

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM.*

By Rev. Mr. McMillan, M.A.

Fear not, v. 1. Fear is the greatest enemy of mankind, and it is the more dangerous because it resides within us. It is not an open foe, but an ambushed traitor. Half the things we do wrong we would rather do right, but we are afraid to. The fear of what the other fellows will think is perhaps the chiefest reason of cowardly ill-doing. What they say cannot break our bones, or take any money from our pockets, yet we would almost rather die than incur their criticism. Is not this abject, reasonless, fear?

I am thy shield, v. 1. If a young and unskilled warrior went into battle without the shield that all other fighters were carrying, he might well be concerned. But if some Achilles or Hector assured him: "Stay with me, and I will be your shield," it would calm his alarm. If, all through the combat, that mighty swordsman stood before him and met every attack with matchless skill and power, he would be safer than if he had to depend on his own awkward use of even the stoutest shield of brass. It was in such a way that God went everywhere before Abram.

Thy exceeding great reward, v. 1. Even if Abram was no richer for the booty he recaptured from the five kings, he was richer in the approval of his divine Friend, Jehovah. If a father forbids his son to go hunting, is he reconciled when the boy brings to him a rabbit or a partridge? Is it not better for the boy to keep the father's confidence? Is it not better to obey God, and take what He sends?

Stars, v. 5. Many people in Abram's time worshipped the stars. For him they were to serve as reminders of the goodness of the true God. They were signs to help his faith. We have more and clearer signs than Abram. Such signs are baptism and the Lord's Supper in the church. Besides we have the story of God's guiding His people during thousands of years. Every recorded instance of deliverance in the past assures us that He will deliver us in time of need. All the marvellous conversions wrought through the power of the gospel declare God's power to save. The numberless blessings which Christianity has brought to individuals and to the world point to a living God who is able to help. Unbelief was never so inexorable as now.

Believed, v. 6. Faith is like some great conqueror, who rules through all the changes of popular government. If the country is a kingdom, he is its king. If it becomes a republic he is its president. If it becomes a military dictatorship, he is the dictator. So, in these days before the law was given on Sinai, we find faith the means by which man pleases God. During the reign of law it was by faith that Moses, Joshua, David, Hezekiah, and all the other saints of that period commended themselves to God. And it is faith that, since Jesus has fulfilled and removed the law, still lays hold on the salvation of God.

Believed in the Lord, v. 6. Says Dr. Alexander MacLaren, "It was not the promise, but the Promiser, that was truly the object of Abram's trust. He believed the promise, because he trust-

ed Him who made it. Whether God speaks promises, teachings of truth, or commandments, faith accepts them because it trusts Him. Christ is revealed to us for our faith by the doctrinal statements of the New Testament. But we must grasp Himself, as so revealed, if we are to have faith that saves the soul.

Drive them away, v. 11. Sometimes we need not only to offer our sacrifices but also to protect them. We must offer a service that not only means well, but that actually results well. It does not do to let "our good be evil spoken of." We must do so despite to the service in which we are engaged. Before we put our money into any charity that offers itself, we have a right to ask, "Will this be wisely expended?" Before we send our contribution to missions, we should know how much of it gets to the missionary. Doing God's will is sowing, not throwing wheat away. We cast it from us, but into a field whose fences we keep in repair.

Thy seed shall be a stranger, v. 13. So, not only is Abram not to own this promised land, but even his seed, for a time, is not to own it. Hardship is often the lot of the favorites of the Most High. Even the Only-begotten was the Man of sorrows. Then, we are not to think that God has forgotten us, or turned against us, when we are in trouble. It is His way of preparing us for grander blessings.

Afterward, v. 14. God has always the last word. Eternity is His reckoning time. One man was telling another what he intended to do in his lifetime. "First I will make money." "Yes, what next?" "Then I will travel." "Well, what after that?" "After that I will settle down for my old age." "And after that?" "Why, then it will be time to die." "Yes, and after that?" That is the last word, "afterward," and it is spoken by God. Let us not forget, while it is possible to prepare for it.

A QUIET LIFE.

A quiet life is mine; all closed about,
I can go neither in nor out

As others go.

Within my daily paths no flowers sprout
Nor sunbeams glow.

As captive bird doth long its wings to try,

So doth my yearning spirit sigh
Sometimes to roam.

But I content must be, I wonder why!
Always at home!

O plaintive, restless heart, be still, be still!

Know that it is thy Father's will
Thou here shouldst stay,
And the full measure of his purpose
fulfill.

Though others stray.

Thy life is his appointing. He doth know

The cares that press, yearnings that glow

Within thy breast.

Thy lot is slowly, but he meant it so;
Then be at rest.

—Sarah K. McLean in Living Church.

It is never too soon nor even too late to press home on ourselves questions like the following: What spirit dwells in my heart? What good have I been doing? What works of love have I done? What deeds of charity have I performed? What fruits of the spirit, what evidence of love, have I to show? We must answer these questions some day. Why not press them now on our heart and reflect upon them?

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Ur—Since the time of Eusebius, the famous church historian of the fourth century, A.D., this has been identified with Mugheir, the ancient Uru, on the south bank of the Euphrates, about 125 miles northwest from the Persian Gulf and 135 miles southeast from Babylon. At that time Ur was not very far from the sea, the silt of the river having now carried the land much farther down. The ruins of houses which were built with bitumen, cover a space two-thirds of a mile long, and half a mile wide, the chief pile being the remains of a great temple. The city must have been the burying place for all that region, as it is completely surrounded by graves. Being on the Euphrates, and very near one of the tributaries of the Tigris, it could get building materials, minerals and merchandise by water from an immense distance northward and on the south it had easy access to the sea. The amount of slag found in the ruins proves it to have been a great manufacturing centre, and two different roads connected it with the commerce of Egypt. It was a famous shrine for the worship of the moon god. Many of its inscriptions are prayers breathing such a pure and lofty monotheism, that they might have been addressed to Jehovah.

PRAYER.

O Loving Father, Lord of the Sabbath, we would begin this Holy Day with Thee, and remember that it is Thy gift. As we ponder Thy unchanging love and Thy unailing help, may it be to us a day of rest and gladness. With morning light grant us the light of life, so that we may be joyful in the God of our salvation. Remember not past sins; blot out for Christ's sake our transgressions, and mercifully hear our prayers. Be with us in this our home, and bless all our dear ones with the blessing of pardon and peace. Manifest Thy presence to us as we wait at Thy Mercy Seat, and cause the heavenly fire to descend upon and purify our sacrifice of praise and service. Amen.

I was walking alone one winter's night,
hurrying toward home, with my little maiden at my side. Said she, "Father, I am going to count the stars." "Very well," I said, "go on." By and by I heard her counting. "Two-hundred and twenty-three, two hundred and twenty-five. Oh, dear," she said, "I had no idea there were so many!" Ah! dear friend, I sometimes say in my soul, "Now, Master, I am going to count thy benefits." Soon my heart sighs, not with sorrow, but burdened with such goodness, and I say to myself, "I had no idea that there were so many."—Mark Guy Pearse.

We are God's plants, God's flowers. Be sure that he will help us to unfold into something serenely fair, nobly perfect, if not in this life, then in another. If he teaches us not to be satisfied till we have finished our work, he will not be satisfied till he has finished his.

N. Y. Christian Advocate A missionary who undertakes to measure his duty in the foreign field by the practice of the least energetic in the home field is not called by God, and should not be called by men, to represent Christianity in the presence of false religions or hostile forms of Christianity.

*S.S. Lesson February 24, 1907.—Genesis 15:1, 5:16. Commit to memory vs. 5, 6. Read Genesis, chs. 15 to 7. Golden Test—He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.—Genesis 15:6.