

The Quiet Hour.

Isaiah's Message to Judah.

S. S. LESSON, Isaiah 1: 1-9, 16-20. Nov. 20, 1904

GOLDEN TEXT—Cease to do evil; learn to do well.—Isaiah 1: 16, 17.

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The vision of Isaiah, v. 1. To see ourselves as we are—not through the colored glass of self-love or the flattery of foolish friends, but in the white light of reality—is great gain. Such a clear vision is the first towards betterment. Strip the mask from the evil within us, and we shall shrink from its ugliness with a shuddering horror. Happy the nation or individual, to whom God has sent some man who sees them as they stand before His pure eyes. His words may smart and sting, but there is healing in them.

Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth, v. 2. What tales the sun might tell of all that it has seen during its daily journeys across the sky from the beginning of time! Not for one moment has God forgotten His creatures, or slackened in His kindness to them. All the more should we blush for those chapters in the story of our lives which tell of ingratitude and rebellion.

My people doth not consider, v. 3. "What is it for?" A most natural question this when we are looking at any piece of machinery. Far more wonderful than any machine of man's inventing is our own nature. There is the body bearing in every part the marks of divine wisdom and skill. And the soul, with its god-like powers and immortal destiny! Never stop to think what we have been made for! Is it any wonder then, if our life ends in ruin?

Despised the Holy One of Israel, v. 4. "Which is your best sermon?" To this question a noted preacher answered, "My next." Always striving towards some ideal, but never reaching it—this only is true life. We find the highest ideal in God Himself. Like Him—so we were created, and that image he intends to be restored. To lose this ideal, to rest satisfied on a lower level, "to despise the Holy One"—there can be no sadder, no more hopeless condition; for what our ideals are, that we become.

Why should ye be stricken any more? v. 5. It is one of the great heart breaks, that men, with their eyes open to what it will cost of shame and suffering, will still persist in sin? Why is it? One answer is.—Habit is strong. Another is.—Sin is sweet. The true answer is.—Our hearts are evil. We love our own way. Hence, the only effective stoppage to sin, is a new heart; and the only source of the new heart, is the Spirit of the Holy God; and the only way to receive the Spirit is to make room for him.

The Lord of hosts, a small remnant, v. 9. With outstretched finger, this verse points to two pillars of national and individual safety. The merciful care of "the Lord of Hosts"—this first, for there is nothing good apart from Him. Then, how much every community and country owe to good people. But for them the social structure would not hold together. Without the righteous it would have no solid foundation.

Cease to do evil; learn to do well, vs 16-17. Righteousness and unrighteousness—how clear and sharp the line between them. We may call evil things we like by smooth names, but that does not change the fact. The strong, honest soul refuses to juggle with words. It will not deceive itself or

others. Elijah and Ahab; John and Judas—these represent two sides. On one or other each of us stands. Middle ground there is none.

Let us reason together, saith the Lord, v. 18. How this invitation anticipates the gospel! God sent his son to reason with men. He spoke to them as fathers and children, as masters and servants, as friends and neighbors. His illustrations were taken from the household and the field and the common affairs of life. What pains he took to show men how fair God's claims are, and how eager He is to do them good! Coercion is foreign to the method of the Master. Persuasion is the key-note of His message.

Scarlet . . . snow . . . crimson . . . wool, v. 18. "Scarlet" and "crimson"—thus the prophet flashes on our vision the worst that sin can do. We see evil raised to the highest power. But there is hope, for grace is mightier to cleanse than sin to stain. The love that streams from Calvary can make the vilest pure as the driven snow. The sight of that sinless Victim stirs the heart to penitence and hatred of sin, which have in them the promise and potency of holiness.

It ye be . . . obedient . . . if ye . . . rebel, vs. 20, 21. The hinge is small compared with the door, but on the hinge the door turns. The huge vessel swings about at the turning of the little rudder. Our destiny depends on the decision of the will. We have it in our power to open the door into eternal blessedness or unending woe. We are free to choose. But having chosen, we must abide by the consequences.

Prayer

Keep me, my King, from all littleness of thought and feeling, that in the largeness of Thy love I may see things as they are. Give me reverence without idolatry, faith without superstition, love without fear. And may my trust be in Thee more than in anything which Thou hast given me. Let not Thy gifts hide Thee, the loving Giver, from me. So shall my faith be true because it is fixed on Thee. Amen.—Selected.

Loving An Enemy.

BY FLOYD W. TOMPKINS, S. T. D.

How can I make myself love my neighbor and banish feelings of hatred.

This is a hard problem, and yet the methods of help are simple. First, pray for him as often and as earnestly as you can. Second, refuse to think of the sayings or actions which made you angry with him. Third, think of his good points, the worthy things you know of him. Fourth, consider yourself and see how you may have been unkind to another, in some way, as he has been to you. And, fifth, try to do something for him. Send him some little token of affection, even if you find it difficult to do it affectionately. Serve him at some time of necessity, and do not be disheartened if he rejects your overtures. And then do not be cast down because you do not at once succeed in feeling toward him as you would like to. We cannot love all men alike, simply because our love is not equally received by all. But if we wish well to all

men, and would help them if we could, then we have the spirit of Christ in a measure, and a greater power of that spirit will come to us.

Reading Steeped in Prayer.

The reading of the Bible is as necessary as the feeding of an engine with coal, or the imparting of strength to an invalid by food. And this reading may be steeped in the spirit of prayer. You must never let your work for Christ so engross you as to rob you of those quiet hours when he needs you to be alone with him that he may declare to you his Father's name, and reveal himself, and charge you with the spiritual forces stored up in him. It will be well to keep yourself free from attractive avenues of service, to be fresh for these still hours. They are more dear to him and more needful to you than all your service. "In eating-time and harvest thou shalt rest." One hour spent in work after prolonged fellowship with Christ will pay better than twelve hours spent in unbroken toils. Christ cares less for the amount of work done than for its quality. He is more anxious about the worker than the work. Help me to remember this, thou Lord of the harvest, and often may I leave even the whitening fields that in thee I may find rest and strength. And if I seem to tarry, I pray thee send some loving reminder to call me to thy side, as thou didst to Mary by the hand of her sister Martha.—F. B. Meyer.

On An Unjust Judgment.

In this God's-world, with its wide-whirling eddies and mad foam-oceans, where men and nations perish as if without law and judgment for an unjust thing is sternly delayed, dost thou think that there is therefore no justice? It is what the fool hath said in his heart. It is what the wise, in all times, were wise because they denied, and knew forever not to be. I tell thee again, there is nothing else but justice. One strong thing I find here below; the just thing, the true thing. My friend, if thou hadst all the artillery of Woolwich trundling at thy back in support of an unjust thing, and infinite bon fires visibly waiting ahead of thee to blaze centuries long for thy victory on behalf of it, I would advise thee to call halt, to fling down thy baton and say, "In God's name, No."—Thomas Carlyle.

In Everything Give Thanks.

Surely this is a hard saying! Am I to thank God for everything? Am I to thank him for bereavement, for pain, for poverty, for toil? I may believe that the time will come when I shall thank him; that is an act of faith. But am I to turn faith into fruition? Must I celebrate the victory before the battle? Must I lift up my hands over my head and say, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast taken away my friend?" Is it possible? Is it human? Is it desirable? Is it the will of love that love should violate its own law? Is it pleasing to my Father that loss should be pleasant to me? Is my heart to make no distinction between the sunshine and the cloud? Is not one-half of my joy just the absence of pain? If I cease to shrink from pain, how shall I keep my joy? Is it good that I should be told to give thanks for everything?

Be still, my soul; thou hast misread the message. It is not to give thanks for everything, but to give thanks in everything. It is not to praise God for the night, but to bless him that the night is not deeper. Be-