

The Quiet Hour.

God Taking Care of Elijah.

S. S. LESSON, 1 Kings 17: 1-16. August 7, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—He careth for you—1 Pet 5: 7.

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There shall not be dew nor rain, v. 1. It seems a terrible thing that such a judgment should be pronounced on a people, and yet if we read history aright, we shall see plainly that God still judges in the earth and that the nations who forget Him and turn aside to evil are destroyed. National virtue brings with it national prosperity, and national wickedness leads to degeneracy; and this is a worse penalty than even to be stricken with famine. And that which is true of the nation is true of each individual soul. The cost of sin is degradation, a weaker body, feebleness of intellect, impotency of spirit. The devil's slaves become more and more abject.

I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there, v. 4. We think of this as a very wonderful tale. We forget the wonder of the tale that is being told us every day of God's providence. Are not raindrops and the sun's rays and the magic that is hidden in the clouds of the earth, just as truly messengers of God to men, bringing them food for their sustenance? We stumble sometimes at the miracle of scripture, but the whole of life and the provision made for its sustenance is wonderful and may well call forth our praise and gratitude. Just as really as the ravens were God's messengers to Elijah, so really are the forces of nature God's messengers to us.

And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and . . . in the evening, v. 6. The provision for the prophet's sustenance was given as he had need. There was no great store heaped up, so that he might feel that he was provided for, for a considerable time. We pray wisely, when we pray, "Give us day by day our daily bread." Sometimes it seems as though God's people were a little too anxious to have provision made for a long time in advance; and when there is too great an anxiety, plans have been made very carefully, something of the sweetness of dependence on His grace is threatened. It is hard for those who have great provision and many investments made for the future, to look to God with that quiet confidence and child-like trust that is so precious a possession.

So he arose and went to Zarephath, v. 10. One thing that is very notable in the story of Elijah's life is the immediate obedience which he renders to God. When God's command here came, there was no hesitancy or argument on the prophet's part, no asking what the results would be. It was enough for him to know the divine will, and his only responsibility was to discharge it. This habit of ready obedience when God's word is plain to us, would save a great many distresses. Too often we find ourselves in some strait place, not knowing whither to turn, because we have hesitated about obeying when there could be no doubt as to God's will in the premises. Power for service depends to a great degree upon swift obedience.

That we may eat it, and die, v. 12. Here is the utterance of despair, and when we take all the circumstances into account, we can hardly wonder. When the whole land was suffering from straitness, who would care for this poor widow and her son? They had

not strength or cunning to battle or to scheme that they might get a share of any food that was left. And yet the time of her despair was the time of her deliverance. Surely it is true that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." Let no child of God ever despair. He will deliver in His own good time. He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but with every temptation will provide a way of escape by enabling us to bear it.

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not, v. 13. If we were to look carefully through the scripture, we would be surprised how often this message, sometimes in the identical phrase, sometimes in other words, has come to the children of God. We should write the words where we can never fail to see them. If only we always had courage, how the spectres that afflict us would dissolve into thin air! The Master said, "Be not anxious, for your Father knoweth ye have need of all these things." "Fear not" should be the thought, not only of the individual Christian, but of the congregation, and of the whole church. If we are seeking to do the will of God, then we need have no ground for fear. For He will feed and clothe and protect all the way.

The barrel of meal wasted not, v. 16. God was as good as His word. If we only had more knowledge of this widow woman, there would doubtless be interesting disclosures as to her character. As Christ tells us, there were many widows in that time (Luke 4: 25), but only to this one was Elijah sent. We may be confident there were reasons why she was chosen, and what a blessed house that was, while the prophet dwelt in it! If we are to be blessed with the presence of God, then we must see that we are of such temper and desire that we can rightly welcome Him.

Shall We Outgrow the Old-Time Christianity?

"The day is coming when no one will be called a Christian unless he lives for humanity as Jesus lived. A new life is stirring in the hearts and minds of men and women today. It is a new vision of the Christ."—Horatio W. Dresser.

There are many conceptions of the true Christian life, most of them good and worthy of the founder of them all. By the heathens, that is those of un-Christian nations, every white man is considered a Christian. Even the most intelligent Japanese, for instance, finds it difficult to differentiate the Christian and the "sinner," as we do. To this confusion in the minds of those to whom Christian missionaries go is due much of the lack of success of the teachers of Christianity abroad. Unfortunately the type of "Christian" most foreigners are familiar with is not such as to inspire respect for or confidence in the divinity claimed for the religion of Christ.

But it is to be inferred from the above quotation that we ourselves have failed to grasp the completeness of the Christian life, the fullness of Christ? Are our faith and hope in the spiritual birth and baptismal sacrament antiquated, restricted and to be outgrown? Surely not. To those who have personally experienced the manifestations of the spirit there come no doubts of their attainment of the earthly ultimate. True, the professing Christian can contract

into narrowness. Growth is essential to progress, and Christianity is not different from other forces which require efforts at advancement. It is incumbent upon the Christian who would "enjoy religion" to practice the virtues of the religious as Jesus did. Such practice makes for enlargement, and enlargement is progress. He must be charitable and self-sacrificing. He must go about doing good. He must be just and generous, faithful, reasonable and zealous without presumption or intolerance. The new vision of the Christ, whatever it may unfold that is really new, will not alter his relationship to those who confess him and accept him as the source of grace in their redemption.

Open the Door

Open the door, let in the air;
The winds are sweet, and the flowers are fair,
Joy is abroad in the world to-day;
If our door is wide, it may come this way.

Open the door!

Open the door, let in the sun;
He hath a smile for every one;
He hath made of the raindrops gold and gems;
He may change our tears to diadems,

Open the door!

Open the door of the soul; let in
Strong, pure thoughts which shall banish sin,
They shall grow and bloom with a grace divine,
And their fruit shall be sweeter than that of the vine,

Open the door!

Open the door of the heart; let in
Sympathy sweet for stranger and kin,
It will make the halls of the heart so fair
That angels may enter unawares.

Open the door!

—British Weekly.

"He Came to Save."

Some years ago an itinerant minister was passing through a prison crowded with convicts showing every phase of ignorance and brutality. One gigantic fellow crouched alone in a corner, his feet chained to a wall. There was an unhealed wound on his face, where he had been shot while trying to escape. The sight of the dumb, gaunt figure touched the visitor's sympathy.

"How long has he to serve?" he asked of the guard.

"For life."

"Has he anybody outside to look after him, wife or child?"

"How should I know? Nobody has ever noticed him all the time he has been here."

"Will you allow me to speak to him?"

"Yes, but only for a minute."

The minister hesitated. What could he say in one minute? He touched the man's torn cheek.

"I am sorry," he said; "I wish I could help you."

The convict looked keenly at him, and he nodded to indicate that he believed in the sympathy expressed.

"I am going away, and shall never see you again, perhaps; but you have a Friend who will stay here with you."

The small, keen eyes were on him; the prisoner dragged himself up, waiting and eager.

"Have you heard of Jesus?"

"Yes."

"He is your Friend. If you are good and true, and will pray to God to help you, I am sure he will care for you."

"Come, sir," said the keeper. "Time's up."

The clergyman turned sorrowfully away. The prisoner called after him, and, catching his hand, held it in his own while he could.