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→*SERMONS*←

CHRIST'S TEMPER TOWARD THE WEAK.

BY REV. JAMES M. KING, D.D., PARK AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.—MATT. xii., 20.

JESUS had been rebuking the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in reference to their sanctimonious notions about the Sabbath, wherein they assumed that it was unlawful for the disciples to satisfy their hunger, or for acts of healing to be performed on that day. To enforce this rebuke, and to show that it was "lawful to do well on the Sabbath days," He went into the synagogue and "restored whole" a man's withered hand. Then the Pharisees counselled "how they might destroy Him." While they were engaged in their wicked council, Jesus went away, but kept on healing the multitudes which followed Him, while He told them "not to make Him known." At this point in the narration, in the midst of a cluster of miracles, the Evangelist throws in a quotation from "Esaia's the prophet," to show that this miracle-working man was fulfilling prophecy by the temper He exhibited toward the weak, closing with the words of the text.

John the Baptist lying in prison, "sent two of his disciples" to ask Jesus, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the

man and the sower of seed bore his sickle and watched for the signs of harvest. And whenever the germs of a divine life appeared, they were nurtured, cherished, guarded, and converts were added to the Church, set at work, kept under fostering care, and not left to scatter, wander at will, or relapse into neglect.

As to his mode of dealing with pauperism, the sagacious Chalmers saw that while a ministry of love to the poor, sick, helpless, was a first necessity, it would be unwise and hurtful to their best interests to encourage them to depend on charity. The Church must not be an asylum in which indolence and incompetence and improvidence should take refuge. The poorest must be educated to maintain, not to sacrifice, self-respect, and must be compelled to form and maintain habits of self-help, industry, economy, thrift. Instead of clothing the poor with the half-worn garments of the better classes,

he would have them taught to save money worse than wasted on tobacco, drink and vicious indulgence, and buy their own garments. And the results of this wise policy were seen in the gradual and rapid improvement in appearance of the attendance at church—rags gave way to respectable raiment, and it was not the cast-off clothing of their betters, either.

Chalmers had no less an ambition than to ameliorate and finally abolish pauperism; and his success in St. John's parish, Glasgow, had proven that he was master of the situation; and no one can tell what results might have followed but for the poor law, enacted in 1845, which, by the admission of a statutory right to public relief, encourages improvidence, weakens family ties among the poor, conduces to a morbid satisfaction with a state of dependence, and thus sows the seed of the very pauperism it professes to relieve and reduce.

CHRISTIAN EDIFICATION

Thoughts for a Communion Sabbath Morning.

By J. HALL, D.D., LL.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), N. Y.

"O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou hast comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is my salvation. Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Such was the language of a Christian on a communion Sabbath morning, as he took his Bible to his closet. He would be alone with God an hour, before going to the sanctuary. He laid down his Bible for a moment. A fresh passage has flashed upon his mind. Indeed he hardly needed to look on the page.

This day the Scripture seemed to meet him in his closet, and with peculiar sweet-

ness too. "We have a strong city," he repeated, "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," he continued, "whose mind is stayed on Thee;" but he must fix his mind on the special, solemn business of the day; and to give direction to his thoughts he turned to the Apostle's account of the Lord's Supper, as he received it from the Lord.

My dear reader are you in the habit of thus making your Bible your sole closet companion ere you go forth publicly to renew your acceptance of Christ, and your engagement to be the Lord's? Then I need not say a word of the need of self-examination. You have long felt that your own experience and the divine word agreed on this point. Nor need I warn you of the danger and the loss of being unprepared. If you come not hungering, do not wonder if you be not satisfied with fatness. But let me suggest to your mind some of the bearings of that service to

which you are invited by a Communion Sabbath.

1. Observe *its relation to Christ Himself*. He appointed the feast. His lips said "This do in remembrance of Me." And when did He say this? On the eve of His lowest humiliation, before a death attended by every circumstance of ignominy and when men seemed banded together to cast Him out. With all this full in view, He said. "This do in remembrance of Me," and you are about to reply "Yea, Lord! this will I do in remembrance of Thee. Though all men forget and forsake Thee, yet by Thy grace so will not I. I will honor Thee as Head of the Church, as my great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God. I will honor Thee in that very event which men associate with shame and show forth Thy death. I will honor Thee as the Crucified One, bruised and broken for sin; God forbid that I should glory save in Thy cross."

My dear friend, is this your language? Is it with this intent you approach His table? Go forward, and say with the writer of the twenty-sixth Psalm, "I will wash mine hands in innocency, so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord: that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works."

2. Observe *its relation to the world*. The world includes all those who have not *actually believed* on Christ. The Lord's Supper seems as a pillar set up on earth, and covered with beautiful inscriptions, such as this—"God so loved the world," etc. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." The importance of this ordinance, in this point of view, appears from the way in which the New Testament Church regarded it, the notice taken of it by heathens in early ages, and even by the errors and exaggerations heaped upon it by a corrupt Church. Even the pains taken by Satan to pervert it, show its importance. Not that we are to have a sacramental religion or put the channel for the blessing conveyed; but we are to be thankful for an opportunity given us of raising a calm, dignified, unobtrusive,

but yet most solemn and striking, protest against the sin of all, of whom Christ might still say, "I came unto Mine own, and Mine own received Me not." Have you felt this, and rejoiced that for the world's good you were permitted openly to confess Christ? Then go to the table of the Lord, and in that day shall ye say, "Praise the Lord, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord, for He hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

3. Observe *its relation to yourself*. Jesus says to believers, "The world, and sin, and self would banish all recollection of Me. You will be in danger of forgetting Me. But oh! yield not to temptation. Gather yourselves together as the members of one family, and eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Me." What a simple request! Shall we be ungrateful enough to decline it? What a high privilege! Shall we be foolish enough to despise it?

Yes my dear friend, it is not a duty merely, but a blessed privilege. In its connexion with the covenant of grace, it seals to the believer forgiveness of his sin, adoption into the family of God, union with Christ, and with His people, and, through Him, life everlasting. It brings us near to Christ; and, as a divine institution, it conveys spiritual food for our nourishment. The Bible presents truth in words, and we feed on truth there. The Lord's Supper still more vividly presents truth in signs—visible and most appropriate. How could faith fail to be strengthened, when the glorious Gospel of the blessed God is held up in the most impressive of all ways? Truth is the appropriate food for the soul—divine truth for the believing soul. And where do you see so much of it as here? It kindles our love anew. It is itself full of love. There was self-forgetting love in the circumstances of its appointment. It commemorates self-sacrificing love, the love of Him who died that we might live. It reveals a salvation free and full, neces-

sary to our souls as sustenance to our bodies, and accessible to the meanest. It has bread and wine—not merely deliverance, but “the joy of God’s Salvation.” It associates us more closely with Christ and His people. It dissociates us from the world, and, as we sit at the table and eat and drink, basking in the sunshine of a Saviour’s love, well may our hearts melt afresh, and the tears of contrition flow again. One such tear is worth a lifetime of the world’s joy, for the Saviour wipes it away, and the eyes of faith and hope with increased clearness, see the crystal river with the overhanging tree of life, and we realize with a new joy the prospect—“and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face; and His name

shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

Look, my dear friend, for such a strengthening of your faith, and increase of your graces. Go to the table humble, for you are a sinner with only one hope, but confident, for that hope is sufficient, and He has invited you. Go, trusting Him, for he Has promised; expecting much, for He has unsearchable riches; loathing self, for you are vile; but rejoicing in Christ, for He is “altogether lovely.” Go to the table, and once more join yourself “to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.”

SUNDAY SCHOOL CAUSE

LIGHT ON THE INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

BY ALFRED H. MOMENT, D.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), BROOKLYN, N. Y.

June 5,

The Manna.—EXODUS xvi., 4-12.

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In the Wilderness of Sin, the Israelites spent, in all, nearly thirty-eight years. They arrived there, for the first time, about a month after their departure from Egypt. Though remaining but a short time before going on to Sinai, yet, subsequently, it became their chief camping ground. It was here that God began feeding His people with “bread from Heaven.”

I. The manna promised. V. 4. (1) The people were in a condition of great need—no food to eat, the bread brought from Egypt being exhausted (v. 3). (2) A murmuring spirit prevailed throughout the camp against Moses and Aaron (v. 2, 3). We here see the little confidence that multitude had in God, though He had given them, but a short time before, the most wonderful exhibitions of His power and goodness. This is like ourselves. We doubt the Almighty when we behold the smallest cloud. (3) The manna was promised, not because they murmured but because the Lord knew their need. What the people did only made themselves miserable in heart and displeasing to God. Discontentment does nothing towards moving the compassion of our Heavenly

Father. (4) The food promised was to be a daily portion. We pray: “Give us this day our daily bread.” This is to develop in us daily faith in God. No doubt many of those faithless Israelites would liked to have had great quantities of manna, sufficient for weeks and months at a time. The human heart rebels against living on the divine bounty given day by day. We want to walk by sight not by trust. Christ the true Bread must be a daily supply. We cannot make for ourselves storehouses of grace. (5) The goodness of God is a test of His people’s fidelity: “And the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove that, whether they will walk in My law or no” (v. 4). From our discontentment in the past, the Lord has good reason to believe that we will murmur however wonderful His mercies are to us. Yet by every new blessing He would “prove” our faith and seek to make it stronger. Would that with David we could all say: “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Ps. xviii., 35).

II. The Sabbath involved in the promise of the manna. V. 5. (1) On the sixth day