

The Quiet Hour.

Israel Reproved.

S.S. LESSON, Amos 5: 4-15. Sept. 18, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—Seek the Lord, and ye shall live.—Amos 5: 6.

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Seek ye me, and ye shall live, v. 4. There is only one way by which men may attain unto life, and that is in the seeking after God. This is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. To seek implies a desire and an endeavor on the part of those addressed. Sometimes people speak as though one might turn aside any day and find God. But this is not the message of scripture, Old or New Testament, nor the message of experience. If God is to be found, there must be the earnest seeking after Him. But He will never deny the soul that thus desires Him, and when He is found, life eternal is the priceless blessing that rewards the search.

Let him break out like fire, v. 6. If the attitude of man's spirit is not one of reverence towards God and desire to find Him, then it will be the attitude of self-seeking, and upon all such shall break the judgment of the Divine, who has been scorned. To seek God is to set ourselves in line with the purpose and intent of the Power that controls the universe: but to refuse to seek Him is to place ourselves in opposition, and such puny antagonism shall be overthrown and destroyed, even as by the breaking forth of fierce flames. There is no third way. We are either God's children sheltered by His power and love, or rubbish to be destroyed.

The Lord is his name, v. 8. The stars, the day dawn, the falling of the night, the irresistible might of the sea, everyone of these appeals to our sense of wonder. How men have pondered on them, and have told each other strange tales as to how it was that all these persist in beauty and in regularity! But the highest thought of all is that all these marvels, and the greatest of them, are but the servants of the Almighty; the Lord is His name. What a joy to the servant of God to rest in the consciousness that all of Nature's wonders are controlled by him who is our Father:

"In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
'The Hand that made us is divine.'"

They abhor him that speaketh uprightly, v. 10. When men give themselves to evil-doing, it invariably results in them hating those who do righteously. There is an abiding antagonism between the worker of unrighteousness and the man who would do the will of God. Many have tried to serve God and Mammon: to give themselves to evil, and at the same time not to set themselves in opposition to godliness; but no one ever yet succeeded. When one finds himself antagonizing good men because they are good, he had better look out for his own footing. He is already in slippery places.

We have built houses of hewn stone... ye shall not dwell in them, v. 11. How often in the history of mankind has this same thing happened! Men have forgotten God's claim upon them and out of ill-gotten gains have heaped up for themselves wealth and built fine houses, and yet have never lived in them; or even where they have lived in them, have not been able to enjoy them.

Many a rich man who has obtained his wealth by iniquity has found it a curse and his luxuries have turned to dust and ashes.

For I know your manifold transgressions, v. 12. It is one of the curious follies of which men are guilty, that they blind themselves into thinking that they may cover over and hide their transgressions. True, they may themselves forget them; but God remembers and sees. There is no oblivion for transgression, except that which comes when we have trodden the hard way of penitence, and made humble and sorrowful confession to God. Then He, who knows our transgressions, will, according to another scripture, cast them behind His back, and remember them no more forever.

Hate the evil... love the good, v. 15. This is the one way and the only way in which we may have hope that God will be gracious to us and pardon. Men have sought in many ways to win the favor of the Divine, but there never has been and never will be other than the one way. When men persist in ill-doing, and yet profess to believe that they have found favor with God, they are deceiving themselves. True godliness must ever manifest itself in high morality. "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." And what is that will, but "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"? This message which came to ancient Israel is just as much needed to-day, and each and all of God's servants should make it known. The fruit of genuine religion is a pure and upright life.

A Creed.

I believe in human kindness.
Large amid the sons of men,
Nobler far in willing blindness
Than in censure's keenest ken.
I believe in Self-Denial,
And its secret throb of joy;
In the love that lives through trial,
Dying not, though death destroy.
I believe in Love renewing
All that Sin hath swept away,
Heavenlike its work pursuing
Night by night and day by day.
In the power of its remoulding,
In the grace of its relieve,
In the glory of beholding
Its perfection—I believe.
I believe in Love Eternal,
Fixed in God's unchanging will,
That beneath the deep internal
Hath a depth that's deeper still!
In its patience—its endurance
To forbear and to retrieve,
In the large and full assurance
Of its triumph—I believe.

—Norman MacLeod.

Sweetness of temper is a precious heritage. It gives beauty to everything. It keeps its windows open toward the spice country and fills the home with perpetual delight. The fortunate possessor of a sunny soul is God's evangel in a dark world. He is a living gospel which no one will ever repudiate, and the blessedness of which all men will appreciate. The body will grow old and the smooth brow will be furrowed, but a happy disposition is an aureole to the gray crown of age. Blessed is he whose life looks out upon the land of Beulah and whose soul is responsive to the outlying vision.

Life's Strange Uncertainty.

No lesson is oftener impressed upon us than this of life's strange uncertainty, and no other lesson are we so slow to learn. We act as if we were to live forever. We plan and build for years ahead, and lo! we are crushed before the moth, and our houses, that we fancied were on rock foundations, are consumed by fire or swept away by flood, and the places where they stood yesterday are vacant to-day. Our very names seem writ in water, and we spend our years as a tale that is told.

At times with sharp and terrible insistence, this lesson of life's terrible incertitude presses upon our souls. A dear one in the prime of youth and joy is snatched hence by death, while the aged and feeble remain. A fortune that had appeared safe from accident melts away like snow in a thaw. A good name that had been stainless is darkened by reproach. Friendships that had been cemented by years of pleasant associations are shattered by misunderstanding. Life's grim uncertainty is accentuated when physical health is undermined by an unsuspected malady. We grow melancholy when we dwell on this aspect of life, and we tread as those do who walk on a lava crust, or whose lightest misstep may start a falling avalanche.

Another and more cheering aspect there is to those who look upon life as taking hold upon eternity. This strange, panoramic, swift changing, swift fitting life is bearing us out on a tide that seeks a steadfast shore. Our trials are for our testing to be compensated in the future. The one solution to our puzzles, the one clue to life's mazes, the one comfort in our manifold sorrows, is the belief that the Lord reigns, and the assurance that we belong to him, and are precious in his sight.

Earthly life is uncertain. Let this fact, that no one denies, teach us to be more considerate of others, gentler, less selfish, more solicitous to plant the gardens of our mortal life with flowers that catch their fragrance those radiant coasts where evermore life torills, and knows no ending.—Margaret E. Sangster.

A Prayer.

O Lord, inspire us with thy Spirit until we rise to that love of thee that shall give us joy to be counted worthy to suffer for thy name's sake. Prevent that we should suffer because of sin; prevent that we should ever suffer because we have forgotten thee or thy Son. But, O, give to us courage and love and grace, so that if it be necessary to suffer for well-doing we may not only enter it with resignation, but may find joy set before us as Christ did, looking to the glory that in the other life is to be ours. We ask this benediction of thee in Jesus' name. Amen.—By Russell H. Conwell.

The English Language.

English is said to be one of the most difficult language in the world for a foreigner to learn. The verbs and propositions are particularly puzzling. A professor in Columbia School of Mines tells of the troubles of a Frenchman with the verb "to break."

"I begin to understand your language better," said my French friend, M. De Beauvoir, to me, "but your verbs trouble me still. You mix them up so with prepositions.

"I saw your friend, Mrs Berky, just now," he continued. "She says she intends to break down her school earlier than usual. Am I right there?"

"Break up her school, she must have