

TALMAGE

**A Timely and Eloquent Discourse
on Safety for Young Men.**

The Death of Absalom and David's Grief—Safeguards Surrounding Youth are Love of Home, Respect for the Sabbath and High Idea of Life.

Washington, D. C., Nov. 24.—In his sermon to-day Rev. Dr. Talmage, preaching to the usual crowded audience, took up a subject of universal interest to young men. His text was selected from II. Samuel, xviii., 29: "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

The heart of David, the father, was wrapped up in his boy Absalom. He was a splendid boy, judged by the rules of worldly criticism. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot there was not a single blemish. The Bible says he had such a luxuriant shock of hair that when once a year it was shorn, what was cut off weighed over three pounds. But, notwithstanding all of his brilliancy of appearance, he was a bad boy, and broke his father's heart. He was plotting to get the throne of Israel. He had marshaled an army to overthrow his father's government. The day of battle had come. The conflict was begun, David, the father, sat between the gates of the palace waiting for the tidings of the conflict. Oh, how rapidly his heart beat with emotion. Two great questions were to be decided; the safety of his boy, and the continuance of the throne of Israel. After awhile, a servant, standing on the top of the house, looks off, and sees some one running. He is coming with great speed, and the man on top of the house announces the coming of the messenger, and the father watches and waits, and as soon as the messenger from the field of battle comes within hailing distance, the father cries out. Is it a question in regard to the establishment of his throne? Does he say: "Have the armies of Israel been victorious? Am I to continue in my imperial authority? Have I overthrown my enemies?" Oh! no. There is one question that springs from his heart to his lip, and from the lip into the ear of the besweated and bedusted messenger flying from the battle field—the question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" When it was told to David, the King, that, though his armies had been victorious, his son had been slain, the father turned his back upon the congratulations of the nation, and went up the stairs to his palace, his heart breaking as he went, wringing his hands sometimes, and then again pressing them against his temples as though he would press them in, crying: "Oh, Absalom! my son! my son! Would God I had died for thee, Oh, Absalom! my son! my son!"

My friends, the question which David, the King, asked in regard to his son is the question that resounds to-day in the hearts of hundreds of parents. Yea, there are a great multitude of young men who know that the question of the text is appropriate when asked in regard to them. They know the temptations by which they are surrounded; they see so many who started with as good resolutions as they have who have fallen in the path, and they are ready to hear me ask the question of my text: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The fact is that this life is full of peril. He who undertakes it without the grace of God and a proper understanding of the conflict into which he is going, must certainly be defeated. Just look off upon society to-day. Look at the shipwreck of men for whom fair things were promised, and who started life with every advantage. Look at those who have dropped from high social position, and from great fortune, disgraced for eternity. All who sacrifice their integrity come to overthrow. Take a dishonest dollar and bury it in the center of the earth, and keep all the rocks of the mountain on top of it; then cover these rocks with all the diamonds of Golconda, and all the silver of Nevada, and all the gold of California and Australia, and put on the top of these all banking and moneyed institutions, and they can not keep down that one dishonest dollar. That one dishonest dollar in

the center of the earth will begin to heave and rock and upturn itself until it comes to the resurrection of damnation. "As the partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches and not by right shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

Now, what are the safeguards of young men? The first safeguard of which I want to speak is the love of home. There are those who have no idea of the pleasures that concentrate around that word "home." Perhaps your early abode was shadowed with vice or poverty. Harsh words, and petulance, and scowling may have destroyed all the sanctity of that spot. Love, kindness and self sacrifice, which have built their altars in so many abodes, were strangers in your father's house. God pity you, young man; you never had a home. But a multitude in this audience can look back to a spot that they can never forget. It may have been a lowly roof, but you can not think of it now without a dash of emotion. You have seen nothing on earth that so stirred your soul. A stranger passing along that place might see nothing remarkable about it; but, oh! how much it means to you. Fresco on palace wall does not mean so much to you as those rough-hewn rafters. Parks and bowers and trees on fashionable watering-place or country seat do not mean so much to you as that brook that ran in front of the plain farm house, and swinging under the weeping willows. The barred gate way swung open by porter in full dress, does not mean as much to you as that swing gate, your sister on one side of it, and you on the other; she gone fifteen years into glory. That scene coming back to you to-day, as you swept backward and forward on the gate, singing the songs of your childhood.

But there are those here who have their second dwelling place. It is your adopted home. That also is sacred forever. There you establish the first family altar. There your children were born. In that room flapped the wings of the death angel. Under that roof, when your work is done, you expect to lie down and die. There is only one word in all the language that can convey your idea of that place, and that word is "home." Now let me say I never knew a man who was faithful to his early adopted home who was given over at the same time to any gross form of wickedness. If you find more enjoyment in the club room, in the literary society, in the art salon, than you do in these unpretending home pleasures, you are on the road to ruin. Though you may be cut off from your early associates, and though you may be separated from all your kindred, young man, is there not a room somewhere that you can call your own? Though it be the fourth story of a third class boarding house into that room gather books, pictures, and a harp. Hang your mother's picture over the mantle. Bid unholly mirth stand back from that threshold. Consecrate some spot in that room with the knee of prayer. By the memory of other days, a father's counsel, a mother's love, and a sister's confidence, call it home.

Another safeguard for these young men is industrious habit. There are a great many people trying to make their way through the world by their wits instead of by honest toil. There is a young man who comes from the country to the city. He fails twice before he is as old as his father was when he first saw the spires of the great town. He is seated in his room at a rent \$1,000 a year, waiting for the banks to declare their dividends and the stocks to run up. After awhile he gets impatient. He tries to improve his penmanship by making copy-plates of other merchants' signatures. Never mind—all is right in business. After awhile he has his estate. Now is the time for him to retire to the country, amid the flocks and the herds, to culture the domestic virtues.

Now the young men who were his schoolmates in boyhood will come, and with their ox teams draw him logs, and with their hard hands will help to heave up the castle. That is not fancy sketch; it is everyday

life. I should not wonder if there were a rotten beam in that palace. I should not wonder if God should smite him with dire sickness, and pour into his cup a bitter draught that will thrill him with unbearable agony. I should not wonder if that men's children grew up to be to him a disgrace, and to make his life a shame. I should not wonder if that man died a dishonorable death, and were tumbled into a dishonorable grave, and then went into the gnashing of teeth. The way of the ungodly shall perish.

Oh! young man, you must have industry of head, or hand, or foot, or perish. Do not have the idea that you can get along in the world by genius. The curse of this country to-day is geniuses—men with large, self conceit and nothing else. The man who proposes to make his living by his wits probably has not any. I should rather be an ox, plain and plodding and useful, than be an eagle, high flying and good-for-nothing but to pick out the eyes of carcasses. Even in the Garden of Eden it was not safe for Adam to be idle, so God made him a horticulturist; and if the married pair had kept busy dressing the vines, they would not have been sauntering under the trees, hankering after fruit that ruined them and their posterity! Proof positive of the fact that when people do not attend to their business they get into mischief. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise; which, having no overseer or guide, provideth her food in the summer and gathered her meat in the harvest." Satan is a roaring lion, and you can never destroy him by gun or pistol or sword. The weapons with which you are to beat him back are pen, type and hammer and adze, and saw, and pickaxe, and yardstick, and the weapon of honest toil. Work, work or die.

Another safeguard that I want to present to young men is a high ideal of life. Sometimes soldiers going into battle shoot into the ground instead of into the hearts of their enemies. They are apt to take aim too low, and it is very often that the captain, going into conflict with his men, will cry out, "Now, men, aim high!" The fact is that in life a great many men take no aim at all. The artist plans out his entire thought before he puts it upon canvas, before he takes up the crayon or the chisel. An architect thinks out the entire building before the workmen begin. Although everything may seem to be unorganized, that architect has in his mind every Corinthian column, every Gothic arch, every Byzantine capital. A poet thinks out the entire plot of his poem before he begins to chime the cantos of tinkling rhythms. And yet there are a great many men who start the important structure of life without knowing whether it is going to be a rude Tartar's hut, or a St. Mark's Cathedral, and begin to write out intricate poem of their life without knowing whether it is to be a Homer's "Odyssey" or a rhymester's botch. Out of one thousand, ninety-nine have no life-plot. Booted and spurred and caparisoned, they hasten along, and run out and say: "Hallo, man! Whither away?" "No where!" they say. Oh! young man, make every day's duty a filling up of the great life-plot. Alas! that there should be on this sea of life so many ships that seem bound for no port. They are swept every whither by wind and wave, up by the mountains and down by the valleys. They sail with no chart. They gaze on no star. They long for no harbor. Oh! young man, have a high ideal and press for it, and it will be a mighty safeguard. There never were grander opportunities opening before young men than are opening now. Young men of the strong arm, and of the stout heart, and of the bounding step, I marshal you to-day for a great achievement.

Another safeguard is a respect for the Sabbath. Tell me how a young man spends his Sabbaths, and I will tell you what are his prospects in business, and I will tell you what are his prospects for the eternal world. God has thrust into our busy life a sacred day when we are to look after our souls. Is it exorbitant, after giving six days to the feeding and clothing of these perish-

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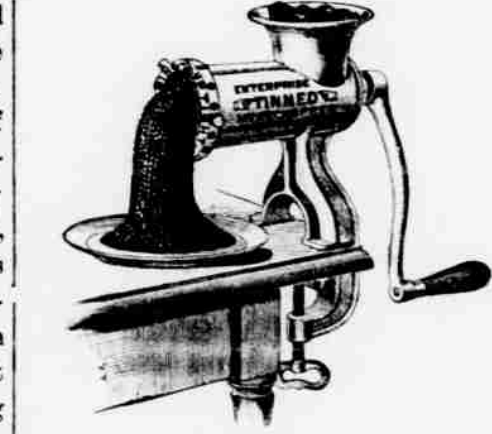
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able bodies, that God should demand one day for the feeding and clothing of the immortal soul? Our bodies are seven day clocks, and they need to be wound up, and if they are not wound up they run down into the grave. No man can continuously break the Sabbath and keep his physical and mental health. Ask those aged men and they will tell you they never knew men who continuously broke the Sabbath who did not fail in mind, body or moral principle. A manufacturer gave his experience. He said: "I owned a factory on the Lehigh. Everything prospered. I kept the Sabbath, and everything went on well. But one Sabbath morning I bethought myself of a new shuttle, and I thought I would invent that shuttle before sunset; and I refused all food and drink until I had completed that shuttle. By sundown I had completed it. The next day, Monday, I showed to my workmen and friends this new shuttle. They all congratulated me on my success. I put that shuttle into play. I enlarged my business; but sir, that Sunday's work cost me \$30,000. From that day everything went wrong. I failed in business, and I lost my mill. Oh, my friends, keep the Lord's day. You may think it old fogy advice, but I give it to you now: "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do thy work; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord, thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work." A man said that he would prove that all this was a fallacy, and so he said, "I shall raise a Sunday crop." And he plowed the field on the Sabbath, and then he put in the seed on the Sabbath and he cultivated the ground on the Sabbath. When the harvest was ripe he reaped it on the Sabbath, and he carried it into the mow on the Sabbath, and then he stood out defiant to his Christian neighbors and said, "There, that is my Sunday crop, and it is all garnered." After awhile a storm came up, and a great darkness, and the

lightnings of the heaven struck the barn and away went his Sunday crop.

There is another safeguard that I want to present. I have saved it until the last because I want it to be the more emphatic. The great safeguard for every young man is the Christian religion. Nothing can take the place of it. You may have gracefulness enough to put to the blush Lord Chesterfield, you may have foreign languages dropping from your tongue, you may discuss laws and literature, you may have a pen of unequalled polish and power, you may have so much business tact that you can get the largest salary in a banking house, you may be as sharp as Heron and as strong as long locks as those which hung Absalom, and yet you have no safety against temptation. Some of you look forward to life with great dependency. I know it. I see it in your faces from time to time. You say: "All the occupations and professions are full, and there's no chance for me." Oh! young man, cheer up. I will tell you how you can make your fortune. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things will be added. I know you do not want to be mean in this matter. You will not drink the brimming cup of life, and then pour the dregs on God's altar. To a generous Savior will not act like that you have not the heart to act like that. That is not manly. That is not honorable. That is not brave. Your great want is a new heart, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I tell you so to day, and the blessed Spirit presses through the solemnities of this hour to put the cup of life to your thirsty lips. Oh! thrust it not back. Mercy presents it—bleeding mercy, long suffering mercy. Despise all other friendships, prove recreant to all other bargains, but despise God's love for your dying soul—do not do that.

There comes a crisis in a man's life, and the trouble is he does not know it is the crisis. I got a letter in which a man says to me. "I start out now to preach the Gospel of righteousness and temperance to the people. Do you remember me? I am the man who appeared at the close of the service when you were worshipping in the chapel after you came from Philadelphia. Do you remember at the close of the service a man coming up to you all a tremble with conviction, and crying out for mercy, and telling you he had a very bad business, and he thought he would change it? That was the turning-point in my history. I gave my heart to God, and the desire to serve him has grown upon me all these years, until now woe is unto me if I don't preach the Gospel." That Sunday night was the turning point of that young man's history. This very Sabbath hour will be the turning point in the history of a hundred young men in this house. God help us. I once stood on an anniversary platform with a clergyman who told this marvelous story. He said:

"Thirty years ago two young men started out to attend Park theatre, New York, to see a play which made religious look ridiculous and hypocritical. They had been brought up in Christian families. They started for the theatre to see that vile play, and their early convictions came back upon them. They felt it was not right to go, but still they went. They came to the door of the theatre. One of the young men stepped and started for home, but returned and came up to the door, but had not the courage to go in. He again started for home, and went home. The other young man went in. He went from one degree of temptation to another. Caught in the whirl of frivolity and sin, he sank lower and lower. He lost his business position. He lost his morals. He lost his soul. He died a dreadful death, not one star of mercy shining on it. I stand before you to-day," said the minister, "to thank God that for twenty years I have been permitted to preach the Gospel. I am the other young man." Oh! you see that was the turning point—the one went back, the other went on. The great roaring world of business life will soon break in upon you, young men. Will the wild wave dash out the impressions of this day as an ocean billow dashes letters out of the sand on the beach? You need something better than this world can give you. I beat on your heart and it sounds hollow. You want something great and grand and glorious to fill it, and here is the religion that can do it, God save you.

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