

# The Quiet Hour

For Dominion Presbyterian.

## Jesus Before the High Priest.\*

In this lesson we have two subjects, our Lord before the High Priest (19-24) and the faithfulness of Peter (15-17, and 25-27). The one is an example of calm strength, and the other a picture of feverish weakness. Our Lord had prepared by prayer for this great hour of strain; Peter had spent his strength in loud professions, and in one burst of excited effort, and now pays the penalty of cold reaction, which leaves him weak in the face of temptation. It will be better to separate these two parts of the lesson, and so we take first the story of human weakness and shame, which is written as a warning to us, lest we should fall, because we think we stand. Peter is perhaps the most interesting of all the Apostles, as much on account of his weakness as his strength. He is so thoroughly human in his changeful impulsiveness and blunt outspokenness. There is nothing stiffly official or artificial about him; he is the fisherman from Galilee, without airs or affectation. He received in the course of his career the strongest commendation and the severest condemnation that was ever meted out by the Master to any disciple; he reached the heights of rapture and he touched the depths of despair. It is not our business to criticise him in a censorious spirit, but rather to learn the lesson concerning the dangers which beset the impulsive temperament. In this case Peter lounged into temptation; he did not go boldly forward like "that other disciple," but he followed afar off "to see what the end would be," and thus he found himself in strange company; and as he moved about in a restless manner that awakened suspicion he laid himself open to the attacks of the enemy. Step by step he went down; one denial followed another, until the pitying look of Jesus pierced his heart and brought to remembrance the Master's warning. Peter's fall was very great; it was a black sin against love, and no one saw its shamefulness more than he did when once his conscience was awakened; and yet we may say it came about quite naturally; he drifted into a doubtful position, and then into a disgraceful failure. He who a little while before could quite sincerely protest his willingness to die

with his Lord now has not strength to stand up and say: "I know Him and love Him." We must remember that it is precisely in the hour of weakness that temptations come, and that we ought not to rush into the exposed position without counting the cost. When we are lonely and cold, and the Master seems to be fighting a losing battle, how easy it is to fall. As soon as the swift sudden steps were taken and the bad deed was decisively done, then conscience awoke, and every sight that Peter saw and every sound he heard reminded him that he had wounded the Lord who had lavished upon him such unmeasured love.

While Peter was thus suffering a great spiritual defeat, the Master was standing firmly, fighting His battle and ours. The first thing that meets our Lord in this pretended trial is a vain question put too late; the High Priest descends to ask concerning His disciples and His teaching. What a solemn mockery is this! Spies had dogged His steps and given garbled reports of His teaching, and the case is already prejudged. Under such circumstances we marvel at the Master's patience and dignity, but He has to go through a great conflict and will not spend His strength in wild indignation and vain reproaches. He is content to declare the openness of His ministry. He had appealed to all men. He had taught in the temple precincts, and in the synagogue, choosing the places where men were wont to congregate. His gathering of disciples was not a secret conspiracy. He had only explained more fully to them the truths He had taught in public. Why then should they take Him by brute force and drag Him, bound, before a tribunal that had no justice to give? A prisoner should not be asked to convict himself. There was probably all the keener sting in this because it was so true and was spoken with such quiet dignity. What reply the High Priest would have given we cannot tell, but this we know, that the reply which was given was of the kind that has often been substituted when argument was lacking, a brutal blow. Some zealous partizan, probably seeking to curry favor with his superiors, struck Jesus a violent blow with his fist, or with a stick, charging Him with disrespect towards the high dignity. A brave way to teach politeness to the gentle prisoner. But coarse as such treatment was, it only showed that the Master could practice His own teaching: He did not return blow for blow; when

He was reviled He did not answer in a similar spirit, but uttered a calm protest: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; if well, why smitest thou me?" Such argument could not be answered, but He could be bound and driven about from one pretended judge to another, and so by harsh stages accomplish the sorrowful way that led to the Cross. The loneliness of Peter came in a measure from carelessness or presumption: it was an evidence of weakness, and led to defeat. The loneliness of Jesus came from submission to the Father's will, and the carrying out of a work that no one else could accomplish; hence He was firm and gentle in spite of all provocation, and His suffering that seemed to be defeat was in the highest sense victory. He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.

### Path of Life.

Life is full of broken measures,  
Objects unattained—  
Sorrows intertwined with pleasures,  
Losses of our costliest treasures—  
Ere the heights be gained.

Every soul has aspirations  
Still unsatisfied;  
Memories that wake vibrations  
Of the heart in quick pulsations,  
At the gift denied.

We are better for the longing,  
Stronger for the pain;  
Souls at ease are nature wronging;  
Through the harrowed soil come thronging  
Seeds in sun and rain.

Broken measures find completeness  
In the perfect whole;  
Life is but a day in fleetness;  
Richer in all strength and sweetness  
Grows the striving soul.

### I. Spiritual Insight.

By B. B.

Ps: xxv., 14. "The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

There is, perhaps, no word the bare mention of which excites a feeling of curiosity like the word "secret." The text teaches that a great secret is in the possession of certain persons. This secret they are not forbidden to speak of, but are powerless to impart. God alone can do this, and the only condition is that of fearing Him. The privileges connected with this fear are many and varied. It is the beginning of wisdom; it prolongeth days; it is strong confidence. The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. What is the secret? No simple term can set forth its full meaning. It covers large ground and is many-sided. We may with advantage lay ourselves out reverently to enquire what are the items that constitute this great secret.

#### I. IT IS THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT.

—It scarcely need be said that insight is the power to read between the lines—

\*International Sunday School Lesson for May 21st. John xviii., 15-27. Golden Text.—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." John i., 11.