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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

SUNDAY, Feb 23rd, 1873.

The Covenant with Abram.—Gen. xv 1-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."—Romans iv. 20.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—Verses 1, 5-7.

SUMMARY—God's promise makes known his purpose, and deserves our faith; and however great or seemingly improbable the blessing, there is no room for doubt.

ANALYSIS.—I. The friendly relation. vs. 1. II. The error exploded. vs. 2-4. III. The promise believed. vs. 5-7.

EXPOSITION.—The Change.—Last Sabbath we had the seventh and last lesson on the general history of our world. We had marked the origin of the earth and man in God's creative will, and traced the whole race from its pure and joyous beginning into sin and shame and calamity, relieved only by God's free grace, or by the flood, and the appearance of a new multitude, until the stroke of mingled wrath and love divided at once the language and the mass of mankind. We saw the rise of different tongues and peoples, and there we stopped. To this state of things our present lesson introduces us. We have, in chapters xi and xii, the account of three sons of Noah, their respective lines of descendants, and their location. We find in the line of Shem, the eighth from him, a man by the name of Terah, chap. xi. 26, and to him were born three sons, one of whom was Abram, probably the youngest of the three, though first named in the list, because of his prominence in the history. Sacred history now turns to him, and passes all other nations by, in order to show how God called and led and blessed him to become a great nation, and how this nation arose, and what it was and did. All along the line of Old Testament history we have world-wide glances, and at every reference to the race we see that the heart of God is large enough to include all, and that the very separation and training of the one people is in order most effectively to bless all. We shall see this put into the very covenant which was made with Abram.

Verses 1.—"After these things" Abram had been called to leave the land of his birth, and go to a country to him unknown. Chap. xii. 1-5. "Ur of the Chaldees," is thought to have been on the lower Euphrates, not far from the Persian Gulf; though others place it far up the river. Famine drove him from Canaan to Egypt, chap. xii. 10, and his own lack of faith in God made him trouble there. vs. 11-20. In Palestine, he afterwards parted with his brother Lot, for the sake of peace, chap. xiii, and, some time later, with a generous, self-forgetful love. He went out to Lot's rescue from the confederate captors, won the day, came back with his brother and with the recovered spoils, paid tithes to the priestly king of Salem—the type of Jesus Christ—and refused to take any gift from the king of Sodom. He would be dependent only on God. "After these things," especially the return from the chase. "The word of the Lord," as given in the rest of the chapter. "Vision." The word so translated signifies any mode by which the prophet received from God his message,—a mental perception, whether given in one way or another. "Fear not." This shows that Abram did fear. Was it like John's fear, in Rev. i. 17, caused by the appearing of the Lord? The narrative seems rather to make it a fear as to himself, which had been springing up in his mind since the first promise to him, chap. xii. 1-3, in the unsettled state of affairs, and especially because of his old age, and childlessness. To the exhortation God adds a reason, a good cause. So he always bids us do only what there is good reason for. He offers comfort when there is sure ground for it. "I am thy shield." I have taken you under my care. I, though unseen, as effectually keep you from all harm, as the best shield turns the lightest weapon. Such, in spirit, is the assurance, "I am thy shield." "And thy exceeding great reward." God himself the believer's portion. "Reward" here is not for service performed, the payment of debt. See Romans iv. God freely, graciously, determined to single out Abram to receive blessing, and then called and prepared him

to receive it. Abram did not lead off in the affair, and bring Jehovah into his debt. "Exceeding great," refers indeed to the increase of his posterity, and the coming of Messiah in the line of his seed, but not to the exclusion of his own personal salvation.

Verses 2, 3.—Abram here shows at least one cause of his fears. He does not see how he is to be blessed so beyond others as the head of a nation, the father of a people. "What wilt thou give me?" How can there be such reward? What hast thou done for me? "Steward," or "son of possession," i. e., possessor, in the prospect of inheriting the house, i. e., as heir, taking the place of a son. We may take things pertaining to God's providence which perplex us, which seem to be against his express word, which seem to make the Saviour's word false, and, if it be not in the way of reproof or complaint, we shall not be spurned, we shall somehow find relief. It may not be by getting a clear answer, but if not, it will be in a better way.

Verses 4.—"The word of the Lord came." To his petition answer was given. Just how, it matters not. Enough for our encouragement, we have the fact. We are little how God answers our own prayers. We must know that he answers, and that is enough. "This shall not be thine heir." Man's extremity is God's opportunity. To Abram it was a thing settled, that Eliezer was to be his heir. He judged by sight. But it was all wrong. The great, brooding sorrow of his life was to be taken away, and that in the very face of impossibility.

Verses 5.—"Brought him forth abroad." Either in vision or in reality. The promise was to be made strong, but not that only. Here, as at the flood, to make assurance sure, there should be a visible sign and pledge of the promise or covenant. The stars were to witness to the promise, as did the rainbow then. They were to shine down into the heart of Abram and his descendants God's pledge. Could there be failure? No—for the stars themselves would sooner shame the Almighty into faithfulness. Should he forget to be gracious, his innumerable hosts right in his very heaven would join together to rebuke him. "So shall thy seed be." Here, first, the seed after the flesh is meant. The Hebrews were to become a numerous people. But we are taught that the deeper and truer thought was of the spiritual seed—Christ and his disciples—these were the real seed. They who had Abram's faith are the children of Abram, if to his soul there came but the faintest conception of the nature of this promised blessing, his being must have thrilled with an unspeakable joy in the view.

Verses 6.—But can he believe? It seems too much. Everything against it. So it is with many a promise of God. Everything against them—nothing for them but just God's word. Nothing but that! Why, that is everything. It is the very foundation of the world, as it was the cause of the universe. "Abram believed," and so can we when our hearts are not far off from God, caught in sense and sin. He believed, and that is just what God would have everyone do,—believe, trust. "And he counted it to him for righteousness." Abram was a sinner, like all other men. He was chosen to receive blessing, not for any goodness in himself, but of pure mercy.

Verses 7.—And now, the promise is to be fixed fast and sure in Abram's heart, that this word shall stand; and so in this verse, God answers him over again, that he is the one who brought him at the first from his home, took him years ago, made for him a way and led him in it, shielded, helped and blessed him, up to the present, and it has all been in preparation for coming good. So is everything here made to rest just where all blessing rests,—on the Lord's own gracious will, and not on our goodness or power.

Conclusion.—Much is made in Scripture of this gracious promise to Abram,—God's free covenant with him. It was the new and clearer declaration of salvation which makes up the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Abram's royal seed after the flesh.

QUESTIONS.—From which of Noah's sons was Abram a descendant? Char. xi. 27. Name his father. His brothers. His wife. Verse 29. His early home. Verse 28. Why did he leave his native land? Chap. xii. 1-4. What can you tell of his history between that time and the time at which our lesson finds him? Chap. 12, 13, 14. Vs. 1. What is here meant by "these things"? What by "a vision"? What did Abram fear? Why was he not to fear? How is God one's shield? How one's "exceeding great reward"? Does

he shield every saint? Does every one wish to have him as a reward? What is here meant by "reward"? Rom. iv. 4. Vs. 2, 3. What did Abram ask God? What did his question mean? In what spirit was it asked? Vs. 4. Was his request answered? What were the Lord's words? Vs. 5. What did God do next? Why did he mention the stars? What is meant by Abram's seed? Rom. ii. 28, 29. Vs. 6. What was the effect on Abram? How did God regard his belief? What is here meant by righteousness? What does God count or reckon for righteousness now? Who has met for us the claims of the law? Rom. iii. 20-27. Vs. 7. What does God say further? What land is here meant? Did Abram inherit it? What land does the Christian inherit? 1 Pet. i. 4.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 101, 102.

SUNDAY, March 2nd. — Escape from Sodom.—Gen. xix. 15, 26.

Youths' Department.

LAZY JIM WARNER.

"Oh, dear!" said lazy Jim Warner, "If I could sit under a tree, Or sit in the chimney corner, Eating a pie, like Jack Horner, What a lucky young chap I'd be! There's the cat and the dog, And the ant and the frog, And the bird and the bee, All so happy and free, With nothing to do but to play; While I must learn, each day, To read and to spell, Which you know very well Is awful hard work for me."

"Mew! mew!" said the cat, "you know better; Of rats I, this day, have caught five." "Bow, wow!" said old Bruno, the setter, "I know what work means, to the letter." "Bzz! bzz!" said the bee in the hive. Yes, the cat and the dog, And the ant and the frog, And the bird and the bee, Are all busy, you see, And do their work thorough and well. So don't give up learning to spell, Jimmy Warner, I pray, But study each day; Then see what a scholar you'll be.

WHAT THE PAINT COST.

Early Saturday evening, at a desk in the snug corner of her newly painted grocery, sat Mrs. Webster, figuring up some columns in her ledger, and holding herself ready to meet any callers who might wish to settle their accounts. Since her husband died she had taken hold of the business herself with earnestness and energy, showing that sometimes a woman can do better than a man, even on her own ground. She had shown good taste and judgment, not only in the purchase and sale of her goods, but also in the good order and neatness that reigned everywhere in the store. Presently in came Philip Philips, a mechanic and a customer. His bill now amounted to upwards of twenty dollars, a large amount for him, for of late Mrs. Webster, considering his intemperate habits, had seldom allowed him credit to any great extent.

"I can pay you twelve dollars to-night, Mrs. Webster, sorry it's no more," said Philips, shambling up to the desk. "I'm sorry, too, Philip. It's not what I like to say—for your wife and children's sake, I regret to say it—but we will have to let the balance of this account stand till next pay day, and not let it grow any. I'll set right cheap for cash you understand; and for to-night, I'll give you a receipt for ten dollars."

Philip took a long breath. Half sitting and half leaning on the bench at the side of the desk, he looked around while Mrs. Webster was writing the receipt. To change the subject for he felt uncomfortable under the implied refusal to trust him till the balance of his account was paid—he began to praise the looks of the store in its new dress of paint and with new fixtures.

"It looks very nice in here since you painted up. It takes a woman to get a look in the world. It must have cost a big sum to paint up after this fashion." "It has not cost so very much, Mr. Philip. I hope you'll take it kindly. If I speak candidly, it's a fact that it hasn't cost any more to paint up my store than it has cost to paint your nose."

Philip started back, looking confused and angry, his cheeks almost as red as his nose. But remembering that it was a lady in whose presence he stood, he checked himself, and said, "That's considerable of a liberty, Mrs. Webster, that's right down personal."

"Now, Philip, you must bear with my plainness. You know as plain as I can tell you that with that wife of yours, and children too, you might be in as prosperous a condition as I am. You are getting good wages, but at the rate you are going on nobody knows how long it will last. To make a calculation how much it costs to keep you in drink—or what is the same thing, to paint your nose—you must add to what you pay the bar-tender various little losses and draw-backs which the habit of tipping always occasions. You know that things go wrong at home on account of it. For instance, you being a customer of the dram shop is the reason why your wife cannot afford to keep a girl, and being at times quite overworked, she has an occasional attack of sickness, and then you have a doctor's bill to pay. In many ways your habit is seen to be expensive. Your loss of credit is no doubt a disadvantage, and some—mind; I say it for your benefit—some have lost their position through their intemperate habits, and have gone down hill from that time. Perhaps you've heard the funny remark, that when a man begins to go down hill, he finds everything increased for the occasion. The pain on one's nose costs more and more—until at last it may cost the man's life, and what is infinitely of more importance, it is likely to cost him his soul too. If you would save all that, make it a settled point never to go inside of the drinking saloon."

With his face very red, Philip made an awkward bow, and thanking Mrs. Webster for her advice, he went out. It was his intention to go to Van Lennep's saloon where he had a bill to pay—for Philips, imagining himself an honest man, thought that he tried as well as he knew how, to pay his way in the world. One thing he had known for a long time—he had nothing to lay by at the end of the week, and now he was going behind-hand.

Outside he met a youngster, the son of a man who was once a neighbor, but now having risen in the world, he lived in another street.

"Mr. Philips," said the boy, "I was just going over to your house to see if Mrs. Philips don't know of any woman who'll come and wash for us on Monday morning—or maybe she'll come herself—mother told me to ask."

"Well, that's queer in your mother to tell you so. My wife don't go out a washing."

"I suppose that's all so, Mr. Philips. But mother said that Mrs. Philips had been over there, and said she didn't know but she would have to go a little in that way—wash, or iron, or something of that kind—to get money to buy clothes for herself, such as she would like to have. You mustn't blame me, or mother either for asking her about it."

"Enough said," muttered Philips. "My wife don't go out a washing or ironing either. Tell your folks that for me."

As the boy went his way, Philips stood irresolute, gloomily pondering what he had heard.

"She go out and do washing! Never; not even for a friend. But then, if we're going down hill, who knows but she'll have to come to it?"

Philips finally concluded that he would not go to Van Lennep's that evening, but would let him wait till the end of the next month for his pay. He had two reasons for going there; he felt the need of a dram, along with the attractions of jolly associates, and he wanted to pay his score. But now, he resolved to take them home.

He took a seat in the room where his wife and children were, they had little to say at first, for he felt gruff and gloomy, and a little tender withal. The talk of Mrs. Webster about painting his nose stung him to the quick. He used to think himself a handsome man; perhaps his coarse habits had changed all that. His little daughter Mary, not yet nine years old, came and clung on his knee, and then remembering, she said, "Papa, I'll run and get a bouquet I made for you this morning out of some flowers in the garden," and she ran and brought the flowers, a bunch of morning glories now all faded and drooping.

"They're the only flowers I could get in the garden," she said, "and they're all spoiled," she added complainingly; and she held back, as if doubting whether to present them or throw them away.

"Hand them to me, Mary. You did the best you could, I s'pose," said her father, trying by a blunt manner to hide his real feelings.

"Let's see—morning glories. Bright things in the morning, and pretty enough,

but they don't hold out. They're like people aren't they, Mary?"

His wife emboldened by this little bit of moralizing, ventured to put in a word. "They're very much like ourselves, Philip. When we were first married all was bright."

"But it faded away like the morning glories," continued Philip. "Well, now, if there's any flower that keeps its color all the year round, let me know and I'll buy it."

As Philip said this, his face colored, for somehow the thought ludicrously, and yet plainly, struck him that his own nose was a flower of that description—red all the year round; and it seemed to him that his wife and little Mary, were divining his thoughts.

He rose, and as he did so; he caught a glimpse of his face in the glass. "There's the nose with the red paint on it," he reflected. "That's the paint that costs us all so much. Opening his pocket-book, he handed his wife ten dollars.

"Take this Janie, and I'll double it next month; you'll need it to get you something new."

"And you'll buy me a little photograph album, won't you, papa?" said little Mary.

"Yes, my little one, if it don't cost too much; but what kind of an album do you want me to get you?"

"I want a little one with twelve places in it for pictures. I want your picture, papa and mamma's; all the girls put their father's and mother's in first."

"Suppose we wait, Mamma, till I'm better looking. Maybe I'll come to my good looks in a few weeks."

"O you're good looking enough—only the nose is red."

"Well, Mamma, said Philip, feelingly, as he drew the little girl to his bosom, for his mind was fully made up, and he acted as if the best way to be a man again was to be candid and tender. "I shall pay no money for nose paint, it costs too much."

And then turning to his wife who was an astonished listener to his new way of talking, he said, "That's just so Janie; I'm done throwing money away on Van Lennep and all his tribe; we'll be happy yet, for I mean to save as I go along; and maybe, if I waste no more money on the paint Mrs. Webster told me about, the old morning glories will come back again and stay for a life time."—Young Folk's News.

NO TIME FOR SWEARING.

"Catch me using a profane word in the presence of ladies," said a talkative stippling, with a shade of down on his upper lip. "There's a time for all things."

No sir, there isn't a time for all things. No law, human or divine, ever set apart a time for swearing. A profane expression is a sin and an abomination, utter it when and where you will. As for ladies; yes, I'll grant you it is well to be and act our best in their presence. We cannot be too true, too pure, too honorable, if we want to stand upright before a good woman or good girl—yes, while I'm about it, I'll add, nor before a little mite of a girl-baby. I know of one other before whom we ought to be just as particular, if not more so. When he is not around, my boys, you can safely do just about as you please. But when you're in his presence—and, to my thinking we're all there and thereabouts pretty much all the time—have a care! Don't offend the dearest love, the whitest purity, the grandest honor of all.—Hearth and Home.

NOBLE ANSWER.

At a slave market in one of the Southern States, before the abolition of slavery, a smart, active colored boy was put up for sale. A kind master, who pitted his condition, not wishing him to have cruel owner, went up to him and said,

"If I buy you will you be honest?"

The boy, with a look that baffled description, replied,

"I will be honest, whether you buy me or not."

Could any boy, white or black, have made a nobler answer than that?

But though slave they had enrolled me, Minds are never to be so.

The consummation of wisdom is, to do what, at the time of doing it, we intend to be afterwards sorry for the deliberate and intentional making work for repentance.

No possessions, good, but by the good we make of them; without which, wealth, power, and servants, do but help to our lives more un-