

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

DANIEL AND BELSHAZZAR

By Rev. C. MacKinnon, B.D., Winnipeg.

Let thy gifts be to thyself, and keep thy rewards for another, v. 17. The judge has a right to his pay, and the minister to his salary. But the upright judge will reject with hot indignation any offer of a gift meant to influence his decision. No amount of money can buy the silence of a true minister when duty requires him to rebuke iniquity. A fair day's pay for an honest day's work—this we can justly claim. But to swerve by a hair's breadth from the straight path of truth and honor—there should not be money enough in the world's mints to induce us to do this.

The most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, v. 18. When Gotthold stretched forth his hand to take an apple from the overladen branch, the very action shook the tree, and several fell, leading the pious man to exclaim, "How like the incomprehensible and unmerited goodness of God, which presents its blessings upon loaded branches." It was with this lavish hand that God had bestowed upon the Babylonian king a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor, albeit the foolish ruler imagined he had achieved all this by the might of his own hand, and returned no thanks to the beneficent Creator. It is from the same divine hand, that men of wealth acquire their means, artists their accomplishments, scholars their talents, politicians their power. Let us be more forward in our acknowledgement of the source from which they come, and not ungratefully imagine that we could have done anything of ourselves.

His mind hardened in pride, v. 20. The Roman poet Lucian tells of a beggar named Simon, who, out of the alms given him, had amassed a little wealth. He changed his name to Simonides, to distinguish himself from the numerous other beggars of the old name, and had the house burned in which he was born, so that no one might be able to point to it. He rid himself as completely as possible of all reminders of his dependence on the kindness of others. In his flinty bosom there were no sweet flowers of gratitude to his benefactors, or compassion towards others less fortunate. Oh, the pitiful meanness of pride like this! And what a wretched return we make for the sunshine and showers of divine blessing lavished upon us, if our hearts are like the hard granite rocks, yielding no response of humble, grateful acknowledgment to the Giver of all good.

They took his glory from him—till he knew that the most high God ruled, vs. 20, 21. There are many teachers in God's great school of life. Some of them are stern, and give us hard lessons to learn; but they are all kind. And the main thing they teach us is just what Nebuchadnezzar came at last to know, that God rules among men. This is God's world, and they alone are safe and happy who obey Him. We may dwell behind the walls of His gracious protection, defended by His might, provided for by His loving care. But to open the gates of these walls we must bring the key of lowly, trusting submission to His authority. This will unlock the portals, and admit to the city where there is safety and joy.

*S.S. Lesson, 1st Oct.—Daniel 5: 17-30. Study the chapter. Commit to memory vs. 29, 30. Read chs. 3, 4. Golden Text—The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.—Psalm 34: 16.

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, v. 22. Like the searchlight on a modern vessel, darting its rays now this way and now that, revealing the smallest object hidden by the darkness, does the word of God penetrate into our souls, and bring our most secret sins into the open day. And for no one of them is there the least excuse. By teaching and example we have been warned against them. And be sure that it is in mercy that our sins are brought to light. God exposes them that He may remove them. He causes us to see them that we may hate them and forsake them. The moment we do this, the cleansing, joy-giving flood of His pardon flows into our souls. Strip us of wealth, even of life—sin may do this in our case, as in Belshazzar's, but it can never prevent us from finding forgiveness, which God is ever willing to bestow.

God... hast thou not glorified, v. 23. During the last few months, Holman Hunt's great picture, "The Light of the World," has been on exhibition in this country. The reproduction of it in our Children's Day Service has carried it into tens of thousands of homes. What a wonderful figure of the Saviour, gleaming lantern in hand, knocking at the closed door. How sad if any who have seen this picture should refuse the Saviour an entrance into their hearts! To admire the skill of a human artist, and refuse due honor and love to the Christ he has portrayed—can worshippers of gods of silver and gold do worse than this?

Weighted—and found wanting, v. 27. Every coin of gold or silver, when it comes out of the mint, is of a certain exact weight, no more, no less. But passing from hand to hand, the coin is worn and becomes lighter, until it at last no one will take it at its face value. That light coin is a picture of our lives. In them traffic with the world has worn away truth and purity, so that, weighed in the scales of God's holy law, our whole character is below the standard. Is there, then, no hope for us? Yes, thank God, we have before us the perfect life of Jesus Christ. There is nothing wanting in Him. And for His sake God will accept us, and by His grace we shall win back all that sin has robbed us of.

TWO WAYS OF READING.

"Would you like another chapter, Lillian dear?" asked Kate Everard of the invalid cousin, to nurse whom she had lately come from Hampshire.

"Not now, thanks; my head is tired," was the reply.

Kate closed her Bible with a feeling of slight disappointment. She knew that Lillian was slowly sinking under incurable disease, and what could be more suitable to the dying than to be constantly hearing the Bible read? Lillian might surely listen, if she were too weak to read for herself.

"There must be something wrong here," thought Kate, who had never, during her life, kept her bed one day through sickness. "It is a sad thing when the dying do not prize the Word of God." "Lillian," said she, "I should think that now, when you are so ill, you would find special comfort in the Scriptures."

Lillian's languid eyes had closed, but she opened them, and with a soft, earnest gaze on her cousin, replied, "I do—they are my support; I have been feeding on one verse all the morning."

"And what is that verse?" asked Kate.

"'Whom I shall see for myself,'" began Lillian, slowly; but Kate cut her short—

"I know that verse perfectly—it is in Job; it comes just after 'I know that my Redeemer liveth; the verse is, 'Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.'"

"What do you understand by 'not another'?" asked Lillian.

"Really, I have never particularly considered those words," answered Kate.

"They were a difficulty to me," replied the invalid, "till I happened to read that in the German Bible they are rendered differently."

Kate was silent for several seconds. She had been careful to read daily a large portion from the Bible; but to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest it," she had never even thought of trying to do. In a more humble tone she now asked her cousin, "what is the word which is put in the margin of the Bible instead of 'another' in that difficult text?"

"A stranger," replied Lillian; and then, clasping her hands, she repeated the whole passage on which her soul had been feeding with silent delight: "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger." "O Kate," continued the dying girl, while unbidden tears rose to her eyes, "if you only knew what sweetness I have found in that verse all this morning while I have been in great pain! I am in the Valley of Shadow—I shall soon cross the dark river; I know it; but he will be with me, and 'not a stranger.' He is the good Shepherd, and I know his voice; a stranger would I not follow. And in the glad resurrection morn, it is the Lord Jesus whom I shall behold—my own Saviour, my own tried friend, and 'not a stranger'; I shall at last see him whom, not having seen, I have loved."

Lillian closed her eyes again, and the large drops, overflowing, fell down her pallid cheeks; she had spoken too long for her strength, but her words had not been spoken in vain.

"Lillian has drawn more comfort and profit from one verse—nay, from three words in the Bible, than I have drawn from the whole book," reflected Kate. "I have but read the Scriptures—she has searched them. I have been like one floating carelessly over the surface of waters under which lie pearls; Lillian has dived deep and made the treasure her own."—Selected.

FOR OTHERS' SAKE.

Christ came to minister, not to be ministered unto. The follower of Christ who is willing to enjoy his religion all by himself has failed to catch the significance of Christ's example. A Christian man's plain duty is not so much to answer the question, "How can I get the most out of my religion?" as, "How can I conduct myself so that others may get the most out of my religion?" Many Christians, in a very important sense, will go to heaven alone. Others will there be surrounded by scores whom they have pointed to the Saviour. The first class will have been saved, but without having saved others. The second class will bring sheaves with them.

But Christ ministered daily while upon the earth. So may we. The comforts of our religion may be made the solace of another's sorrow. In many very practical ways others may enjoy the benefits of our religion. Thus, whether it is for time or eternity, Christ may come to others through us.—Young Men's Era.