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SERMONIC.*

THE POSSIBLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE IN OUR SALVATION.

A SERMON BY ENOCH POND, D.D., PRESIDENT OF THE BANGOR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, BANGOR, ME.

Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.
—Exodus xiv : 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.—Philippians ii : 12.

THE first of these directions was given by Moses to the children of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea. God had appeared gloriously for the deliverance of His people from their bondage in Egypt; He had brought them out with a high hand; He had led them along under an infallible guidance—a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night—to the place of their present encampment. While resting here for a little space, the Israelites learned that Pharaoh, with a powerful army, was in hot pursuit of them, and was close upon them. What should they do? To flee was impossible; to resist was desperation. They could go neither forward nor backward; they could turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. In this dreadful emergency the people began to do what they were wont to do in every trial—they began to murmur against Moses and against God. "They said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us forth out of Egypt?" But "Moses said unto

the people, Fear not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you to-day."

The deliverance of the Israelites from their cruel bondage in Egypt was emblematical—and so it is represented in other parts of the Bible—of the deliverance of sinful men from a greater bondage—the slavery of sin and the bondage of the wicked one. And as, in the progress of their deliverance, the Israelites soon came to a point where they could not help or save themselves—where they were to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord—so there is that connected with the salvation of every sinner which he has no power of any kind to do, which he is never required to do, which he is even forbidden to attempt, in reference to which he is to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. At the same time, there is that connected with the salvation of every sinner which he can do, which he alone can do, which he must do, and do himself, if it is ever done, and he is ever saved.

In addressing you from the Scriptures which have been read I propose to show:

I. What that is connected with the salvation of the sinner which he cannot do, which he is never required to do, which he is forbidden to attempt; and,

II. What that is which he can do, which he is required to do, which he must do, and do himself, if it is ever done, and he is ever saved.

[* The first several sermons are reported in full, the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.—Ed.]

he will find that the kingdom of heaven is wide enough to include all science, all politics, all hunger all thirst, all misery, all need—that it is a kingdom of kingdoms, as its Lord is King of kings.

THE PRODIGAL'S RESOLVE.

By T. DEWITT TALMAGE, D.D., IN THE
BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

I will arise and go to my father.—Luke
xv: 18.

THIS young man, the son of a rich Jew, was thoroughly destitute. He was hungry and in rags. Seated amid the swine-troughs, perfectly wretched, an idea flashes across him—"I will go home. These are no clothes for a rich man's son to wear. What business is this for a Jew—feeding swine? I can stand it no longer. I will arise and go to my father!" Not waiting to patch up his poor clothes or improve his personal appearance, away he flies. Homesickness gives him a fleet foot. That was a wise resolution. He could not sew up his rags or satisfy his hunger. Satan has a great many herds of iniquity, and he says he will give us large wages if we will only watch them. Liar! Down with thee into the pit! "The wages of sin is death." Satan covers his employes with rags; he pinches them with eternal hunger, and when they are weary of the business and try to get away, he chases them with all the bloodhounds of perdition.

1. I remark that this resolution of the prodigal was made in a disgust at his present condition. If his employer had set him to tending flowers or to training vines over the arbor, or to keeping an account of the pork market, or to overseeing the other laborers, that young man would have never gone home to his father's house. If he had had salary enough to clothe himself even moderately; if he had had salary enough to get on ordinarily, he would have said: "I can get along without these splendid things; I can rough it just as a great many other men have roughed it." If he had had money in

his pocket he would never have started home. He would have said: "What do I want of my father, with fifty, a hundred, a thousand dollars in my pocket; what do I want to go home for? I will never apologise to the old man. Besides that, I have one-third of the property coming to me anyhow. Besides, if I went home, I know father would put me on the limits. He would not allow such goings on in the old place as I like to indulge in. Come, my boys, fill high and let's drink again to the good time that's coming." Ah! it was his utter destruction and pauperism; it was the fact that they begrudged him even the beans and the "carobs." It was because he had come down to destitution, beneath which there was no lower depth, that he resolved to go to his father. Let me here say that no man ever starts for God until he is persuaded of his famine-struck condition. People say to ministers, "Why do you stand and talk about the lost state of man?" For the reason that unless men are persuaded of it they do not want the gospel. If I come into your house, and you are well, and I talk about powerful medicines and physicians, you say: "That is nothing to me. I have no cough, no neuralgia, no rheumatism. Why do you talk to me about medicine?" But if I come into your house and you feel that you are desperately sick, and unless you get help very soon you must die, as soon as I begin to talk about medicines or a doctor you say: "Bring them quickly or I shall die." Now, if I can convince you that in your natural condition you are lost, that you are sick and diseased by reason of sin, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, then you are ready to hear me while I speak of Jesus Christ, the great physician, and of the balm that will heal all our wounds.

By every possible simile the Bible sets forth the truth that we are guilty and that there is no help for us, so far as human medicament is concerned. Sin is a red-hot plowshare that turned up Eden, and it has prostrated the whole earth with the exhaustion of

death; and unless a man quits his sin and comes to God for salvation he cannot be saved.

Are there not some here to-night who would like to be Christians? You cannot be where you are, down in your sin. Go home! go home! Make some stout resolution, like the young man of my text. A mere whim, a mere indefinite longing, will not amount to anything. The young man of the text did not say, "I will wait until a caravan comes along and I will get a ride." No! With an emphasis that sounded through all the ages, he said: "I will arise and go to my father."

2. I remark further that the resolution of the text was formed in sorrow at his past behavior. It was not a mere physical plight; it was sorrow at the thought that he had so badly treated his father. Oh! it is a sad thing that a son, after having been watched over by a father and educated and cared for, should go away and break that father's heart. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." That is Shakespeare. "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." That is the Bible. Oh! have we not treated our Father badly? And such a Father! Three times a day with wonderful regularity He has fed you. Through how many winters He has given you wood and coal! How careful He has been to see that you had apparel suited to the climate and the changes of the seasons! Who fed you this morning when you arose? Who provided for you to-day as you sat at table? Who has sheltered your household? Who has given you the love of your children? In whose keeping are the departed loved ones of your heart? Who pours golden sunlight by day and by night lights up for you the street lamps of heaven? On whose earth do you walk? At whose fountains do you drink? Whose eye hath pitied you? Whose heart had compassion upon you? Whose hand hath helped you? Whose voice hath called you? Our Father, so lenient, so loving, so generous hath He been. Oh! we have all been cruel prodigals. We have

chosen the wilderness to the loving arms of our Father. Have you no confessions to make? Have you no sorrows to express? Have you no pardon to ask for? Have you no resolution to make? Oh! if it had been a stranger it would not have been so wonderful that we turned away from Him. If He had flagellated us unmercifully, if He had turned us out of doors, if He had starved us, it would not have been strange if we turned our backs on such a Father. But no, He has loved us, He has caressed us all our life long. Are you sorry that you have offended? Is there in this audience to-night one man frank enough to say: "Father, I have sinned?" If you do wrong to a friend you are willing to apologize. You say: "I am sorry I said that or did that." Have you ever apologized to God? Can it be that ten thousand times ten thousand transgressions of your life are all uncanceled? If it be so, may God this night have mercy upon your soul.

3. I remark again that this resolution of the text was formed in a feeling of homesickness. I do not know how long the young man had been gone—how many weeks, how many years—from his father's house; but I am very certain from the reading of the passage that he was homesick. It is a very disagreeable feeling. You know what it is. You have been away off, and although you may have had plenty of friends around you and all the circumstances were cheerful, you said within your soul: "I would give the world if I could be home to-night."

Oh! are there not those here homesick for God—homesick for heaven? I read of a sailor boy that came back to see his parents, and he stayed a few days, and his mother importuned him not to go away again, and the night before he went back to sea he heard her praying in the next room. It made him harder than he was before. He went to sea. One bitter cold night he clambered up the ratlines; he was out on perilous duty. The winds were whistling around him in the darkness, and he heard something that first seemed like

his mother's voice, and then seemed like that very prayer, and he trembled in the darkness and charged himself with cowardice, and tried to whistle off the feeling; but all the more it pressed through his soul—the very prayer he heard his mother utter in the next room. And there, amid the ship's shrouds, he cried: "God be merciful to me, a sinner! Oh! if there be mercy for such a wretch as I am, help me! Lord help me!" And I have thought while standing here to-night that perhaps some prodigal in this audience might have coming into his soul the memory of father's prayer or mother's petition long ago uttered, and that prayer might press so mightily upon your soul that you would, this moment, surrender yourself to the Lord who bought you.

IV. I remark, again, that this resolution of the text was immediately put into execution. The text says he arose and came to his father. The trouble is that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of the thousand of our resolutions never amount to anything. We do not carry them out. How many of us have, scores of times, resolved upon a Christian life, and yet have not entered it. Here is a man who, twenty years ago, in the time of typhoid fever, said: "Oh, Lord, let me get over this sickness and I will serve Thee all the rest of my life." The fever departed; he is well in the house of God to-night, and yet he has never espoused the cause of Jesus.

A resolution that I will become a Christian next year, or next month, or next week, or to-morrow, or ten o'clock to-night, is worth nothing. The young man of the text is one moment sitting down amid the swine and the husks. Then he says, "I will arise and go to my father," and he starts, starts the very instant; as quick as that he is on his way. Oh! my dear friends, are there not some of you to-night ready to start for heaven? Do you not want to start now? You feel your need of pardon, why not seek it now? You feel that you need a title to heaven, why not get it now? How many have put it off? There are some who say: "I must

get my life changed first, and I must get better first, and then I will come." Ah! my brother, you will get worse and worse until you come to Christ. No man yet ever made himself better.

But, says one, "Put it off a little longer and I will come." Ah! that is what one of olden time said: "Go thy way for this time. I will attend to it after a while." Did he? No, he went away and perished. To be almost a Christian is to be no Christian at all. At Anagansett, Long Island, a vessel came ashore and dashed itself to pieces in the breakers, and the men on the beach threw ropes and shot rockets, and the crew of the wrecked vessel got in a small boat and pulled toward the beach and they came almost to the shore; but the ropes snapped and they were swamped. Their corpses the next day were tossed upon the beach. They came within a stone's throw of rescue, and yet they perished. Oh! how many men there are who come almost to the beach of heaven; they are actually within arm's reach of pardon and peace and salvation, yet right there they are swamped forever. Do you know, my brother, that eternity is at stake in this matter? You would not risk one hundred dollars on as poor security as you have for your immortal soul. If you lend a man a hundred dollars you take a note for it. If you buy property you take a deed for it. If you build a house you get insurance on it. And yet for your everlasting inheritance you have no title, no promise, no hope. Through the darkness of this night, quick as lightning's flash, your soul may be gone—whither? whither? Why will you starve in the desert when you might feast in your Father's house? God wants you to come back; the angels want you to come back; the Church of Christ wants you to come back. God, the infinitely lovely and patient One, leans from His throne to-night and stoops over with every possible entreaty and says, "Come, now, and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be

as wool." And then God lifts His right hand and takes an affidavit, saying, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Two young men in England went down to the seashore expecting to embark. They could not bear the restraints of a kind father's house. The father wrote down to Mr. Griffin, of Portsmouth, saying: "My two sons are down in your city. I wish you would persuade them to come back." He found the two boys and persuaded one to go home. The other said "I won't go home." Then said Mr. Griffin, "I will get you a good place on a very respectable ship." He said, "I won't take it; I want to be a common sailor, and that will plague father most, and what will break his heart will do me most good." Some years passed along, and one day Mr. Griffin was seated in his study when word came, "There is a man on ship-board in irons awaiting execution who wants to see you." Mr. Griffin did not recognize him. "Don't you remember me? I was the young man you tried to persuade not to go to sea." "Oh, yes," said Mr. Griffin; "I remember you." "Well," said he, "I committed the crime of murder. I am going to die, and I thought I would ask you to pray for me before I die." Mr. Griffin, thinking of the old folks at home and of the father whose heart had long ago broken over that wayward son, said, "I will try to get you a pardon." He rushed about by day and by night, from city to city to the proper authorities, and sure enough, he got the pardon. He moved the heart of the judge by the terrible story of parental suffering, and came in hot haste with the pardon, and, as he was coming on the ship, he met the father, who had come down from the country. He had found out that his boy was in trouble under a disguised name, and there Mr. Griffin with the pardon met the father on the dock. They went on board, and the very moment that Mr. Griffin handed the pardon to that wayward son, the same mo-

ment the father threw his arms around the wayward boy's neck, and kissed him, and the son confessed his crime and his wanderings, and said, "Father, forgive me if I have broken your heart," and the father said, "I forgive you." The chains were knocked off, and the boy went home free. To-night I come to you with a pardon—the glorious pardon of the Gospel. I put it in your right hand, while at the same moment the Lord God Almighty, your Father, breaks in upon the darkness of your soul and throws the arms of His compassion around your neck, and says, "I forgive you for all your wanderings," and there is joy on earth and joy in heaven. Who will accept the Father's embrace?

THE FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH.

OUTLINES OF A SERMON BY WILLIAM ORMISTON, D.D., IN THE FIFTH AVENUE COLLEGIATE REFORMED CHURCH, NEW YORK.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.—Eph. iii: 14, 15.

THE apostle in this connection is describing in glowing and magnificent imagery the unity of the Church. In the last chapter he says: "He (Christ) is our peace, who hath made both (believing Gentiles and Jews) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He compares the Church to a city in which all inhabitants enjoy equal privileges. Then again, in the luxuriance of his imagery, his mind glowing with the thought of the brotherhood of all Christians, he compares the Church to a temple, every part fitly framed together, and each part essential to the completeness of the whole—a temple in which expiation is made alike for all. Then arises before his mind the thought of the family, where all are brothers, are equals, and he says, in Christ "the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

"For this cause"—because all Chris-