

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JESUS' POWER TO FORGIVE. *

By Rev. J. W. McMillan, M.A.

No room...he preached the word, v. 2. The truths of religion are often thought of as dull and uninteresting, whereas they are really of the most powerful and sustained fascination. This is because their appeal is made to what is deepest in our natures. People speak of sermons as dry; but think of the congregations that have gathered every week for centuries to listen to them. What other possible topic could be so attractive? The Sunday schools get along without truant officers. Many a person in haste and folly turns from religion only to find that a void within him is set aching, which nothing but the word of God can satisfy. As the French sceptic said, "The human race is incurably religious."

Borne of four, v. 3. No toil is too arduous which brings a man to Jesus. Four men have often labored longer and harder and accomplished less. It may take forty men to build a house, but to save a soul is a grander achievement. And in this work each of us may have a share. There is some corner for us to get hold of. Even a little gift, a simple word, a small portion of our time and energy, will help in the church's great task of bringing people to the Saviour. Who will grudge the offering or the effort through which some un-paralyzed soul may be made new and strong through the pardon of Christ?

Uncovered the roof, v. 4. Housebreaking is generally a criminal act. The firemen smash windows, batter down doors, chop through roofs and partitions, and ruin carpets and curtains with water, and we approve it all, if they put the fire out and save the building. It is not wise to be too careful. There are higher laws than conventionalities. This man came in an irregular fashion, but he went out quite "regular." Don't be afraid of doing surprising things, if the result be blessedness.

Jesus saw their faith, v. 5. He saw it in their works. This is the point the apostle James makes with such point and force: "Show me thy faith without thy works" (it cannot be done), "and I will show thee my faith by my works." What a person is, is known by what that person does. You know that there is steam in the locomotive, if it moves a train of cars. You know there is life in the tree, if it puts forth leaves. You know that a person is a disciple of Jesus, if he acts like "that meek, quiet, patient, humble, tranquil Spirit, the first true Gentleman that ever breathed."

Thy sins be forgiven thee, v. 5.—Forgiveness is the one great immediate need of the sinner. When a person is suffering great pain, the one great immediate need is that the pain be stopped. While the pain endures, he cannot eat, sleep, talk, transact business, worship, or do anything else. The pain absorbs his attention, it expels every normal capacity of his nature. To stop the pain is to reopen all these gates of active living. Just so does sin rage and destroy in the soul of its victim. After forgiveness, is the opportunity of the Spirit, who comes bearing rich fruits of "love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

Reasoning in their hearts, v. 6. Wickedness is just as real and wicked, even though it does not find expression in word or deed. An internal disease will stay as surely as one on the surface of

the body. Cancer is as deadly as smallpox. Jesus taught that hatred was a sort of murder. Set a watch upon your thoughts, and keep them free from guileful wishes and envious hopes and impure covetings. Your thoughts may not injure others as much as your deeds would, but they injure yourself as much. An act of crime is as great, if done in secrecy, as if done before a thousand witnesses, and a thought of crime is as evil, as if it had actually been brought to performance.

Whether is it easier? v. 9. The physical miracle attests the spiritual. If a man claims to speak many foreign languages, and it is found that he does know French and Russian, it is easier to believe his claim that he knows Turkish and Japanese as well. If a professed Christian answers to simple tests, it is probable that he will not fail in more difficult ones. Rowland Hill said: "I would not give much for the Christianity of that man whose very dog and cat were not the better for it." The method by which a disciple of Jesus shows his colors to the world is not loud assertion, but by being more truthful, just, kind and forgiving than he ever had been before, or ever would have been without some revolutionary change having taken place in him.

He arose, v. 12. With the effort to obey came the strength. He might have said, "I can't arise; I'm paralyzed. If I could arise, I wouldn't be here." But he took Jesus at His word, and new energy leaped into his muscles as he tried. This is the law of Christian victory. For each of us, strength sufficient for the day comes with the day. Along with the temptation, is provided the way of escape. It is in the valley of the shadow of death that the rod and the staff of the Shepherd are revealed.

Power...to forgive, v. 10.—Imagine a ship at sea in a great storm. The captain's seamanship is tested to the utmost. The passengers gaze in awe, perhaps with dread, at the battle of wind and wave. Suppose some mighty voice should bid the storm to cease, and turn the wild confusion into quiet. What a wonder! Ah, there is a greater marvel. One there is, who can calm the tempest that rages within the sinner's own breast when conscience lifts up its accusing voice. The word of Jesus, who stilled the storm on the Galilean lake, can bring peace to the soul.

COUNSEL.

Friend, when your heart is heavy
And you know not where to turn,
When the years lie dark behind you
And their blistering memories burn,
Arise, and fling them from you—
The thoughts that poison sleep;
And pray the Lord's good angels
Around you ward to keep.
Nay, dwell not with the sorrow
Or the fruitless might-have-been;
Nor waste in vain repinings,
The strength to fight with sin.
Arise, and march straight forward,
And face the years to be,
And pray the Lord of angels
To send you victory.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

No one need remain under the power of sin. Not even the devil can bind—no there if by the grace of God he is determined to rise.

The head may be pillowed on hard stone, but it is just as liable to see golden ladders and visions of angels as if it were resting on the softest spot. We furnish our own pillows, but God sends the visions.

FEARFUL CHRISTIANS.

(By C. H. Wetherbe)

I hope to write some words which may impart courage to those of my Christian readers who are fearful. Such ones are living in all places. I now particularly refer to those who fear that, as they have committed some grievous sin, they are forever lost. Their feelings are indescribable. They daily grieve over their condition. They are tempted to believe that they have committed the unpardonable sin. They are deeply sorry for their sin or sins, and yet they remain miserable.

A reader of the Christian Herald recently sent the following inquiry to the editor: "If a Christian falls into sin and sincerely repents, may he hope for forgiveness, in spite of the fact that he had been converted before he fell?" A part of the reply is as follows: "You may be quite sure that no truly penitent man is ever rejected, if he goes humbly to God and pleads for forgiveness and put away his sin." It is apparent that that man was fearful that he had so sinned that he could never be restored to God's favor. It such be the case; he is mistaken. A true child of God does not lose his sonship by the commission of one sin, nor a dozen sins. He may have committed some sin of unusual magnitude, but this does not in itself, destroy his relation to God as a spiritual child. Thy children have many times disobeyed me, and thus sinned against me, but they remained my children all the while.

Some Christian teachers say that even one sin by a Christian deprives him of his divine justification, out it is not true. Justification is not such a weak and slender thing as that is. God has provided the means for keeping a believer in vital relation with Him. Christ is the Christian's Advocate, and He intercedes daily for him—What is necessary for such a person as I quoted from is to confess his sins to God, and He, because of Christ's advocacy, will freely forgive him, and at the same time cleanse him from all sin. As soon as one has besought God to give and purify him he need have no further fear that he will be cast off. Of course, the devil tries to harass such a Christian, and keep him feeling fearful and discouraged. Pay no attention to such temptations. Simply believe that God has pardoned you for Christ's sake, and then, rejoice and be fearless. The very fact that one is sorry for his sins, and confesses them, is a most hopeful sign.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, our peace flows like a river whilst our faith lays hold on Thee. Thou art our Father; we are Thy children. Thou dost not deny us, nor leave us, nor disavow us; but with continual affection and care thou dost claim and keep us every one. We are prodigals indeed; still Thou dost keep the house for us, and for our return. Thou dost wait with all the patience and eagerness of undying love. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; yet still Thou art our Father, looking for us, waiting for us, seeking and saving us every day. Behold us in Thine house; may we now see a light above the brightness of the sun—the full shining of God's infinite love—chasing away all darkness, filling the whole space with tender light, and giving us to feel that the bright creation is the house of God and the gate of heaven.—Amen.

The man who is useful will always win the highest prize over him who is merely ornamental.

*S. S. Lesson—Mark 2: 1-12. Commit to memory v. 5. Read Matthew 9: 2-8; Luke 5: 17-26. Golden Text—The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.—Mark 2: 10.