

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

A SPIRITUAL PRINCESS.

By Prof. James Stalker, D.D.

"As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," was said to a hero of faith in Old Testament times; and this Canaanitish woman is the New Testament counterpart to Jacob in the hour when he became Israel. Therefore, if Jacob became the title of a spiritual prince, we may call her a spiritual princess.

Jesus at the middle Wall of Partition—Jesus' destination was remote—indeed, out of his own country. He was not far-travelled. Among the means of his human development the delightful and highly educative one of visiting cities and countries renowned in the history of the past did not find a place. All the more interesting for him must it have been when he drew near to the confines of Phœnicia, or the Land of Palms, as the name means. To the world this tiny country is famous as having been the scene of the invention of letters, on which the existence of all learning and literature may be said to have been dependent. Its cities, Tyre and Sidon, were seats of immortal and other primitive settlements of commerce. A sublime description of the greatness of Tyre occurs in the twenty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel; and the history of the land had been connected with the history of Israel through such names as Solomon and Jezebel. But the country was "Canaanite," that is, connected with the heathen whom Israel had extirpated when they first took possession of the land given them by Jehovah; and, whatever associations may have been recalled from the past to the mind of Jesus, the most impressive was that he was standing for the first time at "the middle wall of partition" which divided Jew from Gentile. This was an invisible wall, yet it was more solid and insuperable than the Great Wall of China, which separates the Celestial Empire from the rest of the globe. He was destined to cast it down; but the hour was not yet. Now, however, to the gates of this wall came a woman from the inside and, with the strength of a spiritual Samson, she wrenched it open and came through to Jesus.

The Immortal Struggling with a Mortal.—The behaviour of Jesus to this petitioner was very strange. In the life of Jesus there are not a few incidents in which we dimly discern a lofty fitness, yet are not able fully to bring this out. Such riddles are due to the great riddle of his existence, in which divine and human were combined; this was sure to produce enigmas for us. If we look from the divine side, we must suppose him to have treated her as Joseph did his brethren when he "talked roughly" to them. Similarly, in the storm Jesus made as if he would have passed the ship in which the disciples were, and, when he was accompanying the two disciples to Emmaus, he "made as though he would have gone further." As a parent tempts the child to walk alone, by retreating as it advances, so Jesus resorted to all kinds of devices to tempt faith to greater efforts. It seemed for a moment as if the disciples were more pitiful than he, when they besought him to send her away. Did their faith need quickening too? His reply to them seemed finally to shut the door; but was it intended to do so? If we looked only at the human side, we might suppose that this indefatigable petitioner actually altered the purpose of Jesus. Till this hour he had believed himself limited to the house of Israel; but she convinced him that it was possible to admit an exception, and that the time for admitting the heathen to the blessings of the Kingdom might be anticipated. He was ignorant of many things till

the hour for knowing them came; and he was always waiting for his Father's further commands. So that even for him this may have been a great hour of transition; by coming to the rescue of this heathen, he substantially anticipated the principle of Paul's Christianity; and this was a critical hour in the training of the Twelve.

The Trial and Triumph of Faith.—Such is the title given by Samuel Rutherford to his seven-and-twenty precious sermons on this incident. The Syro-Phœnician woman had a terrible trial to bear in her domestic life, but it brought her to Jesus. A child with any peculiar ailment or defect is not infrequently more loved than those with all their faculties; and we must assume the tide of a great love behind all the mother's prayers and persistency; for, if faith worketh by love, love also worketh by faith. She must have heard of the mighty works of Jesus and his unlimited compassion; and, indeed, we are informed much earlier in the narrative that his fame had penetrated all through Syria. How keen, then, must have been her disappointment when she found him so different from what rumor had led her to expect! Whether or not she heard the words of the Lord to the disciples is not stated, but one so sharp in all her perceptions must have learned from his gestures what he meant. She, however, did not believe him; and doubt may be faith, when it disbelieves anything stated about God which is inconsistent with his character. But, when, in reply to the discouraging word addressed to herself, she said that even the little dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table, she fairly snatched the sword from the hand of Jesus and smote him with his own weapon. And how handsomely did he capitulate! for the divine heart loves to be conquered by faith.

Aberdeen, Scotland.

THE TEST.

There are times in the life of most people who profess Christianity when there come doubts as to whether they are living up to the standard laid down in the Bible. For myself, I have written down the following questions, and find it a good plan:

Do I love God with all my heart, soul and strength?

Am I willing to leave all and follow him?

Have I the faith in Christ which enables me, in times of trouble and affliction, to look up and say: "Not my will, but thine, be done?"

Do I keep the commandments?

Do I do good as I have opportunity?

Do I search the Scriptures daily to see what the Lord would have me to do?

Can I claim the precious promises?

Do I cherish a kind and forgiving spirit toward my enemies and love my neighbor?

Do I consider it a pleasure, as well as a duty, to do all I can for the cause of Christ?

Do I thank God morning, noon and night, and at all times cherish a spirit of thankfulness for the blessing I have?

If, when the evening of each day comes, I can conscientiously answer, "I do, as far as in me lies," asking God to pardon my weaknesses and omissions, and to give me greater strength and desire to learn his will, I feel the sweet assurance that it will be given me as I ask it. Then, as I lie down upon my couch to sleep, I feel that whether I wake in this world or not, "all will be well."

When the King arrives in His temple, He does not say the words the acclaiming world expects. He is still meek and lowly in heart, and He speaks of a cross before a crown.

THE NEW LIFE.

This new life—the life that has conquered death by tasting it, which has enriched itself with a before unknown sympathy with men whose lives are forever tending towards the grave—this life stretches on and out forever. It is to know no ending. So long as there are men living and dying, so long above them and around them there shall be the Christ, the God-man, who liveth, and was dead and is alive evermore.

As you sit thinking of man's fragmentariness, his certainty of death, his doubt about a future, let his voice come to you, a voice clear with personality, and sweet and strong with love: "I am He that liveth and was dead; and am alive for evermore." "He that liveth!" And at once your fragment of life falls into its place in the eternity of life that is bridged by his being. "He that was dead!" and at once death changes from the terrible end of life into a most mysterious, but no longer terrible, experience of life. "He that is alive for evermore!" And not merely that there is a future beyond the grave, but it is inhabited by one who speaks to us, who went thereby the way that we must go, and who sees us and can help us as we make our way along, and will receive us when we come there. — Phillips Brooks.

SIN AND SALVATION.

There is no gospel worth talking about which does not begin with a remedy for sin. Anything else is superficial, a gloss, and will end in disappointment and more despair. A religion which cannot strike as deep as sin has no mission in the world except to mislead. Making light of sin can never put new light in the face of the human race. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news because it gives to the world a message of salvation from sin—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." There were stiles before Christians, and in Christ's time who resolved not to be troubled by pain or disaster, and there were Epicureans who said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," but they had no power to bless the world. There must be a salvation from sin, and the Christian religion has it. It is this that differentiates it from all other religions, all philosophies, fads, theories and sciences. When we let go of this idea of it we are letting go of the Christian religion itself.

PRAYER

O Lord, merciful Father, we would cast ourselves on Thy gracious promises, and would pray Thee to fulfil them to us now by helping us to draw very near to Thee, and by giving to us desires which we desire. We thank Thee that with all our weakness and unworthiness we can come to Thy presence with confidence, and we would draw near by the faith of Jesus Christ. Blessed be Thy name for the great reconciliation which Thou has wrought for the world in Him; and for all the message of it which has reached our hearts. May we all of us yield to the voice, and be reconciled to God. Amen.

Being in Christ it is safe to forget the past; it is possible to be sure of the future; it is possible to be diligent in the present.—A. Maclaren.

Have as many good works as you please, still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you do not your key will never unlock heaven's gate.

The efforts of two persons working together in harmony and co-operation are ten times as effective as the efforts of the same persons working at cross purposes without any program.