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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

HE PREACHES ON WRONGS THAT CANNOT BE RIGHTED.

His Opinion of "the Unardonable Sin"—Not Possible To-day to Commit It—Some Irrevocable Mistakes Enumerated—Signal Sin of the Gospel.

To Late to Recall.

In his sermon for last Sunday Rev. Dr. Talmage, who is still in the West on his annual summer tour, chose a subject which has been a fruitful theme of theological disputation for centuries past—the “Unardonable Sin.” The texts selected were: “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—Matthew xii. 31, 32.

“He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”—Hebrews xii. 17.

As sometimes you gather the whole family around the evening stand to hear some book read, so now we gather—a great Christian family group—to study this text, and now may one and the same lamp cast its glow on all the circle!

The Unardonable Sin.
You see from the first passage that I read that there is a sin against the Holy Ghost for which a man is never pardoned. Once having committed it, he is bound hand and foot for the dungeons of despair. Sermons may be preached to him; songs may be sung to him; prayers may be offered in his behalf, but all to no purpose. He is a captive for this world and a captive for the world that is to come.

Do you suppose that there is any one here who has committed that sin? All sins are against the Holy Ghost, but my text speaks of one especially. It is very clear to my own mind that the sin against the Holy Ghost was the ascribing of the works of the Spirit to the agency of the devil in the time of the apostles. Indeed the Bible distinctly tells us that. In other words, if a man had given sight to him, or if another was raised from the dead, and some one standing there should say: “This man got his sight by satanic power. The Holy Spirit did not do this. Beelzebub accomplished it,” or, “This man raised from the dead was caused by satanic influence,” the man who said that dropped under the curse of the text and had committed the fatal sin against the Holy Ghost.

Now, I do not think it is possible in this day to commit that sin. I think it was possible only in apostolic times. But it is a very terrible thing ever to say anything against the Holy Ghost, and it is a marked fact that our race has been marvelously kept back from that profanity. You hear a man swear by the name of the Eternal God and by the name of Jesus Christ, but you never heard a man swear by the name of the Holy Ghost. There are those here to-day who fear they are guilty of this unpardonable sin. Have you such anxiety? Then I have to tell you positively that you have not committed that sin, because the very anxiety is a result of the movement of the gracious spirit, and your anxiety is proof positive as certainly as anything that can be demonstrated in mathematics, that you have not committed the sin that I have been speaking of. I can look off upon this audience and feel that there is salvation for all. It is not like when they put out with those lifeboats from the Loch Farn for the Ville du Havre. They knew there was not room for all the passengers, but they were going to do as well as they could. But to-day we man the lifeboat of the gospel, and we cry out over the sea, “Room for all!” Oh, that the Lord Jesus Christ would, this hour, bring you all out of the flood of sin and plant you on the deck of the glorious old gospel craft!

Sins to Guard Against.
But while I have said I do not think it is possible for us to commit the particular sin spoken of in the first text, I have by reason of the second text to call your attention to the fact that there are sins which, though they may be pardoned, are in some respects irrevocable, and you can find no place for repentance, though you set it carefully with tears. Egan had a birthright given him. In other times it meant only temporal but spiritual blessing. One day Egan took this birthright and traded it for a small sum. And the sleep is sweet where the dreams are filled With the simple song you have gaily trifled. And the starflowers glow with a new delight When you wander out in the fields at night.

Oh! little one, sleep, when the nights are kind, In dreamland seek for the joys you find; May they glow and glitter, and each pure star Reflect you forever, just as you are.

—George E. Bowen.

A Little Good-Night Song.
Good night to you, dear! You are weary, And the moon o'er the mountains, she shines. The wind blowing westward sighs drearily, And wanders and walls through the vines.

You have listened so oft to the tender Sweet story—so tender and true, What grace to it all could I render?

Our here with the roses and you?

Good night to you, dear; yet I linger Like one near a spot that is blest,

And toy with the ring on your finger, And kiss the red rose on your breast.

And good night, and good night, dear, and never

Good night! Love has ever his way;

But I love you forever and ever,

And I kiss you good night and good day.

After awhile the child is taken, or the parent is taken, or the companion is taken,

and those who are left say, “Oh, if we could only get back those unkind words, those unkind deeds; if we could only recall them!” But you cannot get them back. You might bow down over the grave of that loved one and cry; and cry and cry—the white lips would make no answer. The stars shall be plucked out of their sockets, but these influences shall not be torn away. The world shall die, but there are some wrongs immortal. The moral of which is, take care of your friends while you have them. Spare the scolding; be economical of the satire; shut up in a dark cave, from which they shall never swarm forth, all the words that have a sting in them. You will wish you had some day—very soon you will—perhaps to-morrow. Oh, yes. While with a firm hand you administer parental discipline, also administer it very gently, least some day there be a little slab in the cemetery, and on it chiseled “Our Willie” or “Our Charlie,” and though you bow down prone in the grave and seek a place of repentance and seek it carefully with tears you cannot find it.

There is another sin that I place in the class of irrevocable mistakes, and that is lost opportunities of getting good. I never come to a Saturday night but I can see during that week that I have missed opportunities of getting good. I never come to my birthday but I can see that I have wasted many chances of getting better. I never go home on Sabbath from the discussion of a religious theme without feeling that I might have done it in a more successful way. How is it with you? If you take a certain number of bushels of wheat and scatter them over a certain number of acres of land, you expect a harvest in proportion to the amount of seed scattered. And I ask you now, Have the sheaves of moral and spiritual harvest corresponded with the advantages given? How has it been with you? You may make resolutions for the future, but past opportunities are gone. In the long procession of future years all those past moments will march, but the archangel's trumpet that wakes the dead will not wake up for you one of those privileges.

Ezra has sold his birthright, and there is not wealth enough in the treasure houses of heaven to buy it back again. What does that mean? It means that if you are going to get any advantage out of this Sabbath day, you will have to get it before the hand wheel around on the clock to 12 to-night. It means that every moment of our life has two wings, and that it does not fly, like a hawk, in circles, but in a straight line from eternity to eternity. It means that though other chariots may break down, or drag heavily, this one never drops the brake and never ceases to run. It means that while at other feasts the cup may be passed to us and we may reject it, and yet after awhile take it, the cupbearer to this feast never gives us but one chance at the chalice, and, rejecting that, we shall “find no place for repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears.”

Lost Opportunities.
There is one more class of sins that I put in this category of irrevocable sins and that is lost opportunities of usefulness. Your business partner is a proud man. In ordinary circumstances, say to him, “Believe in Christ,” and he will say, “You mind your business and I'll mind mine.” But there has been affliction in the household. His heart is tender. He is looking around for sympathy and solace. Now is your time. Speak, speak, or forever hold your peace. There is a time in farm life when you plant the corn and when you sow the seed. Let that go by, and the farmer will wring his hands while other husbandmen are gathering in the sheaves. You are in a religion meeting, and there is an opportunity for you to speak a word for Christ. You say, “I must do it.” Your cheek flushes with embarrassment. You rise half-way, but you cover before men whose breath is in their nostrils, and you sag back, and the opportunity is gone and all eternity will feel the effect of your silence. Try to get back that opportunity! You cannot find it. You might as well try to find the dove that Gideon watched, or take in your hand the dew that came down on the locks of the Bethlehem shepherds, or to find the plume of the first robin that went a-rose paradise. It is gone; it is gone forever.

When an opportunity for personal recognition—or for doing good passes away, you may hunt for it; you cannot find it. You may fish for it; it will not take the hook. You may dig for it; you cannot bring it up. Remember that there are wrongs and sins that can never be corrected; that our privileges fly not in circles, but in a straight line that the lightnings have not as swift feet as our privileges when they are gone, and that an opportunity of salvation goes by as an inch, the one hundredth part of an inch, the thousandth part of an inch, the millionth part of an inch, and not man can overtake it. Fine winged seraphim cannot come up with it. The eternal God himself cannot catch it.

I stand before those who have a glorious birthright. Egan's was not so rich as yours. Sell it once, and you sell it forever. I remember the story of the lad on the Arctic some years ago—the lad Stewart Holland. A vessel crashed into the Arctic in the time of a fog, and it was found that the ship must go down. Some of the passengers got off in the lifeboats, some got off on rafts, but 300 went to the bottom. During all these hours of calamity, Stewart Holland stood at the signal gun, and it sounded across the sea, boom, boom! The helmsman forced his place, the singer was gone and some fainted and some prayed and some blasphemed, and the powder was gone, and they could no more set off the signal gun. The lad broke in the magazine and brought out more powder and again the gun boomed over the sea. Oh my friends, tossed on the rough seas of life, some have taken the warning, have gone off in the lifeboat and they are safe, but others are not making any attempts to escape. So I stand at this signal gun of the gospel, sounding the alarm. Beware! Beware! Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation! Hear it that your soul may live.

Sin always carries a knife under its cloak.

In this category of irrevocable mistakes I place also the unkindness done the departed. When I was a boy, my mother used to say to me sometimes, “De Wit, you will be sorry for that when you are gone.” And I remember just how she looked, sitting there, with cap and spectacles, and the old Bible in her lap, and she never said a true thing than that; for she had often been sorry since. While we have our friends with us, we say unguarded things that wound the feelings of those to whom we ought to give nothing but kindness. Perhaps the parent, without inquiring into the matter, boxes the child's ears. The little one, who has fallen in the street, comes in woe with dust, and as though the first disaster were not enough, she whips it.

Belonging to this class of irrevocable mistakes is the folly of a mispent youth. We may look back to our college days and think how we neglected chemistry, or geology, or botany, or mathematics. We may be sorry about it all our days. Can we ever get the discipline or the advantage that we would have had if we attended

those duties in early life? A man

wakes up at 22 years of age and finds that his youth has been wasted, and he strives to get back the early advantages. Does he get them back? The days of boyhood, the days in college, the days under his father's roof? “Oh,” he says, “if I could only get those times back again, how I would improve them!” My brother, you will never get them back. They are gone. You may be very sorry about it and God may forgive, so that you may at least reach heaven, but you will never get over some of the mishaps that have come to your soul as a result of your neglect of early duty. You may try to undo it; you cannot undo it. When you had a boy's arms and a boy's eyes and a boy's heart you ought to have attended to those things. A man says, at 50 years of age, “I do wish I could get over these habits of indecision.” When did you get them? At 20 or 25 years of age. You cannot shake them off. They will hang to you to the very day of your death. If a young man through long course of evil conduct undermines his physical health, and then repeats it in after life, the Lord may pardon him, but that does not bring back good physical condition. I said to a minister of the gospel, one Sabbath, at the close of the service, “Where are you preaching now?” “Oh,” he says, “I am not preaching. I am suffering from the physical effects of early sin. I can't sleep now; I am sick.” A consecrated man he is now, and he mourns bitterly over early sins, but that does not arrest their bodily effects.

The simple fact is, that men and women often take twenty years of their life to build up influences that require all the rest of their life to break down. Talk about a man beginning life when he is 21 years of age; talk about a woman beginning life when she is 18 years of age! Ah, no! In many respects that is the time they should close life. In nine cases out of ten all the questions of eternity are decided before that. Talk about a majority of men getting their fortunes between 30 and 40! They get or lose fortunes between 10 and 20. When you tell me that a man is just beginning life, I tell you he is just closing it. The next fifty years will not be of as much importance to him as the first twenty.

Parental Neglect.
Now, why do I say this? Is it for the annoyance of those who have only a halef retrospective? You know that is not my way. I say it for the benefit of young men and women. I want them to understand that eternity is wrapped up in this hour; that the sins of youth we never get over; that you are now fashioning the mold in which your great future is to run; that a minute, instead of being 60 seconds long, is made up of everlasting ages. You see what dignity and importance this gives to the life of all young folks. Why, in the light of this subject, life is not something to be trifled away; not something to be smirked about, not something to be danced out, but something to be weighed in the balances of eternity. Oh, young man, the sin of yesterday, the sin of tomorrow, will reach over 10,000 years—aye, over the great and unending eternity. You may, after awhile, say: “I am very sorry. Now I have got to be 30 or 40 years of age, and I do wish I had never committed those sins.” What does that amount to? God may pardon you, but undo those things you never will, you never can.

In this same category of irrevocable mistakes I put all parental neglect. We begin the education of our children too late. By the time they get to be 10 or 15 we wake up to our mistakes and try to eradicate this bad habit and change that, but it is too late. That parent who omits, in the first ten years of the child's life, to make an eternal impression for Christ, never makes it. The child will probably go on with all the disadvantages which might have been avoided by parental faithfulness. Now you see what a mistake that father or mother makes who puts off to the late life adherence to Christ. Here is a man who at 50 years of age says to you, “I must be a Christian,” and he yields his heart to God and sits in the pews of prayer to-day a Christian. None of us can doubt it. He goes home and he says: “Here at 50 years of age I have given my heart to the Savior. Now I must establish a family altar.” What? Where are your children now? One in Boston; another in Cincinnati; another in New Orleans; and you, my brother, at your fiftieth year going to establish your family altar? Very well; better late than never, but alas, alas, that you did not do it twenty-five years ago!

How many parents wake up in the latter part of life to find out the mistake. The parent says, “I have been too lenient,” or “I have been too severe in the discipline of my children. If I had made the trade, he wanted to get it back. Just as though you to-morrow morning just as though you all out of the restaurant and in a fit of recklessness and hunger throw all those securities on the counter and ask for a plate of food, making that exchange. This was the one Egan made. He sold his birthright for a mess of porridge, and he was very sorry about it afterward, but he found no time to correct it. You may say, “Father, you have given me a fine education, and you have placed me in a nice social position; you have done everything for me in a worldly sense but, father, you never told me how to die. Now I am dying.”

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With the simple song you have gaily trifled.

And the starflowers glow with a new delight

When you wander out in the fields at night.

Oh! little one, sleep, when the nights are kind,

In dreamland seek for the joys you find;

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