

SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

## The Quiet Hour

YOUNG  
PEOPLETHREE MIRACLES AND THEIR  
MEANING.

By Professor James Stalker, D.D.

After giving the Sermon on the Mount as a specimen of the teaching of Jesus, the Evangelist proceeds to narrate a number of miracles as specimens of his healing activity, in fulfilment of the programme laid down in the last three verses of the fourth chapter. These are of great variety, as we perceive from the three of which to-day's lesson consists; for, while the first illustrates his fidelity to the Mosaic Law, as taught in the fifth chapter at the seventeenth verse, the second, on the contrary, supplies a wide outlook on his relations to other peoples besides Israel, and the third recalls attention from this distant survey to the domesticity of a scene in the house of a disciple.

The Cure of a Leper.—This may have been the first case of leprosy dealt with by Jesus; yet the victim did not doubt his ability to make him clean, but his willingness. It is always more difficult to be persuaded of the love than of the power of the Saviour; we believe in general in his power to save all, but we are afraid to apply the principle to our own case. If Jesus had not before this cured other lepers, it would not have been surprising if this sufferer had even doubted his ability for leprosy was and is—for unhappily it still exists in all the four continents—a very desperate disease, with which medical skill can do little to cope. In the minds of the ancients it was closely associated with sin, of which it was supposed to be a retribution; and we must still recognize, in its horrible symptoms and progress, a vivid image of sin. If it is not contagious—a point about which there seems to be difference of opinion—then sin is in this respect far worse than it; for sin is contagious—in the highest degree. But, the more it is an image of sin, the more is the cure of it by Jesus a prophecy of his power to cleanse from sin also. The laying of the hand of Jesus on one whom all others were afraid to touch was an act of rare consideration; but did it not involve him who did it in ceremonial uncleanness? No, because the impurity fled before his touch, and the body he touched was already clean. The motive for restraining the cured man's testimony may have been lest the authorities should refuse to attest the cure if they knew how it had been wrought; but there are other cases also which prove that, while the Saviour demands witness bearing from all, he sometimes, for wise reasons, limits it or gives it a particular direction.

The Cure of the Centurion's Servant.—Or was it his son? The word may signify either servant or son; and some prefer the one and some the other signification. If it was his servant, our respect for the centurion is enhanced; for it is much rarer to display such anxiety and take such pains for a servant than for a son; and he may teach Christians a lesson about having transactions with the Saviour about their servants. He was a heathen, stationed at Capernaum, probably in the service of Herod Antipas, but laid hold of, as we learn from the ampler and more picturesque narrative of the third Evangelist, by the religion of the Jews, and now by the ministry of Christ. There are in the New Testament four centurions mentioned, and they are all remarkable, being both fine specimens of the natural man, and responsive to the appeal of the Highest when it came to them. I once asked a soldier why it was that, when soldiers are Christians at all, they are such splendid ones; and he said it was because in the army you are not allowed to be a half-and-half Christian:

the thing is laughed out of you unless you are out-and-out. Perhaps the answer given to this centurion, in verse 7, ought to be a question—"Art thou to come and heal him?" This is, "I, a Jew, into the house of a Gentile?" If so, it was Jesus who tempted this man's faith, as on other occasions he did that of others, not only rising to the belief that the Healer could cure at a distance, but putting this belief into a telling and gracious form by borrowing an image from his own profession: as he was a man under authority to those above him, yet at the same time with authority over those beneath him, so, he acknowledged, Christ was acting under God's authority, yet with authority over the powers, or perhaps the angels, of good and evil, who would go and come at his bidding. With this answer Jesus was delighted, as he always was with any manifestation of faith, or with the wit and wisdom generated by faith. Never, he exclaimed, had he met with such faith in Israel as had been shown by this heathen. And then there rose before his mind's eye a vision of heathens streaming from the East and the West into the kingdom, to sit down in the brilliant banquet-hall, while the natural guests were, through their own fault, thrust forth into the darkness outside. As gracefully as the centurion had acknowledged his power to cure, so did Jesus now give him what he had asked, as the reward of faith.

The Cure of Peter's Wife's Mother.—When the Saviour has attracted anyone to himself, he binds him not by one tie, but a hundred. He was thus casting the bands of a man over Peter when he made a pulpit of his boat and when he caused his nets to enclose a mighty draught of fishes. And now he similarly casts cords of love round him through his domestic affections. He must have won the love of many in the same way—of those, for example, who, that evening when the Sabbath was past, brought their distressed relatives round the house where he was being entertained, and experienced from him such sympathy and tenderness as recalled the words in the fifty-third of Isaiah.—Sunday School Times.

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## A PRAYER.

O Lord, help us by that Spirit of grace and supplication that our prayer may be in the Spirit and our desires inbreathed by Thyself, and so be sure to be answered. We would not bring Thee our own foolish wishes. We would pray much rather for that chiefest good, that our wills may be brought into perfect conformity with Thy will, so that whatsoever Thou dost command we may delight to do it, and whatsoever Thou dost appoint we may be patient and cheerful to bear. We have often enough striven against Thy providences, and Thy higher purposes and commandments, and we have found that it has been vain for us to kick against the pricks, and that we have only wounded ourselves thereby. We ask for joyful submission, that we may desire nothing of which we are not sure that Thou desirest it too. Amen.

If you were going to run a race you would first put down all the parcels you might have been carrying. And if you had a heavy little parcel in your pocket, you would take that out and lay it down, too, because it would hinder you in running. You would know better than to say, "I will put down the parcels which I have in my hands, but nobody can see the one in my pocket, so that one won't matter!" You would "lay aside every weight."—F. R. Havergal.

## THE SECRET OF POWER.

The Christian who neglects his Bible to feed on dreams and visions must expect to lament, "Oh, my leanness!" But he who shows himself in sympathetic accord with the Master's prayer, "Sanctify them by Thy Word," becomes partaker of the Divine nature and grows more and more unto the stature of the fullness of Christ. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of Power. His influence is the great moral dynamic. The Lord said to His disciples on His departure, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power." They waited ten days, with one accord, in prayer, until it came. It came from heaven with a sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as fire, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, Acts ii: 2-4. This was their qualification for the work of the kingdom. It seems to me we have only slightly apprehended as yet the full significance of this manifestation of the tongues of fire. The kingdom is to come through the propagation of truth, and this will never be accomplished until the eloquence of the Church, not in preaching only, but in holy living, is a veritable Gospel of flame. The time will come when men shall speak the Gospel, "The Spirit gives them utterance," in like manner; when the eloquence of truth shall be heard to the burning point; when they shall utter, as Milton said, "thoughts that breathe in words that burn." This is preaching; all else is empty speech.—Dr. D. J. Burrell.

## LOVING WITH OUR MINDS.

We are to love God with our minds as well as with our hearts. That means that God is to have possession of our thoughts as well as of our affections. It means, also, that our affections are to be thoughtful and reasonable, that we are to think about our love and what love calls for. And we are to love our neighbors with as wise and true a love as that with which we love God. The mere impulse of love will not always suffice. How can I show my love most helpfully? This is the ever necessary inquiry. "My sister is one of the most loving and unselfish souls," a man remarked, "but half a dozen people have to follow her around to clear up the unfinished jobs of unselfishness she leaves behind her." She loved with everything except her mind. Her unselfishness created more burdens than it relieved. She left, wherever she went, a mess of well-meant kindnesses which were not reasoned, which required work on the part of many others in order to redeem her assurances, while she went serenely on her way, happy in the thought of her thoughtless love. Whatever duty we owe to God needs to be discharged with all the faculties we have, mind and soul, as well as heart and strength. And in our human relations the will to be helpful needs to be enriched and directed by the mind of love, by the whole intellect alive and keen to perceive and reason out the ways of greatest possible service, of service which will help most. We are not helping a man enough when we endow him with a deed of kindness on which he has to pay a usurious interest to make it of any real use or to save it from being a positive encumbrance.—Sunday School Times.

Let the churches everywhere cease praying for a "coming revival" and devote themselves to the daily care of souls, to the ceaseless inculcation of truth and righteousness and to the constant rebuke of social wrongs and vices, and they will speedily be conscious of a present revival, which will increase in wholesome intensity in proportion as their faithfulness endures.—George C. Lorimer.