

THE THREE CROSSES OF CALVARY

Rev. Dr. Talmage Invites the World to Look to the Central One and Find Salvation.

Washington Report.—The famous paintings in the picture galleries of Munich seem to have suggested the topic of this discourse, which Dr. Talmage sends from the quaint Bavarian town, but the theme which inspired the painter awakens in the redemptive thoughts of the redemption of the human race, which was the supreme design of that scene of suffering and death. The text is Luke xliii. 33: "There they crucified him and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left."

Just outside of Jerusalem is a swell of ground, toward which a crowd is ascending, for it is the day of execution. What a mighty assemblage! Some for curiosity to hear what the three will say and to see how they will act. The three persons to be executed are already there.

Three crosses in a row—an upright piece and two transverse pieces, one on the top, on which the hands are nailed and one at the middle, on which the victim sits. Three trees just planted, yet bearing fruit—the one at the right bearing poison, the one at the left apples of love. Norway pine and tropical orange and Lebanon cedar would not make so strange a grove as this orchard of Calvary. Stand and give a look at the three crosses.

Just look at the cross on the right. Its victim dies agonizing. More awful than his physical anguish is his scorn of his physical agony. He looks at the cross of the middle and hatred of him on the middle cross. This wretched man turns half around on the spikes to hiss at the one in the middle. If the scorner could get one hand loose he would within reach in the face. He hates the middle sufferer. He hates him with a perfect hatred. I think he wishes he were down on the ground that he might spear him. He envies the mechanics who nail the nails because they are fast. Amid the settling darkness and louder than the creak of the rocks hear him utter these words: "Ah, you poor wretch! I knew you were an impostor! You pretended to be a god, and yet you let these legs be cut off!" It was in his death hour, because he thought he saw Christ in his bedroom, got up on his elbow and cried out, "Crush that wretch! What had the middle cross done to arouse up this right hand cross? Nothing. Look against Christ! The middle cross is a sentimental Christ or a philanthropic Christ, but a Christ who comes to smother men away from their sins—away with them! On his right hand cross today I see typified the noblest of the world. Men say: 'Back with him from the heart! I will not let him take my sins. If he will die, let him die for himself, not for me.' There has always been a war between this right hand cross and the middle cross, and wherever there is an unbelieving heart there the fight goes on. Oh, if when that dying malefactor perished the faithlessness of man had perished, then that tree which yields poison would have budded and blossomed with life for all the world to see.

Look up into that disturbed countenance of the sufferer and see what a ghastly thing it is to reject Christ. Behold in that awful face, in that pitiful look, in that unblinded death hour, the sin of the sinner's departure. What a plunge into darkness! Standing high upon the cross on the top of the hill, so that all the world may look at him, he says: "Here I go out of a miserable life into a wretched eternity!" One! Two! Three! Listen to the crash of the fall, all ye ages! So Hobbes, dying after he had 70 years in which to prepare for eternity, said: "Were I master of all the world, I would give it all to purchase a day longer." Sir Francis Newport, hovering over the brink, cried out: "Wretch that I am, whether shall I fly from this breast? What will become of me? Oh, that I were to live up a thousand that never is quenched the favor of God and to be purchased to him again! Oh, eternity! Oh, eternity! Who can discover the abyss of eternity? Who can paraphrase these words, 'Forever and forever?'"

That right hand cross, with its long beam, overhanging all the earth. It is planted in the heart of the race. When will the time come when the spirit of God shall, with its ax, hew down that right hand cross until it shall fall at the foot of that middle cross, and unbelief, that rattling malefactor of the world, shall perish from all our hearts? Away from me, thou spirit of unbelief! I hate thee! With this sword of God I trust thee back and thrust thee through. Down to hell, down, most accursed monster of the earth, and talk to those who have already dammed their souls no longer to these sons of God, these heirs of heaven.

"If thou be the Son of God." Was there any "if" about it? Tell me, thou star, that in robes of light thou standest in the firmament, tell me, thou sea, when he bade thee be still, over thy lips when he bade thee be still, tell me, ye dead who got up to see him die, tell me, thou sun in midheaven, who for him didst pull down over thy face thy veil of darkness. Tell me, ye lepers who were cleansed, ye dead who were raised, is he the Son of God? Aye, aye, respond to the rattle of the flowers breathe it; the stars chime it; the redeemed celebrate it; the angels rise on their thrones to announce it. And yet on that miserable malefactor's "if" how many shall be wrecked for all eternity! That little "if" has enough venom in it sting to cause the death of the soul. No "if" about it, I know it. Ecce Deus! I feel it thoroughly—through every muscle of the body, and through every faculty of my mind, and through every energy of my soul. Living, I will preach it; dying, I will

comes the abode of penitence. The plow of the malefactor, soaked in blood, becomes like the crimson upholstery of a king's couch. When the body became still and the surgeons feeling the pulse said one to another: "He is dead," the last mark of pain had gone from his face. Peace had smoothed his forehead. Peace closed his eyes. Peace closed his lips. Now you see why there were two transverse pieces on the cross for it has become a bed to rest on. The head is under the promise. "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

I have shown you the right hand cross and the left hand cross; now come to the middle cross. We stood at the one and found it yielded poison; we stood at the other and found it yielded bitter aloes. Come now to the middle cross and shake down apples of love. Undo your head. You never saw so tender a face as this. You never saw so loving a father, or mother or companion or child die, but never so affecting a scene as this. The railing thief looked from one way and saw only the right side of Christ's face; the penitent thief looked from the other way and saw Christ's face. But times a tonic for the body, and the bitter aloes that grow on this tree shall give strength and life to this left hand cross is a repenting cross. He says: "I am a guilty wretch. I deserve this. There is no need of my cursing. That will not stop the pain. There is no need of blaspheming Christ, for he has done me no wrong. And yet I cannot die so, by the tortures of my body are undone by the tortures of my soul. The past is a scene of misdoing, the present a crucifixion, the future an everlasting undoing. Come back, thou hiding midday sun! Kiss my cheek with one bright ray of comfort. What, no help from above? No help from beneath? Then I must turn to my companion in sorrow, the one on the middle cross. I have heard that He knows how to help a man when he is in trouble. I have heard that He can cure the wounded. Surely in all His wanderings I have heard that He can pardon the sinner. Surely in all His wanderings I have heard that He never saw up and down the earth. He never saw one more in need of His forgiveness. Blessed, O I turn to Thee. Will Thou turn for the moment away from thy own pang to pity me? Lord, it is not to have my hands relieved or my feet taken from the torture—I can stand all this—but, oh, my sins, my sins, my sins! They pierce me through and through. They will push me out into the darkness unless Thou wilt help me. I confess it all. Hear the cry of the dying thief: 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.'"

Likewise must we repent. You say, "I have stolen nothing." I reply, "We have all been guilty of the mightiest felony of the universe, for we have robbed God—robbed Him of our time, robbed Him of our talents, robbed Him of our services." Suppose you send a man on an agent of your firm, and every month you pay him salary, and every day he tells you how he has been serving another firm, but not taking your salary, would you not at once condemn him as dishonest? God sent us into this world to serve Him. He has given us wages all the time. Yet how many of us have been serving, have leaned their heads against it. This hour may all your soul's affection, brace it with an ecstasy of love. Lay hold of the cross, and put your grip on that you are safe. Oh, that I might engrave on your forehead the three words: "I am a sinner." Then in your dreams you will find yourself to be a sinner. You say, "I don't feel myself to be a sinner." That may be. Walk along by the cliffs, and you see sunlight and flowers at the mouth of the cave, but have gone far and you see the flashing eye of a wild beast or hear the hiss of a serpent. So the heart seems in the sunlight of worldliness. But as I wander into the deep cavern of the heart, alas, for the rattling horrors and the rattling fangs! Have you ever noticed the climax of this passage of scripture: "The heart is deceitful." That seems enough. But the passage goes on and says: "The heart is deceitful above all things." Will you not say that is enough? But the passage goes on further and says: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." If we could see the true condition of the unpardoned before God, what wringing of the hands there would be! What a thousand voiced shriek of supplication and despair! But you are a sinner, a sinner. I speak not to the person who sits next you, but to you. You are a sinner. All the transgressions of a lifetime have been gathered up into a slip from the cliffs and crush you forever. May the Lord Almighty, by his grace, help us to repent of our sins while repentance is possible.

This left hand cross was a believing cross. There was no guesswork in prayer, no "if" in that supplication. The left hand cross hung itself at the foot of the middle cross, expecting mercy. Faith is only just opening the hand to take what Christ offers us. The work is all done; the bridge is built; strong enough for us all to walk over. Tap not at the dog's God's mercy with the tip of your fingers, but as a warrior with gauntleted fists beat at the castle gate. So with all the pounds and energies of our souls let us pound at the gate of heaven. That gate is locked. You go to it with a bunch of keys. You try philosophy. That will not open it. A large door generally has a ponderous key. I take the cross and place the foot of the cross in the lock, and by the two arms of the cross I turn the lock, and the door opens.

This left hand cross was a pardoned cross. The crosses were only two or three yards apart. It did not take long for Christ to hear. Christ might have turned away and said: "How darest thou speak to me? I am the Lord of heaven and earth. I have seen your violence. When you struck down that man in the darkness, I saw you. You are getting a just reward. Die in darkness—die forever." But Jesus said not so, but rather, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise," as much as to say: "I will see you there. Do not worry. I will not only bear my cross, but help you with yours."

Forthwith the left hand cross became the abode of penitence. The plow of the malefactor, soaked in blood, becomes like the crimson upholstery of a king's couch. When the body became still and the surgeons feeling the pulse said one to another: "He is dead," the last mark of pain had gone from his face. Peace had smoothed his forehead. Peace closed his eyes. Peace closed his lips. Now you see why there were two transverse pieces on the cross for it has become a bed to rest on. The head is under the promise. "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

One of the greatest Chinese discoverers was a kind of iron ore which attracts iron—the magnet. The iron ore is the magnet's compass. Without which travel at sea would be almost impossible. They were the first people to dig for iron ore and to carry it on their backs. In building their great railroads, they discovered the greatest of all inventions—the arch.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON NO. XIV
SEPTEMBER 30, 1900.

Review.—Matt. 16; 21-26; John 16; 7-11.

Summary.—Lesson I. Topic: Prayer and Faith. Place: On the sea of Galilee. The first command had just been given; Jesus sent the disciples across the sea towards Capernaum; sent the multitude away; went alone to pray; between three and six o'clock in the morning; Jesus and the disciples were on the water; Peter walks out for help; Jesus caught him; rebuked him for doubting; Christ is worshipped; Peter asks for bread. Place: Capernaum. The multitude seek for Jesus; he again heals their sick; many follow him for the "loaves and fishes"; we should labor for meat, which endureth.

II. Topic: Casting out an unclean spirit. Place: The borders of Phoenicia. Sermons on bread of life, and pollution, just delivered; the people put against the borders of Phoenicia; a Gentile woman beseeches Him to cast the devil out of her daughter; Jesus replies that it is not meet to give the children's bread to dogs; he asks for the crumbs; "for this saying" the devil was cast out—her request granted.

III. Topic: The Christ. Place: Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked His disciples what they said he was; some said John the Baptist, and others Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus said, "But who sayest thou?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon, because flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father in heaven, who hath revealed it unto thee." Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall I go? There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, but the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; whosoever shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whosoever shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Peter said, "Lord, show me this kingdom, for I have seen thee, and I have believed in thee." Jesus said, "Peter, thou art the rock, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; whosoever shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whosoever shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Peter said, "Lord, show me this kingdom, for I have seen thee, and I have believed in thee." Jesus said, "Peter, thou art the rock, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; whosoever shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whosoever shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Peter said, "Lord, show me this kingdom, for I have seen thee, and I have believed in thee." Jesus said, "Peter, thou art the rock, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; whosoever shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whosoever shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." 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