

REV. DR. TALMAGE

The Eminent New York Divine's Sunday Sermon.

Subject: "Comfort."

TEXT: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Revelation vii., 17.

Riding across a Western prairie, wild flowers up to the hub of the carriage wheel, and while a long distance from any shelter, there came a sudden shower, and while the rain was falling in torrents, the sun was shining as brightly as I ever saw it shine, and I thought what a beautiful spectacle this is! So the tears of the Bible are not midnight storm, but rain on panned prairies in God's sweet and golden sunlight. You remember that bottle which David labeled as containing tears, and Mary's tears, and Paul's tears, and Christ's tears, and the harvest of joy that is to spring from the sowing of tears. God mixes them. God rounds them. God shows them where to fall. God exhales them. A census is taken of them, and there is a record as to the moment when they are born and as to the place of their grave.

Tears of bad men are not kept. Alexander in his sorrow had the hair clipped from his horses and mules and made a great ado about his grief, but in all the vases of heaven there is not one of Alexander's tears. I speak of the tears of God's children. Alas, me, they are falling all the time! In summer you sometimes hear the growling thunder, and you see there is a storm miles away, but you know from the drift of the clouds that it will not come anywhere near you. So though it may be all bright around about you, there is a shower of trouble somewhere all the time. Tears!

What is the use of them anyhow? Why not substitute laughter? Why not make this a world where all the people are well and eternal strangers to pain and aches? What is the use of an eastern storm when we might have a perpetual nor'wester? Why, when a family is put together, not have them all stay, or if they must be transplanted to make other homes, then have them all live—the family record telling a story of marriages and births, but of no death? Why not have the harvests chase each other without fatiguing toil? Why the hard pillow, the hard crust, the hard struggle? It is easy enough to explain a smile, or a success, or a congratulation, but come now and bring all your dictionaries, and all your philosophies, and all your religions, and help me explain a tear. A chemist will tell you that it is made up of salt and lime and other component parts, but he misses the chief ingredients—the acid of a soured life, the viperine sting of a bitter memory, the fragments of a broken heart. I will tell you what a tear is. It is agony in solution. Hear, then, while I discourse of the uses of trouble:

First, it is the design of trouble to keep this world from being too attractive. Something must be done to make us willing to quit this existence. If it were not for trouble, this world would be a good enough heaven for me. You and I would be willing to take a lease of this life for 100,000,000 years if there were no trouble. The earth cushioned and upholstered and pillared and chandeliered with such expense, no story of other worlds could enchant us.

We would say: "Let well enough alone. If you want to die and have your body disintegrated in the dust and your soul go out on a celestial adventure, then you can go, but this world is good enough for me!" You might as well go to a man who has just entered the Louvre at Paris and tell him to hasten off to the picture galleries of Venice or Florence. "Why," he would say, "what is the use of my going there? There are Rembrandts and Rubenses and Raphaels here that I haven't looked at yet." No man wants to go out of this world, or out of any house, until he has a better house. To cure this wish to stay here God must somehow create a disgust for our surroundings. How shall He do it? He cannot afford to deface His horizon, or to tear off a fiery panel from the sunset, or to subtract an anther from the water lily, or to banish the pungent aroma from the mignonette, or to drag the robes of the morning in mire. You cannot expect a Christopher Wren to mar his own St. Paul's Cathedral, or a Michael Angelo to dash out his own "Last Judgment," or a Handel to discard his "Israel in Egypt," and you cannot expect God to spoil the architecture and music of His own world. How, then, are we to be made willing to leave? Here is where trouble comes in.

After a man has had a good deal of trouble he says: "Well, I am ready to go. If there is a house somewhere whose roof doesn't leak, I would like to live there. If there is an atmosphere somewhere that does not distress the lungs, I would like to breathe it."

"If there is a society somewhere where there is no tittle tattle, I would like to live there. If there is a home circle somewhere where I can find my lost friends, I would like to go there." He used to read the first part of the Bible chiefly, now he reads the last part of the Bible chiefly. Why has he changed Genesis for Revelation? Ah, he used to be anxious chiefly to know how this world was made, and all about its geological construction. Now he is chiefly anxious to know how the next world was made, and how it looks, and who live there, and how they dress. He reads Revelation ten times now where he reads Genesis once. The old story, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," does not thrill him half as much as the other story, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." The old man's hand trembles as he turns over this apocalyptic leaf, and he has to take out his handkerchief to wipe his spectacles. That book of Revelation is a prospectus now of

the country into which he is soon to immigrate; the country in which he has lots already laid out, and avenues opened, and mansions built.

Yet there are people here to whom this world is brighter than heaven. Well, dear souls, I do not blame you. It is natural. But after awhile you will be ready to go. It was not until Job had been worn out with bereavements that he wanted to see God. It was not until the prodigal got tired of living among the hogs that he wanted to go to his father's house. It is the ministry of trouble to make this world worth less and heaven worth more.

Again, it is the use of trouble to make us feel our dependence upon God. Men think that they can do anything until God shows them they can do nothing at all. We lay out our great plans and we like to execute them. It looks big. God comes and takes us down. As Prometheus was assaulted by his enemy, when the lance struck him it opened a great swelling that had threatened his death, and he got well. So it is the arrow of trouble that lets out great swellings of pride. We never feel our dependence upon God until we get trouble. I was riding with my little child along the road, and she asked if she might drive. I said, "Certainly." I handed over the reins to her, and I had to admire the glee with which she drove. But after awhile we met a team and we had to turn out. The road was narrow, and it was sheer down on both sides. She handed the reins over to me and said, "I think you had better take charge of the horse." So we are all children, and on this road of life we like to drive. It gives one such an appearance of superiority and power. It looks big. But after awhile we meet some obstacle and we have to turn out, and the road is narrow, and it is sheer down on both sides; and then we are willing that God should take the reins and drive. Ah, my friends, we get upset so often because we do not hand over the reins soon enough.

After a man has had trouble, prayer is with him a taking hold of the arm of God and crying out for help. I have heard earnest prayers on two or three occasions that I remember. Once, on the Cincinnati express train, going at forty miles the hour, the train jumped the track, and we were near a chasm eighty feet deep, and the men who, a few minutes before, had been swearing and blaspheming God, began to pull and jerk at the bell rope and got up on the backs of the seats, and cried out, "O God, save us!"

There was another time, about 800 miles out at sea, on a foundering steamer, after the last lifeboat had been split finer than kindling wood. They prayed then. Why is it you so often hear people, in reciting the last experience of some friend say, "He made the most beautiful prayer I ever heard?" What makes it beautiful? It is the earnestness of it. Oh! I tell you, a man in earnest when his stripped and naked soul wades out in the soundless, shoreless, bottomless ocean of eternity.

It is trouble, my friends, that makes us feel our dependence upon God. We do not know our own weakness or God's strength until the last plank breaks. It is contemptible in us when there is nothing else to take hold of that we catch hold of God only. Why, you do not know who the Lord is! He is not an autocrat seated far up in a palace, from which He emerges once a year, preceded by heralds swinging swords to clear the way. No. But a Father willing, at our call, to stand by us in every crisis and predicament of life. I tell you what some of you business men make me think of. A young man goes off from home to earn his fortune. He goes with his mother's consent and benediction. She has large wealth, but he wants to make his own fortune. He goes far away; falls sick, gets out of money. He sends for the hotel keeper where he is staying, asking for lenience, and the answer he gets is, "If you don't pay up Saturday night, you'll be removed to the hospital."

The young man sends to a comrade in the same building. No help. He writes to a banker who was a friend of his deceased father. No relief. He writes to an old schoolmate, but gets no help. Saturday night comes, and he is moved to the hospital.

Getting there, he is frenzied with grief, and he borrows a sheet of paper and a postage stamp, and he sits down, and he writes home, saying: "Dear mother, I am sick unto death. Come." It is ten minutes of 10 o'clock when she gets the letter. At 10 o'clock the train starts. She is five minutes from the depot. She gets there in time to have five minutes to spare. She wonders why a train that can go thirty miles an hour cannot go sixty miles an hour. She rushes into the hospital. She says, "My son, what does all this mean? Why didn't you send for me? You sent to everybody but me. You knew I could and would help you. Is this the reward I get for my kindness to you always?" She bundles him up, takes him home and gets him well very soon. Now, some of you treat God just as that young man treated his mother. When you get into a financial perplexity, you call on the banker, you call on the broker, you call on your creditor's, you call on your lawyer for legal counsel; you call upon everybody, and when you cannot get any help, then you go to God. You say: "O, Lord, I come to Thee. Help me now out of my perplexity." And the Lord comes, though it is the eleventh hour. He says: "Why did you not send for Me before? As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." It is to throw us back upon God that we have this ministry of tears.

Again, it is the use of trouble to capacitate us for the office of sympathy. The priests, under the old dispensation, were set apart by having water sprinkled upon their hands, feet and head, and by the sprinkling of tears people are now set apart to the office of sympathy. When we are in prosperity we like to have a great many young people around us, and we laugh when they laugh, and we romp when they romp, and we sing when they sing; but when we have trouble

we like plenty of old folks around. Why? They know how to talk.

Take an aged mother, seventy years of age, and she is almost omnipotent in comfort. Why? She has been through it all. At 7 o'clock in the morning she goes over to comfort a young mother who has just lost her babe. Grandmother knows all about that trouble. Fifty years ago she felt it. At 12 o'clock of that day she goes over to comfort a widowed soul. She knows all about that. She has been walking in that dark valley twenty years. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon some one knocks at the door, wanting bread. She knows all about that. Two or three times in her life she came to her last loaf. At 10 o'clock that night she goes over to sit up with some one severely sick. She knows all about it. She knows all about fevers and pleurisies and broken bones. She has been doctoring all her life, spreading plasters and pouring out bitter drops and shaking up hot pillows and contriving tricks to tempt a poor appetite. Drs. Abernethy and Rush and Hosack and Harvey were great doctors, but the greatest doctor the world ever saw is an old Christian woman. Dear me! Do we not remember her about the room when we were sick in our boyhood? Was there any one who could ever so touch a sore without hurting it?

Where did Paul get the ink with which to write his comforting epistle? Where did David get the ink to write his comforting Psalms? Where did John get the ink to write his comforting Revelations? They got it out of their own tears. When a man has gone through the curriculum and has taken a course of dungeons and imprisonments and shipwrecks, he is qualified for the work of sympathy.

When I began to preach, my sermons on the subject of trouble were all poetic and in semi blank verse, but God knocked the blank verse out of me long ago and I have found out that I cannot comfort people except as I myself have been troubled. God make me the son of consolation to the people! I would rather be the means of soothing one perturbed spirit to-day than to play a tune that would set all the sons of mirth reeling in the dance.

I am an herb doctor. I put into the caldron the root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness. Then I put in the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. Then I put into the caldron some of the leaves from the tree of life and the branch that was thrown into the wilderness Marah. Then I pour in the tears of Bethany and Golgotha; then I stir them up. Then I kindle under the caldron a fire made out of the wood of the cross, and one drop of that portion will cure the worst sickness that ever afflicted a human soul. Mary and Martha shall receive their Lazarus from the tomb. The damsels shall rise. And on the darkness shall break the morning and God will wipe all tears from their eyes.

Jesus had enough trial to make Him sympathetic with all trial. The shortest verse in the Bible tells the story, "Jesus wept." The scar on the back of His either hand, the scar on the arch of either foot, the row of scars along the line of the hair, will keep all heaven thinking. Oh, that Great Weeper is just the one to silence all earthly trouble, wipe out all stains of earthly grief. Gentle! Why, His step is softer than the step of the dew. It will not be a tyrant bidding you to hush up your crying. It will be a father who will take you on His left arm, His face oaming into yours, while with the soft tips of the fingers of the right hand He shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

Friends, if we could get any appreciation of what God has in reserve for us, it would make us so homesick we would be unfit for our everyday work. Professor Leonard, formerly of Iowa University, put in my hand a meteoric stone thrown off from some other world to this. How suggestive it was to me! And I have to tell you the best representations we have of heaven are only aerolites flung off from that world which rolls on bearing the multitudes of the redeemed. We analyze these aerolites and find them crystallizations of tears. No wonder, flung off from heaven! "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Have you any appreciation of the good and glorious times your friends are having in heaven? How different it is when they get news there of a Christian's death from what it is here! It is the difference between embarkation and coming into port. Everything depends upon which side of the river you stand when you hear of a Christian's death. If you stand on this side of the river, you mourn that they go. If you stand on the other side of the river, you rejoice that they come. On the difference between a funeral on earth and a jubilee in heaven—between requiem here and triumph there—parting here and reunion there! Together! Have you thought of it? They are together. Not one of your departed friends in one land and another in another land, but together, in different rooms of the same house—the house of many mansions. Together!

I never more appreciated that thought than when we laid away in her last slumber my sister Sarah. Standing there in the village cemetery, I looked around and said, "There is father, there is mother, there is grandfather, there is grandmother, there are whole circles of kindred," and I thought to myself, "Together in the grave—together in glory." I am so impressed with the thought that I do not think it is any fanaticism when some one is going from this world to the next if you make them the bearer of dispatches to your friends who are gone, saying, "Give my love to my parents, give my love to my children, give my love to my old comrades who are in glory, and tell them I am trying to fight the good fight of faith and I will join them after awhile." I believe the message will be delivered, and I believe it will increase the gladness of those who are before the throne. Together are they, all their tears gone.

My friends, take this good cheer home

with you. These tears of bereavement that course your cheek, and of persecution, and of trial, are not always to be there. The motherly hand of God will wipe them all away. What is the use, on the way to such a consummation—what is the use of fretting about anything? Oh, what an exhilaration it ought to be in Christian work! See you the pinnacles against the sky? It is the city of our God, and we are approaching it. Oh, let us be busy in the days that remain for us!

I put this balsam on the wounds of your heart. Rejoice at the thought of what your departed friends have got rid of, and that you have a prospect of soon making your own escape. Bear cheerfully the ministry of tears, and exult at the thought that soon it is to be ended.

There we shall march up the heavenly street
And ground our arms at Jesus's feet.

THE BICYCLE AND THE DRINKING HABIT.

"If the wheel never does any other good thing in its history, and if no other benefit comes from its use, it would for one special reason deserve the commendation and indorsement of every thinking person in creation," said an eminent physician who has made the bicycle and its use the study of years. "My attention was first called to one phase of the wheel by the experience of a young man who had been for some time a patient of mine. He had been in the habit of taking a glass of liquor occasionally, and I had warned him against allowing the habit to grow, but whatever I said seemed to make very little impression on his mind. Finally I advised him to buy a wheel. I had an object in view, but gave him no hint of it. He learned to ride one, and one day I asked him to go out with me for a little run in the country. When we got near one of the hotels in the suburbs he proposed a drink, and I assented. I took mineral water, and he indulged in what he called a good, stiff drink to brace his nerves.

"I said nothing, but made up my mind to keep my eye on him rather sharply. We rode for a mile or two, and although he complained of feeling somewhat rocky, he got on tolerably well until we came to another tavern. He said he was all out of gear and wanted to stop again. I went with him, and the same order was repeated. Half an hour later, while riding along a level road, I observed that his wheel had taken on some eccentric motions, and was going almost anyway but the one he desired. He became angry and fractious, and ended up by running into a stump by the roadside, and getting a bad fall. His injuries were so serious that he had to be taken home in a carriage, and was kept indoors for some time.

"When he got out again he came over to see me, and the conversation turned on the best way to become an expert wheelman. It was not a little gratifying to me to have him, of his own accord, make the remark that as long as he rode a wheel he should never take liquor at wayside hotels. People who have given some attention to the subject say that there is far less intoxicating drink taken by young men after they begin to ride the wheel. They find that it is not conducive to clearness of head or steadiness of hand. They cannot go out in hilarious crowds and overindulge with any comfort to themselves while wheeling. There is too much risk of life and limb about it. The bicycle and the grog shop are not good friends, and as I have said before, if the wheel never does anything else, it is worthy of all praise because it is a check on the drinking habit."

"THAT MAN CANNOT BE ELECTED."

Out in the great Western State of Wyoming where the women have enjoyed political equality for twenty-six years, a man was nominated for office, who was known to indulge quite freely in the flowing bowl. The day and evening following his nomination he took a number of boon companions out and indulged in a great bibulous jollification. One of the men on returning home from the caucus was asked by his wife, who had been unavoidably detained at home, who had been nominated. On learning his name she promptly said: "That man cannot be elected." Holding no further parley with her husband she kept her own council for the time being, but on the next day she put on her sun bonnet and went and had a good talk over the back fence with her next door neighbor. The neighbor in her turn put on her sun bonnet and held a caucus of two with her neighbor, and before the women of that town got through with these star chamber sessions of two, every back fence in the community was the recipient of confidential political information. Time went on and election day came. This candidate was everlastingly defeated. Knowing that he had not offended his party, he could not understand it. Six weeks later he found out when a little woman of his acquaintance said to him: "We could not let you be elected, Mr. B., because you would set a bad example to our boys."

TREATING.

One of the most pernicious and foolish customs is that of treating. It is a habit among men in this country to buy drinks for each other until in many cases they are unable to stand, and this is one of the causes of so much wretchedness and misery among the people. Many men take drink after drink that they do not want, and spend the money to pay for the same that they can ill afford to do, and as a result their people at home often suffer from want of the common necessities of life. The way it is now done is to visit a saloon with a friend to take a drink and perhaps, meeting others in the place, they are invited to take a drink also. Round after round of drinks follow until each one has treated, and they consider they have done their duty as American citizens. But by the time the last one has treated the evil effects of the liquor is beginning to show, and at last it is only a question of how much more each one can take and be able to stand.