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~~~~~ Sermons ~~~~~

FAITH.

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But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.—HEB. xi., 6.

SUPERNATURAL and miraculous power, though essentially different in some respects, nevertheless have the same ultimate design, viz., that men may believe in God, in Jesus, and be saved. All the miracles recorded in the Bible have for their chief and immediate end the attestation of the presence, power and purpose of God in regard to the present and future well-being of men. They furnish the chief objective ground of a rational faith in God, in Jesus—the ground of such faith as the Gospel requires in order to salvation.

All supernatural influence, as distinguished from the miraculous, is designed to overcome the evils of human ignorance and depravity, and enable men to understand and accept the Gospel as attested by the miraculous power. The miraculous power furnishes the objective ground or evidence of faith. The supernatural power furnishes the requisite gracious ability to accept this evidence in believing to the saving of the soul. This faith, in its various aspects or stages of growth, will now receive our attention.

Faith in reference to secular objects is practically understood by all, even by children. It is so simple that no definition can make it more simple. In fact its mystery, if it involves any, may be said to consist in its simplicity.

—PRAYER MEETING SERVICE—

The Character of Mid-week Services,

By T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), BROOKLYN.

In all our churches we want to make the Friday evening meeting comforting, explanatory, and helpful. By the time Friday comes our business men are as heavy-laden as camels on the road from Aleppo to Damascus. On Monday morning they whistle on their way to business and hum snatches of tunes they sang the day before in the sanctuary; on Tuesday they settle down to more placid cheerfulness; on Wednesday the characteristic of their countenance is gravity; on Thursday passing along the street they are pictures of anxiety; on Friday there is a distressed look which means "Worn out; I wish I was already through with it." The French proposed to have Sunday only once in ten days. I feel thoroughly satisfied with the present arrangement. If I proposed any change at all it would be to have it every fifth day, coming in about where Friday now is, the Sabbaths coming nearer together and allowing more frequent opportunity for refreshment and recuperation. Coming here then on Friday night and feeling the heft of life's burden upon you, with one more day to pass before the holy Sabbath shall dawn upon you, how do you feel? What are your regrets, and your joys, your anticipations? I suppose we might divide all the experiences into three groups; those that belong to the young, those that belong to the middle-aged and those that belong to the aged.

There are many young people here. They have been out in the conflicts and are purer or not so pure as last Sabbath morning. How are you getting on, young man? Where have you been since you came to town? Have you kept the promise you made since you left your father's house? Are all the characteristics of an upright Christian man becoming more evident in your life, or are they getting worn off? Can you consent to do things you could not do in other days? Are dishonesties

less repulsive? Are unclean thoughts less vulturous in your appreciation? It is mean of you to put off the Christian religion to old age, thinking in the finality of life to do that for God which you ought to do in the very preface of your earthly existence. In my boyhood days we had at school a boy characterized for his meanness and stinginess. He often came from his father's orchards bringing large and luscious fruit, but I never knew him to give anything to any of his comrades save once, and when we opened our hands to receive the bright and delicate gratuity, we were surprised at his sudden outburst of generosity, but found out when we had tasted it that the fruit was rotten to the core. That was mean, but not half so mean as for you to give the best fruits of your life to the world and then when your energies are decayed, to present them to God as a gratuity. God does not want your rotten apples. Give to God that which is sweetest, brightest, fairest.

Another group of experiences I find in the lives of these men in mid-life. It is often said that the safest place for a ship is equidistant from the American and European coasts, and I suppose that is so. But there is no point in life where men can sail along without temptation and without stress of tempest and without danger of making immortal shipwreck. You may be equidistant from the starting and landing-places, but you know, Oh man, very well that to-night there are temptations in your soul so great that if God does not help you in the strife of life you will go down and be destroyed. I see multitudes of men in mid-life making mistakes and guilty of errors they can never correct. Although they seemed to start out with all that is promising and fair, to-night they are in the very shadow of death. Because a man starts for Albany, Chicago or Cincinnati is no surety that he is going to get there. The trains may run off the track at Poughkeepsie or Syracuse. The fact that you began well is no proof that

you are going to keep on in the right direction.

Another group of experiences I find in the aged. The father of Matthew Henry, the commentator, said: "I have been drawing in the gospel yoke for thirty years and I like the choice so well I don't want to change it." How is it with you, old men! Do you feel like giving up the grace of God? Would you like to have it give you up? Now, after long experiences of the mercy of God, after having been led through these years, sustained, comforted, disciplined, how do you feel about the religion of Jesus Christ? May the God of Paul, the aged, the God of Jacob, who worshipped leaning on the top of his staff, be your God forever.

Topics for the Week of Prayer.

Sunday, January 3d—Sermons: "Occupy till I come."—Luke xix., 13.

Monday, January 4th—Praise and Thanksgiving.

Tuesday, January 5th—Humiliation and Confession.

Wednesday, January 6th—The Church and the Family.

Thursday, January 7th—Home and Foreign Missions.

Friday, January 8th—Nations and Governments.

Saturday, January 9th—The Christian Life.

Sunday, January 10th—Sermons: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, etc."—Luke xii., 35, 36.

Helpful Hints for Workers

Church Manners.

By C. F. DEEMS, D.D., LL.D. (INDEPENDENT), N. Y.

1. If your pew be rented and some stranger be in it, never show him out, nor allow your countenance to exhibit the least regret at his being in your seat. In your heart thank God that he is there, and no matter if he comes in rags, keep him there and let no member of your family take his place. Find a seat among those who know you. Those who are near you and discover your condition will make room for you rapidly.

2. If it is a free church, put yourself in the hands of an usher, and say not one word. Sit down where he seats you. He has studied the church and knows best. If you insist upon seating yourself, you may enter a pew in which you will leave only one vacancy; then if a man and his wife come and wish to sit together, you separate them. If there be anything special in your case, as hardness of hearing, or a weak limb, then you should inform the usher and let him select your seat.

3. In dressing for church, prepare your-

self to throw off your wrappings when you enter the pew. If you have on clothing to protect you against the cold, and enter a church warmed with stove or register, you will soon become uncomfortable or restless. Study how you are to be as comfortable in the church as in your own house, and do not let any false modesty prevent you from rising to pull off your overcoat, or sacque, or shawl.

4. Take care how you use fans. Ninetenths of fanning is unnecessary. You would be more comfortable if you would sit still and be quiet. The most of fanning is an expression of general fussiness of temper. Moreover, it may annoy your neighbor. We heard a physician say, "that he thought that a large amount of the prevalent neuralgia was due to the use of fans in church, and fell not on those who fanned, but upon some of their neighbors." We have often heard the remark: "I got little good of the sermon yesterday, because of the lady next to me, who fanned me till I was almost in a shiver." What would you think of your minister, if he should fan himself while preaching?

5. Conform to the usages of the congre-