

The Quiet Hour.

Joseph Sold Into Egypt.

S. S. Lesson.—Oct. 6. Genesis 37: 12-36.
Golden Text.—Acts. 7: 9. The patriarchs moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.

Come, and I will send thee . . . Here am I . . . So he sent him . . . and he came, vs. 13, 14. "Is not all this full to overflowing of a yet loftier theme? Our Lord never wearied of calling Himself the Sent of the Father. There is hardly a page in the Gospel of John in which He does not say more than once, 'I came not of Myself, but My Father sent Me!' Thus it became a constant expression with the New Testament writers, 'God sent forth His Son'; 'The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.'—Meyer.

Come now . . . and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, v. 20. How quickly the evil seed of jealousy had sprung up and ripened into a plot of murder. The time was when the brethren might easily have quenched the feeling that lay like a tiny spark in their bosom and stayed its progress. Instead of doing this they cherished it and soon the breath of a favorable opportunity fanned the spark into a fierce and consuming flame. "The lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and sin, when it is full grown bringeth forth death." (Jas. 1: 15, Rev. Ver.) Not a single germ of sin should be allowed to alight and remain in the heart. To permit it to do so is almost certain ruin. Sooner or later it will acquire a power that we cannot break. The smallest germ of sin would be dreaded, as we dread the germ of an infectious disease. At the first appearance of sin we should seek instant cleansing in the precious blood of Christ.

And Reuben . . . said, Let us not kill him, v. 21. Shakespeare pictures the working of conscience in one of the murderers sent by order of Richard III. to destroy the Duke of Clarence. Brought face to face with the crime to be done, the man was checked by his conscience and when his companion urged him to disregard this inward monitor, he replied: "I'll not meddle with it; it is a dangerous thing; it makes a man a coward; a man cannot steal but it accuseth him; he cannot swear but it checks him; . . . 'tis a blushing, shamefast spirit, that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles; it made me once restore a purse of gold that I found; it beggars any man that keeps it; it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that lives well endeavors to trust to himself and to live without it." (King Rich. III., Act. 1. Sc. 4.) Reuben listened to the voice of conscience and it would not permit him to stain his hands with innocent blood. Long afterwards, when the brethren stood before Joseph in Egypt, he was glad that he had obeyed his conscience. And no satisfaction can be sweeter to us than to know that our conscience approves of our deeds.

And Reuben said . . . Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit, v. 22. Reuben, though he listened at first to conscience, "had not the courage of his convictions, and dared not brook the scorn of his comrades by standing up for the innocent. He tried by a roundabout process to save Joseph while he saved himself. He knew the right, but dared not resist the wrong. He had not the making of a martyr, of a man, in

him. He had not yet learned the monosyllables of conduct, the 'yes' and 'no' of morality; and in learning them, and in taking short steps on the path of duty, there is more difficulty, perhaps, than in doing heroic deeds. The daring to say 'no,' the taking of the first few steps, because the right is right, are harder than the climbing of the scaffold stair at the end. The longest and most heroic march is made up of single steps from humble duty to humble duty, the heroic being just the next step at some point after humble ones. One courageous word from Reuben might have saved Joseph; but the word was not spoken, and Joseph must suffer."—Dr. Armstrong Black.

Besetting Sins.

Our besetting sins are peculiarly humiliating. They cling to us so firmly after we have determined to be rid of them, they reveal their power so often after we have supposed them conquered and abandoned, they assail us so unexpectedly and often beguile us so easily that we sometimes doubt whether we really have any power of self-control remaining or any trustworthy loyalty to God and duty. It is no excuse for us, but it is comforting to remember that everybody else is comforting similarly and that our Heavenly Father understands the situation even better than we do. It is a strong temptation to make special excuses for such sins. Sometimes and to some extent this is proper. For example, he who, like so many, has inherited the desire for strong drink, certainly has in that fact a special use for committing that sin. He is not to blame for the hereditary taste which he cannot help having. It is his misfortune and not his fault. But this excuse is not a justification. He is actually and seriously to 'blame' for yielding. The knowledge of his inherited tendency should serve as a special and solemn warning and restraint, fortifying him against tampering with the temptation which he knows is graver for him than for others. Besetting sins are to be conquered like any other, by prayer and faith and courage and sturdy resistance, by cherishing holy thoughts and cultivating holy aims, by avoiding circumstances involving temptation, by choosing ennobling companions, by studying how to live in constant communion with the Holy Spirit. When the heart is consciously and gladly surrendered to him so that his presence and power rule in it, even our severest besetting temptations can find little or no opportunity of access.—Helpful Thoughts.

Friends, cast your idol into the furnace, melt your mammon down, coin him up, make God's money of him, and send him coursing. Make of him cups to carry the gift of God, the water of life, through the world—in lovely justice to the oppressed, in healthful labor to them whom no man hath hired, in rest to the weary who have borne the burden and heat of the day, in joy to the heavy-hearted, in laughter to the dull-spirited. . . . What true gifts might not the mammon of unrighteousness, changed back to the money of God, give to men and women, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh!—George Macdonald.

The Weekly Prayer Meeting.

The small attendance at the weekly prayer meetings in Presbyterian Churches—and probably in the churches of other denominations as well—is frequent cause of remark and complaint. Only a moiety of the membership—a faithful few, so to speak—in an appearance at the Wednesday night services and too often young people are conspicuous by their absence. The inference is inevitable, that if the mid-week prayer meeting service is to be taken as a gauge of the spiritual life of the Church, then there must be a good deal of deadness and formalism in many Presbyterian congregations.

This is not a pleasant or encouraging view to take of the prayer meeting question. The mid-week prayer service should be a very pleasant and a very profitable service, especially to the Church members—a blessed truce in the wearying, worrying battle of life, in which professing Christians can turn aside for a little while from those material things which so often prove burdensome and vexatious, and gain strength and comfort by holding communion with God and holding converse about those things that concern the higher and future life. Those who attend the prayer meeting expecting to get a blessing are rarely disappointed. There is no valid reason why the large proportion of the Church membership should not share in that blessing. They do not share in it because they are absent.

Why are they absent? Perhaps if they seriously asked themselves the question they would, in a majority of cases, be unable to give any other reason than indifference or thoughtlessness. Absolute inability to attend would probably apply to a comparatively few cases.

Not only do those Christians who neglect or refuse to attend the weekly prayer meeting miss the blessing themselves, but their absence in no small degree discourages and sometimes paralyzes the efforts of those who are faithful in their attendance and anxious to contribute their share towards rendering the services pleasant, attractive and profitable. Perhaps it would have a good result if these regular absentees would seriously try to answer the question: "Why do I not attend the prayer meeting?" Perhaps pastors also err in not occasionally pressing upon their people at the Sunday services, the duty and the importance of attending the mid-week prayer service. One thing is certain, a large attendance at the prayer meeting would encourage and gladden the hearts of many pastors who feel disappointed and chilled at the little handful of people and the array of empty seats which greet them on the week evening prayer meeting. Why should not church members realise it to be their duty—if they cannot be animated by any higher motive—to encourage their pastor in this way?

Sometimes professing Christians attempt to excuse their absence from the prayer meeting by pleading that the service is too formal, that only a few are asked to take part in the prayers, and that they get tired hearing the same voices night after night. There may be something in this view, but at whose door does the fault chiefly lie, if not at the door of those who are conspicuous by their absence when they might and should be