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TALMAGE SERMON

By Rev. FRANK DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D., Pastor of Jefferson Park, formerly Union Church, Chicago.

Los Angeles, Cal., Jan. 24. In this exposition of an "unwritten sermon" now given to the world as sacred literature, the preacher shows the importance of action as the criterion of a true and practical Christian life. The text is Matthew 11, 12. "He who is without sin, let him first cast a stone at him who is without sin." "This is the text and the last sermon which my father ever wrote. When I was summoned to Washington during his mortal illness I found upon his study desk a plain sheet of paper, placed there with these thirteen words upon it, just as he always wrote down his theme and text before he started his sermon. That brief memorandum proved to me that had he not been quickly summoned away by the messenger of death the next sermon he proposed to have written would have been upon 'the language of action.' There were no indications of the manner in which he intended to treat the topic, but I know that the subject had been much in his mind and that he had been impressed by the fact that it often came by sermons and actions without the utterance of a word. I wish we could have had that sermon, for the warnings he would have uttered need to be spoken. I have therefore thought it a duty to fulfill, as far as I am able, the intention my father was so evidently speaking of by the text. A few months ago I had this truth emphasized in a striking way. I was visiting in the east. The first night while there my friend came to me and said, 'I want you to go and hear what I consider the finest oratorical playing in the United States.' 'Oh, no,' I answered, 'I cannot go. I am fagged out from travel and work. Besides, I am going to have a hard day of preaching tomorrow, and I must stay home and rest up for it.' 'But you must go to hear the greatest of men, but I want you to sit in front of Mr. So-and-so, the leader, and watch the expressiveness of his actions while leading his orchestra. If your ear was as deaf as that of a Ludwig Beethoven, who could not hear the loudest tone sounded in his 'Kreutzer Sonata' or in his 'Battle Symphony,' you could not hear what the musicians were playing by watching their leader's actions."

great religious compositions, such as Handel's "Messiah" and Wagner's "Parsifal" and Mozart's "Mozart" and Mendelssohn's "Elijah" or "Paul" or "see standing in the corner of the balcony, the speaker casts such words of scripture as that of Michael Angelo's "David" or "Moses." I am compelled to believe that some pure, noble spirit has been living in and dominating that man. So, by the "language of action," when I had a man looking to be in the house of God on the Sabbath day, when I see that man, week after week, sitting in a conspicuous place at the midweek prayer meeting, when I find him continually seeking the great religious gatherings which every little while take place in a large city; when I find him, daily and weekly, and yearly, associating with men and women noted for their Christian integrity, I am compelled to believe that that man wants to be good and to live a pure life. On the other hand, when I see a man conspicuous for his absolute inactivity, his absolute inaction, I am informed that his character is just the opposite of what it ought to be.

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The Wicked Worse Than They Seem. As a wicked person is nearly always worse than he seems, I put this blunt question to you: "Oh, sinner, with forward lips, how dare you despise God's holy Sabbath? How dare you, without a blush upon your cheek, be seen entering the saloons or be known there your evenings in dissipation, where the name of Christ is sneered at and ridiculed? How dare you gleefully boast of those sins about which I dare not speak in public? Do you not know that by your 'language of action' you are not only destroying yourself, but others also? Take the name of Christ and write it in your book, 'Age of Reason,' he took the manuscript to Benjamin Franklin to ask for his criticism. After Franklin had read it he commended its literary qualities. Then he said: 'Thomas Paine, I would never print that book, would throw that manuscript into the fire. If the human race is to be saved, how greatly magnified those sins will become if the bulwarks of Christianity are taken away. By that work you will not only destroy others, but yourself. He that spits against the wind spits in his own face.' Like Thomas Paine, by the 'language of action,' a man not only destroys himself, but others also. Men sometimes have not the courage to commit the crimes they desire, but by their actions invite others to commit them; but God and man hold them accountable for the acts of their accomplices. As Henry II. of England, grieved by the profligacy of Thomas

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Depravity Hidden. This indictment against the actions of an evil man's life is the more positive because in the lowest form of outward vice, by the "language of action" the wicked man nearly always wants to appear a little better than he really is. Theodore Roosevelt, who has been a student of beans and birds and flowers, says that this characteristic of the wicked man is that he is never better than he is. He is not at all ways true of all the inhabitants of the natural world as it is of man. Once, when visiting Nashville, Tenn., he heard a mocking bird, whose reputation for the most part rests purely upon his ability for mimicry. It is a whole night with sweetest music. Upon the tree upon which he is perched, the president, saw and heard him. "Sometimes," wrote Mr. Roosevelt, "he would perch motionless for many minutes, his body quivering and thrilling with the output of music. Then he would drop softly from twig to twig until the lowest limb was reached. When he could rise, uttering and leaping through his branches, his song never ceasing for an instant, until he reached the summit of the tree and launched into the warm, scented air, floating in spirals with outstretched wings, until, as if spent, he sank gently back into the tree and down through the branches, while his song rose into an ecstatic ardor and passion." That midnight song seems to have given the president a higher appreciation of the powers of the mocking bird. The song, warbling in the darkness and silence of the night, showed that it had more harmony and melody in its being than his heard had previously supposed. It was, in fact, the converse of the general rule, that the actions of a man's life are not at all ways true of their better nature; that they show more of their worst characteristics when they are displayed. Many a man whose life when under observation is irreproachable shows, when the restraints of public opinion are removed, a capacity for hell and beastly sin.

But a wicked man's actions have a positive as well as a negative significance. The man who is good and noble associates a man's character rests upon a dark cloud, then by his bold and reckless avoidance of all the great moral influences of the day his wicked life is to be judged also. It is one not to sit in secret and to be ashamed of your sins. It is a far more shameful act to associate with a man whose character is a departed condition, in which you do not seem to care what people may say in reference to your life or how your bold example they may be led astray through your evil conduct.

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