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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

SUNDAY, April 27th, 1873.

The Lord with Joseph.—Gen. xxxix. 1-6, 20-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”—Romans viii. 28.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Verses 2-5.

SUMMARY.—God raised up his servant as often as men thrust him down.

ANALYSIS.—I. Sold to Potiphar. vs. 1. II. Prospered by the Lord. vs. 2, 3. III. Promoted by his master. vs. 4-6. IV. Cast into prison. vs. 20. V. Prospered and promoted. vs. 21-23.

EXPOSITION.—At home.—The last sentence in the Scripture of our last, and the first in that of to-day, are in substance the same. Joseph was brought down into Egypt. We remember the sad events of the last lesson—the wicked sale of the lad to traffickers in human flesh. But for completeness, we have need to stop a moment and note the events at home. Reuben, it seems, had left, and was not at the meal during which the traders came, and hence had no part in the sale. His distress on returning to the pit, was shown by rending his garment. We shall see, however, that he lacked the manliness and Christian integrity which should have led him to tell his father the plain truth, so far as known to him, and not join in the contemptible tricks and fraud by which both he and the rest conspired to deceive him. But how often do we find men honorable up to a certain point, and in certain respects, but beyond that not to be trusted! It is the glory of God's Word, that it insists upon all righteousness, and frowns upon the whole circle of iniquities; the glory of God's Spirit, that he begets in renewed hearts a thirst for the perfect holiness of God. The trick was cunning and successful—its only merits. The elegant robe, dipped in the blood of a kid, was to Jacob convincing proof of his favorite's death by some of the powerful beasts of prey that haunted the forests of those regions. He had no suspicion of his sons' guilt. How slow are parents to see in their children any thing but good, and even when compelled to know their faults. The hypocrisy of these sons, so infamous as to be acted out thus in the presence of a father's sorrow, has something of an almost sublime hardness about it. Well will it be for us and our scholars, if the ugliness of this vice drives us from its embrace. We leave the father at home, weeping his son slain, and follow the fortunes, or rather the Divine guidance, of that son, still living.

Verse 1.—This repeats, substantially, the last verse of chapter xxxvii, because chapter xxxviii comes in to interrupt the continuous flow of the narrative. The caravan which, coming from Gilead, had passed by Dothan, continued its journey southward to Shechem and Jerusalem. Here the route separates; one line proceeds almost exactly south to Hebron, through the desert of Paran, and, with a slight curve to the west, down to the head of the Gulf of Akabah, while the other road runs from Jerusalem, in a southerly direction, to Gaza, and thence to the valley of the Nile. On one of these routes Joseph seems to have been carried to the town On, then, perhaps, the residence of the Egyptian kings. “Thus he may have passed immediately by his father's home in Hebron—cast a glance of nameless grief towards the tents in which Jacob dwelt and was soon to mourn, not permitted to enter once more the cherished dwelling, or to embrace his loving father.”—*Kalisch*. The man who bought the youth was Potiphar—a name “of very frequent occurrence on the Egyptian monuments. *Guard*—literally “slaughterers;” then “cooks;” then “executioners.” And as the king's body-guard were executioners, it here has this meaning. This man—an Egyptian—was in high office, enjoying the king's favor, and thus in a position to serve as an instrument in fulfilling God's purpose concerning Joseph. But when he bought the lad, neither of the two knew what lay in their future.

Verse 2.—The Lord [i. e., Jehovah.] was with Joseph. God is everywhere, present, but he works in one place as he does not in another. Where he gives peculiar blessings, he is said to be graciously present; where he visits transgressors

with punishment, he is judicially or punitively present. “With Joseph,” as a helper, making him to be a prosperous man, as his father Jacob had been when an exile from his father's house, serving the cunning and hard master, Laban. We are still to recognize God as the author of our worldly prosperity, but not as though all worldly prosperity were proof of God's approval of the prosperous. The bulk of the world's wealth is in the hands of the ungodly, won by unrighteous means. God was probably with Joseph in another more spiritual sense, sustaining, comforting, guiding his spirit, giving him a calm holy trust and rest in God, as a very present help.

Verse 3.—Just what service Joseph at the first performed does not appear, save that he was in the house, and under the master's eye. It was something which gave room for success to appear as its result, for it is not mere fidelity and excellence in service that arrested the master's attention. Faithful service is sure to bring, as a rule, and in the long run, another reward than the consciousness of duty well done, great as is that. Employers are sure to “see” such conduct, and reward it.

Verse 4.—Found grace in his sight, i. e., became the object of favor, was looked upon as worthy of special honor. He entrusted him with the management of all his affairs, at least all private affairs. vs. 5. The completeness of this trust is shown in verse 6.

Verse 5.—Blessed the Egyptian's house; i. e., caused everything pertaining to his affairs to succeed. This was not without the use of care, prudence, energy, on Joseph's part. It was not by a sort of magic, by a luck, which took no account of the use of means. God's blessing does not in this world, either in temporal or spiritual affairs, put any slight on the divine ordinance of means to ends. There is a certain foolish idea of trust and of prayer which does put a slight upon this ordinance, and which is as contrary to Scripture as to common sense and experience.

Verse 6.—The only point here requiring further notice, is the mention of Joseph's comeliness of form and feature. This beauty of person was perhaps not without influence upon Jacob to awaken his fond partiality, and upon his brothers to make more intense their envious hate. It doubtless operated upon Potiphar to induce him to purchase the youth, and also to promote him. But the mention of this fact just here serves as a natural introduction to the story of Joseph's temptation, which follows. Doubtless it was not merely his admirable character which had charmed his master's wife, but far more his attractiveness of person. Thus he found his own charms a snare, as has many another. Would that all could break from their snares, as promptly as he did from his. He escaped with his character.

Verse 20.—Put him into the prison. On the lying accusation of his adulterous wife, and the testimony of the abandoned garment. vs. 15. *Keil* says that “this punishment was moderate. The attempt at adultery was to be punished with one thousand blows of a stick, and violation of the chastity of a free woman, still more severely.” Was it the master's great love of Joseph, or distrust of his wife's story, that made him so lenient?

Verse 21.—With Joseph, as formerly. See on verse 2.

Verse 22.—The keeper of the prison may have been very largely influenced by Joseph's previous character and conduct. If he distrusted the shameless woman's story, it would be no difficult thing to repose confidence in him now, and one who had stood so high as a faithful executive officer, and who had such large experience, would be just the man to place at the head of prison administration. Thus again comes out the value of integrity and fidelity, when joined with fair capacity. *Whatsoever they did there, he was the deer of it; i. e., he superintended the whole, and was responsible for it as though done by himself. He planned all business, and looked well to its accomplishment. He was by nature a person of no ordinary powers. Add the special blessing of God, and it is needless to feel surprise at the great and speedy elevation.*

Verse 23.—As completely as his superior had done, does the keeper trust Joseph. He had the same good reason, and the result as fully justified his confidence. *That which he did, the Lord made it to prosper. This is not to be so applied so to create dependency and self-reproach, if*

our way is not in worldly things prosperous. There is another kind of prosperity more valuable. Here, for the present, we leave our hero in prison, yet even there in favor with both God and men, and made to prosper.

QUESTIONS.—The subject of the last lesson? How did the brothers conceal from their father the crime? What effect had the loss of Joseph?

Vs. 1. Which way did this caravan go to reach Egypt? To whom was Joseph sold? What was his office? Could such a man contribute to Joseph's elevation?

Vs. 2. In what sense was the Lord with Joseph? How else is he with men?

Vs. 3-6. What did his master notice? What effect on him? Was Joseph's prosperity secured without his effort? What lesson in this for us? What came to the master, in consequence of Joseph's promotion? What is said of Joseph's form and features?

Vs. 20. Why was Joseph cast into prison?

Vs. 22-23. Did the Lord's favor continue? Was it any proof of loss of God's favor, that he lost his liberty? How did the keeper of the prison regard him? How treat him? What was the result?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Scripture Catechism, 113, 114.

SUNDAY, May 4th.—Joseph Exalted.—Gen. xli. 37-49

Youths' Department.

SPEAK THE TRUTH.

BY JOHN WESLEY WHITFIELD.

I saw a clear little tear
In the corner of an eye,
A crystal globe of grief—
The dew-drop of a sigh;
And it stole
Down the face,
With a roll
Full of grace
As it fell from the eye to die.

'Twas a queer little tear,
Was that clear little tear,
And I fear little tear,
Said I,
Some heart is very sad,
Indeed, it is too bad!
But really I'd be glad
To know the reason why.

It soon did appear
That the clear little tear
Ran away through fear
From the eye,
For there on a stool
Sat the master of the school—
In his hand he held a rule,
By the by!
And a little hand in school
Felt anything but cool,
Being smitten by that rule
For a lie!

Now, if you tell a lie
There is no reason why
You shouldn't have to cry,
Little dear!
And then the God above
A liar cannot love
But to him He must prove
Most severe

Pray learn a better way
My tender-hearted youth
In everything you say
Speak nothing but the truth,
Then you'll fly when you die
To a better world on high,
Where the truth-lovers go;
But never those that lie.

THE SECRET OF GOOD WORK

Some years ago I was brought in contact with a colored man. He was nothing but a cobbler. He said himself he was not a decent shoemaker; and I can testify to that from some experience of his work. But if not elegantly done, it was thoroughly done, and that was the point. He told me that when he became too old and crippled to work in the field and house, he took to cobbling. I said to him: “My friend, after this cobbling on earth has done, how about that other world? Have you any hope for a better world?” “Ah! master,” said he, “I am nothing but a poor cobbler; but I feel, when I sit here and work at my stool, that the good Master is looking at me, and when I take a stitch, it is a stitch; and when I put on a heel-tap, it is not paper but good leather.” It is not the work we do upon earth that makes the whole of life, but it is the way in which we do that work,—it is the motive. “Thou, God, seest me.”—*Christian at Work*.

PAT'S EXPLANATION.—“I say, Pat, is it true that you have taken the pledge?” said Mike to his friend. “Indeed it is true, and I'm not ashamed of it either,” replied Pat. But Mike, thinking himself well qualified, sought to convert Pat. He said, “And did not Paul tell Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake?” “So he did,” replied Pat, “but my names not Timothy, and there's nothing the matter with my stomach.”

FROM NORTH BROOKFIELD TO NICTAUX.

The following is a short account of a journey from North Brookfield to Nictaux, or of that part of it at least, which goes through a forest, where for twenty-four miles there is not a solitary house. It is a true account. Robert Ballentine of Wilmet, and Burton Lockhart were the actors in this scene, which well nigh proved a tragedy:

The Sun arose from out the cloudy East,
And night fled slowly back,
Leaving its shadowy track,
Whereon the cold orb threw his glimmering rays.
A thick, and misty haze
Spread o'er the heavens like a darkened pall:
And far before the gaze,
The dim clouds floated, sombrous—through the air.

On this third morning of th' eventful week,

We started for our home,
Through swamp and forests lone,
O'er plains and white hills bleak,
Through deep untrodden snow.
Here, where the wild winds sweep
O'er hills—through deep defiles,
The winding road pursued its dreary way,
For twenty-four long miles.
Houseless and trackless all,
On either side a wall
Of Pines, and Hemlocks tall,
Whose ghostly shadows on the white snow lay.

Through three deep feet of snow
Our weary way we go,
Until the first twelve miles are traversed now,

The dial points to one;
Our toil is but begun,
While fast, the pale, red Sun
Is sinking in the dim vaults of the West.
Meanwhile the wood grows thin,
The trees are scattering,
A few tall Pines moan loud before the blast,
Which shrieks and whistles past,
Itself pursuing fast,
This fierce storm-demon of the Northern sky.

And now before it fly
Whirlwinds of frost and snow,
Borne on tempestuous wings,
Which pile more snow upon the dreary waste.
And still we struggle on,
Our lives must yet be won
From out the grasp of the grim spectre Death.

With hard untiring toil,
With weary, labouring breath,
With sad despairing hearts,
We onward reel along our “snow blind way.”

In dark despair we pause;
Nature has barr'd the path;
Impassable the mound of glittering white.
A wful the scene and grand.
Sahara's burning sand
In barrenness bedight,
Had not more terrors to our distorted sight.
Ah! 'twas a woful plight!
And such adventures dread
May God in mercy keep me ever from.
Now to the treacherous bog
Our fortune do we trust;

Whose undulating waves of hard and glittering crust,
Cut to the quivering flesh as through we break our way.

Though weary unto death
The worst our hearts forbode.
We bear a heavy load:
Despair is rushing o'er our darkening soul.
Once more the road we gain,
Our labour not in vain,
Although we scarce can tell it from the wilds.
And now, before the light
The dreaded, coming night
Is drawing fast her sable curtains down.

Fit symbol of the coming night of life!
A certainty as yet but half defined,
Like a keen pointed knife,
Pierces the inmost chambers of the heart.
This frosty snow has served for many shrouds.

Others have trod this path:
This cold and icy sleet
Has been their winding sheet;
Their requiem, the tempest's moaning loud.
Then thoughts of a kind mother,
Would throw its saddening influence o'er the soul.

Imagination saw the ruddy fire
Pervading pleasant rooms with cheerful glow,
To each wild burst of tempest blasing higher:
And thoughts of tributes that from hearts o'er flow.

Of kindly wishes for the wanderer.
Scant time for reverie,
Or dreaming's vain had we,
For work alone can save in dangers dire.
There, bound by icy band,
The frost, with painless hand,
Was covering fast our wearied bodies o'er.

There on the cold white snow,
Without of pain one throe,
Our spirits—immortal winged—to their long home
Would speedily have flown
From out that deep still sleep,
Which knows on earth no anguished waking more.

But such was not to be,
And once again we're free
From that still, subtle spell of deadly power.
The sleigh had over turned:
And from this we had learned
How near to us had been the last dread hour.

The wind swept forest Pine;
The hills in white outline
Had donned the sombre covering of night.

Blackness on all around,
Except the cold white ground.
Snow swept the landscape with its withering blight.
The Pine trees loudly moan
In sad and solemn tone,
For Eurus rides upon the rushing clouds.
Still are we going on
The endless road along,
Making between each rest, twice seven rods.
Peculiar look the stars
Which flash along the sky;
Then sightless die away in solemn gleam.
Stars! No! tis fire doth rise
Before our gladdened eyes!
Saved O God! we thank Thee—from untimely tomb!

Miles from our journey's end,
A logger's camp we find,
Who take us in with words of kindly cheer,
O hospitality!
Thy name must blessed be
Throughout the years of wide eternity.
B. W. LOCKHART.
North Brookfield, Queens Co.

A CHICKEN'S STORY.

The first recollection I have of myself, I was shut up in a little dark prison-house. I didn't like it, and I pecked very hard at the walls, and somehow, I hardly know just how, I by-and-by found myself free. I soon discovered that I was a very queer little fellow, with two nice legs, and two really elegant little wings. I had a very sharp little bill, too, and such cunning little feathers all over me. That was all I made out distinctly, though I nearly broke my neck and quite lost my balance trying to see what was on the top of my head. I didn't find out—never have seen it, in fact, but I know there's something there.

I had five little brothers and sisters, and such a nice, warm mother! I do wish you were acquainted with my mother; I am sure you would say you had never seen such a cozy little mother as she is. Two of my brothers were black, and one was white. I had a little yellow sister, and a speckled one, and I am sure I don't know what color I was; but my mother called me “Top-knot.” How we used to run around in the nice dirt, and under the leaves and bushes! And didn't our mother scratch for us! How she would find the worms and bugs and the little seeds for us! When she called, “Come quick, come quick,” how we would all scamper! Jet was a greedy little fellow, and got more than his share; but our mother was an industrious old hen, and none of us went hungry.

Every night she cuddled us under her dear, warm wings, and she wasn't at all afraid. But it was only a fence-corner where we slept, and one night a rat, or something dreadful, and I don't know what, came and most frightened us into spasms. He actually did carry off my little screaming brother Jet, though my poor mother lost every one of her tail-feathers in our defence. I just wish that old rat or something had all his tail-feathers pulled out! But Jet was a most awful greedy chicken! Mother said we must sleep in the hen-house after that. I am now a very fine chicken—can scratch for myself pretty well, and in many ways make myself useful to the family; but I shall never forget that dreadful night.—*Rural New Yorker*.

TWO OR THREE.

“One stick'll never burn! Put more wood on the fire, ladder; one stick'll never burn!” my old Scotch grandfather used to say to his boys. Sometimes, when the fire in the heart burns low, and love to the Saviour grows faint, it would glow warm and bright again if it could only touch another stick. We are weak and imperfect. A hundred things—health, digestion, anxieties, little frets and cares—hinder our soul's progress. The spirit cannot soar, for the flesh constantly keeps it down. There is a true life begun in us, but it flickers like a candle in the wind.

What we need, next to earnest prayer to God and communion with Christ, is communion with each other. “Where two or three are gathered together,” the hearts burn; love kindles to a fervent heat. Friends, let us frequent the society of those who are fellow-pilgrims with us to Canaan's happy land. “One stick'll never burn” as a great, generous pile will be sure to.—*Christian Banner*.

—“In the absence of the globes, how do you illustrate the shape of the earth to your scholars? asked a committee of a school teacher. “I shows 'em my head,” was the reply.

An ounce of cheerfulness is worth a pound of sadness to serve God with.