

## • The Quiet Hour •

### The Rich Young man.\*

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D.D.

One came to Him (v. 16). This incident probably occurred in Peraea, during our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem. Comparing the accounts in St. Mark and St. Luke, we learn that this "one" was a "young man"; he was earnest, he came "running"; was reverent, he "kneeled"; was thoughtful, he asked a momentous question; was dissatisfied with himself, the asking of the question shows that; was desirous of better things, else he had not asked the question. Significantly, St. Mark tells us, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him."

Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (v. 16.) Eternal life involves the idea, not only of endlessness, but also of complete harmony with God, and so of inconceivable blessing. This young man thought this "eternal life" was something to be earned, not given. But the steady teaching of the New Testament is that we, sinners, cannot "do" anything to merit eternal life; that we can receive it only as a gracious gift from the atoning Christ.

Why asketh thou Me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good (v. 17). As to Jesus' answer, there is doubt as to the reading, whether it ought to be as in the Authorized Version, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, God," or whether the reading should be as the Revised Version renders it. If we accept the reading as here, the meaning is substantially the same. The great teaching is that, except we heartily accept the essential deity of Jesus, His teaching can be no more to us, we can be no surer of its truth, than of the truth in the teaching of any other fallible human teacher.

Keep the commandments (v. 17). But our Lord will meet the young man on his own ground of doing, and show him how poor a ground it is, if, determining to stand on it, one expects eternal life.

Which? (v. 18.) The young man, in his moral self-complacency, supposes that Jesus will mention some of the many minute rules of conduct of which the oral law of the Pharisees was full. Jesus surprises him by calling attention to the five great laws of the second table of the ten commandments.

All these things have I observed: what lack I yet? (v. 20). The young man believes that he has been most scrupulous and anxious in his obedience. But compare Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28. One may do externally as he ought, and yet be fearfully wrong in thinking and feeling, and the law of God demands absolute righteousness back and down in these inner springs. Looked at from the point of view of thought, feeling, motive, it is the steady sign of the saddest moral obtuseness and blindness for one to ask, "What lack I yet?"

If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor (v. 21). This was a special test, exactly suited to the young ruler, as appears from his sorrowful failure to meet it. The principle involved is supreme devotion to Christ. The test of this is different for different people. Some

find it hard to renounce hopes of worldly honor and fame for Christ's sake than to renounce wealth; and for others the hard trial is to abandon certain gratifications of the various appetites of taste. This is the great, testing question: Shall we make Christ supreme?

He went away sorrowful (v. 22). Beautiful character is not salvation; the young man had that to such degree that Jesus loved him; yet he was not, certainly at this time, saved. Desire for salvation is not salvation; actual choice of Christ is necessary to that. The essential thing in order to salvation is supreme devotion to Christ. "Turning away from Christ with regret and gloomy sadness is yet turning away."

It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (v. 24). I cannot do better than quote Dean Farrar's note: "To soften the apparent harshness of this expression, some have conjectured kamilon, 'a rope'; and some have explained 'the needle's eye' of the small side gate for passengers (at the side of the large city gates), through which a camel might press its way, if it were first unladen. It is the object of the proverb to express human impossibility. In the human sphere, apart from the special grace of God, it is better to be certain that those who have riches would be led to trust in them, and so would fail to enter into the kingdom of God, which requires absolute humility, ungrudging liberality, and constant self-denial."

With God all things are possible (v. 26). No men, neither the rich nor poor, can save themselves. Salvation is possible; God can save. Let us not lessen the stern teaching as toward riches, with their peculiarly attractive and seductive power. Rich men can be Christian, but a rich man, or any other man, can be Christian only as he holds his possessions in trust for Christ. Christ must have the supreme devotion of every saved soul.

### Our Life.

Our life is scarce the twinkle of a star  
In God's eternal day. Obscure and dim  
With mottled clouds, it yet may beam for Him,  
And, darkened here, shine fair to spheres afar.  
I will be patient, lest my sorrow bar  
His grace and blessing, and I fall supine;  
In my own hands my wants and weakness are,  
My strength, O God, in Thine.

—Bayard Taylor.

### How Souls are Saved.

"Do you know that the Holy Spirit almost always uses insignificant means? Eloquent sermons never save anybody; metaphysical sermons never save anybody; philosophical sermons never save anybody. But the minister comes some Sabbath to his pulpit, worn out with engagements and the jingling of a frenzied door-bell; he has only a text and two or three ideas, but he says: 'O Lord, help me. Here are a good many people I may never meet again. I have not much to say. Speak though my poor lips.' And before the service is done there are tearful eyes and a solemnity like the judgment. The great French orator, when the dead King lay before him, looked up and cried, 'God only is great!' and the triumph of his eloquence has been told by the historians. But I have not heard that one soul was saved by the oratorical flourish. Worldly critics may think that the early preaching of

Thomas Chalmers was a masterpiece. But Thomas Chalmers says he never began to preach until he came out of the sick room, white and emaciated, and told men the simple story of Jesus. In the great day of eternity it will be found that the most souls have been brought to Christ, not by the Bossuets and Massillons and Bourdaloues, but by humble men, who, in the strength of God, and believing in the eternal spirit, invited men to Jesus. There were wise slaves—there were excellent ointments, I suppose, in the time of Christ for blind or inflamed eyes. But Jesus turned his back upon them, and put the tip of his finger to his tongue, and then, with the spittle that adhered to the finger, he anointed the eyes of the blind man, and daylight poured into his blinded soul. So it is now that the spirit of God takes that humble prayer meeting talk, which seems to be the very saliva of Christian influence, and anoints the eyes of the blind, and pours the sunlight of pardon and peace upon the soul. Oh, my friend, I wish we could feel it more and more that, if any good is done, it is by the power of God's omnipotent spirit. I do not know what hymn may bring you to Jesus. I do not know what words of the Scripture lesson I read may save your soul. Perhaps the spirit of God may hurl the very text into your heart: "Come for all things are now ready."—Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D.D.

### The Giver of All Good.

The tendency of success is to make us forget God. There is no doubt at all about that. The Psalms are full of that teaching, and so are the Words of our Lord. Prosperity engenders the feeling that we are equal to anything. The rich man's wealth, as Solomon says, is his strong city. He entrenches himself in it, he fortifies himself in it, he feels secure in it. He is secure against chance, secure against accidents, secure against any reasonable or unreasonable kind of bad fortune, secure against Providence, secure against God. His very sense of being independent overleaps itself, and falls, before he knows it, into a kind of practical atheism. Well, here is a direction for the use of memory by prosperous and successful men. "Remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." It is only when we remember God that the getting of wealth ceases to be an end in itself. It is only when we remember God that the sense of responsibility attaches to success and to the possession of wealth. The man who is making money almost unconsciously begins to feel as if he were independent. Of course, there is a legitimate sense in which independence is to be aimed at, as Burns says:

"But for the glorious privilege  
Of being independent."

But how little, when we think of it, independence can really be! The most prosperous man is not independent of his neighbors, of his servants, of the forces of nature; and still less is he independent of God; and he should remember God and his dependence upon Him if his prosperity is not to do him harm instead of good. A full cup is ill to carry, and it is only the recollection of the Lord our God that gives a steady hand.—James Denny, D. D.

I will know the company thou keepest by the fragrance thou hast—If thou hast lain in beds of spices, thou wilt smell of the myrrh and the spikenard and the aloes. I will not think thou has been with Christ unless I can perceive thou savorest of him.—Spurgeon.

\*S. S. Lesson December 2, Matt. 19:16-26.

Golden Text.—Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!—Mark 10:24