

## The Quiet Hour.

### David's Trust in God.

S. S. LESSON—Ps. 23. November 15, 1903.

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The Lord is my shepherd, v. 1. The confidence of the believer is rooted in the very nature of his living, covenant-keeping Lord. The soul that stands to such a God in the relation of a helpless sheep to a strong and faithful Shepherd has no want to fear. His is a confidence which can grow in no earthly soil. There is no fortune or place so sure that it may not be snatched from us, but all the changes that time can bring are not powerful to snatch us from the hand and help of God. In Him there is no change from age to age. His care will never fail.

He maketh me to lie down, v. 2. There is a natural longing in the human heart for some sheltered and pleasant place, "where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, nor even wind blows loudly." The One who has made us knows this craving and has provided for it. Life is not always a hard and dusty road on which we must travel, however weary and footsore. It has its frequent places of rest and refreshment. In the kindly ministries of the home, in our helpful friendships, in the books of wise writers, in quiet seasons of morning and evening prayer and meditation, and in the weekly recurring Sabbath with its sacred services, we find the blessed influences that strengthen and hearten us for new journeyings.

He restoreth my soul, v. 3. Even one who has known the Shepherd's care and the green pastures may have wandered. And when that has happened, we may fear that we may have lost His love and that hope must be extinguished. But the Shepherd goes out in the storm looking for the lost sheep, "until he find it." God is not only Shepherd, but also Redeemer. And when He has brought us back, there comes this more blessed faith, that even for the wandering one the Shepherd has mercy.

For His name's sake, v. 3. The ground of our confidence is found in the divine character. We have had a friend of whom we hear as having done some very kindly deed, and when we hear the story we say, "It was just like him, he couldn't have done anything else." So when we think of God as the Restorer of the lost, we find the reason of it in His character. In His whole redeeming work for us as individuals and for the whole world, He is simply revealing His own nature.

Yea, though I walk through the valley, v. 4. It cannot always in this world be the green pastures. God's children, as well as others, are called on at times to enter the deep darkness, and in the gloom every evil shape may lurk, every savage beast crouch to destroy, and the poor sheep has no strength in himself or weapons to defend him, if they make an onslaught. And yet he need not fear, for the Shepherd is still there, and even if he cannot see Him, he feels the touch of His rod to direct his steps, and he knows that His staff will protect if any evil beast assail the flock.

I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, v. 4. An old Scotch shepherd found much comfort, when dying, in the words of his pastor, who said, "Don't you know that sometimes, when you were driving the sheep through the valleys, there would be shadows all about you, while there was bright sun-

shine on the hills above? You are in the shadows now, but there's sunshine on beyond." "Oh! that is good," said the shepherd. "I never saw it that way before, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me.' Over yonder on the heavenly hilltops the sun is shining."

Thou preparest a table, v. 5. What a strange and striking scene! Without and near at hand, are gathered the enemies who would destroy the godly man. Within, he sits at the table furnished by his divine Protector. The provision is abundant and the feast is a joyful one, even though it is in the very presence of the foes. This scene reflects the experience often enjoyed by the people of God. For they have frequently found, in the fiercest conflicts with their adversaries, intervals in which their spirits were most bountifully refreshed with His goodness.

All the days of my life, v. 6. It is not only in the great emergencies and crises of life that we are to look for proofs of the divine goodness and mercies. In the experiences of the most commonplace days, if we have eyes to see them, we shall find many causes for thankful praise.

In the house of the Lord for ever, v. 6. All marches come to an end sometime. "All journeys end in welcome to the weary, and heaven, the heart's true home, shall come at last." Only those who have wandered far in strange lands and among foreign people, can rightly know the intense joy that thrills the whole being when the home land is before their eyes. Life here is a pilgrimage at the best. We have homes, but no home that is a constant abiding place; and yet deep in human nature there is the desire for such a home. And to that longing comes the reply, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." What meetings there will be there! and when we have entered, we shall never wish to depart.

### A Serious Neglect.

C. H. WETTERBE.

It is strange that Christian people, with any considerable knowledge of the truths of the Bible, will continue to demand new proofs of the certainty that God answers prayers. The very fact that the Bible gives numerous instances in which it is shown that a neglect to ask wisdom of God in relation to certain matters resulted disastrously to the neglecters, is sufficient evidence that God surely does answer prayer. In many instances the Bible shows the special difference between one seeking to have God's wisdom and help in his undertakings, and one's independence in such seeking and obtaining. We see an example in the days of Joshua. In the ninth chapter of the book of Joshua is an account of a shrewd scheme which the Gideonites perpetrated upon the Israelites. That people, having heard what Joshua and his men did to the inhabitants of Jericho and Ai, were in great fear lest they also would meet a like fate, hence they devised a very adroit plan by which they succeeded in so deceiving Joshua and his princes as to secure a covenant, granting the Gideonites a perpetual protection against all enemies of the Israelites. Joshua and his men soon discovered that they had been craftily

caught, but it was then too late to remedy the matter. What was the reason that Joshua and his princes were thus entrapped? Here it is: "And the men took of their provision, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." Those few words mean that Joshua, instead of asking counsel of the Lord as to what should be said and done when the Gideonites made their proposition used his own wisdom, in connection with that of his princes, and hence a bad covenant was made. If Joshua had consulted God, asking Him to guide him wisely, He would have revealed the plot to Joshua, and then he would have exterminated the Gideonites, as God wanted him to do. One wonders that Joshua, so generally true to God, should have thus neglected to pray for safe guidance. I presume that he never forgot that serious mistake. Its results long plagued him and his people. One lesson is, we are not competent to fulfill all duty without God's wisdom and power. Another lesson is, take plenty of time to get God's mind before doing business for him.

### Christ on Light.

BY HORATIUS BONAR.

Thou hast arisen, but thou declinest never,  
To-day shines as the past.  
All that thou wast, thou art and shall be ever,  
Brightness from first to last.

Night visits not thy sky, nor storm, nor sadness,  
Day fills up all its blue;  
Unfading beauty and unflinching gladness,  
And love forever new.

Light of the world! undimmed and unsetting,  
O shine each mist away!  
Banish the fear, the falsehood and the fretting,  
Be our unchanging day!

### Prayer.

Blessed be God for the degree in which we can see God in any movement of our life. Sometimes we see nothing but God: Thy goodness fills the earth, and Thy glory fills the sky. In the springtime our pulses are quickened and our songs are multiplied and heightened; then in the sunless days we fall back in unbelief and in distress. But the whole year is Thine: why can we not, by increase of faith, which is Thy gift, rest in God and count the darkness one of His jewels? We are slow to understand; we stand in our own way, and we throw our own shadow upon God's blessing. What wonder if we charge our souls with unfaith and rebellion, when it is really not so, but is some passing mood of the mind? The Lord give us understanding in these things, lest we grieve the Spirit and finally grieve the Holy Ghost.—Dr. Parker.

### The Mystery.

We sow the globe, we reap the corn,  
We build the house where we may rest,  
And then, at moments suddenly,  
We look up to the great wide sky,  
Inquiring wherefore we were born—  
For earnest, or for jest?

The senses folding thick and dark  
About the stifled soul within,  
We guess diviner things beyond,  
And yearn to them with yearning fond;  
We strike out boldly to a mark  
Believed in, but not seen.

And sometimes horror chills our blood  
To be so near such mystic things,  
And we wrap round us, for defense,  
Our purple manners, moods of sense—  
As angels, from the face of God,  
Stand hidden in their wings.  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.