

THE PULPIT TREASURY.

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→ SERMONS ←

THE CHRISTIAN'S FOOTPRINTS.

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Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.—HEBREWS xii., 13.

THIS exhortation follows another—"Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees." It requires strong knees to enable us to take firm steps and make a straight path. If one is weak-kneed, he will be jostled and turned aside by every sturdy and resolute man he meets; and therefore for a Christian to make headway through a world full of wrong-headed and perverse characters it demands the utmost vigor to step. And both these requirements—the strong knees and straight path—are preceded by another—"Wherefore seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses . . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." On the cross, Christ was the author of our faith: at His coming, He will be the finisher of our faith; and between these two lies the whole Christian race. These two facts, therefore, need to be definitely fixed in our creed and in our conviction. The carpenter takes but two points in drawing his mark, and stretching his cord between these he snaps it, and makes a line as straight as a sunbeam. Starting from the cross, where we get forgiveness of sin, we are to set our face steadfastly toward the crown, where we shall attain perfection, and thus are we to press on, hearing God saying to us, "Let thine eyes look right on,

Seizing the horns of the altar—taking Heaven by violence—the soul grows more and more fearless, until one might think his incessant solicitation would carry him beyond divine forbearance. This is the sort of prayers we must offer to our heavenly Father. There must be spirit in them—a burning importunity!

IV. The prayer answered. Here are six petitions. Here also are six responses on the Almighty's part. Not one refused. As long as Abraham asked, the Lord answered. If the patriarch could have gone on, Jehovah would have gone on! O the efficacy of prayer! O the inexhaustible fulness of Grace!

February 27,

Destruction of Sodom.—GEN. xix., 15–26.

1887.

I. Destruction of Sodom. (1) Why? Because of its wickedness (Gen. xix., 13). This wickedness was developed through great worldly prosperity. Fat fields are apt to make lean souls. Here is a common experience—"In my distress I cried unto the Lord." Here is another—"In my prosperity, I forgot God." (See Deut. xxxii., 15.) (2) Who destroyed Sodom? The Lord, using angels as His agents (vs. 1, 13). Here is divine judgment against wickedness. "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." (3) The destruction was complete (vs. 24, 25). The Lord does nothing by halves. He saves to the uttermost! He destroys to the uttermost! Sodom's overthrow is a figure. It tells what that of the wicked soul must be. No light is here thrown upon the doctrine of restorationism. O the force of this word "overthrew" (v. 25). It gives no hope of re-establishment.

II. Lot and his family saved. Vs. 15, 16. (1) They were plainly told the Lord's purpose and what they were to do (vs. 12, 13). The Gospel speaks with equal clearness and force to all now in the Sodom of sin (John iii., 36; Rom. vi., 23). (2) They were urgently told to get out of the city. "Escape for thy life!" To every sinner, the Gospel is equally urgent: "Now is the accepted time and now the day of salvation." By startling providences and deep convictions, God seems at times to lay hold upon men, lest they be consumed in the world's iniquity. (3) It was a timely warning that was given. There is, also, ample opportunity given, by the Gospel, to each sinner to be saved. The

merciful God never warns too late. In the living "now," each lost soul is offered a full salvation!

III. Lot's wife. V. 26. The case of this unfortunate woman is made most notable by our Lord's reference to her (Luke xvii., 30). "Remember Lot's wife." While our lesson charges her with "looking back," Jesus seems to make it stronger, as if she actually "turned back" (Luke xvii., 31, 32). Though she was so urgently warned and though she desired safety, yet unbelief made her linger a fatal moment. (2) She lingered because her heart was still back in cursed Sodom. This is the reason why so many who set out to be saved, are lost—they will not give up the world. (3) The woman perished on the plain, not in Sodom. So, to-day, men are lost on the plain of mere moral life; intense feeling; indecision, etc.: not in great wickedness, not far from the kingdom of Heaven; almost saved—but not saved; not in Christ! (4) She had one grand opportunity to be saved—but one! So has every man but one opportunity. It is given in this life. When death comes that ends mercy. (5) This woman had been greatly helped. But there came a time when she had to help herself, neither husband, daughter or angel could stand by her. So with every case of salvation. (6) Remember it was Lot's wife who was lost. Husband saved, wife lost. Daughters saved, mother lost! (7) There was only one place of salvation—Zoar! So the world has but One to redeem from sin and from the wrath of God (Acts iv., 12).

THE PULPIT TREASURY IN THE FAMILY.

The Cradle-Song.

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

What our mothers sung when they put us to sleep is singing yet. We may have forgotten the words; but they went into the fibre of our soul, and will forever be

a part of it. It is not so much what you formally teach your children as what you sing to them. A hymn has wings, and can fly everywhither. One hundred and fifty years after you are dead, and "Old Mortality" has worn out his chisel in recutting your name on the tombstone,

your great-grandchildren will be singing the song which this afternoon you sung to your little ones gathered about your knee. There is a place in Switzerland where, if you distinctly utter your voice, there come back to you ten or fifteen distinct echoes; and every Christian song sung by a mother in the ear of her child shall have ten thousand echoes coming back from all the gates of Heaven. Oh, if mothers only knew the power of this sacred spell, how much oftener the little ones would be gathered, and all our homes would chime with the songs of Jesus!

We want some counteracting influence upon our children. The very moment your child steps into the street, he steps into the path of temptation. There are foul-mouthed children who would like to besoil your little ones. It will not do to keep your boys and girls in the house and make them house-plants. They must have fresh air and recreation. God save your children from the scathing, blasting, damning influence of the streets! I know of no counteracting influence but the power of Christian culture and example. Hold before your little ones the pure life of Jesus; let that name be the word that shall exorcise evil from their hearts. Give to your instruction all the fascination of music, morning, noon, and night; let it be Jesus, the cradle-song. This is important if your children grow up. But perhaps they may not. Their pathway may be short. Jesus may be wanting that child. Then there will be a soundless step in the dwelling, and the youthful pulse will begin to flutter, and the little hands will be lifted for help. You can not help. And a great agony will pinch at your heart, and the cradle will be empty, and the nursery will be empty, and the world will be empty, and your soul will be empty. No little feet standing on the stairs. No toys scattered on the carpet. No quick following from room to room. No strange and wondering questions. No upturned face, with laughing blue eyes, come for a kiss; but only a grave, and a wreath of white blossoms on the top of it, and bitter deso-

lation, and a sighing at nightfall with no one to put to bed, and a wet pillow, and a grave, and a wreath of white blossoms on the top of it. The heavenly Shepherd will take that lamb safely anyhow, whether you have been faithful or unfaithful. But would it not have been pleasanter if you could have heard from those lips the praises of Christ? I never read anything more beautiful than this about a child's departure. The account said, "She folded her hands, kissed her mother good-by, sung her hymn, turned her face to the wall, said her little prayer, and then died."

Oh, if I could gather up in one paragraph the last words of the little ones who have gone out from all these Christian circles, and I could picture the calm looks, and the folded hands, and sweet departure, methinks it would be grand and beautiful as one of Heaven's great doxologies! In my parish in Philadelphia a little child was departing. She had been sick all her days, and a cripple. It was noonday when she went; and as the shadow of death gathered on her eyelids, she thought it was evening and time to go to bed, and so she said, "Good-night, papa! Good-night, mamma!" And then she was gone! It was "good-night" to pain, and "good-night" to tears, and "good-night" to death, and "good-night" to earth; but it was "good-morning" to Jesus—it was "good-morning" to Heaven. I can think of no cradle-song more beautiful than Jesus.

Jesus.

O name so gentle, yet so strong,
The soul's true wealth and dower;
The heart unlocks at Thy approach,
And opens like a flower;
Blossoms all fear and clouds above,
Filled with the odors of God's love.

O costly treasure of the heart,
Thy beauty men deride,
Faith shows this pearl at Heaven's own
gates

And finds they open wide;
With songs of joy she enters in
A victor over death and sin.