

The Quiet Hour.

The Lame Man Healed.

S. S. Lesson, Jan. 26th; Acts 3:1-10.

Golden Text—Ex. 15:2. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.

BY REV. J. MCD. DUNCAN, B. D.

The hour of prayer, v. 1. It is a good thing to have regular times for prayer. It is related of General Gordon that for half an hour every day a white handkerchief lay on the ground at a little distance from his tent. This was a well known signal that the general must not be disturbed because he was at prayer. So great were the demands on his courage and strength that he must renew the energies of his soul by waiting upon God. In the time of secret prayer in the morning, we shall find a fountain whose streams will refresh and gladden us all through the day.

Ask an alms, v. 3. The request which came from the lips of the lame man was for money, but the deep yearning of his heart was for strength to walk. God answered not the auditable petition, but the inward desire. He understands not only what we say but what we need. In His wisdom He often withholds from us a minor blessing, that He may bestow a greater one.

And Peter fastening his eyes upon him . . . said, Look on us, v. 4. There must be in us a preparedness of mind, if we are to receive blessing from God. When Jacob, full of self-confidence, sought to enter the land of Canaan, he had to wrestle with God. It was only after he had been made to see his own helplessness and dependence that he had power with God and man. God gives the blessing, but our faith is the necessary condition of our receiving it.

Silver and gold have I none, v. 6. Peter was a poor man and naturally took a special interest in the poor. Christianity is the religion of the common people. It upholds the dignity of labor. St. Crispin is the patron saint of shoemakers. This is his story. He was a Roman senator, brought up in the lap of luxury. He became acquainted with the religion of Jesus during a time of fierce persecution early in the fourth century. He was baptized, and feeling that a life of ease and idleness was not consistent with his Master's example, he gave up his honors and his wealth, retired into Gaul, and there took up the trade of shoemaking, because it could be exercised in great quietness. At a time when manual toil was considered fit only for slaves. Christianity emphasized the dignity of labor.

Such as I have give I thee, v. 6. The confidence of Peter sprang from his assurance that the risen Saviour, though He was absent from His disciples in bodily form, was really present with them in His power and spirit. Their work was but a continuation of His. They were but carrying on the work which He began. An example, and an inspiration, verily, to all Christian workers!

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, v. 6. The Romans had crucified Jesus Christ and His friends had laid His sacred body in Joseph's tomb. Men had killed His body. But He had another life besides His bodily life. There was that life which consisted in perfect obedience to the will of His Father. There was that life in virtue of which He exercised authority over the forces of nature, over disease, over death, over the

world of good and evil spirits. It was impossible that this higher life of Christ could be crushed by the mallets which drove the nails into His cross. That life survived the grave. It re-appeared in the activity of His disciples. It was only a few weeks before this that the temple courts had been thronged by crowds of blind and lame seeking to be healed by Jesus (Matt. 21:14). And now, although the Master had been crucified and buried, the disciples on the very same spot were repeating His miracles. How vain had been all the attempts of men against that invulnerable life! The Crucified lived on and worked on through the presence and power of His Spirit in His followers. And at this day there is no name in the world so powerful, no authority so potent in the world as the name and authority of this same Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

And he entered . . . into the temple . . . praising God, v. 8. The first thing his strengthened limbs did for this man was to carry him into the house of God to join in its praises. His conduct proves that not only his body but also his soul had been acted upon by divine power. It would have been sad indeed if he had employed his quickened energies to enter on evil courses before impossible. But not less sad is it to see those who have always enjoyed health and vigor, use their powers, not in the service of God, but of self and sin. All that is so spent is clear loss; all spent for God, clear gain.

Studying the Bible.

It has been my privilege during the past nine years to be closely identified with a great company of men, both in evangelistic work and in the regular service of the Church. I have in that time been brought in contact with many who, while they were Christians, were living far away from Christ, were not growing, and were having an experience with which they were thoroughly dissatisfied, and in every case, when I have investigated the cause, I have found that it was due to the fact that they were not students of the Word of God. I have also known very many who, while they had accepted Christ and made a fair start in the Christian life, had stumbled and fallen by the wayside, bringing disgrace upon themselves, the Church and the Lord who had bought them; and in every case I have found their failure was due to the fact that they had neglected the study of the Bible, and thus had become an easy prey to the wiles of the devil. These facts are exceedingly solemn, but they at once established the necessity for faithful, prayerful and constant study of God's Word. If it should be objected that so much of the time is taken up by business and its attendant responsibilities, my answer would be that those who have been most proficient in their knowledge of the Scriptures have become so because they have made time for communion with God and His Word—in the early hours of the day, or even the late hours of the night, and it has not infrequently been by the sacrifice of some special pleasure.—Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman.

Observe when others are suffering and drop a word of kindness.

Paul's Thanksgivings.

All of the epistles of Paul abound with expressions of thanks to God. But there is one class of them which not only contain the thanks, but begin with thanks. These are the epistles of his imprisonment.

One would expect the contrary. We would anticipate that when Paul was barred from home, restrained from all public preaching, estopped from "the care of all the churches," and chained to a Roman Soldier, (probably a disgusting heathen) his epistles would be characterized by a tone of sorrow or disappointment. On the contrary, all these epistles open with a strain of praise and thanksgiving. Let us count them over:

Ephesians 1:2—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings."

Philippians 1:3—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you; always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy."

Colossians 1:3—"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you."

Philemon, v. 4—"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith."

1 Timothy 1:3—"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

The lesson is for us. When circumstances are adverse, we are tempted to ask, what we have for which to give thanks. When Paul was in these adverse circumstances, he gave thanks even more than in his other epistles.

The facts remind us of the truth that spiritual blessings are more important to us, and are a greater source of thanksgiving than the temporal blessings. Let us look beyond the temporal. If we have grown in grace this year, conquering temptations, let us give thanks. If we have grown in knowledge, if we have seen children or neighbors converted, if we have witnessed spiritual growth in Sabbath scholars—no matter how unfavorable our temporal surroundings—we can join Paul in crying, "I thank my God."—Christian Observer.

Prayer.

Lord, I have viewed this world over, in which Thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit and the design of my creation and can find nothing on which to rest, for nothing here doth itself rest, but such things as please me for a while in some degree vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lord, I come to Thee, the Eternal Being, the Spring of Life, the Center of rest, the Stay of the creation, the Fullness of all things. I join myself to Thee; with Thee I will lead my life and spend my days, with whom I am to dwell forever, expecting, when my life time is over, to be taken up ere long into Thy eternity. Amen.—Selected.

That great scholar and student of religions, Max Muller, never said a truer word than when he said, "The very soul of our religion is missionary, progressive, world-embracing. It would cease to exist if it ceased to be missionary, and if it disregarded the parting words of its Founder." As Dr. A. J. Gordon once said, "If you are not a missionary Christian, you will soon be a missing Christian."