

## The Quiet Hour.

### Early Christian Church.

S. S. Lesson.—Jan 19 : Acts 2 : 37-47.

Golden Text.—Acts 2 : 47. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

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They were pricked in their heart, v. 37. The first effect which the gospel produces in those who hear it is sorrow and alarm. Sin so blinds and deadens the soul that it must be startled out of its insensibility. As birds who build their nests in bellies are undisturbed by the clamour of the bells, or as those who live beside a cataract cease to notice its roar, so the sinner is unaware of his guilt and danger. It is true kindness to rouse him. A sinking ship or a burning house is not the place for quiet sleep. The true friend is the one who shouts our danger in our ear and rouses us to seek safety. The terror and grief which the gospel awakens in the soul lead us to flee to the only refuge.

What shall we do? v. 37. It is not sufficient to have our emotions stirred by the preaching of the gospel. If we are to realize its saving power it must reach our wills and lead us to action. We have not finished with a sermon when we have listened to it. It remains for us to act out its teachings. The listening is over, the doing is just begun.

Repent, v. 38. A soldier defined repentance as a "right-about-face." Some one has said that to repent is to take the first turn to the right. Repentance is a change of mind. It is a necessary step to salvation. Unless we repent, we cannot receive the forgiveness of sins. It is true, in one sense, that believers have been forgiven from eternity, because the Lamb was slain "from the foundation of the world," but when this is said of them, they are looked upon as having already repented and believed in Christ.

Be baptized, v. 38. Along with the inward change there must go the outward sign. This badge of discipleship serves not only to indicate to others which side we are on, but also to confirm our own faith. Looking at this symbol reminds us of the position we have taken and the vows we have made. It is to us what the blood sprinkled on the doorposts was to the Israelites (Exod. 12 : 13), a token that they belonged to the Lord and were under His special protection.

In the name of Jesus Christ, v. 38. The apostles baptized their converts in the name of their Master. This means that they acted under His authority. We sometimes send a messenger and bid him use our name. He is clothed with authority from us. More than this—it means that they were acting in the interests of His kingdom. When we do a thing in another's name, it is for him we do it. When we take possession of money or property in the name of a society, it is not for our own use but for the use of the society. When an officer arrests a man "in the king's name," he is not gratifying his private malice; and when the tax collector gathers money in the name of the government, it is not to fill his own pocket, but the coffers of the state. When the apostles baptized, they received new citizens into the kingdom of heaven, and those who submitted to this rite assumed the obligations as well as the privileges of citizenship.

Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, v. 38.

The one thing that keeps the Holy Ghost out of our hearts is sin that is unrepented of and so unforgiven. When we repent of our sin, He comes in as the sunlight floods the room when the shutters are thrown open, or as the waters rush forth when some barrier is removed.

And to your children, v. 39. The children are included in the covenant which God makes with His people. Peter offered to parents a salvation which included their children. The children in our Sabbath Schools belong to God's kingdom as really as they are subjects of the British Empire. And because they belong to that kingdom, special obligations rest upon them. What boy or girl would willingly disgrace the name of an earthly father? How much more should they shrink from doing anything that would dishonor their Heavenly Father!

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers (Rev. Ver.), v. 42. Look at the four marks of these early converts. *First*, they made progress. They were converted at Pentecost, but that did not make them perfect Christians. They must grow into the likeness of Christ. The means of growth was the teaching of the apostles. Their souls were fed by the lessons which their teachers drew from the Old Testament and by the memories of Jesus. *Secondly*, they had fellowship with one another for mutual help and encouragement. In 1 Cor. 10 : 16, the word here translated fellowship is applied to the Lord's Supper, and in Rom. 15 : 26, it is used of a contribution for the poor. The fellowship consisted therefore in these two things—partaking of the same holy feast and ministering to one another's outward necessities. *Thirdly*, they united in the "breaking of bread." This is the earliest New Testament name for the Lord's Supper. From the beginning it took its place as a sacrament along with baptism. *Fourthly*, they gave themselves to prayer. This means social prayer and we learn that the prayer-meeting has always had a place of honor among the services of the church.

Were together and had all things common, v. 44. This is not an ordinary communism, where each claims a share by right, but a communism of generosity. The permanent teaching of this feature of early church life may be summed up in the two statements: (1) that our neighbors have a claim upon our sympathy and help, and (2) that our property is not our own. We have been "bought with a price" and this purchase includes our possessions. If we do not love our brother whom we have seen, it is in vain that we profess to love God whom we have not seen. (1 John 4 : 20.)

The Lord added to the church daily, v. 47. We see what kind of a church it is to which the Lord adds. It is a living church, whose members feed upon the word and are united one to another in bands of brotherhood and seek in the sacraments and prayer the blessing of God. May ours be such a church!

A man can no more be a Christian without facing evil and conquering it than he can be a soldier without going to battle, facing the cannon's mouth, and encountering the enemy in the field.

### A Gratifying Statement.

DEAR "DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN":—Statements have been sent to all congregations in the western section, whose June reports showed that they had not then collected, or remitted, the full amount reported as actually subscribed. It is encouraging to find that very many have lessened the balance against them, that a good many have paid in full, and that not a few have sent in a little more than they had promised. A considerable number, also, who had paid in full according to June reports have sent additional amounts, as was suggested by the August circular. For all these tokens of continued interest, the Agent is duly thankful.

It is hoped that Ministers and local treasurers, now furnished with statements, if they find that there is yet a shortage will immediately call in outstanding subscriptions, and seek further contributions, if necessary; and that, thus, by the 22nd inst. when the Executive committee is expected to meet in Toronto, or at least within the present month, there may be large remittances to Rev. Dr. Warden. There are instances in which it appears that considerable sums have been collected and not yet remitted, but no doubt these will be in by 21st inst.

It is noted that in many congregations the balance due is now small—say from one or two to ten or fifteen dollars—showing probably a little shortage. It seems certain that if this matter were explained to the congregation, enough would immediately be provided to keep the congregation in the honorable position of having "paid in full" its reported subscription. I know many congregations who have tried this plan, and that it has resulted in providing the full amount, and often a little over.

One half the congregations have now paid in full, and it will be matter of congratulation if, in the end, we are able to say:—"Practically all our congregations sent in every cent promised."

Some have considerable lee way to make up, and will need to work vigorously or they may find themselves hard pressed in the closing days of the movement, which are not now far off. But in no case should there be any difficulty, if only friends face the task of collecting with hearty good will, and that I bespeak of them, and believe they will do.

The Annual meetings of congregations are now in order and, considering the vast interests involved both for Church and country, should there not in every case be on the order of business such enquiries as these: "How does our congregation stand with respect to the Century Common fund?" "Are there arrears we should provide for?" "Is there some further sum we might make up, so that it may not be said; 'The Presbyterian Church started to raise a \$600,000 fund but was never able to finish it.'"

I do not doubt that we can finish it, but we need generous thoughts and hearty action during the next month or two, and these may be called forth by discussion at annual meetings, and by timely appeals to our people. We do need, also, such a small amount additional from each congregation as was suggested in the August circular, from 5 to 10 per cent more, from those who have not already sent it in. R. Campbell.

Perth, Jan. 4, 1902.

The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things, more remote from our knowledge.