

The Quiet Hour.

Jeroboam's Idolatry.

S. S. LESSON—1 Kings 12: 25-33. July 10, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—Keep yourselves from idols.—1 John 5: 21.

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And Jeroboam said in his heart, v. 26. What a strange thing it is to remember that the secret imagination is never altogether hidden, and that it is by that a man is judged. There is no doubt that Jeroboam misled the mass of the people as to his motive in establishing another place of worship; but his real motive was selfish. And so to-day there are many who blind the eyes of their fellowmen. The reasons they give for actions are such as sound well and commend themselves to the hearers, but there is a secret motive which is altogether different from the ostensible one. We cannot be too careful as to what we say which men may hear; but still more important for us is it to be careful as to what we say in our hearts. For it is only when the thoughts are pure, that it may be true of us, as the English poet said of the great Duke: "Whatever record leap to light, he never shall be shamed."

Whereupon the king took counsel, v. 28. The king had plotted in his own heart, but he took counsel ere he proceeded to action. But he doubtless counselled with those who would be ready to support him in any plan he adopted to retain political power. It is a matter of most serious moment whom we take for counsellors. There are those whose advice will be a wholesome and purifying influence, and there are those who will support us in ill doing. We are all constrained by our nature to seek for those who will go with us. Rather let our counsellors be those who will advise us against ill doing and in favor of righteousness.

Is it too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, v. 28. The king's whole thought and purpose was to guard against the danger of the people forsaking him and going back to accept Rehoboam again for their king. But he veils his intent by professing to have a regard for the comfort and ease of the people. So, not infrequently we will find professed friends expressing great concern for us, when all the time they have some ulterior purpose to serve. We should not be ready to ascribe selfish motives; but, on the other hand, we should not be blind to the fact that very often selfish motives are hidden behind an apparent interest in our welfare, and we are responsible for our own course of action. How often, too, people shrink from any hardship or weariness in the service of God. If our hearts are in our worship, we will be ready to endure fatigue and inconvenience.

And this thing became a sin, v. 30. How could it be otherwise? The king, from motives of political expediency, put aside all the teaching that had been received of the evil of idolatry, and made two golden calves take the place of Jehovah in the minds of the people. That was what it came to. He could not ignore the religious instinct. Man is bound to worship; but though the calves were only supposed to stand as figures that would aid them in the worship of God, they came themselves to be worshipped. Again and again throughout the record of later history, when some king is spoken of who walked in folly, it is said of him that he walked in the way of "Jeroboam, the son of

Nebat, which made Israel to sin." Jeroboam was thinking of political advantage, but his action made his name a shame forever.

And he made an house of high places, v. 31. His success led him further on in the way upon which he had entered. Places of worship, feasts, ordaining of priests; all these were attended to. No thought of God was in his mind. All his planning was for the purpose of uniting more firmly to his government the tribes that had rebelled against Rehoboam. If he could have known the terrible heritage of hate and idolatry which he was handing down to coming generations surely he would have shrunk back. But selfish advantage blinded his eyes to the results of his doing. Let us never forget that every act and device of ours will bring forth fruit, and if the motive that has led us is purely selfish, then we may be confident that the fruit will be evil. On the other hand, the fruit of good thoughts and deeds live long, too. Our influence may be either that of the wholesome stream from a pure fountain, carrying life and health wherever it goes; or that of the plague-laden river, bearing dire destruction in its course. We have only one short sowing time, whilst the harvesting will go on and on far past the time of our stay on earth.

Looking Off Unto Jesus.

If men in the city walk the pavements with their eyes fixed upon the gutters, what does it matter though all the glories of a sunset are dyeing the western sky? They will see none of them; and if Christ stood beside you, closer to you than any other, if your eyes were fixed upon the trivialities of this poor present, you would not see Him.

If you want to see Him, shut out competing objects, and the dazzling cross-lights that come in and hide Him from us. There must be a "looking off unto Jesus." There must be a rigid limitation, if not exclusion, of other objects if we are to grasp Him. If we would see, and have our hearts filled with, the calm sublimity of the solemn white wedge that lifts itself into the far-off blue, we must not let our gaze stop on the busy life of the valleys or the green slopes of the lower Alps, but must lift it and keep it fixed aloft. Meditate upon Him, and shut out other things.—Alexander Maclaren, D.D.

Our Need of Knowing the Right.

Doing the best we know how is not enough for us to do. We are commanded to do right. If we fail in so doing, we have to suffer for it. Even in human governments, it is not enough for an evil-doer to say that he did not know that there was any law against his doing what he did. It is every man's duty to know the law. And even the loving gospel, not the Old Testament law, but the New Testament love, says this. It was the loving Jesus who said, "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." The one who does his duty as far as he knows it, and yet fails, must suffer, even if less than a conscious wrong-doer. Who of us will dare to say that all he asks is his fair deserts?—S. S. Times.

In an old palace in Rome there is a chamber on the ceiling of which is painted that wonderful fresco of Guido—the "Aurora." If one stood underneath and gazed up in the darkness, one might get a faint sense of the outline and color; but the strain upon one's neck was so great that before you could get a view of the painting you must drop your head. A few years later I went again to see the "Aurora," when the custodian led me to a table and bade me sit there and look down at the table. I discovered that its top was plate-glass mirror, in which every beautiful line and all the marvelous coloring of the aurora were perfectly reflected. That was a fine device for revealing the fresco. For all the long ages past men have been trying to get glimpses of God, the fact of whose being is revealed in nature above and below. But the light has been dim, for "who by searching can find out God?" But now at last God had sent forth His Son, "the express Image of his person, and the very brightness of his glory," in whom the Father is perfectly revealed. Geo. Pentecost. D.D.

Close at Hand.

BY SUSAN COOLIDGE.

The day is long, and the day is hard,
We are tired of the march and of keeping guard;
Tired of the sense of a fight to be won,
Of the days to live through and the work to be done;
Tired of ourselves and of being alone.

And all the while, did we only see,
We walk in the Lord's own company;
We fight, 'tis He who nerves our arm;
He turns the arrows which else might harm,
And out of the storm He brings a calm.

The work which we count so hard to do,
He makes it easy, for He works too;
The days that are long to live are His,
A bit of His bright eternities,
And close to our need His helping is.

O eyes that were holden and blinded quite,
And caught no glimpse of the dying light;
O deaf, deaf ears, which did not hear
The heavenly garment trailing near!
O faithless heart which dared to fear!

—Christian Press.

Christ's Love.

We sleep in peace in the arms of God when we yield ourselves up to his providence in a delightful consciousness of his tender mercies; no more restless uncertainties, no more anxious desires, no more impatience at the place we are in; for it is God who has put us there and who holds us in his arms. Can we be unsafe where he has placed us and where he watches over us as a parent watches a child? This confiding repose, in which earthly care sleeps, is the true vigilance of the heart; yielding itself up to God, with no other support than him, it thus watches while we sleep. This is the love of him that will not sleep even in death.—Francis Fenton.

In contrast with the earth's weariness heaven smiles upon us, a place of rest. "They rest from their labors" is the first element of that celestial blessedness. Toil of body, mind and heart, toll against sin and self and Satan—these are changed to spontaneous, unwearied, invigorating exercises of soul and spirit. The lower services in which we may then engage are infinitely easier than the easiest we here perform. No play on earth is so delighted as the meaneast work of heaven.—Bishop Gilbert Haven.