

## The Quiet Hour.

### Gideon and the Three Hundred.

S. S. LESSON, Nov. 30; Judges 7: 1-8

**GOLDEN TEXT**—Ps. 118: 8 It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man.

Jerubbaal, v. 1. This name suggests the thought that before Gideon could be used of God to smite the enemies of his people, he must lift up his hand against the sin that was in his own house. We may prevent God from working through us by cherishing sin in our hearts. While we are waiting for God to do something, He is waiting for us to remove the sin that keeps Him from acting on our behalf.

Who is Gideon, v. 1. The call to his great mission came to this man while he was doing his humble duty. It is not idlers who receive calls from God. "He that hath, to him shall be given," Mark 4: 25. Then, too, Gideon, like Isaiah (Isa. ch. 6), was conscious of his own unfitness for the work to which God had called him, but it was true in his case, as it frequently is, that God choose what the world, judging by appearances, pronounces "the foolish things," (1 Cor. 1: 27); for the might is not in what men are, whether their endowments be great or small, but in what God is in them.

The Lord said, v. 2 We do well, like Gideon, to make ourselves sure that we are called of God before we go on with His work. Strong faith needs a sure foundation to rest upon. We need continually "to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," Eph. 3: 16.

The Midianites, v. 2. The church of God in all ages has been opposed by powerful enemies. In the early days of the Christian church, the mighty Roman Empire overwhelmed it with fierce persecution. In the days of Luther, false doctrines threatened its very life. In the time of Wesley a cold and heartless formalism had deadened its activities. In our own time greed of gain, love of pleasure, and worldly ambition are arrayed against it. But, in spite of all its enemies, the church has grown and increased in power, and the victories of the past are a prophecy and assurance of still more glorious conquests in the future. Each soul, also, has its foes to meet, in the passions and desires and evil affections, which rise in rebellion against the God whose kingdom should be established there. We need Gideon's God to strengthen us for our inward conflicts.

Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return, v. 3. There are, alas! too many Christians who neglect to count the cost when they give themselves to Jesus Christ. Their conception of the Christian life is that of a holiday parade, to be concluded with a grand review; so, when the call to battle against the Midianites of sin resounds through the land, they are the first to desert, because they had not calculated on any such emergency. He who does that is not fit for the Kingdom.

I will try them for thee there, v. 4. God tests His workers in various ways. Martyr times, hard work, reproaches, unpopular duties, trials, missionary labors, test the quality of God's people. Blessed is he that "shall endure unto the end," for "the same shall be saved," Matt. 24: 13.

Them that lapped, v. 6. No one will accomplish much in any department unless he be ready to apply himself. If the athlete is

to win the race or be a victor in the game, he must submit to long days of strict self-restraint in the matter of food and drink and other enjoyments. In like manner, no one can be a useful and efficient instrument for the Master's use who seeks too eagerly and too frequently to gratify himself at the fountains of earthly pleasures, of which, if a man drink, he shall thirst again. Appetite should be a servant, not a master.

Any attempt to make an exhaustive statement regarding the ideal elements in Christ is like attempting to make a full statement about the richness of the sun. What grain or fruit or flower but has borrowed its richness from the lord of the summer? From the sun the sheaf borrows its golden lustre. From the sun the cluster borrows its purple hue. From the sun the apple borrows its blushing beauty; even the modest arbutus and the low lying snowdrop trace their delicate loveliness to the morning light.—Newell Dwight Hillis, D. D.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

### Obstacles.

BY H. M. MCCLOSKEY.

There has never been any marked advancement in the life of the Church or an individual without new and special hindrances arising. When at the word of the Lord the door of the Church was thrown open to the Gentiles, the hatred of the Jews was intensified, and their king distressed the aggressive church. He killed one of the apostles, the first one to suffer martyrdom, and this was so gratifying to the Jews that he imprisoned Peter, intending later to have him executed. This occurred during Passover week, and he desired to postpone the deed until after the feast; so perverted was their judgment as to what constituted holy things; though Jesus had told them that they emphasized the least important part of the law and "left undone the weightier matters, judgment, mercy and faith." It was indeed a dark outlook for the disciples, with one of their leaders slain, another, the foremost of all, imprisoned waiting execution. He was guarded with unusual care, for had he not escaped from prison once? So every precaution was taken to make him secure. Ah, but there was one point in which the king failed; one element which did not enter into his reckonings; it is written, "But prayers were made earnestly of the church unto God for Peter." Prayer was the one mighty weapon that was used by the church in those early days, and with all of her modern inventions she has not found anything to supersede it; no power that obtains much results. Jesus said: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." There could be no more discouraging situation than confronted those believers, unless it be the apathy and lukewarmness that has been stealing over the church these later years, threatening to envelop her in the chill of death. But the Lord has always had some remembrancers that have prayed earnestly—praise His name!—and their prayers are being answered as truly as were those which ascended for Peter's deliverance. To day there are believers who by their indifference to the duties and privileges of Christian living, are as

firmly bound as Peter was by the chains that fastened him to the soldiers. Many are slumbering in their own security, unmindful of the lost ones out in the darkness and tempest, from whom they are withholding the message that the Lord of glory entrusted to them for safe deliverance. The church needs to pray for her own that the angel of the Lord will touch these indifferent ones and enable them to take the steps that made Peter free. There were three commands given to Peter, three successive steps. "Rise up quickly;" preparation by attempting at the word of the Lord a human impossibility which was safely accomplished. "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals;" prepare for action, be ready for an advance. "Cast thy garment about thee and follow me." Nothing that belonged to him was to be left behind in that prison cell, as when one accepts the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," it includes not only the entire personality, influence, attractiveness, personal magnetism, but also one's home and friends, all for Christ to use as He wills; then follow Him. Onward Peter went unmolested, from one ward to another, then to the iron gate, which swung open of its own accord; so the Lord leads His people, overcoming all obstacles and always moving toward the one goal, *likeness to Christ*, "that he might be the first born among many brethren."

Think what a change would pass over our fair land if every nominally Christian home was one in reality, where the Christ spirit reigned supreme! With nothing less should the church rest content. Peter, after his release, went directly to such a home, where he found his friends "earnestly praying" for him. It is not surprising that they could not believe for joy, that their prayers had been answered, so "exceeding abundantly," and yet it is the way that the Lord delights to give to His own. Peter sent to the other apostles the message of his wonderful deliverance, and then left the city, going beyond the reach of the cruel king whose career closes with a terrible manifestation of the power of God visited upon arrogant assumption and horrible wickedness. The church now has the same power at her command as of old,—prayer and the Holy Spirit. Ought she to be the satisfied with her small attainments while there remain in her borders so many unsurmountable obstacles, and the world looking to her for deliverance from the power of evil?

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### Leading and Following.

Leading is in vain unless there is following. God can lead us, and does lead us, every day of our lives. Sometimes, though, we wilfully turn our backs on him and follow our own wills, and these are the times of hurt to us. God's leading means comfort and strength and growth only to those who follow him.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a missionary enterprise. This is the very essence of Christianity, that it is an advancing, radiating, conquering religion. It is born to grow. It lives to spread. It is centrifugal force, which works from the center toward the circumference. The Church is organized to conserve, increase, direct and apply that force. It is the body in which the spirit of Christ is to live and work. The spirit of Christ is missions. When that spirit wanes the Church is sick; when that spirit dies the Church is a corpse.—Henry Van Dyke.