

Christian Messenger.

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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, August 31st.

Power to forgive sins.—Matt. ix. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts xiii. 38.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 2-6.

SUMMARY.—The God of nature is the God of grace, and Christ's power to forgive sins was shown in his power to heal the sick.

ANALYSIS.—I. Sin forgiven. vs. 1, 2. II. Sickness healed. vs. 3, 7. III. Spectators astonished. vs. 8.

EXPOSITION.—Connection.—The Sermon on the Mount was Christ's manifestation of himself by words. Chap. v. vii. Then follows the record of a series of miracles, which was his manifestation by works. Chaps. viii. ix. Among these, and in some respects, the most significant of all, is the miracle of which the present lesson treats.

Verses 1.—And he entered into a ship. After the miracle of casting out demons, viii. 28-34. This was wrought on the east side of the sea of Galilee. His entrance into the ship, or boat, was to re-cross to the west side. This was at the earnest request of the "Gergesenes," vs. 34. They did not want Jesus among them. Passed over the lake or sea, from east to west; the same sea, that on his passage to the east he had stilled by his word. vs. 26. Into his own city. Capernaum, Matt. iv. 13, his place of residence; born at Bethlehem; brought up at Nazareth; and now resting in Capernaum.

Verses 2.—Mark has a more full and vivid account of this miracle than Matthew, Mark ii. 1-12. So also has Luke. Luke v. 18-26. It seems that Christ's return to Capernaum was hailed with joy. He had, by his former words and works, awakened interest, roused enthusiasm. Crowds gathered to hear his words. Mark ii. 1, 2. It was a congregation eager to hear the Word of Life. Behold. Expresses wonder; points to something specially worthy of notice. What it was we learn more fully in Mark ii. 3, 4. He was taken upon the flat roof of the house, common in the East, and used as a place of resort; the tiling was removed to enlarge the opening into the room where Jesus was speaking, and so he was let down on his little couch or bed, immediately in the presence of our Lord. They, the man's friends. Palsy. A shorter form of the word paralysis. The man had lost the use of his limbs. Lying on a bed. A mere piece of matting, or that, and a "slight and portable frame," merely strong enough to sustain the sick man. Seeing their faith. Viz., that of both the sick man and his bearers, for they seem all to have been of one mind. The faith was seen in the works, and doubtless in the expression of the faces. Said unto the sick of the palsy. Said to him, because he saw "their faith." Such is the thought, and a most weighty and precious doctrine is here, viz., that God blesses men in answer to the prayers of others; for the faith of this man's friends was pleading, interceding faith. Son. A term of endearment, assuring the sick man at once of his acceptance. Be of good cheer. He was weighed down. Could it be that he, even he, was to be blessed? Thy sins be forgiven thee. To all others than the palsied, this must have seemed a strange and impertinent statement. What has forgiveness of sins to do with this case of sickness? The Saviour saw, that in his heart of hearts, this man was far less eager to be rid of his palsy than of his guilt; that he had been drawn to visit Christ, less from physical, than from spiritual causes. Jesus knew perfectly what was in the man. Most likely, the paralytic did not expect such a word. He received more and better than he expected.

Verses 3.—Certain of the scribes. Said within themselves. That is, thought, decided, felt clearly and distinctly, but were restrained by the circumstances from stating in words. Their faces and bearing may have indicated their thoughts. This man blasphemeth. More literally, "this one." The original has not the word man, as implying that he was only man. The blasphemy supposed, was in claiming for himself what belonged only to God, and thus claiming to be either God, or his equal.

Verses 4.—Jesus knowing their thoughts. As he knew the faith of the sick man and

his bearers, not merely by inference from the signs, but from a clear insight into the soul. What a new experience for those men, to be in company with a man from whose eye nothing could conceal their thoughts! Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? "Ye" is, in the Greek, emphatic; contrasting these persons with the right-minded sick man and his friends. "Evil," or strictly, "evil things," meaning not simply that in thought they found evil in him, even blasphemy; but farther, that it was an evil principle in them that made them thus feel and think. The words, "in your hearts," taken with the words, "said within themselves," show how they tried to keep out of sight their sentiments. But no cover could hide them from Christ's all-searching gaze. We may be very religious outwardly, and full of respect to Christ, his people, and his cause; but this, which may satisfy men, does not satisfy our Judge.

Verses 5.—For whether is easier, etc. Says Dean Trench: "In our Lord's argument, it must be carefully noted, that he does not ask, 'which is easiest, to forgive sins, or to raise a sick man?' for it could not be affirmed that forgiving was easier than healing; but which is easier, to claim this power, or to claim that?" The claim to have the power to heal was a more difficult one to make, because it could be more easily tested.

Verses 6.—But that ye may know. He had given the principle, now he would give the proof. The Son of man. Christ's favorite designation of himself, by which he recognized his oneness with mankind. Power, or "authority" dwelling in him, because he is the Son of man. A divine authority, implying that he was a divine being. On earth. That is, in contrast with his glorified state following his death. The Saviour could not appear in his kingly glory just then, but he was king none the less. Then saith he to the sick of the palsy. Hitherto he had been speaking to the scribe-party. Arise, etc. The apostles were wont to work miracles in the name of Christ. That is, they recognized Christ as the real worker of them, as the author.

Verses 7.—He arose and departed. Grateful for the healing, but more grateful for the forgiveness. It had proved safe for him, as it does for all, to commit both his spiritual and temporal interests into the hands of Christ.

Verses 8.—The multitudes. There gathered to hear Christ. Marvelled. Were filled with wonder; or, as a more approved reading has it, feared. Glorified God. The dread of the best at least, was mixed with gladness, for God's power had, in both the forgiving and the healing, been power only for good. To men. As represented in Christ, who had exerted this power.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1. What miracle had Christ just performed? Chap. vii. 28-34. In what country? Chap. viii. 28. On which side of the sea of Galilee was this? Chap. viii. 5-18. What was "his own city"? Chaps. iv. 13; viii. 5.

Vs. 2. Who was brought to Christ? Where was Christ? Mark ii. 1, 2. How did they get the man to Christ? Mark ii. 3, 4. How did they show "their faith"? What did he say to the sick man? Through whose faith was the man forgiven?

Vs. 3. Who were "the scribes"? Explain the words, said within themselves? What did they say? Their meaning?

Vs. 4. How did Christ know their thoughts? What did he ask? meaning of the words, "think ye evil"? What made any man think evil of Christ? John x. 26. Is it still the same?

Vs. 5. His next question? Which is the easier of the things named? Why?

Vs. 6. How did Christ prove his power to forgive sin?

Vs. 8. What was the effect of the miracle?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 138.

SUNDAY, September 7th.—The Twelve called.—Matt. x. 1-15.

Youths' Department.

THE CLOVER-BLOSSOM.

A STORY FOR THE LITTLE FOLKS, BY T. TAYLOR.

"Yes, flowers have tones; God gave to each A language of its own, And bade the simple blossom teach, Where'er its seeds are sown."

A pink clover-blossom popped its head out of its green leaves one fine summer morning. She found herself planted in a border of grass that surrounded a circle of flower-beds in a beautiful garden, and scarcely dared to raise her eyes to take a peep at the grand place in which she was growing.

The great sun, with his hot, fierce eye,

looked directly down from the broad, blue sky overhead; birds twittered and flew to and fro from their nests in a big apple-tree which stood near the flower-bed, and golden butterflies floated in the light breeze, just touching one blossom and then skipping gaily to another.

"You are very pretty," whispered a blade of ribbon-grass, bending down to the clover-blossom. Now that I come nearer, I can see that you have a hundred beauties I didn't notice before, each one blushing sweetly."

"It must be so," thought the clover, as the wind swung the tall blade up straight; "for he is so high he can spy out everything all around me."

She spread her pink and white-winged spikes wider, and looked out at her neighbors, but soon discovered that of all the garden-flowers she was the plainest and lowliest when compared with the rest; though her leaves were soft and beautifully marked, they were unnoticed in the dark green grass, and her pink and white-winged spikes, though there were so many of them, were very insignificant.

The blade of ribbon-grass bent gracefully toward a scarlet fuchsia, nodded to a small spire of blue larkspur, and waved good-day to the morning-glories, whose striped skirts were spangled with glittering dew. The garden was filled with stately beauties—lady-slippers in puffs and flounces of every hue, yellow marigolds, blue harebells, pansies in purple velvet and gold, and majestic gladioli in scarlet and white caps. The clover-blossom hung her red head; she felt like an uninvited guest; she had come there quite by accident; it was not intended that her lowly form and humble dress should appear among these fine flowers of quality.

"This is no place for me," she sighed, wishing that she might creep again under the cover of the green leaves and hide her homely charms. But none of the gay beauties were thinking of her. The ribbon-grass took no more notice of her; he was paying his compliments to the garden belles, and had quite forgotten the clover-blossom.

The eyes of the butterfly were very large; he roved from one flower to the other without spying out the red clover-head. When the sun rose higher the four-o'clocks and morning-glories closed their eyes and went fast asleep.

"Dear me! they look very old and withered, to be sure," thought the clover-blossom; "and I am not at all sleepy, my eyes are opening wider every minute. These fine folks do not suit me. Perhaps the gardener will chop off my head with his hoe when he finds me here. I should not be very sorry, for I am of no use—no one needs or cares for me here."

A busy bee came humming and buzzing through the garden; he hovered around the apple-tree; the blossoms had long ago withered; he could not find what he came for there, so he buzzed on and stopped at the group of four-o'clocks.

"Lazy things!" said the bee. "Sleepy heads! they can't keep awake half of the day. They are the drones of the garden. I won't call here again. Bah! I need not expect anything from you," continued the bee, in contempt, pausing for a moment at the withered, unsightly morning-glories. He was looking for something better than grace and beauty and mere ornament. The wise bee knew it could not be found on the dew-spangled skirts of morning-glories and four-o'clocks, so he passed by the languishing fuchsia, the blue harebell, gorgeous pansies, and red-capped gladioli. He knew what he wanted, and where it was to be found, and none of these gay flowers possessed the treasure.

They all looked after the bee as he flew past, wondering why they were neglected, and saw him linger near the clover-blossom, almost hidden down under the meek grass.

"Will you give me some honey?" said the bee. "I have come miles for it; I have passed all the fine garden-flowers, hunting for my little favourite; I always find honey stored away in your red and white spikes. I will carry it back to the hive, and we all know that the best honey we have is that we beg from our friends—the clover-blossoms."

"Take what I have to give you, busy bee; you may have my honey," said the clover-blossom gratefully.

"Ah! I am of some use then," she thought, as the bee flew away from the garden, laden with honey taken from the clover-blossom. It was a precious treasure for him. He had come a long way in search of it, and he must travel over wide fields, down long lanes, and through deep, thick woods before he reached his home. But the honey he carried to the cell was worth the trouble, and the busy bee went on his way satisfied.

"It is better to live and die in the shade down here with the gentle green grass than to be a brilliant garden beauty. I would rather be useful than ornamental."

The evening breeze wafted the tall blade of ribbon-grass down toward the clover-blossom, as she murmured these thoughts to herself.

"The beautiful flowers all wondered why the bee passed them by and came to you," said the ribbon-grass.

The clover made no reply. She had learned the sweet spirit of contentment; she was happy, because she knew that she was of some use in the beautiful world in which the Creator of all things had placed the little homely blossom.

If any of my little readers should taste the sweetest honey from the hive, perhaps they may remember that from the clover-blossom the bee draws the finest honey, and stores it away in the hive for our use. And as we see the common flower which springs up in every meadow and roadside, remember that usefulness is greater than beauty; and what we store in our minds of more value than the most attractive exterior.

A SCHOOL-BOY'S STORY.

John Tubbs was one day doing his sums, when little Sam Jones pushed against him; and down went the slate with a horrid clatter. "Take care of the pieces!" said the boys, laughing. But Mr. Brill, the master, thought it no laughing matter, and believing it to be John Tubbs's fault, told him that he should pay for the slate, and have his play stopped for a week.

John said nothing. He did not wish to get little Sam into trouble; so he bore the blame quietly. John's mother was by no means pleased at having to pay for the slate, as she was a poor woman, and had to provide for several other little Tubbses besides John.

"I tell you what it is, John," said she, "you must learn to be more careful. I will not give you any milk for your breakfast all the week; and by this I shall save money for the slate, which it is right you should pay for."

Poor John ate his bread with water instead of milk; but somehow he was not unhappy, for he felt that he had done a kindness to little Sam Jones; and the satisfaction of having rendered a service to another always brings happiness.

A few days after, Mr. Jones came to the school, and spoke to Mr. Brill about the matter; for little Sam had told his father and mother all about it. Sam was a timid boy; but he could not bear to see John Tubbs kept in for no fault, while the other boys were at play.

"What!" said the master, "and has John Tubbs borne all the blame without saying a word! Come here, John."

"What's the matter now?" said John to himself. "Something else, I suppose. Well, never mind, so that poor little Sam Jones has got out of his scrape."

"Now, boys," said Mr. Brill, "here's John Tubbs. Look at him!" And the boys did look at him as a criminal; and John looked very much like a criminal, and began to think that he must be a bad sort of fellow to be called up in this way by his master.

Then Mr. Brill, the master, told the boys all about the broken slate, that John did not break it, but bore all the blame to save Sam Jones from trouble, and had gone without his milk and play without a murmur. The good schoolmaster said that such conduct was above all praise; and when he was done speaking, the boys burst out into a cheer. Such a loud hurrah! it made the school-walls ring again. Then they took John on their shoulders, and carried him in triumph around the playground.

And what did John say to all this? He only said, "There, that'll do. If you don't mind, you'll throw a fellow down."

ANECDOTE OF A DOG.

We know a dear little boy, six years old, who often says to us, "Tell me a story about a dog, or a bear;" and as he was delighted with the following anecdote, we thought perhaps some of our young readers might like to hear it also.

"A poor dog, having been severely hurt, was taken to a surgeon, who dressed his wounds; and after his master had carried him there once or twice, he actually went of his own accord, until perfectly cured. After this, whenever he met the surgeon in the street, he ran to him, wagged his tail, licked the gentleman's hand, and showed his love and gratitude in every possible way. But the sagacious

animal did more than this, for on finding another dog injured in a similar manner, he led him to the house of the kind surgeon, and, in all but words, made him understand that he wished to place his suffering companion under his care, that he might benefit as he himself had done."

Dear children, what an example this poor dog sets us! Do we not owe a far greater debt of gratitude than he did to our Father in heaven, who sent his dear Son, that we might be saved from sin? and if we know anything of the love of Jesus, should we not bring others to him, that they may be made as happy as we ourselves are? Do not forget this short story; and if any dear child does know this Great Physician, may he show his gratitude by speaking his praise, and leading his young companions to know him too.—Church and State.

"GETTING READY TO BE MARRIED."

We do not at this time presume to meddle with the fashions, but desire to speak a word to those unfortunate damsels who are laboriously "getting ready to be married."

We lately tried to put ourself in the place of an acquaintance who was passing through this ordeal, and we came to the conclusion that if men were obliged to submit to so much shopping, and matching, and advising, and "trying on," they would break their promise oftener than they do—the rascals.

Now, girls, this is confidential—is it not taking too much thought for the morrow, to work and worry yourselves into leanness of body and soul in order to astound your acquaintances by the variety of your bridal apparel? We confess—no, it is not a sin, we boast—that we have an eye—two eyes—for that most charming vision, beautiful woman richly and becomingly dressed; to feminine loveliness we grudge nothing within the bounds of taste and of a purse which is open at one end for charity; and we think a little modest extravagance, even if it has to be planned for, may be pardoned on the day which should be the fairest in a maiden's calendar. But to make up garments for years and years, to prepare a *trousseau* ten times as elaborate as ever was needed in flirtation days—girls, what are you thinking of? Don't you know that an unruffled face will please the bridegroom more than forty ruffled skirts? Wouldn't you respect yourselves more were you to "get ready" by learning new ways to be really useful, than if you make yourselves incompetent for anything but to exhibit new dresses?—Christian Union.

SHAN'T AND WON'T.

Shan't and Won't were two little brothers, Angry and sullen and gruff; Try and Will were dear little sisters, One scarcely can love enough.

Shan't and Won't looked down on their noses, Their faces were dismal to see; Try and Will were brighter than roses In June, and as blithe as the bee.

Shan't and Won't were backward and stupid, Little indeed did they know; Try and Will learn something new daily, And seldom are heedless or slow.

Shan't and Won't loved nothing, no, nothing, So much as to have their way; Try and Will give up to their elders, And try to please others at play.

Shan't and Won't came to terrible trouble, Their story is too sad to tell; Try and Will are now at the infant school, Trying to read and spell.

TELLING A LIE WITH A FINGER.

"A little boy for a trick pointed with his finger to the wrong road when a man asked him which way the doctor went. As a result, the man missed the doctor, and his little boy died, because the doctor came too late to take a fish-bone from his throat. At the funeral, the minister said that the boy was killed by a lie, which another boy told with his finger."

"I suppose," says Uncle John, "that the boy did not know the mischief he did. Of course, nobody thinks he meant to kill a little boy when he pointed the wrong way. He only wanted to have a little fun, but it was fun that cost somebody a great deal; and if he ever heard of the results of it, he must have felt guilty of doing a mean and wicked thing. We ought never to trifle with the truth."—The Congregationalist.

As it respects general habits, a parent can scarcely teach a child a more valuable art than dispatch without bustle; nor can any one that values his time cultivate a more valuable one for himself.