

THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS A SECURE HIDING PLACE

Extermination of Righteousness an Impossibility—Helpful Lessons From a Biblical Abduction Story.

Washington Report—In this discourse on a neglected incident of the Bible, Dr. Talmage draws some comforting lessons and shows that all around us are royal natures that we may help deliver. The text is II Kings, xiv, 2: "Jehoshaphat, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahab, took Joash, the son of Ahab, and stole him from among the king's sons, which were slain, and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Ahab's house; and he was not slain. And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years."

Grandmothers are more lenient with their children's children than they were with their own. At 40 years of age of discipline be necessary chastisement is used, but at 70 the grandmother, looking upon the misbehavior of the grandchild, is apologetic and disposed to substitute censure for whip. There is nothing more tender than childhood. Grandmother takes out her pocket handkerchief and wipes her spectacles and puts them on and looks down into the face of her mischievous and rebellious descendant and says: "I don't think he meant to do it. Let him off this time. I'll be responsible for his behavior in the future." My mother, with the second generation around her, a boisterous crew, said one day: "I suppose they ought to be disciplined, but I can't do it. Grandmothers are not fit to bring up grandchildren." But here in my text we have a grandmother of a different type.

I have been in Jerusalem where the occurrence of the text took place, and the whole scene came vividly before me while I was going over the site of the ancient temple and climbing the towers of the king's palace. Here in the text in old Athaliah, the royal murderer. She ought to have been honorable. Her father was a king. Her husband was a king. Her son was a king. And yet we have a grandmother who is a clergyman's wife, Jehoshaphat by name, stealthily approaches the imperial nursery, seizes upon the grandchild that had somehow escaped massacre, wraps it up tenderly in her arms, smuggles it up tenderly her, fled down the palace stairs, her heart in her throat lest she be discovered in this compassionate abduction. Get her out of the way as quick as you can, for she is a young king. With this youthful prize she presses into the room of the ancient temple, the church of olden time, unwraps the young king and puts him down, sound asleep as he is and unconscious of the peril that has been threatened, and there, for six years, he is secreted in that church apartment. Meanwhile old Athaliah smacks her lips with satisfaction and thinks that all the royal family are dead. But the six years expire, and it is time for young Joash to come forth and take the throne and to push back into disgrace and death old Athaliah.

The arrangements are all made for political revolution. The military come and take possession of the temple, swear loyalty to the boy Joash and stand around for his defense. See the sharpened swords and the burnished shields! Even the king's army, now Joash, half-frightened at the armed tramp of his defenders, scared at the vociferation of his admirers, is brought forth in full regalia. The scroll of authority is put in his hands, the coronet of government is put on his brow, and the people clapped and waved and huzzed and trumpeted. "What is that?" said Athaliah. "What is that sound over the temple?" And she flies to see, and on her way they meet her and say: "Why, haven't you heard? You thought you had slain all the royal family, but Joash has come to light. Then the royal murderers, frantic with rage, grabbed her mantle and tore it to tatters, and cried until she foamed at the mouth: 'You have no right to crown my grandson. You have no right to take the government from my shoulders. Treason! treason!'"

While she stood there crying, the military started for her arrest and she took a short cut through a back door of the temple and ran through the royal stables, but the battlements of the military fell on her in the barnyard, and for many a day when the horses were being unloosed from the stable after drawing out young Joash the fiery steeds would snort and rear as they passed the place of carnage.

Other children, but you cannot kill him. Eternal defenses are thrown all around him, and this clergyman's wife, Jehoshaphat, will snatch him up from the palace nursery and will run down with him into the house of the Lord, and there she will hide him for six years, and at the end of that time he will come forth for your dethronement and obliteration.

Well, my friends, just as poor a batch does the world always make of extinguishing righteousness. Superstition rises up and says, "I will just put an end to pure religion." Domitian slew 40,000 Christians, a Socinian slew 84,000 Christians. And the myth of persecution has been swung through all the ages, and the flames blazed, and the guillotine chopped, and the Bastille roared, but did the foes of Christianity exterminate it?

Infidel says, "I will exterminate the Bible." The Scriptures were thrown into the street for the mob to trample on, and they were piled up in the public squares and set on fire, and mountains of indignant contempt were hurled on them, and learned universities decreed the Bible out of existence. Thomas Paine said: "In my Age of Reason I have annihilated the Scriptures. Your Washington is a pusillanimous Christian, but I am the foe of Bibles and of churches." Oh, how many assaults upon that sacred Bible! All the hostilities that have ever been created on earth are not to be compared with the hostilities against that one book. Said one man in his infidel desperation to his wife: "You must not be reading that Bible," and he snatched it away from her. And though in that Bible was a lock of hair of the dead child—the only child that God had ever given them—he pitched the book with its contents into the fire and stirred it with tongs and spat on it and cursed it and said, "Susan, never have any more of that damnable stuff here."

How many individual and organized attempts have been made to exterminate that Bible? Have its enemies done it? Have they exterminated the American Bible society? Have they exterminated the British and Foreign Bible society? Have they exterminated the thousands of Christian institutions whose only object is to multiply copies of the Scriptures and spread them broadcast around the world? They have exterminated until instead of one or two copies of the Bible in the world, we have eight or ten, and we live there in the corners of our Sabbath school rooms and send great boxes of them everywhere. If they get on as well as they are now going on in the work of extermination, I do not know that our children will live to see the millennium. Yea, if there should come a time of persecution in which all the known Bibles of the earth should be destroyed, all these lamps of life that blaze in our pulpits and in our families extinguished, in the very day that the infidelity and atheism of the world are at their height, and should be holding jubilee over the universal extinction there would be in some closet of a backwoods church a secret copy of the Bible, and this Joash of eternal literature would come out and come up and take the throne, and the Athaliah of infidelity and persecution would fly out of the back door of the palace and drop her miserable carcass under the boots of the horses of the king's stables. You cannot exterminate Christianity! You cannot kill Joash!

The second thought I hand you from my subject is that there are opportunities in which we may save royal life. You know the profane history is replete with stories of strangled monarchs and of young princes who have been put out of the way. But why should we spend our time in praising this bravery of expedition when God asks the same thing of you and me? All around us the imperiled children of a great king. They are born of Almighty parentage and will come to a throne or a crown if permitted. But sin, the old Athaliah, goes forth to the massacre. Murderous temptations are out for the assassination. Valens, the emperor, was told that there was somebody in his realm who would usurp his throne and that the name of the man who should be the usurper would begin with the letters T, H, E, O, D, and the edict went forth from the emperor's throne, "Kill everybody whose name begins with T, H, E, O, D, and hundreds of thousands were slain, hoping by that massacre to put an end to that one usurper. But sin is more terrible in its denunciation. It matters not how you spell your name, you come under its knife, under its sword, under its doom, unless there be some omnipotent relief brought to the rescue. But, blessed be God, there is such a thing as delivering a royal soul. Who will snatch away Joash?

This afternoon in your Sabbath school class there will be a prince of God, some one who may yet reign as king forever before the throne; there will be some one in your class who has a corrupt physical inheritance; there will be some one in your class who has a father and mother who do not know how to pray; there will be some one in your class who is destined to command in church or state. There are sleeping in your cradles by night, there are playing in your nurseries by day, imperial souls waiting for dominion, and whichever side the cradle they get out will decide the destiny of empires. For each one of those children sin and holiness contend. Athaliah on the one side, Jehoshaphat on the other. But I hear you say, "What can I do?" I have no other instruction? Let them grow up and choose for themselves. Don't interfere with their volition." Suppose some one said to Jehoshaphat: "Don't interfere with that young Joash. Let him grow

up and decide whether he likes the place or not; whether he wants to be king or not. Don't disturb his volition." Jehoshaphat knew right well that unless that day the young king was rescued he would never be rescued at all. I tell you, my friends, the reason we don't reclaim our children from worldliness is because we begin too late. Parents wait until their children lie before they teach them the value of truth. They wait until their children swear before they teach them the importance of righteous conversation. They wait until their children are wrapt up in this world before they tell them of a better world. Too late with your prayers. Too late with your discipline. Too late with your benedictions. You put all care upon your children between 12 and 18. Why do you not put the chief care between 4 and 9? It is too late to repair a vessel when it has got out of the dry docks. It is too late to save Joash after the fact. He is too late, broken in. May God arm us all for this work of snatching royal souls from death to coronation.

The third thought I hand to you is that the church of God is a good hiding place. When Jehoshaphat rushes into the nursery of the king and picks up Joash, what shall she do with him? Shall she take him to some room in the palace? No, for the official desperadoes will hunt through every nook and corner of that building. Shall she take him to the residence of some wealthy citizen? No; that citizen would not dare to harbor the fugitive. But she has to take him somewhere. She hears the cry of the mob in the streets; she hears the shriek of the dogs coming to the residence of some eastern city and act as scavengers. We have before us the characters and lives of two men occupying very different positions in this world. One was a leader in society, very wealthy and highly respected; the other was a despised and loathsome beggar. But if you see the heart and in never deceived by a pompous exterior.

22. The beggar died—his burial was so inferior that no mention is made of it. He died in a pauper's box and was carried to a pauper's grave. There were no flowers and no mourners. Carried by angels—There was a rustling of snowy wings as angels came to the redeemed spirit home to God.—E. P. H. Abraham's bosom.—That is, the happy side of Hades, where the saints were regarded as the holy sacraments. The rich man died—death comes to the rich as well as the poor, and was buried.—There was the long procession of the funeral solemnities through the streets of Jerusalem. The crowd of hired mourners, the spices and ointment wrapping his body and the costly sepulchre on which the virtues of the departed were recorded. This, however, profits him nothing, for death has been for him an awakening from his flattering dream of ease and self-enjoyment to the stern and terrible realities of eternity.—Bosom.—E. P. H. 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