

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

DAVID'S KINDNESS TO JONATHAN'S SON.*

By Rev. Clarence Mackinnon, B.D.

Kindness for Jonathan's sake, v. 1. In the city of Pittsburgh, in front of a library erected by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, the great donor of library buildings, stands a small monument, with an inscription showing that it was erected to the memory of a gentleman, who, when the millionaire was a poor boy, had permitted him to use the books in his own private library. Through all the years of his climbing up fortune's ladder, Mr. Carnegie cherished the memory of this kindness shown to him in his early years and when he became a rich man, he showed his appreciation of the advantages opened up to himself, by seeking to place them within the reach of others. Gratitude for benefits received is best shown by generosity in sharing them with others.

The kindness of God, v. 3. A slave in climbing a mountain missed his footing and fell. He grasped a little bush to save himself, but it gave way and he went rolling down the slope with it in his hand. When he reached the bottom, he noticed little white particles adhering to the roots of the bush. They looked like silver. He climbed again to the spot, dug with his fingers into the soil, and found that his hopes were well-founded, and that he was the discoverer of a mine that secured for him a great fortune. When he slipped, he became alarmed; when the bush gave way, he cursed his misfortune; but the very events that filled his heart with anxiety and misgiving, were the greatest material blessings that ever came to him. God's kindness is oftentimes veiled, and surprises us in the most disconcerting ways. Some serious illness, an unexpected loss, a disastrous fire, a sore disappointment,—and we think we are undone. Then God discovers His kindness to us, and though these very misfortunes enriches us in a thousand ways that we had not dreamed of; and we find that behind "a frowning providence" He has hid "a smiling face."

Fear not, v. 7. When Catherine the Great ascended the throne of Russia, she cast a jealous eye on the young Princess Tarrakanoff, only sixteen years of age, whose claims to the crown she dreaded, and who had found refuge in Italy. She sent Alexis Orloff to entice her by false promises to place her foot once more on Russian soil, where she could be arrested. But the young princess was too suspicious to be easily entrapped. Then Orloff made love to her, went through the form of a marriage ceremony, conveyed her as his bride to Leghorn, and, amid echoes of artillery and the shouts of a thousand throats, placed her on board a Russian warship. In a moment all was changed, her pretended husband deserted her, she was informed that the marriage was a mockery, and that she was Catherine's prisoner. For five long years she lay in a Russian dungeon, until the friendly waters of the Neva overflowed their banks, invaded the prison, and drowned the sorrows of the innocent victim of imperial displeasure. In vivid contrast with this cruelty, is David's generous treatment of Mephibosheth, a possible claimant to the throne of Israel. By his example the noble king teaches us how the kindness of God to us should

constrain us to deal kindly even with those who may be our rivals.

Such a dead dog as I am, v. 8. Poor Mephibosheth was lame. He could neither join in the race, nor mount the war-horse, nor perform those brilliant feats of arms, which in those rough times secured a man power and fame. He felt he was of no more use than a dead dog. But it was his very infirmity that was his strongest appeal to the interest of his fellows. It was the appeal of the weak to the strong. "O, please do not kill me, I am so small," cried the little child to the rough soldier who had seized him when everyone was being put to death, and the appeal was respected. It is brutal to trample on helplessness, weakness or deformity. God has permitted such suffering to call forth the generous sympathy of mankind, and not to provoke its contempt.

Thou shalt bring in the fruits, v. 10. All over our goodly land, barns are bursting with the harvest now safely garnered. From a bountiful heaven have come, during all the summer days, the sunshine and the showers that have caused the grain and the roots to grow and ripen into a rich reward for the labors of the spring. The harvest, according to the divine promise, has followed the seed-time. There is joy in all hearts over the plenty that has crowned the year. But there is a far more blessed harvest that brings a deeper and more enduring gladness. It is reaped by all who accept the invitation of Jesus, as Mephibosheth did that of David. This harvest consists in pardon and peace with God, a character reflecting that of the Perfect Man, and heaven at last. Who would not have these fruits? They are free to all through simple faith in Jesus Christ.

Lame on both his feet, v. 13. In many modern cities, playgrounds are set apart for children. Here, with the green grass beneath their feet little ones from the stuffy homes in the crowded streets may play and grow strong. No money, surely, is better spent in any city than the money that provides these spaces for play. And, in smaller ways, the deeds that will bring us the richest returns of joy are those that help less fortunate ones than ourselves to a happier life.

THE FOLD.

I have a life in Christ to live,
But ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?
I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die;—
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?

Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at thy feet.
Take but the lowest seat,
And hear thine awful voice repeat
In gentler accents, heavenly sweet,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Believe Me and be blest."
—John Campbell Shairp.

LIFE TO BE A SONG.

God wants our life to be a song. He has written the music for us in His Word and in the duties that come to us in our places and relations in life. The things we ought to do are the notes set upon the staff. To make our life beautiful music we must be obedient and submissive. Any disobedience is the singing of a false note and yields discord.—J. R. Miller.

PREACH THE CROSS.

(By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.)

"First of all," wrote Paul to the Church of Corinth, "I delivered unto you that Christ died for our sins." The "first of all" does not refer to priority of time; for Paul has sounded the Gospel-trump through the cities of Asia Minor, and under the shadow of Mount Lebanon, before he ever struck its key-note amid the voluptuous idolaters of Corinth. But it means that as the principal thing, he preached the Cross of the crucified Son of God. Whatever else came second, this always came first; whatever else he omitted, he never omitted the very core and marrow of the Gospel of salvation.

The atonement is the cardinal doctrine of the Bible. Other religious systems make prominent the character of their divinities, or the life of their founders or some sacred rites of worship. But the core of Christianity is the sacrificial death of its Divine Founder. The Bible does not underrate Christian ethics, or the spotless example of Jesus; but the atonement transcends all other truths in sublimity and saving power. If I could deliver but one discourse to a congregation composed of all the nations of the globe, this should be my text: "Christ Jesus died for our sins." This is the text that has rung round the world wherever pure Christianity has found a voice. This is the truth that shook pagan Rome, and confounded human philosophers; and it is the truth that has lain warmest and closest to the Christian's heart in every age of the Church. The touchstone of every minister is this. Does the man preach Christ and Him crucified? Wherever the highest spiritual power is developed from a pulpit, wherever sin is most fearlessly assailed, wherever sinners are awakened and most thoroughly converted, wherever the richest outpourings of the Holy Spirit have been enjoyed, there has been commonly the most faithful preaching of the guilt of human sin, and of salvation only through the atoning blood. It is the imperative duty of every ambassador of God to thunder against injustice, and intemperance, and licentiousness, and fraud, and hypocrisy, and covetousness, and every form of impiety; but the true vantage ground from which to assail them is beside that Cross, where Jesus died to condemn all sin, and to save the sinner. If I were a member of a church seeking for a pastor, my first question would be. Does he make foremost the atoning blood of Jesus Christ? No erudition, or eloquence, or "advanced thought," can supply the lack of this one thing needful. From the most brilliant or erudite discourse that has no Christ in it the hungry, unsatisfied believer comes away complaining, "He has taken away my Lord, and I know not where he has laid him!"

Be careful also how you present Christ; for not every theory of the Cross is either Scriptural or soul-giving. Theodore Parker was the apostle of "the humanities," and fearlessly denounced many wrongs; yet he often spoke of the crucified Redeemer in language that makes our blood run cold. Some pulpits teach that Jesus died simply to display his fortitude and his sincerity to a principle; another pulpit teaches that he died to set a sublime example; another that the only aim of the Cross was to make an exhibition of wickedness, and to lead men to abhor it. Not long ago a very prominent pulpit presented a theory of the atonement from which

*S. S. Lesson, October 18, 1908—2 Samuel, ch. 9. Commit to memory v. 7. Golden Text—And be ye kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.—Ephesians 4:32.