DR. TALMAGE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

A RING FROM CHRIST

Which Every Returning Prodigal Sinner Freely Receives.

TEXT: "Put a ring on his hand."—Luke xv., 22.

I will not rehearse the familiar story of the fast young man of the parable. You know what a splendid home he left. You know what a hard time he had. And you remember how, after that season of vagabondage and prodigality, he resolved to go and weep out his sorrows on the bosom of parental forgiveness. Well, there is great excitement one day in front of the door of the old farmhouse. The servants come rushing up and say: "What's the matter? What is the matter?" But before they quite arrive the old man cries out, "Put a ring on his hand." What a seeming absurdity! What can such wretched mendicant as this fellow that is tramping on toward the house want with a ring? Oh, he is the prodigal son. No more tending of the swine trough! No more longing for the pods of the carob tree! No more blistered feet! Off with the rags! On with the robe! Out with the ring! Even so does God receive every one of us when we come back. There are gold rings, and pearl rings, and emerald rings, and diamond rings, but the richest ring that ever flashed on the vision is that which our Father puts upon a forgiven soul.

I know that the impression is abroad among some people that religion bameans and belittles a man; that it takes all the sparkle out of his soul; that he has to exchange a roistering independence for an ecclesiastical straitjacket. Not so. When a man becomes a Christian, he does not go down. He starts upward. Religion multiplies one by ten thousand. Nay, the multiplier is in infinity. It is not a blotting out. It is a polishing; it is an arborescence; it is an efflorescence; it is an irradiation. When a man comes into the kingdom of God, he is not sent into a menial service, but the Lord God Almighty from the palaces of heaven calls upon the messenger angels that wait upon the throne to fly and "put a ring on his hand." In Christ are the largest liberty, and brightest joy, and highest honor, and richest adornment. "Put a ring on his hand."

I remark, in the first place, that when Christ receives a soul into His love He puts upon him the ring of adoption. While in my church in Philadelphia there came the representative of the Howard Mission of New York. He brought with him eight or ten children of the street that he had picked up, and he was trying to find for them Christian homes, and as the little ones stood on the pulpit and sang our hearts melted within us. At the close of the services a great hearted wealthy man came up and said, "I'll take this little bright eyed girl and I'll adopt her as one of my own children." And he took her by the hand, lifted her into his carriage and went away.

The next day, while we were in the church gathering up garments for the poor of New York, this little child came back with a bundle under her arm, and she said: "There's my old dress. Perhaps some of the poor children would like to have it," while she herself was in bright and beautiful array, and those who more immediately examined her said she had a ring on her hand. It was a ring of adoption.

There are a great many persons who pride themselves on their ancestry, and they glory over the royal blood that pours through their arteries. In their line there was a lord, or a duke, or a prime minister, or a king. But when the Lord, our Father, puts upon us the ring of His adoption we become the children of the Ruler of all Nations. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." It matters not how poor our garments may be in this world or how lean our bread, or how mean the street we live in, if we have that ring of Christ upon our Prince, we are assured and defense[illegible]

[illegible] adoption. Why, then, we are brothers and sisters to all the good of earth and heaven. We have the family name, the family dress, the family keys, the family wardrobe. The Father looks after us, robes us, defends us, blesses us. We have royal blood in our veins, and there are crowns in our line. If we are His children, then princes and princesses. It is only a question of time when we get our coronet. Adopted! Then we have the family secrets. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Adopted! Then we have the family inheritance, and in the day when our Father shall divide the riches of heaven we shall take our share of the mansions and palaces and temples. Henceforth let us boast no more of an earthly ancestry. The insignia of eternal glory is our coat of arms. This ring of adoption puts upon us all honor and all privilege. Now we can take the words of Charles Wesley, that prince of hymnmakers, and sing:

> Come, let us join our friends above
> Who have obtained the prize,
> And on the eagle wings of love
> To joy celestial rise.
>
> Let all the saints terrestrial sing
> With those to glory gone,
> For all the servants of our King
> In heaven and earth are one.

I have been told that when any of the members of any of the great secret societies of this country are in a distant city and are in any kind of trouble, and are set upon by enemies, they have only to give a certain signal and the members of that organization will flock around for defense. And when any man belongs to this great Christian brotherhood, if he gets in trouble, in trial, in persecution, in temptation, he has only to show this ring of Christ's adoption, and all the armed cohorts of heaven will come to his rescue.

Still further, when Christ takes a soul into His love He puts upon it a marriage ring. Now, that is not a whim of mine (Hosea ii., 19), "I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies." At the wedding altar the bridegroom puts a ring upon the hand of the bride, signifying love and faithfulness. Trouble may come upon the household, and the carpets may go, the pictures may go, the piano may go, everything else may go—the last thing that goes is that marriage ring, for it is considered sacred. In the burial hour it is withdrawn from the hand and kept in a casket, and sometimes the box is opened on an anniversary day, and as you look at that ring you see under its arch a long procession of precious memories. Within the golden circle of that ring there is room for a thousand sweet recollections to revolve, and you think of the great contrast between the hour when, at the close of the wedding march, under the flashing lights and amid the aroma of orange blossoms, you set that ring on the round finger of the plump hand, and that hour when at the close of the exhaustive watching, when you knew that the soul had fled, you took from the hand, which gave back no responsive clasp, from that emaciated finger, the ring that she had worn so long and worn so well.

On some anniversary day you take up that ring, and you polish it until all the old luster comes back, and you can see in it the flash of eyes that long ago ceased to weep. Oh, it is not an unmeaning thing when I tell you that when Christ receives a soul into His keeping He puts on it a marriage ring! He endows you from that moment with all His wealth. You are one—Christ and the soul—one in sympathy, one in affection, one in hope.

There is no power on earth or hell to effect a divorcement after Christ and the soul are united. Other kings have turned out their companions when they got weary of them and sent them adrift from the palace gate. Ahasuerus banished Vashti; Napoleon forsook Josephine, but Christ is the husband that is true forever. Having loved you once, He loves you to the end. Did they not try to divorce Margaret, the Scotch girl, from Jesus? They said: "You must give up your religion." She said: "I can't give up my religion." And so they took her down to the beach of the sea, and they drove in a stake at low water mark, and they fastened her to it, expecting that as the tide came up her faith would fail. The tide began to rise, and came up higher and higher, and to the girdle, and to the lip, and in the last moment, just as the wave was washing her soul into glory, she shouted the praises of Jesus.

Oh, no, you cannot separate a soul from Christ! It is an everlasting marriage. Battle and storms and darkness cannot do it. Is it too much exultation for a man, who is but dust and ashes like myself, to cry out this moment, "I am persuaded that neither height nor depth nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord?" Glory be to God that when Christ and the soul are married they are bound by a chain—a golden chain—if I might say so—a chain with one link, and that one link the golden ring of God's everlasting love.

I go a step farther, and tell you that when Christ receives a soul into His love, He puts on him the ring of festivity. You know that it has been the custom in all ages to bestow rings on very happy occasions. There is nothing more appropriate for a birthday gift than a ring. You delight to bestow such a gift upon your children at such a time. It means joy, hilarity, festivity. Well, when this old man of the text wanted to tell how glad he was that his boy had got back, he expressed it in this way. Actually, before he ordered sandals to be put on his bare feet; before he ordered the fatted calf to be killed to appease the boy's hunger, he commanded, "Put a ring on his hand."

Oh, it is a merry time when Christ and the soul are united! Joy of forgiveness! What a splendid thing it is to feel that all is right between my God and myself. What a glorious thing it is to have God just take up all the sins of my life and put them in one bundle, and then fling them into the depths of the sea, never to rise again, never to be talked of again. Pollution all gone. Darkness all illumined. God reconciled. The prodigal home. "Put a ring on his hand."

Every day I find happy Christian people. I find some of them with no second coat, some of them in huts and tenement houses, not one earthly comfort afforded them, and yet they are as happy as happy can be. They sing "Rock of Ages" as no other people in the world sing it. They never wore any jewelry in their life but one gold ring, and that was the ring of God's undying affection. Oh, how happy religion makes us! Did it make you gloomy and sad? Did you go with your head cast down? I do not think you got religion, my brother. That is not the effect of religion. True religion is a joy. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Why, religion lightens all our burdens. It smooths all our way. It interprets all our sorrows. It changes the jar of earthly discord for the peal of festal bells. In front of the flaming furnace of trial it sets the forge on which scepters are hammered out. Would you not like this hour to come up from the swine feeding and try this religion? All the joys of heaven would come out and meet you, and God would cry from the throne, "Put a ring on his hand."

You are not happy. I see it. There is no peace, and sometimes you laugh when you feel a great deal more like crying. The world is a cheat. It first wears you down with its follies, then it kicks you out into darkness. It comes back from the massacre of a million souls to attempt the destruction of your soul to-day. No peace out of God, but here is the fountain that can slake the thirst. Here is the harbor where you can drop safe anchorage.

Would you not like, I ask you—not perfunctorily, but as one brother might talk to another—would you not like to have a pillow of rest to put your head on? And would you not like, when you retire at night, to feel that all is well, whether you wake up tomorrow morning at 6 o'clock or sleep the sleep that knows no waking? Would you not like to exchange this awful uncertainty about the future for a glorious assurance

[illegible] of the Lord Jesus to-[illegible] on your way home [illegible] and cross the street and dash your life out, it would not hurt you. You would rise up immediately. You would stand in the celestial streets. You would be amid the great throng that forever worship and are forever happy. If this night some sudden disease should come upon you, it would not frighten you. If you knew you were going you could give a calm farewell to your beautiful home on earth and know that you are going right into the companionship of those who have already got beyond the toiling and the weeping.

You feel on Saturday night different from the way you feel any other night of the week. You come home from the bank, or the store, or the office, and you say, "Well, now my week's work is done, and to-morrow is Sunday." It is a pleasant thought. There are refreshment and reconstruction in the very idea. Oh, how pleasant it will be if, when we get through the day of our life, and we go and lie down in our bed of dust, we can realize, "Well, now the work is all done, and to-morrow is Sunday—an everlasting Sunday."

> Oh, when, thou city of my God,
> Shall I thy courts ascend,
> Where congregations ne'er break up
> And Sabbaths have no end?

There are people in this house to-day who are very near the eternal world. If you are Christians, I bid you be of good cheer. Bear with you our congratulations to the bright city. Aged men, who will soon be gone, take with you our love for our kindred in the better land, and when you see them, tell them that we are soon coming. Only a few more sermons to preach and hear. Only a few more heartaches. Only a few more toils. Only a few more tears. And then—what an entrancing spectacle will open before us!

> Beautiful heaven, where all is light;
> Beautiful angels, clothed in white;
> Beautiful strains that never tire,
> Beautiful harps through all the choir;
> There shall I join the chorus sweet,
> Worshiping at the Saviour's feet.

I know there are some people who say they are Christians who seem to get along without any help from others, and who culture solitary piety. They do not want any ordinances. I do not belong to that class. I cannot get along without them. There are so many things in this world that take my attention from God and Christ and heaven that I want all the helps of all the symbols and of all the Christian associations, and I want around about me a solid phalanx of men who love God and keep His commandments. Are there any here who would like to enter into that association? Then by a simple, childlike faith apply for admission into the visible church, and you will be received. No questions asked about your past history or present surroundings. Only one test—do you love Jesus?

Baptism does not amount to anything, say a great many people, but the Lord Jesus declared, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," putting baptism and faith side by side. And an apostle declares, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." I do not stickle for any particular mode of baptism, but I put great emphasis on the fact that you ought to be baptized, yet no more emphasis than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Head of the church, puts upon it.

Some of you have been thinking on this subject year after year. You have found out that this world is a poor portion. You want to be Christians. You have come almost into the kingdom of God, but there you stop, forgetful of the fact that to be almost saved is not to be saved at all. Oh, my brother, after having come so near to the door of mercy, if you turn back you will never come at all. After all you have heard of the goodness of God, if you turn away and die, it will not be because you did not have a good offer.

May God Almighty this hour move upon your soul and bring you back from the husks of the wilderness to the Father's house, and set you at the banquet, and "put a ring on your hand."

TEMPERANCE.

DESTROYS BODY AND MIND.

Intemperance can not dwell in a sound frame, or at least it never does. Disease of the mind, too, is not far off. It may be delirium or insanity, temporary or confirmed; or it may stop short of that, resting at senile driveling and childish folly. The moral sense is blunted, and the better part of man sustains both degradation and decay.

THE "PUBLIC HOUSE."

The London Times, England's g[illegible]nal, says of the liquor traffic in that country: "It would be impossible to find anything which stands for so much loss to soul, body, and estate as the public house. Even if we accept the best case that can be made for it in principle, the fact is it is still a huge nuisance and misery, there is not a vice, or disease, or disorder, or a calamity of any kind that has not its frequent rise in the public house. The public house degrades, ruins and brutalizes a large faction of the British people."

SALOONS IN CITIES.

A study of the figures of the number of saloons in other large cities is interesting:

Cities.	Number of Saloons.	Ratio to Population.
New York	7,500	1 to every 234
Chicago	7,000	1 to every 242
Boston	1,080	1 to every 500
Philadelphia	1,355	1 to every 841

In Philadelphia there are 1355 retail liquor licenses, a decrease of 3000 since the high license law went into operation. The sum of $1000 is paid for each license. The issue of the license is under the control and direction exclusively of the judges of the courts.

WHY A TEETOTAL.

Edward W. Bok, editor of the Ladies' Home Journal, gives the following, among other reasons, for having never tasted liquor:

Another thing which led me to make up my mind never to touch liquor was the damage which I saw wrought by it upon some of the finest minds with which it was ever my privilege to come into contact, and I concluded that what had resulted injuriously to others might prove so to me. I have seen, even in my few years of professional life, some of the smartest, yea, brilliant, literary men dethroned from splendid positions, owing to nothing else but their indulgence in wine. I have known men with salaries of thousands of dollars per year, occupying positions which hundreds would strive a life time to obtain, come to beggary from drink. Only recently there applied to me for any position I could offer him, one of the most brilliant editorial writers in the newspaper profession—a man who, two years ago, easily commanded one hundred dollars for a single editorial in his special field. That man became so unreliable from drink that the editors are now afraid of his articles, and, although he can to-day write a forcible editorial as at any time during his life, he sits in a cellar in one of our cities writing newspaper wrappers for one dollar per thousand.

NO ARGUMENT IN ITS FAVOR.

If a man, says a leading advocate of total abstinence, steps up to me and says that alcohol is good for heat, I remember the terribly hot weather when the thermometer at St. Louis went up to 102 degrees in the shade, and there were 100 sunstrokes in the city in one day, and ninety-five of them were beer-drinkers. If men say that alcohol is good for cold, I reply that the three men who went farthest in the search for Sir John Franklin were cold water drinkers.

The cold water drinkers can stand more hot and cold weather, do more hard work, have better health, and make better fathers, citizens and Christians than the liquor drinkers of this land.

The fleet deer, when heated in the chase, pants for the water brooks, and bounds with joy to the cooling stream, slakes its thirst [illegible] is away, challenging the huntsman's ge[illegible] and the speed of the bullet. The cattle from a thousand hills seek nature's treasure with a delight that only the faithful herdsmen can describe. The rose and lily drink in the refreshing dew, and breathe their fragrant gratitude upon the air of summer. The blossoms of the orchard trees hold their painted colors towards the clouds of spring, to catch the magic pearls of life that turn the blossoms to fruit. Meadows sip from the silver-rimmed goblets of the sky, from the crystal rills, and smile with verdure and flowers. The broad fields of the husbandman drink in the generous showers, and their sides shake with rustling harvests. All life, all health, all development in nature demand nature's sweet stimulant, the beverage brewed amid the lightning and in the rocky vats of the mountains. Of all God's creatures man alone has spurned the sparkling principle of life, and raised to his parched lips the cup of fire and death, the draught that scorches the brain, maddens the passions and consumes the life. We might as reasonably expect to raise good cattle and horses and fruits and grains by substituting alcohol for water for their drink, as to expect to raise good, strong, handsome, brawny men on lager beer.

ROTTED OFF BY BEER.

This is not a temperance treatise, but it has a bit of fact in it that the total abstainer may show to the beer-drinker whenever occasion offers, says the New York Mail and Express.

The attention of the New York hospital surgeons has been called to the large number of bartenders that have lost several fingers of both hands within the past few years.

The first case was that of an employe of a Bowery concert-hall. Three fingers of his right hand and two of his left were rotted away when he called at Bellevue one day and asked the doctors to explain the reason. He said his duty was to draw beer for the thousands who visited the garden nightly.

The man was in perfect health otherwise, and it took the young doctors quite a time to arrive at a conclusion. But they did finally, and it nearly took the beer man's breath away when they did.

"Your fingers have been rotted off," they said, "by the beer you have handled."

Other cases of a similar nature came rapidly after this one, and to-day the physicians estimate that there is an army of employes of saloons whose fingers are being ruined by the same cause. The acid and rosin in the beer are said to be responsible.

The head bartender of a well-known saloon says he knows a number of cases where beer-drawers have, in addition to losing several fingers of both hands, lost the use of both members.

"Beer will rot iron, I believe," he added. "I know, and every bartender knows, that it is impossible to keep a good pair of shoes behind the bar. Beer will rot leather almost as rapidly as an acid will eat iron. If I were a temperance orator, I'd ask what must beer do to men's stomachs if it eat away men's fingers and shoe leather. I'm here to sell it, but I won't drink it, not much."

GLORY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Cross-bearing calls for strenuous effort. And by cross-bearing we do not mean chastisement. Cross-bearing is doing for others. The cross is the pre-eminent symbol of altruism. The cross of Jesus represents a voluntary work which he took up in behalf of suffering man. The cross of the Christian is participation with Christ in the great propaganda, in his effort to build up the kingdom of truth and righteousness on earth and so to deliver the race from sin. It was with this intent that our Lord said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." The work of the universal church is cross-bearing. To do good at the sacrifice of personal preference and convenience. To do good as fishers of men. Oh! the blessedness of this service—to grow weary in toil beside the Son of God!—David J. Burrell, D. D., in "The Spirit of the Age."

TEMPERANCE NEWS AND NOTES.

There are 999 retail liquor dealers in the State of Maine, according to internal revenue statistics just issued.

Providence (R. I.) policemen have been notified that they must become teetotalers or they cannot remain policemen.

Judge Steele, of Denver, has decided that the law providing for sending inebriates to an institution for curing them at the public expense is unconstitutional.

The Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society is the name of an organization, composed entirely of colored men and women, lately established in St. Augustine's parish, Washington, D. C.

In England credit over the counter of a public house is not recognized in law, and the publican who allows his customer to drink without paying for what he orders cannot subsequently recover the amount.

A prize banner is to be given to the society affiliated with the C. T. A. U. which shows the largest numerical increase in adult members during the previous twelve months, when the next National convention meets at St. Louis.

According to statistics gathered by Doctor Lancereaux, of the Paris Faculty of Medicine, out of 814 children of alcoholics observed by him 322, or forty per cent., were "degenerates," and seventeen per cent. of these were epileptic and hysterical.

Physical vigor is not only valuable for its own sake, but it favors temperance and all virtues by producing clearness and soundness of intellect, and by removing those indescribable feelings of sinking, disquiet, depression, which no man who has not felt them can possibly understand. Physical education needs more attention.

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Cured Diabetes.

March 14th, 1895.

The Dr. J. H. McLean Medicine Co., St. Louis, Mo.

Gentlemen: I desire to express my heartfelt thanks to you for my marvelous restoration to health. I was sick for many years with a bad case of diabetes which made me very thin and weak. I also suffered much loss of sleep, having to get up so many times at night to pass urine, and also great annoyance from thirst that water would not satisfy. A few months ago I began to follow your instructions in regard to diet and to use

DR. J. H. MCLEAN'S LIVER AND KIDNEY BALM.

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Venezuela Commission.

President Cleveland announced the appointment of the Venezuela commission as follows: David J. Brewer, of Kansas, justice of the United States supreme court; Richard H. Alvey, of Maryland, chief justice of the court of appeals of the District of Columbia; Andrew D. White, of New York, Frederic R. Coudert, of New York, and Daniel C. Gilman, of Maryland.

Sunk With all on Board.

Captain McQueen on Saturday last discovered a sunken for and aft schooner of 300 tons burden about six miles east of Pelee Island, Lake Erie, where it had evidently been sunken very recently, as the spars had not been damaged by floating ice. This ship no doubt went down in the storm of the 11th inst. It is believed that all on board perished, their being no means of escape on account of large quantities of floating ice.