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UNITED THEY STAND.

REV. DR. TALMAGE'S UNITY SERMON FROM CURIOUS TEXT.

SERMON INSPIRING LESSON.

Message to Churches and Religious Communities That Have Been Torn By Dissension or Weakened By Discouragement—Spiritual Victories For Christians Acting As a Harmonious Unit—Gideon's Unique Victory.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Bailey, of Toronto, at the Dep't of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Jan. 31.—To the churches and religious communities that have been torn by dissension or weakened by discord and defection this sermon conveys a powerful and inspiring lesson, showing how even a small company of Christians, acting as a harmonious unit, may win great spiritual victories. The text is Judges vii, 6, "And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men."

No sincerist is the army's recruiting officer. In most cases, whether in peace or war, the problem which must be solved by the war department is not "How can we reject our volunteers?" but "How can we persuade or even compel men to enlist in the ranks?" During America's great civil war all healthy men in the south between the ages of eighteen and sixty were forced to shoulder a musket if unwilling to go as volunteers, while in the north, after the volunteers had ceased to respond to Lincoln's repeated calls for troops the "draft" officers went everywhere.

The story of Gideon's campaign is unique in history. Here was a general about to march against a powerful invader, well armed and equipped, whom he must meet with a raw and undisciplined force, actually reducing by a capricious test the number of his followers. Under God's command he dispensed with nine-tenths of his men. When General Gideon raised his standard to repel the invasion of the Midianites, and Amalekites 32,000 volunteers answered the call to arms. But God said to Gideon, better quality than quantity. Better a few loyal and devoted men to repel the invasion than a great host made up of disgruntled and fault-finding, indifferent recruits. Gideon, as directed by God, cut down the numbers of that Israelitish army. He cut them down and down and down and down until there were left only three hundred men—only three small companies to follow their intrepid leader. But they won the victory. So it may be in the great conflict between good and evil in this world. Consecrated, loyal, earnest men are needed in the struggle for righteousness.

The church should be a harmoniously organized army. The loyalty with which one soldier holds to another in the national army decides to a great extent the aggregate strength of that army. When going into battle it is just as important for a soldier to know that he is standing shoulder to shoulder with friends as to realize that he is standing face to face with attacking foes. Civil war veterans have told me that the affection which bonded the men of each company together was like bands of unbreakable steel. If a soldier out foraging found food hidden away in a barn or if he found a deserted pile of blankets or an extra pile of dry wood to be cut into kindling, the first persons he thought of were those of his company. There the members shared each other's joys. They sympathized with each other in their sorrows. So, my friends, the members of each separate Christian church ought to be linked together by gospel love. They should try to shield each other and pray for each other and care for each other and help each other. They should never before the world expose each other's weaknesses any more than a wife should be willing to publish before a cynical neighborhood the weaknesses and shortcomings of her husband. Church members, in other words, should "be kindly affectioned to one another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another."

"The church a harmonious gospel company? Oh, no," says our skeptic idealist. It is not always a possibility. I know it is not possible for me to live in sympathy and love with all the members of my church. Some of them have been too mean and have done me too many injustices. I can truly say I do not want to harm them, but I certainly desire that they should leave me entirely alone. I certainly intend to leave them entirely alone. I do not wish to keep them out of heaven, but I do not wish some of them to sit beside me in a celestial mansion or by any common earthly fireside made of brick and stone. My friend, by such an answer you are proving the Holy Spirit's power inefficacious. You are demonstrating that you are unwilling to become one of Gideon's band and live in faithful harmony with the chosen three hundred. God is willing to give you grace enough to love all your fellow church members if you will only ask for that grace. Has not the sure testimony been given, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me?"

You are now about to decide your whole eternal destiny. You are to decide it not by how you profess to love God, but by how you are willing to love your fellow church members. Are you ready, here and now, as Christian soldiers to "be kindly affectioned to one another, with brotherly love in honor preferring one another?" Do not tell me that it is impossible for you to live in Christian sympathy with those who belong to your same church family. By the grace of God it is possible. And if you are not willing to let that divine love have full control of your life, then instead of staying in a church and disputing and adding

fault continually, with the other members it is far better for you to leave that church and go back to the world and thereby play the gospel coward, as did the 22,000 men who deserted Gideon's standard at the first opportunity the Hebrew commander gave them to skulk home. The church should be a harmoniously organized army. It is not only possible thereby to hurl a solid front against the Satanist foe, but also by preponderance of numbers, concentrated in one move, to make, as the Bible says, a little one become a thousand and a small one a strong nation. Concentration in military parlance means not only conquest, but generally the complete mystification and disorganization of an opposing foe. It was by the successful concentration of forces against his enemies and by the lightning rapidity of his movements that Napoleon Bonaparte won his great victories. During all the military career of the "Little Corsican" his armies were outnumbered by those of his opponents. But one day we find the brilliant military genius attacking one wing of the Austrian army. The next day we find him attacking another wing of the Austrian army. One day he is falling upon the defenseless Italian fields by boldly scaling the Alps. Another day we see him concentrating his artillery force upon a separate part of the German army. Napoleon with his forces would have been wiped off the face of the earth ten years before he met his fate at Waterloo had he attempted to battle his enemies in bulk. He beat Austria and Italy and Germany and Spain by defeating his foes by detail—piecemeal. He did it by the power of military concentration. This was the way Frederick the Great carried on his wars of many years. This was the way Washington and Nathaniel Greene won their victories. So, my friends, as Gideon marshaled his three hundred, the church soldiers should be a united band. They must be able to hurl all their spiritual strength against the Satanist foe in one place and at one time.

How can this great forward movement of a single church against sin be concentrated and conserved? First, by all the church members every seven days answering church roll at the mid-week prayer meeting. It is even more important than the Lord's day worship. It is by the comingling of prayers that the spiritual forces of a church become inflamed with the holy zeal and all conquering gospel enthusiasm. It is to that roll call that the members of the church must give diligent heed. Concentrated church membership at the mid-week prayer meeting is of overwhelming importance. I know of what I speak. During my life I have observed the ways of two kinds of churches. In the one I have seen a mighty gospel conquest going on month in and month out. Why? The people attended the mid-week prayer meeting. In the other kind of church spiritual results were never assured. Why? The people, no matter how the pastor begged and pleaded, failed to attend the mid-week prayer meeting. A church with a full prayer meeting means a spiritually conquering church. A church with an empty prayer meeting means a spiritually dead church.

The concerted forward movement of a church, in the next place, must be manifested in the united voices of its members lifted in songs of praise and in its gospel energy. Oh, yes, the very best voices trained by our musical colleges are never too good to be allowed to sing in the church choir. But the church members have no more right, in this gospel movement, to let the choir do all the singing than the pew has to expect the pulpit to do all the praying. Methodist pews have sung as many immortal souls into glory as Methodist pulpits have won by preaching. "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" In every service let the old fashioned hymns be given out and let all the people sing. Yes, shout forth your gospel battle songs like the sound of many waters! Concentration of the church forces in prayer meeting means spiritual conquest for Christ. Concentration of the songs of praise in one great congregational chorus means also spiritual conquest for Christ.

The concerted strength of the church, in the next place, should make that church a unit in its belief in the authority of God's revealed word and also in its protest against sin, wherever found. When the three hundred Gideonites went forth to battle, their most effective weapons were a lighted lamp concealed within a pitcher and a trumpet in the right hand. The lamp lighted, can be used as the symbol of gospel faith, as revealed in God's word. The trumpet can be used as the symbol of the voice of a Christian church protesting against a world steeped in sin. Plenty of room in every Christian church for all repentant sinners saved by Christ's blood, but no room for any man who will not accept the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ and who will not protest against sin, wherever found. The Christian church must be a unit in its Calvary belief, and it must be a unit in its protest against sin.

As in every other army, the Christian army must have a countersign. When I belonged to the United States army, during the Spanish-American war, there were certain times I could not pass in or out of the camp without giving the countersign. So we find that all the Christian churches have a countersign. That countersign is one word of five letters, and that one word is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, who is our Saviour; Jesus, who lived and died and rose again to redeem the world and to save his people from their sins.

The church army must be a harmonious army and show a brave front. There is sure to be a more or less extent towards "hurling in the hearts of us all. If one Christian soldier is allowed, using a common phrase, to show the "white feather,"

(Continued on Page Eleven.)

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