

The Quiet Hour.

David's Grief Over Absalom.

S. S. LESSON—2 Sam. 18: 24-33. November 8, 1903.

GOLDEN TEXT—Prov. 17: 25. A foolish son is a grief to his father.

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And David sat between the two gates, v. 24. We may imagine the turmoil of the king's mind. All else would pass away from his thought except the news that might come at any moment. To most, if not to all, there come such periods of anxious waiting. By a sick bed, where the watcher hears every tick of the clock, while his whole soul is hanging on the thought of what the passing moments may bring. These periods of strange emotion cannot be described. What is the best preparation for such life crises? There can be no doubt about this. If, in the quiet, uneventful days, one learns to stay himself on God, and sets his confidence on Him, then in the time of trial he will not be put to shame. Instinctively, when the tide of emotion rises to its highest, and it seems as though human nature could stand no more, the godly man will cast himself on the divine aid, and it will not fail him.

Me thinketh the running is like the running of Ahimaaz, v. 27. There are certain gestures and bodily movements that are peculiar to each individual, and by which he is recognized even at a distance, and which are characteristic of the man. One of the poets puts this in striking words, when he says concerning a certain man, one can "read rascal in the motions of the back and scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee." We cannot hide ourselves, and when one is recognised by those who know him, they have certain thoughts as to his character, even as David, who, when the watchman tells him that he thinks it is Ahimaaz, responds, "He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings." It is wise to remember that in like manner people day by day are saying concerning us that we are good or bad, and the general judgment is probably not far from correct.

Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered, v. 28. We have here evidence that the king's word concerning the character of Ahimaaz was a true word. He who had been in the midst of the battle, must have known how much the result was dependent on the skill of Joab and the bravery of those who followed him. But he saw behind all these instruments the working of the power of God, and so, while he rejoices in the triumph that has been achieved, he does not forget to ascribe thanksgiving to God, for he is conscious that it was the divine blessing upon them that had given the victory to the army of the king. This is a truth that should always be in our hearts, even if we do not at all times give audible expression to it. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." Such a remembrance will save us from many faults and follies."

Is the young man Absalom safe? v. 29. When the heart is filled with a great love there is room for nothing else. The re-establishment of his throne was to David a secondary matter compared with the safety of Absalom, over whose childhood and youth he had been dreaming as he sat waiting for the tidings. And in the heart of every one there is some great love that has the

control. It is a matter of supreme importance to us who has the first place there, Christ claims that place from every one of us. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me," Rev. 3: 20. If we give Christ the first place, then no evil will overpower us.

And behold the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, v. 31 (Rev. Ver.) There is room in the service of God for the greatest differences in temperament and capacity. The tender-hearted Ahimaaz and the blunt Cushite, showed their loyalty to the king, each in his own way. It is to be borne in mind that each of us has his own peculiar gift, and we need not be troubled if it is not given to us to do that which our neighbor can do. What God asks of each one is, that he strive to make the best of his own powers.

The enemies of my lord the king... be as that young man is, v. 32. Sad as the fate of Absalom was, we cannot but feel that it was just. He reaped what he sowed. No one is surprised when a wicked man suffers. What puzzles us is that sometimes the wicked prosper while the righteous are in distress. In every manly heart there is the conviction, that the wicked ought to be punished, and that, here or hereafter, they will be punished as they deserve.

And the king was much moved, v. 33. The king was ready to die for his son, but even that great love could not save Absalom against his will. God calls on each one of us to forsake sin and to engage in His service, and a godly father or mother, or friend, cannot help us, no matter how great their love or desire to do so, unless we yield ourselves to the divine will and purpose. Our salvation is a personal matter. In securing it we must deal directly with God. Our wills are our own. It is ours and ours alone to surrender them to God.

Sunday Travelling by Christian People—Is It Justified?

BY REV. J. T. SHEARER.

The writer has been frequently asked this question. Many Christians—especially the young are perplexed by it. The work of the Lord's Day Alliance is not to settle questions of conscience or conduct in regard to the Lord's Day—which is the work of the Church—but rather to preserve the day in its integrity to all the people. The writer claims to speak, therefore, only for himself in answering the above question.

The question we are to consider is not whether Sunday travel is in its nature—always and necessarily—a breach of the moral law, and therefore sinful. It may become in certain emergencies, a work of necessity or mercy. David's special need justified his eating the shew bread, which under ordinary circumstances, would have been wrong. And there may arise in the experience of anyone exceptional conditions which would justify Sunday travel by whatever means may be available. To do so under such special circumstances is one thing, and in ordinary conditions quite another.

Nor is the question before us whether Christians are justified in travelling on the Lord's Day for mere pleasure or in the in-

terests of business. No follower of Jesus would defend such a misuse of the day given for rest, worship and kindly Christian activities.

Our inquiry is, rather, Whether Christian people are warranted in using these public hired means of conveyance on the Lord's Day in the ordinary course of things, habitually, aforethought, for objects in themselves commendable, such as visiting friends or the sick, or to attend worship, or do Christian work.

People undoubtedly at times find it less trouble, less expense in money and time, to use such means of conveyance, or they find that they are thus enabled to overtake more work, and they ask, "Why not?" A minister of the writer's acquaintance, after the Sunday cars were introduced into one of our cities, said, "The Devil introduced them, but let us use them for the glory of God."

Presbyteries, Conferences, Home Mission Committees, etc., not infrequently put certain far-apart preaching appointments together into one mission field or pastoral charge on the understanding that the missionary or minister in charge will use the Sunday train or car or steamer in going between his appointments, and many a missionary of tender conscience has felt compelled to set aside his scruples on entering upon a new field of labor and use the Sunday train or quit the field altogether and leave it without the means of grace. And this Church court or committee defends its action because it is a saving of Church funds.

Not a few ministers and laymen use the Lord's Day in travelling to or from Church gatherings "to save time" for other work during the week, or the use of the Sunday car to enable them to fill an exchange with a brother minister in a remote part of their city.

Is this right or expedient? That is the question we seek to answer. And with our present light we are compelled to answer with a respectful but unhesitating negative. The motive of those who for such purposes travel on Sunday may be the purest. We shall assume this to be the case. But is it prudent, expedient and in view of all the circumstances, right?

We are engaged in a keen controversy—are waging a strenuous warfare—over the Christian Sabbath in this country just now. Its sanctity is being broken down, its integrity seriously invaded. The forces of evil are being concentrated in a determined assault on its defences. The Church of Jesus is the one force which can meet and stop this onslaught. But even the church of the living God will not find its task a light one. It cannot afford to carry any handicap. It will need to lay aside every weight. Every ounce of available energy will be needed for battle. There will be none to spare for the bearing of needless impediments.

Moreover, large numbers of men—Christian and non-Christian—are being deprived of their rest-day rights and privileges by greed and selfishness and—Christian people who travel on the Lord's Day. These do not travel for greed or selfishness, it may be, but in the hope of doing more good. Does the end justify the means? Is it right to seek to do good or to oblige a brother or a friend when the doing of it helps to rob others of the opportunity to get the benefit of the means of grace? There are 50,000 people in Canada engaged every Sunday "conveying travellers," good, bad and indifferent. What a pity one cannot write "bad and indifferent." The fact that the good have to be counted in makes it so much the more difficult to arouse the public to a sense of