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MONEY AND RELIGION

REV. THOMAS DIXON'S THIRD SERMON ON THE SUBJECT.

Black Friday Was and the Present Panic Is the Result of Violating God's Revealed Law as to Trade—Can a Christian Succeed in Wall Street?

CAPE CHARLES, Va., July 16.—Rev. Thomas Dixon, Jr., preached the third sermon in the series on "The Question of Money and the Gospel of Christ" in the Methodist church on Cobb's Island today. The text chosen was, "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges v. 20).

In no way does money show its tremendous power so clearly as in the want of it. Man never fully realizes the power of money until he is absolutely without it. It is this shadow that oppresses in these days our own great nation. It is the shadow of the panic. It is the ghost of the commercial world that forever haunts even the prosperous. It is the skeleton in the closet of the nation whose treasury groans with countless millions. The darkest days of the history of our nation have not been the days of war, of great storm or of food or of famine. They have been days of money panic. They have been days in which thousands hung breathless over the brink of ruin, and bound up with them were countless other thousands whose lives were involved.

The days of our real trial are these days when the black shadows hang over the money markets of our great cities; when cunning fiends lurk in every dark corner ready to spring upon the throat of the helpless and kill and destroy without mercy. This is speaking on a large scale of the problem which confronts the poor in their daily life. Wall street in New York and State street in Boston and the centers of commerce in our great western cities have their Black Fridays, but they come on rare occasions and at long intervals, and it is a blessed relief to the world that they do come thus rarely. But it is a sad fact that Black Friday is a day with which the great masses of our people are only too familiar.

One of the direst curses of our age is the want of money. I mean want. I do not mean a respectable poverty. I mean a want that cuts. One of the chief causes of the poverty of our age is unquestionably found in the results of the day of darkness and panic in the financial world. This black Friday is not a thing that comes by chance. It is the evidence of a vital disease—a disease that strikes to the very heart of the body politic. The old prophet told us that the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Sisera was the captain of the hosts of Jabin, the oppressor of Israel. He encamped in the plains with his magnificent army, preparing to make his final assault. But the river rose and overwhelmed his chariots, and a woman slew Sisera, driving a nail through his sleeping head. The river did the work—that is to say, the prophet would teach us that the forces of nature are in league with the eternal principles of truth and righteousness, and together they are working out the salvation of the world.

Evil by its own nature exhausts and destroys itself. Good increases and must ultimately triumph. Its principle is germinal. Individuals, principles, systems that clash with truth and right, have gone down and must continue to go down. Let us lift high above our heads as a gleaming lantern these facts and explore the depths of this Black Friday of poverty, and we will find both the cause of our failures and the promise of something better.

Such is the contrast between a successful Christianity and successful business today. There cannot be a moment's questioning of the fact that the business of today is in conflict with eternal truth and righteousness. So much the worse for business. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The forces of nature are in league with the eternal forces of truth and right. The business which violates the fundamentals of right in the process of its development must have of necessity its Black Fridays, and the Black Fridays are the necessary developments of the clash with righteousness. These days of panic are the natural result of long continued violations of justice. If they did not come, law would cease to be law, and chaos would reign. The fact that they come is an indication that there is a God of right and truth who is guiding above all the scenes of conflict and confusion. The man who violates truth and justice has thrown his puny body against the very stars of heaven. He has thrown his prostrate form before God's great wheel of the universe, and he will be ground to powder. The nation that violates fundamental right must suffer, and suffer in the very ways in which it has wrought the violation.

The Christian way of trade may not be an easy way; it is certainly not a popular way today; it never has been. But Christianity is the mightiest power on earth today. It is the one power that dominates politics, trade, nations. It is the power that through the ages has righted a thousand wrongs that seemed beyond remedy. Kingdoms, empires, societies—apparently invincible—have perished at its touch. We stand upon the pinnacle of the nineteenth century and look back with increasing amazement at this procession of dead societies and dead peoples and dead nations who have died because they clashed with the eternal forces of truth and of righteousness. At times we have an apparent triumph of wrong. It is only apparent. It is but the beginning of the end. Men have declared that it is impossible to exist in the business world and live on principles. Men have declared men are liars in the business world and said to me a short time ago

money; that honor and truth are not elements that are considered in the modern business world.

This assertion is entirely too broad when our friend would declare that all men are liars. From this point of view it is true, but there is such a thing as mirage. A man in the arctic sea looks out over the water and sees a ship approach with her keel in the air. He can see the officer in command; he can see the vessel as it tacks in its course. Everything is beyond question a living reality before him. And yet, as a matter of fact, it is owing to a condition of atmosphere. It is not a reality on which he is gazing; it is an inverted picture of the real ship that is below the horizon in the distance. So the vision of the modern business man as to right and truth is often obscured, because he draws his conclusion from what he sees in daily life about him, from what he touches.

The way of Christianity is not the easiest way in the long run. We suffer in pain. We suffer in black poverty and despair and wretchedness and crime and misery and intemperance, because in our commercial world we violate the fundamental laws of truth and righteousness. To get back to the right is to remedy the evil. To bring the commercial world into harmony with the principles of Christianity is at once the cure for the present disease and the guarantee that the future will be bright, not dark.

If it is said that a Christian with his impossible ideals cannot exist if he attempts to enforce them in the business world, let the answer be unmistakable, that the business of the Christian is to die, is to sacrifice. The block and the stake and the rack and the thumbcrew and the red hot plowshare—these have been his through the ages of the past. When Christians could not live, they died. They considered it their business to die. It is the Christian's business to die as much as it was in the apostolic age, in the age of the heroes and the martyrs. Every age must have its heroes and its martyrs. There is a call today for the Christian merchant who is willing to die rather than to do wrong, as there never was a call for the Christian soldier to march into the valley of death for the cause of Christian civilization.

John Ruskin has met graphically and powerfully expressed this truth in his great essay on "The Roots of Honor." He shows that: The soldier's profession is to defend the nation. The pastor's to teach it. The physician's to keep it in health. The lawyer's to enforce justice. The merchant's to provide for it. And the duty of all these men is on due occasion to die for it. On due occasion—namely: The soldier, rather than to leave his post in battle. The physician, rather than to leave his post in plague. The pastor, rather than to teach falsehood. The lawyer, rather than to countenance injustice. The merchant—what is his due occasion of death? Well does Ruskin say it is the main question for the merchant as for all of us, for truly the man who does not know when to die does not know how to live. The difficulty in our world of commerce has been that men have not known how to die. They have fought one another to the death. They have fought the wounded as well as the strong. They have fought one another instead of fighting their common enemies—hunger and cold—and the forces of nature that would destroy man. "He that would save his life shall lose it" is the message which Jesus brings to the world. It is the message which should be written in letters of fire across every Stock Exchange in the hour of its panic.

It is utterly impossible today to be a practical Christian and a successful business man? Is the basis of business anti-Christian? So much the worse for business. We shall certainly not give up Christianity. We must simply recreate the business world and make it possible for a Christian to live in it. And until it is thus recreated the curse of God, the God of truth and righteousness, will wither and blast and strike with destruction. The God of the widow and of the orphan will have his days of reckoning. The God of the homeless and of the friendless and of the wretched and helpless will have his day of reckoning and of wrath. It must come because his laws have been violated in the course of the daily life of our business world. The business that clashes with Christianity must go down. It clashes with the very stars of heaven.

Hear the prophetic voice of John Ruskin again: "Any given accumulation of commercial wealth may be indicative on the one hand of faithful industries, progressive energies and productive ingenuities, or on the other it may be indicative of mortal luxury, merciless tyranny, ruinous opulence. Some treasures are heavy with untimely rain, and some gold is brighter in sunshine than it is in substance. And these are not, observe, merely moral or pathetic attributes of riches which the seeker of riches may, if he chooses, despise. They are literally and sternly material attributes of riches, deprecating and exalting incalculably the monetary signification of the sum in question. One mass of money is the outcome of action which has annihilated—other times as much in the gathering of it. Such and such strong hands have been paralyzed, as if they had been numbed by lightning; so many strong men's courage broken; so many productive operations hindered—this and the other false direction given to labor and lying image set up on Dura plains dug times heated furnaces. It seems to be wealth may be only the gilded index of ruin: a wrecker's handful of

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

LESSON IV, THIRD QUARTER, INTERNATIONAL SERIES, JULY 23.

Text of the Lesson, Acts xviii, 1-11—Memory Verses, 9-11—Golden Text, I Cor. 1, 18—Commentary, by the Rev. D. H. Stearns.

1. "After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth." His testimony was not in vain at Athens, for some came unto him and believed. See previous verse. He did not expect that all the seed would fall on good soil; neither are we so taught. But he did know that God's word would accomplish His pleasure and not return void, and that his labor was not in vain for the Lord (Isa. lv, 11; I Cor. xii, 58). His aim was "by all means to save some" (I Cor. ix, 22), and this he accomplished. The church of Christ is made up of an elect number out of all nations, given unto Him out of this world (Rev. v, 9; Eph. 1, 4; John xvii, 9), and to this end we, like Paul, should seek to get the gospel everywhere.

2. "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome), and came unto them." We cannot help remarking that after 1,800 years the Jews are still commanded to depart from cities and countries on the face of the earth. It is the same old story as in the days of Paul. It is the fulfillment of words spoken through Moses over 3,000 years ago. See Deut. xviii, 63-66. But if the curse has come so literally, and so fully the blessing shall also come, and "the days of their mourning shall be ended." "For He that scattered Israel will gather him," and the time is even now at hand (Isa. li, 20; Jer. xxxi, 10; Ezek. xxxvii, 21, 22).

3. "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought, for by their occupation they were tentmakers." While Paul believed and taught that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. ix, 14), he also took pleasure in working at his trade that he might minister to his own necessities and give the gospel freely (Acts xx, 34; I Cor. iv, 11, 12; I Thess. ii, 9; II Thess. iii, 8). It is a great advantage under some circumstances to be able to do this now and thus stop the mouths of those who say of the preacher, "It is his business; he makes a good thing out of it." I am glad that I had three years' experience of ministering to my necessities by working seven hours a day, that I might freely give all the rest of my time to distinctively religious work.

4. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." He doubtless did as at Thessalonica and reasoned out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus is the Christ (chapter xvii, 2, 3). From his conversion his one duty was that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (chapter ix, 20-22).

5. "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ." The R. V. says that he was "constrained by the word." This reminds us of Jeremiah, who, when the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto him and a derision daily, said he would not speak any more in His name, but the word of God was such a fire in his heart that he was constrained to speak (Jer. xx, 9, 10).

6. "And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed he shook his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." It was his custom everywhere to preach the gospel to the Jew first (Rom. i, 16) and then to the Gentile. Compare their conduct at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii, 45, 46). When any one is duly warned of danger and refuses to take heed, his blood is on himself (Ezek. xxxiii, 4, 5). Those who obey not the gospel shall be punished with everlasting destruction (II Thess. i, 8, 9). As to shaking one's raiment see Neh. v, 13.

7. "And he departed thence and entered into a certain man's house named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue." When one door is shut, another is sure to open, and sometimes, as in this case, next door to the one closed against us. When the Lord opens a door for us, no power can shut it, and when a house or city is closed against us, or our message we have only to move on in His name (Rev. iii, 8; Math. x, 14). It is not us that they will treat, but Him whose message we bear (Luke x, 16).

8. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized." The chief ruler cannot always control the other rulers, whether he be president of a nation, mayor of a city or only ruler of a synagogue, but the time will come when there will be a Chief Ruler to whom all others shall yield a perfect obedience. He will be this same Jesus whom Paul preached, but He will then be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him (Rev. xix, 16; Ps. lxxii, 11). It was a splendid victory for the Lord and His servant to have the chief ruler and his household receive the despised Nazarene as Israel's Messiah. Many must have been helped by his example to do likewise. Here again, as at Athens, Paul is privileged to give scope and help to complete the church.

9. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace." He was probably being tempted like Jeremiah, to whom he has already referred. He says in I Cor. ii, 3, that he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. His Master had observed this, and hence this vision and great comfort. Compare Josh. i, 9; Jer. i, 17. What exceeding great comfort there is in these "fear notes" of our Lord from Gen. xv, 1 to Rev. i, 17, but we get no benefit unless we appropriate them to ourselves. If we are the Lord's and in His service, we may take His promises right to our hearts. 10. "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." One of the largest promises in the Bible, if not the very largest, is the "I am with you" of Jehovah. See how he gave it to Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, and the apostles (Ex. iii, 12; Josh. i, 5; Judg. vi, 16; Isa. xli, 10; Jer. i, 19; Hag. i, 13; ii, 4; Math. xxviii, 20).

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