

The Quiet Hour.

Elijah Encouraged.

S. S. LESSON, 1 Kings 19: 9-18. Sept. 4, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—Fear thou not; for I am with thee.—Isa. 41: 10.

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And, behold, the word of the Lord, v. 9. Not only in visions does the word of the Lord come. Nor is it only prophets who hear it. There is not a duty so simple or humble, but behind it there is some word of the Lord. It comes in one form to this man, in another to that: speaks in one tone to-day, with a different accent to-morrow. And if only we listen to his word and obey, our lives will grow in strength and beauty and fruitfulness.

What doest thou here, Elijah? v. 9. This question is asked of us all. This place we are in, the way in which we regard and treat others, the motives that are influencing us: all these are of importance; and God is asking why we stand where we do and what our purpose may be. And we must answer, for when God questions, there is no saying I am nay. Well is it for us if we can answer unashamed and unafraid, with nothing to blush for, nothing we desire to conceal from His searching gaze.

And I, even I only am left, v. 10. It is very hard for one to feel that he is left alone, and that there is no one to take his part. If one is really seeking to do the will of God it is never true, for there are always those who are godly and whose sympathies are with him. And in any case the man who is serving God is not alone, for his Lord is with him. If all Israel had indeed forsaken Jehovah, as Elijah's words imply, still he was not alone, for to be with God is more than to have an army of followers. We can afford, if need be, to do without the favor and help of men. The only essential thing is that we should have God on our side.

Stand upon the mount, v. 11. The history of the past is full of inspiration. Looking back over the ages, we see many a place where God has appeared to His servants, giving them some message to utter, some work to do, or speaking words of encouragement and cheer. We do well to stand in imagination on such places, and let their sacred memories fire our zeal. There we, too, shall hear God's voice and, hearing, go with new courage and faith to do His work.

The Lord was not in the wind, earthquake, fires, vs. 11, 12. We are amazed in the presence of the mighty forces of nature. But what shall we say of His power, who has called these forces into being and holds them in the most complete control? At a word from Him the storm is loosed and at His bidding it is still. He sends the earthquake to move the solid ground like the waves of the sea, and He quiets its convulsion. The lightning blazes and dies away at His command. And yet even when we have seen His power, we have not known God. "God is love" (1 John 4: 8); and we never really know Him until we have seen the fullness of His love as it is revealed in Jesus Christ.

And he said, v. 14. How the appearance of everything changes according to the color of the glass through which we look! It is the same world; but it seems very different. In like manner, the hue shown by the facts

of life depends largely on our own spirit. The hopeful, confident man sees in obstacles only the opportunity of showing his strength and courage, while to the man of despondent spirit, they are insurmountable hindrances. And there is never any reason why the servants of God should be anything but hopeful. For, however hard the facts of life, God is with His servants and will see them safely through.

Go, return, v. 15. Are we tempted to give up our work? God says to us as to Elijah, "Go, return." We are sent back to the very same task day after day. But it is our own fault, and not God's, if we go back to it without fresh courage. Not more surely does the sun rise, than God, stands beside us each morning we rise, with supplies of grace for all the needs of the day. So long as breath lasts, there is work to do; and when we are doing our work, God is close by to help.

And Elisha shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room, v. 16. The barn-raising goes smoothly because the framing has been laid out, and hewn and mortised beforehand for its place. God's planning is not less complete. He neglects nothing, forgets nothing, is never taken by surprise. He is like the far-sighted general, who has always his eye upon trusted officers ready to fill the place of those who fall in battle.

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, v. 18. The highest reward of the recognition of his valor by his leader. How it should nerve and inspire us to know that God is looking on, as we go to face His foes and ours! He is, in truth the "God of hosts"; the multitude of glorious angels stand ready to do His bidding; and yet He knows with intimate and personal knowledge the humblest soldier who is fighting for the right on the earth. There is no true brave deed done, or word spoken, that He does not see and approve. His smile is on every honest effort on behalf of righteousness.

The Joy of Belief.

BY F. B. MEYER, M. A.

When we become regenerate our nature as a whole is left as it was, except the evil influence of self, the pivot around which it used to revolve, is exchanged for one of devotion to God. You must not think that regeneration alters the nature to such an extent that we are no longer able to laugh, to frolic with children, to romp with boys and girls, to take an interest in music, or this lovely world of God's. All our nature is left as quick and susceptible as ever, but the self-principle is crucified, and the Christ-principle is enthroned. The whole being has come under new and blessed influence of the love of God. The first question we have to ask about everything is: Has God created this—this love, this friendship, this employment, this method of recreation? Is this music of God? Is this cheque stamped with His impress? Are these things, to which our soul is attracted, bearing, like coins do, the image and superscription of the King?

Here stands the cup before me. It is chased with exquisite skill; it is brimming, and its color attracts and fascinates me; I put my hand out to receive it; but as I lift

it to my lips, can I look into the face of God and thank Him? Is there that in my friendship which enables me to soar; is there that in this delight which startles my heart to join with the anthem of the cherubim, for, if so, I may take this thing with joy and thanksgiving, counting it as innocent.

"It is sanctified by the Word of God, and prayer." There are some friendships, fellowships and engagements, which incapacitate us for prayer. You cannot turn from that hour which you have spent, and at the close of it say: "Let us pray." You cannot come out of that recreation and take your Bible and read your evening passage. This is the third great test. If, then, you realize that God, who knew your nature and made it, gave you, created for you, that joy, and fitted it to you with infinite ingenuity; if you realize that, so far from being hindered, you may turn to the most holy exercises of the closet and read your Bible, and commune with your God, you may look up into the face of God and say: "Thou art the blessed God, the happy God, the God whose life is music, who art light and in whom is no darkness at all; and thou hast put this beautiful thing into my experience; I cannot thank Thee enough, but I will rejoice and be glad; my heart shall sing for joy, and Thou wilt be glad because I am glad."

There is nothing more exquisite in this world than the joy of little children; to see them quiver with delight, the little faces flush with joy and the eyes sparkle, and to have the child throw itself upon your bosom, crying: "I am so happy." And sometimes it seems as though God comes into our life and says: "Little child, do not think I am always using the rod and administering the bitter cup; I must do so sometimes, not because I like it; but now, come and have a good time and enjoy yourself to your heart's content."

You sorrowing people, take joy—open your heart to the glinting light. You lonely people, let God put in some gift of His tender thoughtfulness to alleviate the monotony of life. You who have passed through a great bereavement, do not shut yourself up with it, but accept the joys that God creates.

But does not this go too far? How about the coarser pleasures? How about the ball, or the dance, or the theatre? But surely it is not possible to pray over the theatre, with its excitement and its baleful effect on the lives of the performers. It is not possible to give thanks over the vicious novel. It is not possible to let ourselves go into animal, sensual delight with the texts I have enumerated before our face. No; we can only be glad for things which God has made, things for which we can thank Him, things which do not hurt or ruffle our holiest hours; these alone can come trooping into our heart with music.

Everything which God has made is beautiful. Oh, sorrow, God hath made thee: art thou beautiful! Oh, black, sable night, without star or moon, God hath made thee: art thou beautiful! Oh, terrible ache and pain, that gnaws at the heart and never leaves it for an hour: art thou beautiful! When we look at these things apart from God, they certainly startle, scare and frighten us.

But perhaps we are not childlike enough. I like that story in Kingsley's life. One summer morning he was sitting with a friend in his study, and his little girl came in, with a long worm, exclaiming: "Oh, father, look what a lovely worm I have got!" If we could see worms with a child's eye, we should think them beautiful. God is so beautiful in Himself that He cannot make