

## Devotional Service.

By REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

### MAY 20. "THE POWER OF A TEMPERATE LIFE."

Ps. 1: 1-7.

(QUARTERLY TEMPERANCE MEETING.)

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., May 14. What is temperance? . . . 1 Cor. 9: 25-27  
Tues., May 15. Need of personal purity. . . . Titus 1: 15; 2: 2-5  
Wed., May 16. The power of influence. . . . 1 Cor. 8: 8-12  
Thurs., May 17. Help by example. . . . Ps. 1: 1-10  
Fri., May 18. The safe company. . . . Ps. 144: 9-15  
Sat., May 19. How to insure personal safety. . . . Ps. 33: 12; Isa. 60: 1-2

In this age, inclined to excesses, temperance in all things should be maintained as a Christian principle—temperance in food, in drink, in dress, in work, in pleasure, in expenditure, in all appetites and activities. Temperance, in its first meaning, does not signify abstinence; it means moderation in things right in themselves but wrong in excess. It has come to mean, however, in reference to certain things, total abstinence, particularly in reference to intoxicating liquors. To obtain a broad view of our topic, we should, therefore, take both meanings into the count—total abstinence in regard to certain things, moderation in regard to certain other things. When we say, "he is a temperance man," we mean that the man in question refrains entirely from the use of ardent spirits as a beverage—he is a total abstainer. When we read the injunction of the apostle, "add to knowledge, temperance," we understand he means self-restraint, holding oneself according to the principles of Christian moderation. Every Epworth Leaguer should be a living embodiment of both meanings of the term, exemplifying the virtue of abstinence from strong drink, and moderation in all things.

#### A CASE IN POINT.

We have a most impressive illustration of this topic in the case of Daniel and his three companions in Babel. They had been taken captive from Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar, as trophies of his conquest. Intelligent, cultured, of handsome appearance, and of good address, they were selected to form part of the attendants at the king's court. In token of their subjection to their new master their names were changed, and they were expected to conform to the secular and religious usages of heathen Babel. For three years they were to be dieted in a way ordered by Aspenaz, an officer of the King, so that their health and good appearance might be improved. But the religious principles of Daniel and his friends stood in the way of their submission to the King's orders. They had been taught the lesson of temperance in all things, and they refused to eat of the things at the King's table. In their home in Palestine they had become used to a plain diet, and had come to regard rich and highly-flavored foods as harmful. As Jews they were forbidden by the law of Moses to eat certain kinds of food, as well as food prepared in a certain way. Besides, what the heathen used of animal food had been already offered in sacrifice to their idols, while a portion, both of the meat and drink on their table, was presented as an offering to the same false deities. Daniel and his friends saw that to partake of the royal provision was to connect themselves with idolatry and heathen worship and to transgress the law of God. He had been so taught that his teaching had passed into conviction, and from conviction had evidently become a matter of conscience. So

when they left their own country they did not abandon their old manner of life, but brought their convictions and principles along to their new home and their changed conditions. They did not act according to the more modern adage, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." But their motto was, "put in modern terms, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do, but do what you believe to be right.' Daniel determined to make it known from the first day of his residence in Babel that though but a young Jewish slave he was the servant of the living God. It was no small risk. Their resolution might cost these young men their lives. But there is something better even than life.

#### RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE TESTED.

When a person accepts Christ, and determines to live the Christian life, his conscience will soon be brought to the test. The gold must be submitted to the fire to prove its reality, and cleanse it from dross. The trial of faith is a rule in God's government, and the universal experience of His people. The trial may be a severe one; it may make one despondent for a time, but "My grace is sufficient for thee," and, if faithful, the trial shall issue in "praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Believers are to be like Apollos—"approved in Christ." The means of testing the sincerity and steadfastness of our faith are often dangerous situations, involving danger, trouble or loss. We have placed before us on the one hand worldly loss, but on the favor of God and the testimony of conscience; on the other hand the transitory favor of the world, but a wounded conscience and the displeasure of God. Which shall it be? We are called upon to choose between the treasures of Egypt, and the more abiding treasures of the Kingdom of God. Which shall we possess? We know what Daniel did. He is a worthy model.

#### SELF-DENIAL NECESSARY.

Daniel and his friends must choose between the dainties of the king's table and the plain diet of an humble slave. There was a considerable difference between the king's savory dishes and mere boiled beans and water. But there was a principle at stake. The choice was soon decided on. God's help enabled Daniel, instead of yielding to the temptation of luxury, to practice self-denial in order that his appetite might not betray him into sin. Like his ancestor Moses, he "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The Saviour's rule is for all time: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Such endurance and self-restraint results in the strengthening of character, and a fitting for Christian service in the world. But do not suppose, young people, that self-denial and self-restraint will rob you of joy and contentment; rather will you find that submission to Christ in all things is the pathway to highest happiness and duty influences. Yet, remember that wily and not happiness is your chief business.

#### COURAGE AND RESOLUTION.

We need both courage and resolution to serve God and keep a good conscience in the world. To be faithful to God, and faithful to the end, one must, like Daniel, "purpose in his heart," and through grace adhere to it. Joshua exhorted the people more than once before encountering the Canaanites, to be strong and of a good courage, and not be afraid. It is impossible to be a loyal Christian and at the same time to be a coward. One of the early promises which we may appropriate these days, is, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass,"—prepared to acquit ourselves with Christian bravery under all circumstances. He that putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God, neither for the enjoyment of it himself, nor the extension of it to

others. A Christian needs to be a hero, for there is as much need for true heroism on the home field as on the battlefield. But what is the foundation of true courage? Faith in God. Through faith, "out of weakness men are made strong, wax valiant in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the aliens." Faith makes men heroes, and in religion a man must either be a hero, or lose much reward and renown.

#### FLASHLIGHTS.

1. You must learn to control yourself before you can hope to control anything else.
2. Every time a horse runs away, he is more likely to run away again. So with your passions.
3. Every ounce of strength used on what is lower, is so much taken from the service of what is higher.
4. A temperate life sees things in their proper proportion, lives for eternity and not for worldly trivialities. And this is power.
5. Over-doing in one direction means under-doing in all others, as you cannot draw water out of a pond without lowering its entire level.
6. A temperate man is like a well tempered plate—he will not yield or bend, but springs back again. He is not the slave of inclination.
7. The proper basis for all temperance is faith in God, and in Jesus Christ our Lord. Here is both the true motive and efficient help for self-denial and self-mastery.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Have you a Whatsoever Committee? If not, you should have one. It is the business of this committee to look after the matters that do not come within the sphere of any other committee, such as ventilating the room, putting the topic on the blackboard each week, mending the hymn books, etc. Do not keep the same members on the committee longer than one term, but give all the members a chance to prove their originality and inventiveness. Treat the topic this week in the broad scriptural way, as indicated in the foregoing exposition.

### MAY 27.—"HAVE PATIENCE"

Matt. 18: 21-35.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., May 21. Adding to temperance. . . . 2 Pet. 1: 1-11  
Tues., May 22. Which are the common virtues? . . . Mark 10: 17-22  
Wed., May 23. How does one help all? . . . Rom. 5: 1-5  
Thurs., May 24. Minor vs. the major virtues. . . . 2 Kings 5: 1-13  
Fri., May 25. What patience secures? . . . Rom. 12: 1-4  
Sat., May 26. The victorious and patience. . . . Jas. 1: 1-4

#### THE TOPIC STATED.

A certain king about to take account of his servants. One was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents. Having nothing with which to pay, the king commanded that he and his wife and children be sold to pay his debt. The servant, having pleaded with his lord to have patience with him, the king was moved with compassion, set his servant free, and forgave him his debt. But this same servant went out and found one of his servants which owed him only a hundred pence. The servant who had just been forgiven by his master took his debtor by the throat and commanded him to pay what he owed. This servant in turn fell down saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But he would not, and cast the servant into prison until the debt was paid. Our topic of patience, then, refers particularly to having patience with the mistakes, failings, and sins of our fellow-men.

#### KEY-NOTES.

The key-notes of this parable are to be found at the beginning and end. It was spoken in order to show that a man should set no limit to the forgiveness of injuries; and in order to show this, the parable goes