

The Quiet Hour

Christ Freeing from Sin.*

References.—John ix., 5; Rom. vi., 14; James i., 25; Matthew iii., 9; Rom. vi., 16-20; viii., 2; Gal. vi.

Explanatory Notes.—The time of this lesson was probably the day following that mentioned in the last lesson.—**Jews** (v. 31). John generally uses this word to describe those of the nation that held the false national ideas about the Messiah, and were therefore opposed to Christ. This usage may also be a sign that the book was written chiefly for Gentiles, and at a time when the Jews had lost their standing as a people with a country of their own.—**Ye** (v. 31). The pronoun is emphatic, holding out promise even to those having so little faith.—**Commit** (v. 34). The word suggests leading a life of sin, rather than a single act.

Perhaps it is well to treat viii., 12-ix., 41, as one section which presents Jesus the Christ as the source of truth and light. Here, then, we have the statement of the subject, the claim boldly set forth by our Lord. The next lesson contains a living illustration of it in the giving of light to the blind, and the following lesson shows the same central truth in beautiful parables. The place is still Jerusalem. The time probably a few hours after the last lesson. The symbol of light as well as that of living water may have been suggested by the ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles. Verse 20 makes it probable that He was teaching in or near the Court of the Women, where there was a grand illumination on the first day of this Feast. "Light" was, according to the tradition, one of the names of the Messiah. V. 12, "Light of Life," i. e., life-giving light. Vs. 13-30 contain notes of Our Lord's discourse, which was interrupted by questions and criticisms; it was a time of fierce conflict. After these interruptions we have a clear, calm re-statement of His claim. It was addressed to those Jews who believed in Him. They, like Nicodemus and the Women of Samaria stumble at the lofty spiritual truth. They have some measure of faith but little humility, their pride causes them to reject a great promise. "If ye abide in My words, ye shall come to know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Not one momentary act but a living process. These slaves of prejudice are annoyed at the very suggestion of slavery; they ignore historical

facts, as well as overlook spiritual truths. The truth, true teaching concerning God Christ and self, this is what they need and what we all need.

V. 34. The two-fold "amen" of Christ always marks some truth of the very highest importance, as here, the fact that he who keeps on doing sinful things shows by his life that he is the servant or rather slave of sin. Surely then we all need real enfranchisement, true emancipation; and if the Son, and not some servant, gives us our freedom, it will be a real freedom. The Son abideth always in the Father's house and can effectually carry out the father's will. Here Jesus makes his claim to sonship, and the claim to be the personal embodiment of the truth which makes men free. After this the controversy waxed hotter until Jesus had to hide Himself and get away from the temple. We must not spend too much thought over Jewish controversies, but rather remember that the same great claim of the Christ still confronts us.

We are told that this may be used as a "Temperance" lesson, and so it may, both in the larger and in the stricter sense. Temperance in the New Testament sense is "power over" self, and this regulating and restraining power we can only have by the grace which comes through Christ. Temperance in the modern sense is soberness or abstinence from that which is hurtful, and moderation in the use of things that are good. All kinds of evil habits make men slaves, and one of the strongest illustrations is the love of strong drink. Many a young man has begun in a way which seemed the way of harmless indulgence and ended by being possessed by an overmastering appetite. Alas, how many have been enslaved and cruelly slain by this demon. "There is a way that seemeth good unto men, but the end thereof is death." Men who shout that Britons never, never shall be slaves, are sometimes themselves bound hand and foot by this evil habit. In this case, we may say "the diminutive chain of habit is too light to be felt until it is too strong to be broken." Such teaching as this may be legitimately based upon this lesson. But it is not necessary to limit ourselves to this one illustration. The lesson teaches us to make the root good and the fruit will be good, and this can only be done by the loyal acceptance of Jesus as our living Saviour. Many whose lives are outwardly correct are slaves to the love of money, of display, or of some other earthly belittling thing. The way

of freedom from all this is to enter through the Christ into God's new spiritual kingdom. The force that can make us free is the Truth, not our own resolutions or pledges. This truth brings the knowledge of self with all our sin and need; but, if it ended there, it could only end in despair. It brings further the knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation. It is not a series of abstract propositions, or even a noble creed, it is personally embodied in Jesus. He is the living Word. In this form the child and the simple-minded man can understand it, and receive it into a childlike heart. What then is the way of freedom and of life? It is, (1) To believe in Jesus with a loftier faith than that of these cavilling Jews. (2) To be real disciples, that is, willing learners in the school of Christ, not running from the truth when it strikes our pride. (3) Thus we shall grow in the truth and come to know higher truths. We must do this or fall back; there was no standing. Some went back and walked no more with Him, but those who stayed received words of eternal life. They came to know the man Jesus, as the Son of God; the revelation of the Father, the source and centre of light, and thus they learned the meaning of the words, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The boldest, freest men we can find in the whole course of history are those who, like Paul, claimed to be "Slaves" of Christ. Obedience is the way to freedom; loyalty to our true King is liberty. This gives freedom from the bondage of sin, and brings us into the liberty of God's dear children.

Coming Back.

To the Father's house they are coming back,
The sons that were scattered wide and far,
And all their beautiful upward track
Is white in the beams of the Morning Star.

They have broken the ties that bound them fast;
In the alien lands where their hearts have been;
To the dear old home they return at last.
To the patient Father who bids them in.

There are some who wandered, and lost the way
In the brilliant hours of their early youth;
There are some who have striven many a day
With weapons of evil against the truth.

They found but husks where they sought for
food;
The fairest fruit had a bitter taste;
And the phantom lights their feet pursued,
Lured to the snares of a barren waste.

So they're coming back to the Father's house,
To the Father's love, that has waited long,
To the Father's heart, that will hear their vows,
And turn their grief to a happy song.

O sorrowful children! rebels still,
Who stay in the gloom of your little faith;
Return with these, from the desert's chill,
To the better life, from the shade of death.

For the Father's house, it has room for all,
And crowding there from the east and west
The weary ones, who have heard the call
Of Love divine, are crowned and blessed.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

*International S. S. Lesson for March 5th, 1880: John viii., 12, 31-36. Golden Text—"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free, indeed."