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## Sermons

### PEACE THROUGH CONFLICT.

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*Think not that I came to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword.—*  
MATT. x., 34.

THIS seems to be in very strange contradiction to all the drift of ancient prophecy. The idea of peace, of profound, universal, permanent peace, is most intimately interwoven with all our thoughts of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The highest name given to the Messiah by the evangelical prophet of the Old Testament is "Prince of Peace." The peculiar glory of His reign is described by the phrase, "abundance of peace." "In His days abundance of peace shall flourish." That is, peace in generous and overflowing measure. We are all familiar with such imagery as this, that the sword is to be sheathed; that the voice of violence is no more to be heard in the land; that in the latter time Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; that the lion and the lamb, the strong and the weak, shall lie down peacefully together; and that for the government of the world a child's hand shall be considered enough; "A little child shall lead them." If we turn to the New Testament we find that the same phraseology is used in describing the effects of the entrance of the Spirit of Christ into the hearts and the lives of men. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." The first fruit of grace, the first evidence of conversion, is the sense of reconciliation with God through His Son Jesus Christ. Our Lord declared when He left His disciples that

## →\*Decoration Day Service\*←

### THE SHEATHED SWORD.\*

BY T. DEWITT TALMAGE, D.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), TABERNACLE, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

*And the Lord commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.*  
—I. CHRONICLES xxi., 27.

ONE day in Davidic times the people looked up and saw against the sky something which made the blood curdle and the cheek blanch and the breath stop—an angel of overtowering stature, and armed with a sword long and bright as summer lightning when it cleaves the sky from zenith to horizon. The broad blade with curved edge pointed toward doomed Jerusalem. The sheath hung dangling at the side of the great supernatural, the sheath, of course, of such vast proportion as to have held the sword before it was brandished. As long as that uncovered sword was pointed toward Jerusalem havoc and massacre and bloodshed went on; but after a while, in answer to the prayers of the people and the sacrifices on the threshing-floor of Ornan, the angel drew back the sword with the right hand, and seizing the sheath with the left he inserted the sharp point into the mouth of the scabbard, and flung the sword down deep, until the haft of it struck the rim of the scabbard with resound that made the mountains about Jerusalem tremble. Then the havoc stopped, and the wounds healed, and the former glories of the city were eclipsed by the splendors subsequent. Hear you not the clang of sabre and scabbard as they come together in the words of my text? “And the Lord commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.”

Soldiers of the Grand Army of the Republic! And soldiers who fought on the other side! All one now in kindly brotherhood, whether you wore the color that suggested the gray of the morning sky or the blue of the full noon! And let no man who, by word or deed, tries to open the old wounds, ever offer, either in this world or the next, to take my hand! Hear me while I draw out the contrast between the time when the angel of war stood in the American sky, pointing his long, keen, cutting, frightful sword toward this, our beloved land, and for four years the nation was in awful hemorrhage, and now when, in answer to the prayers and sacrifices on ten thousand altars, that angel of war that stood above us hath hurled the bloody scimeter into the scabbard with a clang that made everything from the Canadas to the Gulf tremble with gladness.

At this season of decoration of the soldiers' graves, both at the North and

\* Preached the Sabbath before Decoration Day, 1884.

South, it is appropriate that I rouse your patriotism, and revive your reminiscence, and stir your gratitude by putting 1864 beside 1884. I shall make two circles around these two dates.

Around 1864 I shall put a garland of red dahlias for the carnage. Around 1884 I shall put a garland of white lilies for the peace. The first date I shall crown with a chaplet of cypress. The second date I shall crown with a sheaf of wheat. The one date a dead march and the other a wedding anthem. Twelve o'clock at night compared with twelve o'clock at noon.

AMITY FOR BITTERNESS.

I. Contrast, first of all, the feelings of sectional bitterness in 1864 with the feeling of sectional amity in 1884. At the first date the South had banished the national air, "The Star Spangled Banner," and the North had banished the popular air of "Way Down South in Dixie." The Northern people were "mudsills," and the Southern people were "white trash." The more Southern people were killed in battle the better the North liked it. The more Northern people were killed in battle the better the South liked it. For four years the head of Abraham Lincoln or Jefferson Davis would have been worth a million dollars if delivered on the other side of the line. No need now, standing in our pulpits and platforms, of saying that the North and South did not hate each other. The hatred was as long and terrible as the sword the angel of war, standing midheaven, gripped pointing toward this nation, and then swung closer down till *it gashed a grave trench* clear through the quivering heart of the continent. To estimate how very dearly we loved each other, count up the bombshells that were hurled, and the carbines that were loaded, and the cavalry horses that were mounted. North and South facing each other, all armed in the attempt to kill.

The two sections not only marshalled all their earthly hostilities, but tried to reach up and get hold of the sword spoken of in the text—the sword of heaven—and the prayer of Northern and Southern pulpits gave more information to the heavens about the best mode of settling this trouble than was ever used. For four years both sides tried to *get hold of the Lord's thunderbolts*, but could not quite reach them. At the breaking out of the war we had not for months heard of my dear uncle, Samuel K. Talmage, President of Oglethorpe University in Georgia. He was about the mildest man I ever knew, and as good as good could be. The first we heard of him was his opening prayer in Confederate Congress in Richmond, which was reported in the *New York Herald*, which prayer, if answered, would, to say the least, have left all his Northern relatives in very uncomfortable circumstances. The ministry at the North prayed one way, and the ministry at the South prayed another way. No use in hiding the fact that the North and South cursed each other with a withering and all-consuming curse.

Beside that antipathy of 1864 I place the complete accord of 1884. Meeting in New York to raise money to build a Home at Richmond for crippled Confederate soldiers, the meeting presided over by a man who lost an arm and a leg in fighting on the Northern side, and the leg not lost so

hurt that it does not amount to much. Cotton exhibition two years ago at Atlanta attended by tens of thousands of Northern people and by General Sherman, who was greeted with kindness, as though they had never seen him before. United States Government last week voting a million dollars toward a New Orleans exhibition, to be held next December, in which every Northern State will be represented. A thousand-fold kindlier feeling after the war than before the war.

No more use of gunpowder in this country, except for Fourth of July pyrotechnics or a shot at a roebuck in the Adirondacks. Brigadier generals in the Southern Confederacy making their fortunes as lawyers in our Northern cities. Rivers of Georgia, Alabama and North Carolina turning the mills of New England capitalists. The old lions of war—Forts Sumter and Moultrie and Lafayette and Pickens and Hamilton—sound asleep on their iron paws; and instead of our raising money to keep enemies out of our harbor, raising money for the Bartholdi statue on Bedloe's Island, the figure of Liberty with uplifted torch to light the way of all who want to come in. Instead of 1864, when you could not cross the line between the contestants without fighting your way with keen steel, or going through by passes carefully scrutinized at every step by bayonets, you need only a railroad ticket from New York to Charleston or New Orleans to go clear through, and there is no use for any weapon sharper or stronger than a steel pen. Since the years of time began their roll, has there ever been in two decades such an overmastering antithesis as between 1864, of complete bitterness, and 1884, of complete sympathy? It is the difference between the archangel of war mid-sky with sword brandished, and the archangel of war mid-sky with sword scabbarded.

II. Contrast also the domestic life of 1864 with the domestic life of 1884. You were either leaving home or far away from it, communicating by uncertain letter. What a morning that was when you left home! Father and mother crying, sisters crying, you smiling outside, but crying inside. Everybody nervous and excited. Boys of the blue and gray! Whether you started from the banks of the Hudson, or the Androscoggin, or the Savannah, don't you remember the scenes at the front door, at the rail-car window, or the steamboat-landing? The huzza could not drown out the suppressed sadness. Do you not remember those charges to write home often, and take good care of yourself, and be good boys, and the good-by kiss which they thought, and you thought, might be forever?

Then the homesickness as you paced the river bank on a starlight night on picket duty, and the sly tears that you wiped off when you heard a group by a camp-fire singing the plantation song about the "Old Folks at Home." The dinner of hard-tack on Thanksgiving day, and the Christmas without any presents, and the long nights in the hospital, so different from the sickness when you were at home, with mother and sisters at the bedside, and the clock in the hall giving the exact moment for the medicine. And that forced march when your legs ached, and your head ached, and your wounds ached, and more than all, your heart ached—homesickness which had in it a

suffocation and a pang worse than death. You never got hardened as did the guardsman in the Crimean war, who heartlessly wrote home to his mother : "I don't want to see any more crying letters come to the Crimea from you. Those I have received I put into my rifle, after loading it, and have fired them at the Russians, because you appear to have a strong dislike to them. If you had seen as many killed as I have, you would not have as many weak ideas as you now have." You never felt like that. When a soldier's knapsack was found after his death in our American war, there was generally a careful package containing a Bible, a few photographs, and letters from home.

On the other hand, tens of thousands of homes waiting for news. Parents saying : "Twenty thousand killed ! I wonder if our boy was among them ?" Fainting dead away in post-offices and telegraph stations. Both the ears of God filled with the sobs and agonies of kindred waiting for news, or dropping under the announcement of bad news. Speak, swamps of Chickahominy, and midnight lagoons, and fire-rafts on the Mississippi, and gunboats before Vicksburg, and woods of Antietam, and tell to all the mountains, and valleys, and rivers, and lakes of North and South, the Jeremiads of 1864 that have never been syllabled !

Beside that domestic perturbation and homesickness of twenty years ago put the sweet domesticity of 1884. Where do you come from to-night ? From home. The only camp-fire you now sit at is at the one kindled in stove, or furnace, or hearth. Instead of a half ration of salt pork, a repast luxuriant, because partaken of by loving family circle and in sacred confidences. Oh, now I see *who those letters were for*, the letters you, the young soldier, took so long in your tent to write, and that you were so particular to put in the mail without any one seeing—lest you be teased by your comrades. God spared you to come back, and though the old people have gone, you have a home of your own construction, and you are here to-night, contrasting those awful absences and filial, and brotherly, and loverly heart-breaks with your present residence, which is the dearest place you will find this side of heaven—the place where your children were born, and the place where you want to die. To write the figures 1864 I set up *four crystals*—crystals of tears ; to write the figures 1884 I stand up four members of your household—figures of rosy cheeks and flaxen hair, if I can get them to stand still long enough.

III. Contrast also the religious opportunities of twenty years ago with now. Often on the march from Sunday morn till night, or commanded by officers who considered the names of God and Christ of no use except to swear by. Sometimes the drum-head the pulpit ; and you standing in heat or cold ; all the surroundings of military life having a tendency to make you reckless ; no privacy for prayer or Bible reading ; no sound of church bells ; Sabbaths spent far away from the places where you were brought up. To-day the choice of sanctuaries ; easy pew ; all Christian surroundings ; the air full of God, and Christ, and heaven, and doxology ; three mountains lifting

themselves into the holy light—Mount Sinai thundering its law, Mount Calvary pleading the sacrifice, Mount Pisgah displaying the promised land.

#### IV. CONTRAST OF NATIONAL CONDITION.

1864—Spending money by the millions in devastation of property and life. 1884—With finances so reconstructed that all the stock gamblers of Wall street, week before last, failed to make a national panic.

1864—The surgeons of the land setting broken bones, and amputating gangrened limbs, and studying gunshot fractures, and inventing easy ambulances for the wounded and dying. 1884—Surgeons giving their attentions to those in casualty of agriculture, or commerce, or mechanical life. The rushing of the ambulance through our streets not suggesting battle, but quick relief to some one fallen in peaceful industries.

1864—Thirty-five million inhabitants in this land. 1884—Fifty-five million.

1864—Wheat about eighty million bushels. 1884—The wheat will be about five hundred million bushels.

In 1864—Cotton less than three million bales ; in 1884 cotton will be more than seven million bales.

In 1864—Pacific coast five weeks from the Atlantic ; in 1884, for three reasons, Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Northern Pacific, only seven days across.

Look at the long line of churches, universities, asylums and houses with which, during the last two decades, this land has been decorated. Oh, was not this a country worth fighting for ?

Do not the magnificent prosperities of 1884 compensate for the hardships of 1864 ? Soldiers ! Praise God that He has spared you to see this day, and as you gave your bodies in battle give your souls in peace to God and your country.

Living soldiers of the North and South ! Take new and especial ordination at this season of the year to garland the sepulchres of your fallen comrades. Nothing is too good for their memories. Turn all the private tombs and the national cemeteries into gardens. Ye dead of Malvern Hill, and Cold Harbor, and Murfreesboro, and Manassas Junction, and Cumberland Gap, and field hospital, receive these floral offerings of the living soldiery.

But they shall come again, all the dead troops. We sometimes talk about earthly military reviews, such as took place in Paris in the time of Marshal Ney, and in London in the time of Wellington, and in our own land. But what tame things compared with the final review, when all the armies of the ages shall pass for divine and angelic inspection ! St. John says the armies of heaven ride on white horses, and I do not know why many of the old cavalry horses of earthly battle that were wounded and worn out in the service may not have resurrection. It would be only fair that, raised up and ennobled, they would be resurrected for the grand review of the Judgment Day. It would not take any more power to reconstruct their poor bodies than

to reconstruct ours, and I should be very glad to see them among the white horses of apocalyptic vision.

Hark to the trumpet blast, the reveille of the last Judgment! They come up, all the armies of all lands and all centuries, on whichever side they fought, whether for freedom or despotism, for the right or the wrong. They come! they come! Darius, and Cyrus, and Sennacherib, and Joshua, and David leading forth the armies of scriptural times. Hannibal and Hamilcar leading forth the armies of the Carthaginians. Victor Emanuel and Garibaldi leading on the armies of the Italians. Tamerlane and Genghis Khan followed by the armies of Asia. Gustavus Adolphus, and Ptolemy Philopater, and Xerxes, and Alexander, and Semiramis, and Washington leading battalion after battalion. The dead American armies of 1776 and 1812 and the one million of Northern and Southern dead in our civil war. They come up. They pass on in review. The 6,000,000 fallen in Napoleonic battles. The 12,000,000 Germans fallen in the thirty years' war. The 15,000,000 fallen in the war under Sesostris. The 20,000,000 fallen in wars of Justinian. The 25,000,000 fallen in Jewish wars. The 80,000,000 fallen in the crusades. The 180,000,000 fallen in Roman wars with Saracens and Turks. The 35,000,000,000 men estimated to have fallen in battle, enough, according to one statistician, if they stood four abreast, to reach clear around the earth four hundred and forty-two times.

But we shall have time to see them pass in review before the throne of Judgment—the cavalymen, the spearsmen, the artillerymen, the infantry, the sharp-shooters, the gunners, the sappers, the miners, the archers, the skirmishers, men of all colors, of all epaulettes, of all standards, of all weaponry, of all countries. Let the earth be especially balanced to bear their tread. Forward! Forward! Let the orchestra of the heavenly galleries play the grand march, joined by all the fifers, drummers and military bands that ever sounded victory or defeat at Eylau or Borodino, Marathon or Thermopylæ, Bunker Hill or Yorktown, Solferino or Balaclava, Sedan or Gettysburg, from the time that Joshua halted astronomy above Gibeon and Ajalon till the last man surrendered to Garnet Wolseley at Tel-el-Kebir. Attention! companies, battalions, ages, centuries and the universe. Forward in the grand review of the Judgment! Forward!

Gracious and eternal God! On that day may it be found that we were all marching in the right regiment, and that we carried the right standard, and that we fought under the right commander; all heaven, some on amethystine battlement and others standing in shining gates, some on pearly shore and others in turreted heights, giving us the resounding million-voiced cheer: "To Him that overcometh." And our Commander and King, having reviewed the troops, all nations of heaven and earth will salute Him as the one who, standing so long in the sky with the sword of conquest stretched toward the earth, hath at last put it back with a mighty thrust and echoing clang into the sheath of universal victory.