

The Quiet Hour.

The Boy Samuel,

S. S. LESSON—Dec. 14; 1 Sam. 3: 6-14.

GOLDEN TEXT—1 Sam. 3: 9. Speak Lord; for thy servant heareth.

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, v. 7. So, many to-day are familiar with the written word, and know of Jesus of Nazareth, who do not recognize the Lord in His providences, and are ignorant of the still small voice of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

The third time, v. 8. The Lord calls early and loud and long to every one. We may be in open rebellion when He calls, as was Saul on the way to Damascus, or we may be at some humble duty, as was Samuel, when the voice comes. But the call *will* come, and with special power and significance will it come to the young, because to them the counter calls of the world are not yet so many or so insistent. By His word and works, by His life and character, by His Spirit's invitations and influences, by His promises and warnings, as well as by our blessings and privileges, God in Jesus Christ is calling all, and especially the young, to follow Him. Obedience to this call will open the door to nobler and higher service.

And Samuel arose, v. 8. In Samuel we observe a quick attention and unwearied diligence; he hears and runs at every call; he stays not to be twice called before he goes. He murmurs not, he argues not, he complains not; he delays not; at every call he rises from his bed and runs. It is such a child as this our Lord requires us to be like, for of such is the kingdom of God. No principle is more noble and none more holy than that of a true obedience.

Here am I, for thou didst call me, v. 8. This prompt and uncomplaining obedience of Samuel is particularly suggestive, when taken in connection with verse 1, "Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli." Thus we are taught that God calls those to great responsibilities who have ministered to Him faithfully in the every day duties of life. Joseph was ministering to the Lord in prison, when called to preside over all Egypt. Gideon was threshing wheat when the call came to him to save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. Elisha was ploughing in the field, when called to the prophetic office. And so it has ever been through the ages, and ever will be unto the end. Faithfulness in small things shows us fit and makes us fit for larger service in the kingdom of God.

Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, v. 8. When Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, he did not hesitate nor remonstrate. He did not say, "The child is too young; he cannot understand; there must be some mistake; I will ask God to tell me, and I will communicate it to him when he is older." He did not try to balk his way, and tell him to go and lie down and pay no more attention to the matter, for it was only a dream or a fancy of youth. He was a great deal wiser and much more charitable than many professing Christians of to-day, who are slow to believe and still slower to act upon their belief, that children are called of the Lord, and have a right to membership in His church here upon earth. Christ rebukes all such as He rebuked His disciples, Mark 10: 14.

Speak; for thy servant heareth, v. 10. God speaks to men. Oh, what an art it is

to listen! Notice the sevenfold injunction to the churches of Asia—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," Rev. chs. 2, 3. God wants us "swift to hear, slow to speak," Jas. 1: 19. He wants us to think more of what He would say to us than of what we might have to say to Him. Telling God our wish and not waiting to know His way is the cause of many a failure; but "whoso hearkeneth... shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil," Prov 1: 33.

The Lord said to Samuel, v. 11. God called Samuel; now He gives him his commission. God came to Samuel not to gratify his curiosity, but to employ him in His service and send him on an errand to another person. The task was a sad and a hard one for him to perform, yet he performed it. God often lays hard duties upon us at the very beginning of our Christian life. Such tasks reveal to ourselves and to others the reality and strength of our faith, and so enable us to set up a barrier at our weak points. "Hence God sets His children to work against evil; He gives them hard duties to perform, hard battles to fight, and this prepares them for their life's work."

When I begin, I will also make an end, v. 12. No purpose of God ever fails. The task undertaken in His name may be very difficult, and bring us face to face with many obstacles, but He will make out of these hindrances stepping-stones to success. Just as certain is it that any course entered upon, in opposition to His will, can lead, in the long run, only to failure and disaster. Wickedness may climb the sunlit heights of prosperity for a time, but its ascent will only make its fall more destructive. Our lives will be truly blessed, only if they become a part of God's great plan. Otherwise it is not possible to reach real happiness.

A Prayer.

"Lord, the creatures of thy hand, thy disinherited children, come before thee with their incoherent wishes and regrets. Children we are, children we shall be, till our mother the earth has fed upon our bones. Accept us, correct us, guide us, thy guilty innocents. Dry our vain tears, delete our vain resentments, help our yet vainer efforts. If there be any here, sulking as children will, deal with and enlighten him. Make it day about that person, so that he shall see himself and be ashamed. Make it heaven about him, Lord, by the only way to heaven, forgetfulness of self. And make it day about his neighbors, so that they shall help, not hinder him."—From the life of R. L. Stevenson.

Strange, passing strange, that they who stand in the forefront, pre eminent for their ability, are alike pre eminent for their sufferings! Denied his ambition and the promised land, Moses led the immortal band. Blind Homer feels his way. Then comes Paul, flogged and stoned out of all semblance of a man. Exiled Dante, too, is there, whose inferno in life best interprets his inferno of death. There, too, is Milton, broken hearted and blind. Now comes One who leads all that goodly company. His name is "above every name." And whence his supremacy? This is his secret; "His visage was so marred more than any man's

and his form more than the sons of men."—Newell Dwight Hillis.

Our Crosses and What to do With Them.*

If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Matt. 16: 24.

His Cross; each one has his own. How shall we know ours? Sometimes by a heavenly revelation, as in the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh. He was told to pray no more about it but to quietly submit, as grace sufficient would be given. It was *his* Cross; no mistake had been made.

Sometimes God's Providence points it out as ours. There is no one else who could be expected to carry it. A mother dies suddenly, leaving young children; and the eldest girl unselfishly takes her mother's place so far as she can, sacrificing her own private plans and desires upon the altar of duty. Her Cross! Two men are seized with certain convictions as to public reforms.

The one—the leader—dies. The other must take up the mission as his Cross, for no one else will do it. A man as a public leader of thought and guide of men is in the place when it is demanded of him that he speak unpleasant truths. When he so speaks he earns for himself dislike, opprobrium and unpopularity. What must he do? Be silent and let the cause that he conceives to be that of truth and duty go by default? Not he, if he be Christ's Servant. His Cross.

His Cross! Every man has his own. It must be so. The poor man's Cross— anxiety about bread, could not be that of the millionaire who asks the advice of the world as to how he may in his life-time spend or give away his vast accumulations.

The farmers cross—bad seasons, storms, blights, lightnings or whirlwinds—is very different from the merchants—bad debts, drugged markets, dullness of trade, or the like.

What is *your* Cross? Perhaps a cross husband, a cross wife, unruly children, loneliness, physical weakness. Well, consider Christ. "He endured His Cross, despising the shame." Only they who have fellowship with Him in His Cross may wear a crown.

What to do with the Cross—Take it up. There are other ways in which you might deal with it. Some deliberately avoid their Crosses. They let them lie instead of taking them up. They studiously walk around them. Let some one else lead this meeting, teach that class, wear that burden do that irksome task. This is what Peter wanted Christ to do upon which the Master turned and rebuked him, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men." "And He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

How many fail to follow him in this. Was the word one of faithful witness-bearing? Then the brave word is not spoken, and the weak are caused to stumble. The query with the unfaithful witness is, What will take now? Not what will be found best at the death hour and at the judgment throne.

Or was the trouble poverty? Is the man of that sad number

"Who amid their wants and woes,
Hear the sound of doors that close,
And of feet that pass them by;
Grown familiar with disfavor,
Grown familiar with the savor,
Of the bread of which men die."

*Notes of a sermon by Rev. J. M. Kelloch, M. A., of Newburgh, Ont.