as free as the wind blowing over the Phrygian highlands, yet not free. It certainly means that the man is not free. He hears a voice, though he cannot see the form of the one speaking, even as a bird's song is heard, though it is unseen because hidden by the foliage. And this voice is for him the voice of truth. It is called in one verse the Holy Spirit, and in another the Spirit of Jesus, but in every other name called, it means only one thing, and that is the truth of God reaching for his inner life. And as the truth of God is authoritative. And more than this, it is final; authority for truth is always final to the honest and sincere soul. This authoritative truth it has power to send him out over the highways of the Roman Empire with sublime abandon. And this is chapter one in every earnest life—allegiance to the truth. A willingness to follow the truth wherever it may lead, to the ends of Asia and Bithynia and drive one on to Troas, but not until a man is willing to say:

It fortifies my soul  
To know that whether I perish,  
Truth is so—

Troas—a vision of service. As is true of every good story, chapter two begins where chapter one ends. Paul enters Troas in the night, in which he sees on the distant shores of Europe a person pleading for help. It would be interesting were it possible to interpret the feelings of this man as he enters Troas. It picturesquely locates the man, and shows him the Aegean Sea, across whose blue gleam could be seen in vague outline the shore of Europe, and its commerce. The tangled spars at the docks, and the heavily laden, gaunt camels in the streets, and its historic reminders, Paul's own coming to the aid of Achilles and the marble throne of Xerxes, and the remainder of Homer's genius in "the ringing plains of windy Troy." But of more interest still, the people crowding the streets. And out of the crowd there comes one to enter the circle of Paul's friendship. Is it too much to think of the man sitting on the bluff during the hours of the day and conversing about the deep things in life? But the conversation ends as darkness comes down upon the earth. The men separate, and Paul, reaching his lodgings, is soon lost in slumber. And in his sleep he dreams, and sees the friend of the afternoon, now standing yonder in Macedonia, and pleading with him to help. And thus is chapter two in every earnest life.

Allegiance to truth in Phrygia leads to a vision of service in Troas. For truth is more than an abstract idea, or a major and minor premise in a cold syllogism. Truth is a gleam, a suggestion, an illumination. It fires the intellect and kindles the imagination.

Philippi—region of action. In Philippi Paul finds Lystra and her household. Soon he meets a ventriloquist maiden owned by a group of selfish traders, denounces their business; is seized, beaten, thrown into jail. In the night he sings and prays. And then follows the story of the conversion of the jailor and Paul's freedom the next morning.

But why did not Paul remain in Troas and meditate upon his dream? Why does the narrative say, "And straightway?" There are two answers: First, life at its best is lived in the region of action, not in the realm of dreams. The historian in Acts has caught the meaning of this. For he gives us verse to the dream at Troas and forty-three verses and three books of the New Testament to the recording of the action following the dream. The second answer is, a man must go from his dream in order to keep it. The thought unexpressed lies in a less obvious meaning.

For every noble thought is the outcome of a heroic dream. There is a sequence of events. This does not mean that the result will always seem the normal outcome of the antecedent cause. Night follows day, but night is not a day, yet it is welcome. And so when the actions in Philippi are compared with the dream in Troas they seem unlike. An unselfish dream in one city and a selfish group of traders in another city. A quiet bed of repose in Asia and a damp dungeon in Europe.

But Paul discovers what every man discovers in his pursuit of truth and the unselfish vision of service is

wrought out with selfish men. The tragedies of life are never in the realm of vision, but in the region of service. The dreamed and acted. And Chapter III, must be written by every earnest life in its pursuit of truth. The stress and test of life is in sailing from Troas with its dream to Philippi with its action.

And so, in conclusion, write the chapter of Phrygia, allegiance to the truth; Troas, a vision of service; Philippi, the region of action.

Every family has a sorrow founded on drunkenness and every voter an experience of the effects which it is bound to cure.

## EPWORTH LEAGUE LESSONS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 1.

The Nearness of Extremity to Opportunity. (John 5: 1-16.)

Our Lord must have performed many miracles of healing not recorded, but it is evident that every case preserved to us in the Gospel has some special lesson. Is there any other instance of Christ's power so completely suggestive of the statement that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." For it must be remembered that the Savior was ever looking for opportunity to bless suffering humanity. It is not difficult to believe that in all that sorrowful, afflicted assemblage about the porch of Bethesda, this poor, impotent man might have been the most needy. Think of the long life of weakness and helplessness! Thirty-eight years of prolonged misery! Surely, his was an extreme case. For many years he had been brought to these porches in the hope that when the angel "troubled" the waters of the pool he might have at least a chance, poor as it was, of getting healing. Season after season passed and hope deferred must have made his heart sick as he lay on his mat the morning that the Great Physician came to the way. Was there a more hopeless creature in all Jerusalem at the moment when salvation was so near? The darkest moments are just before the dawn, and his darkest hour of the direst extremity was upon him to be illumined by the coming of Jesus with most gracious opportunity. Opportunity had indeed come into touch with his extremity. It is wonderful how Christ awakened the man to a realization of his opportunity. Standing before the paralytic, the Great Healer asks the strange question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus is doubtless unknown to the poor sufferer, and such a question might have seemed only a gratuitous wounding of his sensibilities. But the stranger's commanding and benign appearance belied any such interpretation and he sorrowfully and perhaps apathetically replied, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." This broken-hearted utterance spoke volumes of the man's extremity. Even the little human hope in his case had gone to drag himself to the healing waters when the blessed stirring occurred; he was in the very depths of hopelessness, yet salvation was blessedly near. Was he stealing into the benumbed heart the warmth of a new hope, and when the royal command came, "Take up thy bed and walk," this new hope became a spring of faith; he was enabled to put aside all doubt and questioning, "and he took up his bed and walked."

## CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR NOTES

AUGUST FIRST

Topic—Life Lessons for Me From the Book of Acts—Acts 27: 18-44—(Consecration Meeting.)

The need of the Spirit. Acts 1: 8—Turning to God. Acts 2: 37-42. God is not mocked. Acts 5: 1-11. Spread of the seed. Acts 8: 1-3, 24-41.

A chosen vessel. Acts 9: 19-19. An epoch-making speech. Acts 17: 22-31.

This passage is typical of the book of the acts, which throughout is the story of the perils of the church, unassisted into triumph by its trust in God.

God and serving—those are the two halves of the Christian life (v. 23). "I am of good cheer, for I believe"—that is the Christian argument for happiness (v. 25).

God's man is ever in command in time of peril, though a slave, like Joseph, or a prisoner, like Paul (v. 21). Little Sermons from Acts.

The reason why so many Christians are powerless is because they seek for power in themselves and not in the Holy Ghost (1: 8). Love for Christ makes all things common still wherever that love really exists (2: 44). Silver and gold are often the least gift that can be given, and sympathy is always the greatest gift (3: 6). Christianity is not a great religion or the greatest religion; it is the religion (4: 12).

If our lives are of God, so that we cannot be overthrown, we should not build up another fortress (5: 39).

God wants us to use for Him the highest powers He has given us, and not be turned aside to lower uses (6: 2).

Stephen had thought so much about Christ's prayer for His enemies that it had become his; thus we may incorporate Christ in us (7: 60). Bible reading is not profitable, but Bible understanding (8: 30).

Every impulse of good in our lives is Christ, and He is persecuted when we scout those impulses (9: 4).

A Collier Epigram.

The late P. F. Collier, the noted publisher and horseman, once discussed at a publishers' convention the odd case of Ambrose Bierce, who in England is regarded as an author of genius—whose "Chickamauga" is said to be the finest short story ever written in English—while here at home Mr. Bierce is not half so renowned as others.

Mr. Collier ended with an epigram at once true and sad.

"Mr. Bierce is fortunate, for it frequently happens," he said, "that the prophet who is without honor in his own country can't afford to go abroad."—Washington Star.

SACRIFICE TO ART.

He—"Well, how do you like being an understudy?"

She—"Not much; it's all work and to play."—Illustrated Bits.

# The Sunday-School

INTERNAL LESSON COMMENTS FOR AUGUST 1.

Subject: Close of Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Acts 18: 1-23—Golden Text: John 10: 38—Commit Verses 9, 10—Commentary.

TIME.—A. D. 52.

PLACE.—Corinth.

POSITION.—1. Paul Conducting a Revival in the Home of Justus at Corinth, 1-6. Aquila and his wife Priscilla became very important members of the church of Christ (see v. 26; Rom. 16: 3, 4; 1 Cor. 16: 19; 2 Tim. 4: 19). It was, apparently, a matter of small consequence that three Paul went with them—was of the same trade. But God uses things just like this for the promotion of His kingdom. It would be well if we would make more of them for the same purpose. Are you a merchant? Make for Christ.

2. An unrighteous edict of Claudius had driven Aquila and Priscilla out of Rome. It doubtless seemed to them a bitter thing, but God turned it to their good, to no less a good than their eternal salvation (cf. Ps. 76: 10). There are many things just like this for the promotion of His kingdom. It would be well if we would make more of them for the same purpose. Are you a merchant? Make for Christ.

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II. Paul Conducting a Revival in the Home of Justus, Corinth, 7-11.

Paul's labors bore abundant fruit. Even the ruler of the synagogue received the truth and with him his whole household. Many others believed also, and openly confessed their faith in baptism. The order of experience as given in verse 8 is suggestive; heard, believed, were baptized. But still there was opposition. Indeed the opposition increased with Paul's success. "The next sabbath Paul in the night." That is just like the Lord. Paul had had a pretty hard time of it in Corinth, and was to have a still harder time, and the Lord appears and comforts him and strengthens him for the coming trial. The Lord who is obeying Christ in this way (ch. 22: 18; 23: 11; 27: 23-25). So He is ready to speak to us, but we do not need visions, as Paul did, for we have the written Word. We can carry the voice of God around in our vest pocket and have Him speak to us whenever we will. Listen to the Lord's message. "Be not afraid." That is one of God's favorite messages. There was to be opposition, but Paul must throw fear to the winds, and speak right out the whole message of God. The Lord gave Paul an all-sufficient reason for not being afraid: "For I am with thee, and will comfort thee, Paul couldn't be afraid. That is one of God's favorite messages. There was to be opposition, but Paul must throw fear to the winds, and speak right out the whole message of God. The Lord gave Paul an all-sufficient reason for not being afraid: "For I am with thee, and will comfort thee, Paul couldn't be afraid. That is one of God's favorite messages. There was to be opposition, but Paul must throw fear to the winds, and speak right out the whole message of God. The Lord gave Paul an all-sufficient reason for not being afraid: "For I am with thee, and will comfort thee, Paul couldn't be afraid. That is one of God's favorite messages. There was to be opposition, but Paul must throw fear to the winds, and speak right out the whole message of God. 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