

The Quiet Hour.

Solomon's Wise Choice.

S. S. LESSON—1 Kings 3: 4-15. December 6, 1903.

GOLDEN TEXT—Prov. 9: 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

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And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, v. 4. King Solomon at the beginning of his reign acknowledging his dependence upon God in this solemn public service, enters wisely upon his life work and sets a good example to all. It is well that we should declare ourselves before men. Young people who in the spring of their lives declare their allegiance to Christ, do a right and wise thing. God honors them who honor Him, and when we thus publicly declare ourselves as His servants, we make a right beginning and the very fact, that we have thus declared ourselves saves us from many temptations which might otherwise beset us. Moreover it is a strength to a man who enters upon any undertaking, to do so publicly in the sight of his fellows.

In Gibeon the Lord appeared, v. 5. We are tempted to think of a story such as this that the case is unique, and that Solomon is the only one to whom God has come and asked this question. But the truth is, that through the circumstances of our lives God is asking this same question of each one of us. The things that we cherish and desire in our thinking; the words that we speak and the deeds that we do; all these are the various ways in which we respond to God's question. And God gives us according to our desire. Life is every day saying to us as the voice of God, "What is it that you desire?" and day by day we receive the thing we seek after.

And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed, v. 6. We should often count our blessings and remember the good that God has bestowed upon us. Too often the only review that a man makes of his life, is to remember the sorrows and disappointments that he has passed through. But it is a better and a wiser thing to remember the good and to trace the good to its source, the kindness of God to us.

And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king, vs. 7, 8. How often, when a young fellow has obtained a position somewhat better than he has held, his whole thought is the honor and the emolument! But every honor carries with it responsibility, and it is better that one should dwell on that side. And the good man will ever be humble and see that no one can rightly fill his place in his own strength. Not only a king, but every mortal, may well shrink from his task if it is to be done in his own strength and wisdom. In the face of life and its tasks we are all but little children.

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, v. 9. The king's whole desire is that he may do his work well. When one faces his work in this fashion he will do it well. Instead of thinking of the wage that is to be ours, let us think of the work that is to be done. Work first and wage second.

And the speech pleased the Lord, v. 10. Isn't it very wonderful that a man may so do his work as to please God? We know what the chief joy is after that which comes in the mere doing of the task. It is that those we love and trust may be able to say of us, that we have done well. But how much higher

the delight should be, if we can think that we have pleased God! And it is a possible thing. In the parable of the talents we have the Lord represented as saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." This ought to be a very strong incentive when we are discouraged, to remember that the great Taskmaster has His eye upon us all the time. Nothing escapes His notice, and He will give generous praise where there is honest work done by His people.

That which thou hast not asked, v. 13. God is ever ready to give us more than we ask if only we ask aright. He is no niggard master, who will deny us, but rejoices to pour out His bounty upon His faithful servants.

And if thou wilt walk in my ways, v. 12. Even though one may begin his task as wisely as Solomon did, yet there is always the possibility of his falling short. If Solomon had only continued as he had begun his name would come down to us fragrant with honor, but he failed. We too must take heed lest having begun well, we too fall short of the mark set before us.

And Solomon offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, v. 15. Our gratitude is the only return we can make to God for His gifts to us. His constant goodness should never fail to awaken a response of grateful praise. Our hearts must be hard indeed, if they are not melted when we think of God's "unspeakable Gift," even His only Son. Nor should words be the only expression of our gratitude. It ought to shine out in every deed of our lives. By nothing short of complete self-surrender can we measure up to the claims which the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has upon us.

The Inner Man.

BY REV. W. C. GRIFFITH.

"When a man grows old, and sees more deeply into life, he does not find, if he possesses any inner world at all, that he is advanced by the external march of things, by the 'progress of civilization.' Nay, he feels himself, rather, where he was before, and forced to seek the sources of strength which his forefathers, also sought. He is forced to make himself a native of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the eternal, the kingdom of love."—Harnack's Nature of Christianity.

The above is a true and apt expression of the experience of almost all irreligious people, whatever may be their attainments or surroundings. "My mind my kingdom is," said Sir Walter Raleigh, but unless that "inner world" be stored with riches of Grace, all its other possessions will prove sources of but temporary enjoyment. However fascinating or alluring the pleasures of sensual gratification; however agreeable and potential the millions of earthly treasure; however vast and varied all our stores of knowledge may be; in the decline of life they lose their influence. In old age we feel that we belong to a former generation. Some interest in passing events may linger, but in the march of events the old man is left behind. The progress of civilization is only a wonder to him—not something of which he is a part, and in which he still participates and mingles. He has completed the circle of existence, and like the lost traveler in the forest, finds himself, to his astonishment,

back where he started. Wealth has not advanced him. Knowledge has only taught him how little he knows. Social improvements have added little or nothing to the condition of his inner nature. "Vanity of vanities," he cries; "all is vanity."

The old man is bewildered by the contrast between the earlier and later periods of his life. When young, glittering prospects charm his eyes. Joy after joy arises before him. With consuming zeal he entered into the contests and struggles of business. Every success thrilled his soul.

Full of vigor and strength, with bounding exhilaration of spirit, he presses forward into all the opening opportunities before him, never once finding time to pause for deliberation over the possibility of failing health or the contingencies of a future hour. That he may come to a time when all those outer, marching things of the world in which he is so deeply absorbed, will fail to yield him the same unceasing interest, he can, by no means, believe. But such a time comes, nevertheless. Then, he sees more deeply into life, and realizes the futility of all earthly possessions to revive or sustain his drooping spirit.

How very different is it with the man, who, from the beginning, has "sown to the Spirit," and not to the Flesh! While outwardly weak and perishing, inwardly, he has been renewed, day by day; and in consequence thereof, his pathway has been like that of the just, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The sources of his strength become all the more precious, when, because of an enfeebled body the things that are seen have lost their effect. He knows that "whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away;" but he, also, knows that, "now abideth faith, hope, love." The kingdom of God is within him.

Is it a wonder that David, in his declining years, appeals so earnestly to his son, Solomon, to remember the God of his father, and serve him with a perfect heart? Pitiable beyond description is he, who, having no inner world—no kingdom that will supply him with food for thought when alone, or even in a dungeon—must wholly depend for enjoyment upon external affairs. But still more pitiable is that man or woman, who, with a mind stored with knowledge, has reached old age, destitute of the righteousness of faith. A dreadful uncertainty haunts such a one.—The Lutheran Observer.

Life.

Life is God's gymnasium. He takes the measures; we do not know what they are. He puts us in our places, and gives us what discipline we need. The ministers call churches means of grace, and prayer means of grace, and the Bible means of grace; and so they are. But, also, your shop is a means of grace, and your kitchen is a means of grace, and your social gathering is a means of grace; your dull and stupid clerk is a means of grace—or disgrace, just as you choose to make them. Let a man go into life believing this, taking life as his school preparing for the life beyond, and what a glorious thing it is to live! Even failures do not discourage such a man, because he says, I have failed once, and now I know what my weak point is, I will correct it next time. Christ supplies our need by teaching us the meaning and significance of life.—L. J. man Abbott, D. D.