

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., MARCH 5, 1873.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873

SUNDAY, March 9th, 1873.

Trial of Abraham's Faith.—Gen. xxii. 7-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. Gen. xxii. 8.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—Verses 10-14.

SUMMARY.—We save that which for Christ's sake we lose.

ANALYSIS.—I. The conversation. vs. 7, 8. II. The preparation. vs. 9, 10. III. The prohibition. vs. 11, 12. IV. The substitute. vs. 13. V. The memorial. vs. 14.

EXPOSITION.—Preliminary.—Abraham's faith was "counted to him for righteousness." Because of his faith he was accepted, and became the father "of them that believe." This faith had been often shown in his previous history, though on two occasions it seems to have failed miserably. Ch. xii. 2; xii. 13. But it had also been often rewarded. Its crowning reward was in the birth of Isaac, the child of his old age, and of promise, born when hope had faded, and the father and mother had accepted the son of the bond-woman as the real heir. Ishmael and his mother were sent away, and Isaac, now a lad of several years, was the light of the house. Then "God did tempt Abraham," verse 1, or rather, try, test, prove him, and his faith. We must, with Scripture, make a wide distinction between such testing and the enticements to sin which constitute temptations from the wicked. There are reasons why a man ought to be tested. It is often for his own growth in grace, and often for the good of others. Our lesson opens in the midst of the most terrible trial that could possibly befall Abraham. He was commanded to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on one of the hills in the land of Moriah, the name at that time of the district within which Jerusalem was afterward built. Moriah became the name of one of the elevations within the city, the hill or mount on which the temple was built, and doubtless the very one to which Abraham made his way. Abraham received the message in Beersheba, and from Beersheba to this place the distance was about forty-five miles. "If they proceeded fifteen miles on the first broken day, twenty on the second, and ten on the third, they would come in sight of the place early on the third day."—Murphy, vs. 4. On that morning Abraham left his two servants with the ass at a distance from the designated hill, bidding them await his return, verse 5, laid on Isaac the word of the offering, took the fire and a knife in his own hand, and started. At this point our lesson opens.

Verse 7.—We have here the name Abraham, i. e., father of multitude. In our lesson two weeks ago, we had Abraham, i. e., father of altitude. On the change see chapter xvii. 5. The name Isaac means laughing, and the reason why it was given to the child will be found in chapters xvii. 17-19; xviii. 12; xxi. 6. Names were in those times more significant than now. Now we take up the narrative. The two were making their way alone, toward the remote mountain. The lad is all unconscious of the father's purpose, all ignorant of the death to which he has been devoted. The father has nothing but love in his heart, though resolved on the terrible deed of blood. What a contrast between the two. Unsuspicious innocence, heroic consecration. The boy speaks first, naturally, too deep feeling, too solemn thought, in the father to admit of speech. Men do not much incline to talk when they feel on them the weight of God's mighty hand. Isaac spake to Abraham his father. The writer is plainly touched with the tender and solemn event which he narrates. It was son and father, and that father was Abraham. "Abraham his father." And said, my father. Only a father who has been called, or has thought himself called to give up his son in death, can even faintly conceive the effect of those words on Abraham's loving heart. Common, very common words, so often heard, and yet such strange, mysterious power given them sometimes, by the time and circumstances of their utterance. So here, and [the father] said: here am I, my son. Brief answer, but those words, "My son!"

they mean now so much as they fall from his lips. Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? Not a word had been said to the boy, but now his curiosity is awakened. He had seen his father offer sacrifice, but there was always at hand the victim. Now he sees none. What does this mean? Everything furnished but "the lamb." Thus he comes at once to the point, and asks the one question which of all questions was most fitted to try faith and break down resolution. We can bare so much more: when nothing is said of our sorrow. A word as to one's trouble often quite unnerves him. Verse 8.—"My son." Tenderness in the words. Love rules. No stern insensibility. Here lay the trial, in this very depth of tenderness, this yearning, clinging, absorbing affection. "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Abraham recognized Isaac as God's, and this call of God for Isaac's surrender he regarded as involving the choice of his son in place of the wanted lamb. John xi. 50. How naturally did Abraham shape his answer to the searching question of his darling. God's will that demanded the sacrifice, that was his justification, his satisfaction, his comfort in making the sacrifice. So they went both of them together. No other word of that lone, solemn journey is recorded. Perhaps not another word was spoken.

Verse 10.—How vivid the picture! How it chills the blood to look on it! What a horror! Shall we, as so many do, condemn? But if we do not condemn, shall we approve of the offering of human victims? Let us rather approve of obedience to God, whatever he wills. Verse 11.—The angel of the Lord called out of heaven. A sound was heard by Abraham, a voice uttering the words. What comfort is here. In Abraham's terrible extremity, when he seemed to be abandoned and bereft of the light of his life, even then, and especially then, the Angel of the covenant was regarding him with a divine love and care. Often God is nearest us when he seems to be most remote.

Verse 12.—"And he said," with divine authority, Lay not thy hand, etc. In form revoking the command given in verse 2. But we must remember that Abraham had in spirit already executed that command, and hence had no need to do more. Heb. xi. 17-19. God cares for the heart, the spirit, motives, principle of our actions. It was not the death of Isaac, but his surrender by his father, that was wanted. He had; 1, the sweet inward consciousness of having been true to his Maker; 2, the direct, express witness: Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me; 3, The second gift of his darling, his virtual resurrection, and so a new and most manifest pledge and token of God's acceptance of that son as his chosen one, and the object of his love. How much strength was in these ways added to the patriarch's trust. The gladder moments of life are just such moments as this, at which we now see the "father of the faithful," just when

The clouds we so much dread Do break in blessings on our head. Just as from Behind a frowning providence there bursts full on the view the "smiling face"

Verse 13.—The literal fulfilment of the unconscious prophecy in verse 8. How came this lamb to be there? Was there a miracle? In what consisted the miracle? These are mere questions of natural curiosity, needing no answer. In the stead [i. e., place] of his son. It was not to be thus when the eternal Father made the offering of his son Jesus Christ. No dumb animal could die in his stead. God did not spare him, but freely gave him up. He endured the last pang, and died on the cross. "By his stripes we are healed." It was Christ "in the stead" of the sinner.

Verse 14.—Precious in the memory of the saints of old were the places where they had met the gracious Lord. They raised memorials of stone, or gave to the places names of perpetual remembrance.

QUESTIONS.—Give the story of Abraham from the time of the last lesson. What command was given him? vs. 2. Where was Moriah? How long was Abraham's journey? vs. 4. Vs. 7. What part of the journey did the father and son make by themselves? vs. 5. What question did Isaac ask? What led him to ask this? vs. 6. Vs. 8. The father's answer? Did he know how the trial was to end? Vs. 9. Do you suppose that Isaac consented to be thus offered? Vs. 10. Was it Abraham's purpose actu-

ally to slay his son? Was the purpose right? How, and why? Vs. 11. What voice was heard? Vs. 12. Was this a rebuke of Abraham? Was it a disapproval of the command in verse 2? Vs. 13. What is meant by "in the stead"? Vs. 14. In what respect was Isaac a type of Christ? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 104.

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

Youths' Department.

HOW BESSIE LONGLEY GOT A COW.

James Longley was a mechanic. Owing to his skill as a workman, he received higher wages than some who worked for the same employer.

He had a wife and four children, the oldest of whom was Bessie, a lass of twelve years. The cottage in which he resided was owned by his employer, who had built after the same model enough to accommodate all of his workmen who had families.

Thomas Kingsley lived next door to Mr. Longley. He had a cow, and furnished milk to Mr. Longley's family, and some others.

One evening, as Bessie Longley sat by the window and looked over into Mr. Kingsley's yard, she spoke to her father, who was smoking his pipe, and said, "Pa, why can't we have a cow, as well as Mr. Kingsley's folks?"

"What do you want a cow for?" "Because then we could have all the milk we want."

"Don't you have milk enough now?" "Sometimes, but not always."

"Why not, Pa?" "Because Mrs. Kingsley can't always spare as much as we would like. Why don't you get a cow, Pa?"

"I can't afford it. I could not get money enough together to buy one. A cow costs quite a sum. Then I should have to hire her pasture, and buy hay to feed her on in the winter. I should also have to hire some boy to drive her to the pasture and back. So I don't think I could afford it."

"I could drive the cow, Pa." "Well, Pa, I cannot afford it, and that is the end of it."

Now that Bessie had got her heart set on having a cow, she did not mean that this should be "the end of it."

James Longley felt that he could not afford it. His expenditures were so large that it was ill he could do to bring up at the end of the year without being in debt.

The next morning, after her father had gone to his work, Bessie was washing the breakfast dishes, while her mother was nursing the baby. She turned to her mother and said, "Are we poor?" "No, my child. We are not rich, nor are we poor. Why?"

"I have been thinking how nice it would be to have a cow, but Pa says he can't afford it. Mr. Kingsley has a cow, and I don't believe he is any richer than we are. He don't go down to the tavern evenings, as Pa does. Don't Pa spend money there?"

"Yes, I suppose he does, some. He gets very tired at his work, and goes down to have a good chat. He drinks sometimes, but he don't get drunk."

"Don't you suppose he could save enough to buy a cow, if he would only try?" "Perhaps so. I don't know."

A few days after this, a gentleman visited the district school of which Bessie was a member, and addressed the children on the subject of temperance.

After a few remarks, he said he would like to have one of the scholars go to the blackboard. The teacher requested Bessie to go. The gentleman then said, "If a man drinks three glasses of liquor per day at ten cents each, how much does he spend a day?"

Bessie answered promptly, "Thirty cents."

"How much is this per week?" "Two dollars and ten cents." "How many weeks in a year?" "Fifty-two." "Fifty-two times two dollars and ten cents, are how many dollars?" "One hundred and nine dollars and twenty cents."

"Right. What does a good cow cost?" Bessie hesitated. The gentleman said, "Any one may answer." Jimmy Kingsley sung out, "Our cow cost fifty dollars."

Very well. Deduct the fifty dollars from the one hundred and nine dollars and twenty cents, and how much have you left?"

"Fifty-nine dollars and twenty cents." "Right. How much does it cost to get a cow pastured through the summer?"

"Some said ten dollars, some said twelve, and one boy said his father paid fifteen."

"Well call it fifteen; and this taken from fifty-nine dollars twenty cents leaves how much?"

"Forty-four dollars and twenty cents." "Right. We will suppose hay costs twenty dollars a ton, which is more than the average price, and the forty-four dollars will buy more than two tons of hay. These two tons, with the slops from the house, and a little meal, will keep the cow through the winter."

After telling Bessie to be seated, he continued:—

"You can readily perceive, my young friends, that if a man only drinks three glasses per day at ten cents a glass, he drinks up every year a cow and all the grass and all the hay necessary to keep her. Is he any better for it? As many as think he is benefited by drinking up the cow may raise their hands."

It is not necessary to rehearse all that was said. It produced an impression on the school, and especially on the mind of Bessie Longley.

After tea Mr. Longley was smoking his pipe, while Bessie was busy with her tattling. He saw that she looked unusually grave, and said, "My child, what makes you so sober?"

"I'm thinking." "About what?" "About what a gentleman said, in the school to-day."

"What was it?" She went and got her slate, and showed him the figures just as she had copied them from the blackboard, and then told him all the gentleman had said, so far as she could remember it.

He listened attentively. The subject was placed before him in a new light,—he saw that he was spending for drink which did him no good, enough to buy him a good cow, and enough in addition to pay for her keeping. He said nothing to Bessie, but turned to his wife, and said, "Can you get the baby to sleep and leave him with Bessie, and go with me and call on our neighbor Kingsley?"

She said "Yes," and they were soon in the house of their neighbor. Mrs. Longley was glad of the chance to call, and especially so that her husband was ready to accompany her, instead of going to the public house.

After a few remarks about the weather, Mr. Kingsley said, "My Jimmie came home to night and told what a gentleman said in the school to-day. It pleased him very much to think of drinking a cow, and said, 'No man could swallow a cow.' So I explained it to him. Did Bessie say anything about it?"

"Yes she had the figures all down on her slate, and I was surprised. I see how I am myself drinking up a cow. I have pretty much concluded to quit tavern-hunting, and buy me a cow, and drink the milk, instead of drinking more liquor than the cow and her keeping would cost."

"I am glad to hear you say so." "Where can I get a cow?" "Farmer Robinson told me the other day that he had a new milk cow. The hay crop is so light he will sell cheap."

"Can you go up with me to-morrow evening and look at her?" "Yes."

"Please not to mention it; I mean to take my Bessie by surprise."

"They went at the time appointed. The cow was bought. Mr. Kingsley said he would be surety for Mr. Longley."

On the way home Mr. Longley stopped at the store and got a large card and a piece of blue ribbon. He wrote something on the card, and fastened it on the horn by the ribbon. Bessie's mother had sent her on an errand, so that she was not at home when the cow came. On her return she looked out in the yard, and saw the cow standing out in the yard chewing her cud. Her first thought was that some stray cow had got into the yard, but she saw a card on her horn, and went and looked at it. She found on the card,

BESSIE'S LONGLEY'S COW

A NEW YEAR'S PRESENT FROM HER FATHER.

"Will yer honor take a cab?" said a London cabbie to a gentleman. "No, thank you, I am able to walk," said the gentleman. "My yer long be able, but seldom will!" was the witty reply.

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A DOG STORY.

BY FALCONBRIDGE.

Rover had become attached in some unaccountable way to the fire-company of an eastern city, and good service he did too. Always on hand, his deep bay leading the men, he had many narrow escapes, but still remained unharmed, with the exception of a deep scar across the breast made by a falling beam. He was a Newfoundland bull-dog, compitly made. His weight was perhaps a hundred pounds. He had close, black, shiny hair, massive chest, and luminous black eyes.

It was the night of the great fire on C. street, when the stately houses, palaces you might call them, were swept off in a moment. The owner of one of them as it afterward appeared had once befriended Rover in his puppyhood, and the kindness had never been forgotten. The first block was past hope, when Rover and company reached it, and an adjoining one owned by his early friend was about to follow. The almost superhuman efforts of the firemen were useless, the inmates had just time to reach the sidewalk with their most valuable chattels, when the cry went through the crowd "a child in the building!" A dozen firemen sprang to the rescue like the brave men they were but a braver one had preceded them at the instant of the cry. Unperceived in the excitement, Rover had sprung into the burning building. The fire had progressed with such alarming rapidity, that the firemen were driven back from the threshold: but what of the dog? His absence had but just been noticed, when a shout went up as he appeared with the child in his mouth just as it lay wrapped in its cradle. Sleepy and surprised, but unharmed, it was placed at his father's feet.

But Rover had done his last work, his back was fearfully scorched, one leg being limp and useless, his mouth forming as his red tongue lolled out from it. He could not move; a touch was agony for him. A spasm went over his heavy frame. He lifted up his head and gave a groan almost human. The eyes, eloquent in their dying light, grew fixed and staring, another shiver, and Rover was dead.

It was only a dog, and yet with uncovered head, and eyes blinded with fast-moving tears, the men had watched him die. In the city cemetery is a marble slab, often visited by a young girl, which bears this inscription,

In memory of Rover, He died for me.

—Interior.

HUMILITY.

The violet bows its lowly head. And bends its plant form, While overhead high-towering oaks, Defy the subatitid storm.

The tempest o'er, while shattered oaks Their desolations mourn, The violet lifts its smiling face, Without a petal torn!

CONFESSING CHRIST BEFORE MEN.

In openly uniting with the Lord's people, one avows nothing as to his own character, except a purpose. What he chiefly declares is the recognition of a god above and beyond himself. He recognizes God's law as binding on him. He recognizes the Heavenly Father, as a tender and loving parent,—always his father, now owned by him before men as his father. He recognizes Christ as the Master and Saviour of men, worthy to be wholly trusted and followed. "He does not 'profess religion,' as a mere superiority which he has got in himself. He makes no more profession as to himself than a child makes in asking to join an infant class. What he chiefly does, is to acknowledge God as his Master, and Father, and Saviour. So far from setting forth his own merit as commendable, he declares that for whatever merit he has, God, and not himself, is to be praised.

"The prayers of a little girl at a camp meeting were the occasion of my being awakened and led to Christ. With other thoughtless young men I was walking up and down the grounds during the progress of a prayer meeting. Among those kneeling was a mother, and by her side her little daughter, who stood with eyes up lifted and hands clasped, and with an expression of almost angelic sweetness said, 'O Lord, bless my dear mother.' These six short words entered my heart and tears sprang to my eyes. I could not rest till I had myself prayed. 'O Lord, bless me!' —Bishop Ames.