

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., NOVEMBER 4, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, November 8th, 1874.

The Two Commandments.—Mark xii: 28-34.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans xiii. 10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 29-31.

SUMMARY.—Love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself; and so fulfill the law.

ANALYSIS.—I. The question answered. Va. 28-31. II. The answer commended. Vs 32-34.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—Our last lesson took us into the last week of Christ's ministry—the "passion week." We left him and the twelve on Tuesday morning, of that week, still standing by the withered fig-tree, which now spoke in solemn emphasis of the curse which the unbelieving nation was so soon to experience in consequence of its pretentious self-righteousness, and incurable destitution of God's righteousness. Immediately after they pursued their way to Jerusalem, and entered the temple in which the day was, in part, spent in dealing with the hostile leaders of the Jews, answering their subtle and malicious questionings, and laying open their sin, the righteous principles of God's government, and the doom which impended over them. xi. 27-33; xii. 1-27.

Verse 28.—And one of the scribes came. Called by Matthew, "a lawyer" (xxii. 35), one who was by profession an expounder of the Jewish law. He may have suspected, or even believed, that Christ was an imposter, and hence both wished and expected to expose him, but unlike the majority of those who sent him, he was not determined to put him down, imposter or no imposter. Having heard them reasoning, Christ and the Sadducees. The word translated "reasoning," means "questioning together," carrying on a discussion in which question and answer had a large share. Perceiving that he had answered them well. The Pharisees were glad enough to have their opponents, the Sadducees, silenced on points of doctrine, which, like that just under discussion between Christ and the Sadducees, separated the two sects. Asked him. From this account he would seem to have asked of his own will. Which is the first commandment of all? More exactly, "What kind of commandment is first of all?" We are informed that the Pharisees were divided into rival schools, in part, by the question as to the relative importance of the commandments; as to which were the most important, and what it was which gave the superior importance, and also that "the Jews enumerated six hundred and thirteen ordinances; three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions, according to the days of the year; two hundred and twenty-eight commandments, according to the parts of the body." No wonder Paul gave the caution found in Tit. iii. 9. This was just the question for a Jewish "lawyer" to ask, a question in "casuistry." Such questions naturally spring up in abundance where attention is directed largely to the externals of morality, for often one precept or rule will infringe upon another. Luke xiii. 15; John vii. 22.

Verse 29.—Jesus answered him. He sometimes declined to answer, but never because he felt unable to reply. xi. 33. The centuries past give proof that Christianity can, and will, withstand all hostile attacks. The first of all the commandments is. He thus recognizes a natural priority or superiority of one commandment to another. Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. Quoted from Deut. vi. 4. It is in substance the introduction to the ten commandments, as given in Ex. xx. 2. Not given by Matthew xxii. 37. Another translation which it admits, and which some prefer is, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord [in Hebrew, Jehovah] is our God; the Lord is One." The nature of God and his relation to man together constitute the foundation of moral law and obligation. Because Jehovah, the self-existent, unchangeable, eternal Person is our God, the God of us, owning us with an absolute ownership as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, our All, it is his to command, and ours to obey; and because he is not many gods, but one God, the question of the authority of moral precepts is not as with the polytheist, a question as to which of the gods commands. It is to

be regarded not as a separate commandment, nor as a part of the first commandment, but as the foundation of them all; and more immediately of those of the first table. Duty to God underlies duty to man. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, etc. Christ aims to give not two from a multitude of precepts which differ simply in degree, but to give the two which comprehend all precepts, to give the principle which gives life and meaning to every precept. Two chief points are brought out; first the nature of the commandment. It is love. The second is the degree of the love. It is supreme. The latter point is made very emphatic. It is to be with "heart," "soul," "mind," and "strength"; four words which, together, are intended to express the sum of all our power, of feeling, intellect and will. It is to be with "all" the heart, "all" the soul, etc. This is the first commandment. He here repeats, for the sake of emphasis, that this is the first.

Verse 31.—The second is like, namely this. For "like, namely this," another reading is "like this"; that is, the second commandment is similar to the first, kindred with it, having the same principle essentially. Another reading omits both the words "like," and "this." The Greek has no article before "second," as in vs. 29, 30 it has none before "first." This gives us nearly the following thought: "we have as first," "we have as second." Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The similarity or likeness of this to the preceding commandment appears (1) in the identity of the principle—LOVE; and (2) in the fact that this is the all-comprehending principle of man-ward duties, as it is of God-ward duties. The wide distinction between the two is found in the degree or measure of love to be accorded. In the first it was supreme; in this it is simply impartial, or equal to others as to self, and to self as to others. By "neighbor" we here understand a fellow-man, any and every human being, according to Christ's teaching in Luke x. 29-37, and to enlightened reason. This law enjoins self-love implicitly, as it does love of others explicitly, and with reason; for it is the nature of man that carries the obligation to love, and our own nature, like that of others, is human. That we are to love all men, even the most wicked and debased, even our personal enemies, with a love which, in its inner principle, is the same with our love to God, does not imply that we are to love the wickedness of the wicked, or be pleased with the enmity of our enemies. It is "the mind of Christ," the love with which God loved the lost, and which has given to us the cross of Christ, and the eternal redemption. This moral love is far more profound and comprehensive than mere natural affection by which we are bound together in special temporal relations. It is not to be confounded with such affection, although this is its earthly type, and is by it most fostered and befriended. Witness the home and the land where the gospel is most effective. So, too, the operation of universal and impartial love to man gives full room for all that is in nature special and separate, and not only allows, but requires, that each take special care of those specially related and entrusted to him, and that the rights of property, etc., be maintained. It will purify and promote business, not undermine and destroy it. There is none other commandment greater than these. Nor on a level with them, since all other precepts have here their life-principle, and are mere applications of one or other of these two.

Verse 32, 33.—The answer struck the Scribe, as it has all honest men.

Verse 34.—Not far from the kingdom, etc. But not in it; a great difference.

QUESTIONS.—Where did we last week leave Christ? xi. 12-14, 20. Where did he go from that place? xi. 27. How did he spend his time in the Temple? xi. 27-xii. 27.

Vs. 28. Who is here said to have come to Christ? Called what in Matthew xxii. 35. Why did he come? Vs 34; Matt xxii. 35. What question did he put? What is said by Paul in Tit. iii. 9? Why would the Pharisees be likely to make prominent such questions? Matt. xxiii. 23-28.

Vs. 29. Did Jesus refuse to answer his questioners? xi. 33; Matt. xxvi. 62. Why? Matt. vii. 6. Did Christ in this answer quote from the Old Testament? Deut. vi. 4, 5. If not, why should Christ have quoted them?

Vs. 30. What does Christ give as the first commandment? What is meant by the words, "with all thy heart," etc.? Why should we love God? Why love him supremely? What duties are required by the first table of the Decalogue? Ex. xx.

3-11. Does love to God include all those duties? Vs. 31. What is given as the second commandment? To whom do we owe the duties of the second table of the Decalogue? Ex. xx. 12-17. Who is our neighbor? Luke x. 29-37. Why should we love all men? Gen. i. 26. How can we hate wickedness, and love the wicked? John iii. 16. Difference between selfishness and self-love?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, November 15th, 1874.—Hypocrisy and Piety.—Mark xii. 38-44.

Youths' Department.

OLD RYE'S SPEECH.

I was made to be eaten, And not to be drank, To be thrashed in a barn, Not soaked in a tank.

I come as a blessing, When put through the mill; As a blight and a curse When run through a still.

Make me up into loaves, And your children are fed; But if into drink, I starve them instead.

In bread, I'm a servant, The eater shall rule; In drink, I am a master, The drinker a fool.

Then remember the warning; My strength I'll employ; If eaten, to strengthen, If drank, to destroy.

AN INTELLIGENT DOG.

An incident that recently occurred in this city reminds us forcibly of Byron's eulogy on his dog, wherein he says:

"Man's firmest friend, First to welcome and foremost to defend."

A family residing near the railroad allowed the girl, aged five years, to play about the yard of their residence on pleasant days with a Newfoundland dog. One day the child ran away—all children do so—and in her wanderings about was accompanied by the dog, who apparently felt in duty bound to see that no harm befell her. It seems that the two came to a railroad crossing; that a train was coming, and it looked a little dangerous. The dog saw the danger, and quickly seized the little miss by the skirts of her dress, and being the stronger of the two pulled her back upon the sidewalk, and stood over her until the train had passed. The little miss scolded and kicked his shins, but he didn't let her up till the danger had passed, when he trudged on behind her as though nothing had happened. Nashua Telegraph.

WORKING FOR JESUS.

A preacher in England was once talking about the heathen, and telling how much they needed Bibles to teach them of Jesus. In the congregation was a little boy who became intensely interested. He wished to help buy Bibles for the heathen. But he and his mother were very poor; and at first he was puzzled to know how to raise the money.

Finally he hit upon the plan. The people of England used rubbing, or door stones, for polishing their hearths and scouring their wooden floors. These stones are bits of marble or freestone, begged from the stone-cutters or marble-workers.

This little boy had a favorite donkey named Neddie. He thought it would be nice to have Neddie help in the benevolent work. So he harnessed him up, and loaded him with stones, and went around calling,— "Do you want any door stones?"

Before long he raised fifteen dollars. And then he went to the minister and said,— "Please, sir, send this money to the heathen."

"But, my dear little fellow, I must have a name to acknowledge it." The lad hesitated, as if he did not understand. "You must tell me your name," repeated the minister, "that we may know who gave the money."

"O, well, then, sir, please put it down to Neddie and me; that will do, wont it, sir?"

THINGS TEMPORAL.

A baby-boy, propped up with cushions, was eagerly reaching after his little toys. On the couch beside him sat a little sister, just enough older to feel very womanly and important as she "amused the baby." She blew his whistle for him, shook his rattle, and made the monkey climb the stick; then, as baby laughed merrily at

each performance, she smiled up at her mother, and said: "O mamma, isn't he a funny, silly little fellow, to laugh at such little things?"

A few years flew by, and the little sister was almost grown up, and felt herself really a woman now; while the baby-boy, whom she had once amused, was a sturdy lad, taller and stronger than herself. The brother and sister were preparing for an excursion upon which they had been setting their hearts for weeks. The young girl, radiant with hope and expectation, was eagerly inquiring of all around as to the prospect of a pleasant day; while her manly brother, although he tried to seem unconcerned, was evidently as much interested in the matter as she.

"Oh, I do so hope nothing will happen to disappoint us!" cried the girl, in a tone which seemed to imply that such a disappointment would be very, very hard to endure. And the elders of the family smiled on the impatient young people, and said among themselves: "This excursion seems such a great matter to them; but how little they will care for such pleasures a few years hence!"

These elder people felt themselves very grave and wise as they spoke thus, and turned away to their own busy cares and duties—the real, grown-up cares and burdens of life. But, dear children, only think! Over these same grave and careful ones the angels might at this moment have been bending, and saying in tones of pity and regret: "Ah, how is it that they can be so taken up with these trifles, which perish with the using, and think so little of the unending life, so near at hand!"

Let us stop a moment, and try to realize this, for it is certainly true. The most important work and studies and business, which concern this life only, and with which so many are filling up their hearts and lives, are but "things temporal," passing away, soon to be cared for no longer. But they seem so absorbing, these things that are around us, and through which we are passing, and the things of another life seem to us so faint and far-off and unreal;—how shall we learn to value them aright? Only by trusting ourselves unto God; to be led and taught and guided by him. If he is "our ruler and guide," we may hope that we shall "so pass through things temporal," that as we pray, "we finally lose not the things eternal."—Churchman.

THE YOUNG MAN'S FIRST OATH.

The extinction of the moral sense is usually very gradual, and the progress of its decline is often marked with great accuracy by the conduct. Every one knows that conscience is one of the most active and powerful of all the inhabitants of the human heart, and that she will never yield up her authority till she has sustained a severe struggle. There is nothing, perhaps, in which this conduct is more clearly marked than in the progress of a young man, who has had a pious education, towards a habit of profaneness. Though he has been accustomed occasionally to hear the language of cursing from others, the impressions of his childhood are too strong to allow him immediately to copy it. At length, in an evil hour, he summons resolution enough to make the awful experiment of making an oath; but his faltering tongue and blushing cheek proclaim that there is a commotion and a remonstrance within. Conscience rouses up all her energies, and thunders out a rebuke which almost puts him into the attitude of consternation. Perhaps his early resolutions to reverence the name and authority of God come thronging upon his remembrance; or perhaps the instructions of other days, enforced by parental affection rise up before him, or it may be that the image of a departed parent, who had trained him up in the way he should go, haunts his busy and agitated mind, and reproaches him with filial ingratitude. He resolves that the dreadful privilege of taking the name of God in vain has been purchased at too great an expense, and that he will not venture to repeat an experiment that has been so fruitful in remorse and agony. But presently he is heard to drop another oath, and another; and in each successive instance the conflict with conscience becomes less severe, till at length the faithful reprover is silenced, and he blasphemes his Maker's name without remorse, and almost without his own observation.

When I see an ingenuous youth taking the first steps in this path of death, when I see his countenance change and his voice

alter, the embarrassment and awkwardness of manner tell me that conscience is offering her remonstrance at the very moment when the language of profaneness is upon his lips, I say to myself, "Poor young man! little do you know what disgrace and wretchedness you are treasuring up for yourself." I regard him as having set his face like a flint towards perdition, and I read on his character, in dark ominous letters, "The glory is departed."—Sprague.

CHRISTIAN CLEAR THROUGH.

A certain little boy in Kansas, only seven and one-half years old, is trying hard to be a Christian. The missionary who started the new Western Sunday school which he attends, says that this boy, whose name is Willie, uses a great deal of what we call good common sense in his ideas of a religious life.

The other day he was in the house, watching Maggie, as she pared the potatoes for dinner. Soon she pared an extra large one, that was very white and nice on the outside, but when cut into pieces it showed itself to be hollow and black inside with dry rot. Instantly Willie exclaimed,— "Why, Maggie, that potato is no Christian!"

"What do you mean," asked Maggie. "Don't you see it has a bad heart?" was Willie's reply.

It seems this little Kansas boy had learned enough of the religion of Jesus to know that, however fair the outside may be, it will never do to have the heart black. We must be sound and right clear through.

THE SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING.

Dr J. M. Gregory gives the following as the fundamental principles to be observed by teachers:—

- 1. Know thoroughly and familiarly whatever you would teach.
2. Gain and keep the attention of your pupils, and excite their interest in the subject.
3. Use language which your pupils fully understand, and clearly explain every new word required.
4. Begin with the known, and proceed to the unknown by easy and natural steps.
5. Excite the self-activities of the pupils, and lead them to discover the truth for themselves.
6. Require pupils to re-state fully and correctly, in their own language and with their own proofs and illustrations, the truth taught them.
7. Review, review, review—carefully, thoroughly, repeatedly—with fresh consideration and thought.
It would not be a bad plan to paste them in one's class-book, and look them over every Sunday for the sake of what they might suggest.

LAUGHTER AS A MEDICINE.

A short time since, two individuals were lying in one room, very sick, one with brain fever, and the other with an aggravated case of the mumps. They were so low that watchers were needed, every night, and it was thought doubtful if the one sick of fever could recover. A gentleman was engaged to watch over night, his duty being to wake the nurse whenever it became necessary to administer medicine. In the course of the night, both watcher and nurse fell asleep. The man with the mumps lay watching the clock, and saw that it was time to give the fever patient his portion. He was unable to speak aloud, or to move any portion of his body except his arms, but, seizing a pillow, he managed to strike the watcher in the face with it. Thus suddenly awakened, the watcher sprang from his seat, falling to the floor, and awakened both the nurse and the fever patient. The incident struck the sick men as very ludicrous, and they laughed heartily at it for some fifteen or twenty minutes. When the doctor came in the morning he found his patient vastly improved; said he never knew so sudden a turn for the better, and now both are up and well. Who says laughter is not the best of medicines? And this reminds the writer of another case: A gentleman was suffering from an ulceration in the throat, which at length became so swollen that his life was despaired of. His household came to his bedside to bid him farewell. Each individual shook hands with the dying man, and then went away weeping. Last of all came a pet ape, and shaking the man's hand, went away also with its hands over its eyes. It was so ludicrous a sight that the patient was forced to laugh, and laughed so heartily that the ulcer broke, and his life was saved.—Sanitarian.