

Christian Messenger.

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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

SUNDAY, March 16th, 1873. Jacob and Esau.—Gen. xxvii. 30-40.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." vs. 33.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—Verses 37-40.

SUMMARY.—Notwithstanding Jacob's fraud, God confirmed the stolen blessing, and notwithstanding Esau's bitter grief, the blessing was denied him.

ANALYSIS.—I. Too Late. vs. 30-33. II. Fruitless Repentance. vs. 34-37. III. Esau's Portion. vs. 38-40.

EXPOSITION.—Connecting links.—We find ourselves to-day in the presence of Abraham's descendants. Sarah is dead and buried. Chap. xxiii. Abraham also is dead. Chap. xxv. 8. The lad whom we saw given to God by the father, and back to the father by God, has been married, after a romantic, vicarious courtship, chap. xxiv, and has become the father of twin boys. Chap. xxv. 22-34. These boys have grown up to manhood, with traits of character totally diverse, as though they belonged to different races,—one of those unaccountable facts so often occurring, where the principle of variation in offspring comes to view in the most striking manner. Esau was first-born. Esau appears as a frank, impulsive, affectionate, uncalculating fellow,—rather an interesting and prepossessing child of nature. Jacob is by nature selfish, deceitful, unscrupulous; but he knows what is for his interest, and can sacrifice any present good for the ultimate reward. Unhappily, the parents are not impartial toward their children Jacob is Rebekah's favorite; Esau Isaac's. Such partialities are almost sure to make trouble in a family. They made plenty of it in this case. Jacob meanly gets from Esau his birthright, as first-born. And this, with the Hebrews, was a most valuable right. Especially was it so at this time, when the whole elect nation was to come of one of the brothers only. Esau shows his lack of faith in God, and of appreciation of his promise, by the reckless manner in which he sold, or rather threw away his high privilege. After this, they lived on until Isaac was near his end,—a poor old, feeble, blind patriarch, just waiting from day to day for the final call. He wished to give to his favorite and first-born the final blessing, which seems, in those days, in the case of the patriarchs, to have been given by inspiration of God.

Verse 30.—As soon as, etc. He had need to hasten. Esau was likely to come in upon him. What an encounter, what an explosion, in that case! Sin, fraud, deceit, make occasion for fear. Honesty, integrity, sincerity, enable one to move on with open brow, fearlessly. Jacob was off not a whit too soon. Scarce gone out when Esau came in. So near was Jacob to failing. What little events give shape to the affairs of men,—to the destiny of individuals and nations! "Large doors turn on small hinges." By the very little helm the huge ship is turned at will. It all seems to have happened, it looks like chance. But God rules. His will has way and sway. Even wicked men are in his hand, and his providence comprehends their acting. It was God's will that Jacob should have the blessing. It does not follow that Jacob's mode of getting it was right. It was God's will that Christ should be crucified; but the hands that did the deed are fitly called "wicked hands." Does any one say, "We cannot see how both these things can be true"? Well, suppose you do not see how? Is this the only thing you do not understand? Some things are true whose explanation will never be understood by philosopher or archangel. It is a great attainment for one to know that he cannot know everything, and to accept truth on its sufficient evidence, though it do not appear how one truth fits in with another. From his hunting. See chaps. xxv. 27, and xxvii. 3, 4.

Verse 31.—Savoury meat. Heb. "delicacies." No suspicion has crossed Esau's mind. He loves his father, wants the paternal blessing, and has done all that was asked. It was the moment of high and confident hope. The prize which the

final blessing was to secure was already within his grasp. We find our sympathies enlisted. We feel with him and for him. We hear him say: Let my father arise, etc., and dread the reply which we know must come. Was Esau quite honest, in trying to get the first-born's blessing after selling the first-born's right? Both brothers were at fault.

Verse 32.—Who art thou? Strange question. So Esau must have thought. He was as much perplexed, doubtless, as Isaac was when Esau called on him to rise. Poor old blind saint, duped by his wife and son,—no wonder he is confounded. "Who art thou?" Now he recognises the true voice of Esau, and knows himself to have been deceived. Esau's answer shows what was uppermost in his mind. Thy Son, in want of a father's blessing. Thy first-born, come to have the rights and privileges, and glorious promises of thy first-born sealed to me, now he feels the value of the gift as he did not when, in a moment of petulant impulse, he bartered away that birthright for the merest trifle. Chap. xxv. 34. How does our view of spiritual blessings change with change of circumstances!

Verse 33.—Trembled very exceedingly. Most pitiable! Betrayed by his wife and son, and failing in his cherished wish concerning his favorite. With this was probably mingled a sense of God's presence and control,—ruling in the midst of all this wretched tangle. Seeing that the blessing has gone from his mouth; knowing that God had spoken by him—not like him, ignorantly, but of purpose—and recognizing the divine will as not only contrary to his, but supreme over his, he accepts the situation, falls in with the divine arrangement, and says to Esau, I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed. It is our wisdom to say, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," even when our wills have been most crossed, and even crushed.

Verse 34.—Cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry. Most emphatic language! A most heart-rending spectacle! His anguish is extreme. Mingled with bitter disappointment his rage at his treacherous brother, and perhaps also at his treacherous mother. Despair wrings from his soul the cry,—almost despair, not quite; for he can yet call out, with a gleam of hope that it is not yet too late, Bless me, even me also, O my father. He seems not to recognize clearly that the power to bless was not in the father, but in the father's God, and so fancies that it is for his father to decide. What nervous energy, what vehement, sorrowful passion in the words! Such capability of anguish in a human heart!

Verse 35.—And he [i. e., Isaac] said, With subtilty, i. e., deceit, fraud. The father does not pretend to justify Jacob, even though he recognizes God's will. This act was in keeping with Jacob's character, and of course the father knew only too well that character. Some have thought that his selfishness was dethroned, and his conversion to God effected, when he wrestled with the angel of God, on his return to meet Esau, years after this event.

Verse 36.—And he [Esau] said, . . . rightly named Jacob. Supplanted,—deceit, defraud, circumvent. The word has in Hebrew the same root and meaning as the name Jacob. Two times. He bitterly remembers his own folly, and Jacob's selfish craftiness, in the matter of the birth-right. What bitter memories we lay up for ourselves, by our wicked follies! And still Esau has just a little hope. Hast thou not a blessing for me? Must I go unblessed? Poor, poor, wretched man!

Verse 37.—I have made him thy lord. I, as expressing all unintentionally the will of God. Not I, as by myself. This was why there could be no change. "Lord," as superior in power, privilege, and, as the history of the nations afterward proved, lord in that the Israelites were to have dominion over the Edomites. With corn and wine,—occupying Palestine, which was in ancient times extremely fertile. And what shall I do unto thee, my son? He has no message of good to give him, in the form of blessing.

Verse 38.—Hast thou but one blessing? Jacob's blessing must remain, but may I not be blessed also, in like manner and degree? Bless me, even me also, O my father, as verse 34. Repetition gives emphasis. Such useful pathos. Lifted up his voice and wept. Here is repentance, but unavailing. Heb. xii. 16, 17. Well is his example held up to the world as a most solemn appeal and warning. It is so easy to sin away the day of grace,—to pass the boundary of hope.

Verse 39.—We have not so much a blessing, as a statement of that which the loss of the blessing was to be. Thy dwelling shall be the fatness, etc. The margin reads, "of the fatness"; but it should be translated, "without the fatness,"—away from it. So, away from the dew of heaven. In the Hebrew the preposition rendered "of" means first "from," and one meaning is "apart from." So in Prov. xx. 3. Verse 40.—Have dominion. Or, rather, shake, move violently, stir himself to shake off the yoke; then he should break it. The nation was to be like Esau, impetuous, not steady of purpose. The tract inhabited by the Idumeans, the region of Mount Seir, and the deserted districts in the west and northwest of it, belong perhaps to the most desolate parts of the globe.

QUESTIONS.—What was the subject of the last lesson? Between the events of that and to-day's, what has become of Isaac's father? Chap. xxv. 8. Of his mother? Chap. xxiii. Whom has Isaac married? Chap. xxiv. What boys born to him? Chap. xxv. 22-24. The character of each? Chap. xxv. 27-34. Isaac's age and condition at the time of our present lesson? Verse 1. His request? Vers. 25. What had Jacob and his mother done, on hearing this request? Vers. 5-27. What was Jacob's blessing? Vers. 28-29.

Vs. 30. When did Esau come in? What if he had come before Jacob was blessed? Was it merely by chance that he did not? Vs. 31. What did Esau bring? What did he say? Why did he so much wish the father's blessing? Vs. 32. What was the father's reply? Why did Esau say, "thy first-born"? Vs. 33. The reason of Isaac's agitation? Did he not know whom he had blessed? Vs. 35. What did he say of Jacob's blessing? Did he in blessing speak as God's prophet? Vs. 34. What was Esau's lament? Chap. xxv. 34. Vs. 35. Did Isaac approve of Jacob's course? Why did God bless him? Rom. ix. 11. Vs. 36-38. What did Esau think of Jacob? Did he regret his own folly? What did he beg for? Could his father help him? How can we avoid such sorrow?

Vs. 39, 40. What kind of a country was Esau to have? How live? His relation to Jacob?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.—Scripture Catechism, 105.

SUNDAY, March 23rd.—Jacob at Bethel.—Gen. xxviii. 10-12.

Youths' Department.

HOPE'S SONG.

I hear it singing, singing sweetly, Softly in an under tone, Singing as if God had taught it, 'Tis better farther on!

Night and day it sings the song, Sings it while I sit alone, Sings so that the heart may hear it, 'Tis better farther on!

Sits upon the grave and sings it, Sings it when the heart would groan, Sings it when the shadows darken, 'Tis better farther on!

Farther on? How much farther? Count the mile-stones one by one. No! no counting—only trusting 'Tis better farther on!

MIDGE'S RIDE.

It was a hot, dusty morning in midsummer. Biddy sat upon the curb-stone by the old-town pump, and what do you think she was doing? Bathing baby Midge with a bit of soft white muslin she had found clinging to the handle of the pump as she came up to it.

"There, now, ye titty-bird darlin', ye wee beautiful childie; ye'll be white as a snowdrap and swate as a honeysuckle, and I'm going to eat ye clean up when I get through, so I be, so I be, so I be—e-e-e!" And Biddy's voice went off into a jubilant little trill, in which Midge joined with all her baby powers.

"When you get baby washed, if you'll let me I'll take her to ride," said a sweet childish voice from the sidewalk. Biddy looked up and saw a beautiful little girl with a carriage fit for a fairy queen and all court attendants.

"Oh, mercy! ye wouldn't take the likes o' Midge Malone to ride in that fine kerriage now, would ye?" exclaimed Biddy with mouth and eyes wide open with astonishment.

"Why not? I'd like to if you'll let me."

There was a wishful look in the little girl's face which Biddy couldn't understand at all. She looked at the fairy chariot, with its snowy pillow-cushions, and its dainty-curtains of the softest lace,

which were carefully closed as if to shelter the face of some dainty sleeper. Then Biddy looked at rugged Midge, and lastly at the beautiful little girl, repeating the incredulous question: "Ye wouldn't now, honey, do sich a lovely curis thing?"

"See if I wouldn't," returned the little girl, smiling at Biddy's doubtfulness. Biddy fell to kissing Midge ecstatically, and then sprang with an exclamation of delight to where the little stranger stood upon the sidewalk.

"But what'll ye do with yer own baby? There won't be room for two in the likes o' that tit-bit of a kerriage," Biddy asked, drawing suddenly back.

"There isn't any baby there," the little girl said, mournfully; and she parted the curtains and disclosed an empty carriage. Biddy gazed into it a moment silently, and then asked wonderingly:

"Where is it? Ter home?" "Yes—at-home with Jesus!" replied the little girl in a trembling voice.

"Ye don't say! I'm sorry for ye," Biddy's voice grew soft with sympathy. "What for ye haul the empty kerriage round?"

"Mamma lets me because it comforts me. I close the curtains and it seems as if Angel were really there, and sometimes I find some other baby—the little girl finished the sentence with a sob, while big round tears fell fast from Biddy's eyes upon the soft white hands of the child that were lying Midge down tenderly among the cushions—as tenderly as if it were Angel herself, instead of little ragged Midge."

The curtains were drawn, and whether the baby passenger was Angel or Midge 'twas all the same to the passer-by; and I'm sure 'twas all the same to the gentle watchers up where Angel had gone.

Why should we wonder if Biddy, with her bare brown feet, did walk beside the beautiful child through all that summer morning? Were they not sister spirits in innocence and love? The birds that flitted through the shadows above their heads were glad because of it, and Biddy was happy, while little Midge slept sweetly, and the beautiful child fancied Angel had come back to her again.

"Get up, little boy! You are lying in bed too long; breakfast soon will be ready. The canary-bird has taken his bath, and is now singing a sweet song: Get up, get up, or I shall throw this pillow at you!"

That is what Sister Charlotte said to Oliver Reed, one frosty morning in November. He was a good little fellow; but he had one fault,—he was too fond of lying in bed in the morning.

"Don't throw the pillow at me!" cried Oliver; "I'll promise to get up in five minutes."

THE ORIGIN OF SCANDAL.

Said Mrs. A. To Mrs. J., In quite a confidential way, "It seems to me That Mrs. B. Takes too much—of something—in her tea."

And Mrs. J. To Mrs. K., That night was overheard to say— She grieved to touch Upon it much, But "Mrs. B. took—such and such!" Then Mrs. K. Went straight away

And told a friend, the self-same day, "Twas sad to think"— Here came a wink—"That Mrs. B. was fond of drink." The friend's disgust Was such she must Inform a lady, "whom she nussed,"

"That Mrs. B. At half-past three Was that far gone she couldn't see!" This lady we Have mentioned, she Gave needle-work to Mrs. B., And at such news Could scarcely choose

But further needle-work refuse: Then Mrs. B. As you'll agree, Quite properly—she said, said she, That she would track The scandal back To those who made her look so black.

Through Mrs. K. And Mrs. J. She got at last to Mrs. A., And asked her why, With cruel lie, She painted her so deep a dye? Said Mrs. A., In sore dismay, "I no such thing could ever say I said that you Had stouter grew On too much sugar—which you do!"

LEGAL ADVICE ON COMMON TOPICS.

A note dated on Sunday is void. A note obtained by fraud, or from one intoxicated, can not be collected. If a note be lost or stolen, it does not release the maker—he must pay it.

An indorser of a note is exempt from liability if not served with notice of its dishonor within twenty-four hours of its non-payment. A note by a minor is void.

Notes bear interest only when so stated. Principals are responsible for their agents. Each individual partnership is responsible for the whole amount of the firm.

Ignorance of the law excuses no one. It is a fraud to conceal a fraud. The law compels no one to do impossibilities. An agreement without consideration is void.

Signatures in lead pencil are good in law. A receipt for money is not legally conclusive. The acts of one partner bind all the others.

Contracts made on Sunday can not be enforced. A contract made with a minor is void. A contract made with a lunatic is void.

A FISH'S MEAL.

The piscine inmates of the Brighton Aquarium, it would seem, do not quite escape the perils of the deep. One might have thought that these fishes would in their "little tank agree," and help to make life under such circumstances as pleasant as possible.—But such is not the case.

The octopus, one might naturally have supposed, would be the last to fall a prey to his epicurian fellow-prisoners. He found an enemy in the person of the dog-fish, who may have owed him a grudge from the time when they were together in the sea. Whether such was the case or not will never be ascertained. The octopus, since his incarceration, had built himself "a house of living oysters," wherein he resided. He did not seem quite contented with his abode of delicacies, and must needs take his walks abroad. He was not in the habit of leaving home, probably knowing that he was not on the best of terms with his neighbors. On Tuesday week he ventured to take a little exercise, or may be to see the effects of his grotto from the outside. He was not permitted to walk far and enjoy the scenery; for the "dog fish" pounced upon him and devoured him whole. This impudent puppy was immediately executed—not so much to expiate his crime as to allow of a post mortem examination being made, in the hope of setting the prisoner free. It was too late—octopus was dead, and so was the dog-fish.

It is only those who are despicable who fear being despised.