

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, Aug. 20th, 1876.—The Value of Wisdom.—Prov. i. 20-23.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 13-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof." Job xxviii. 15.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Psa. cxix. 1-32. Tuesday, Psalm cxix. 105-136. Wednesday, Matthew xix. 16-30. Thursday, Luke x. 25-42. Friday, Hebrews xii. 1-11. Saturday, Philippians ii. 1-21. Sunday, Proverbs xvi.

ANALYSIS.—I. Blessings of piety. Vs. 1-4. II. Trust in, fear and honor, Jehovah. Vs. 5-10. III. Uses of chastisement. Vs. 11, 12. IV. Value of wisdom. Vs. 13-19.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS utters, in concisely expressed speech, man's duty to God and to his fellow-men. It presents motives to right conduct. It adds incentives to pious living—such as honor, interest, love, and fear. It exhibits the inevitable consequences of wrong-doing in injustice, profligacy, idleness, laziness, indolence, intemperance, debauchery, and crime. It presents, in telling contrasts, the rewards of true piety, in time and eternity, and the sure and certain retribution of a life of folly and sin. In concentrated parables and pithy parallels it portrays the security and peace of the righteous, and the stupidity and heedlessness of the wicked rushing on to ruin. Psalm ix. 16.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—My son. Here, Wisdom is speaking to men—not merely Solomon's to his child. Forget not my law. The "law" here meant is perhaps first of all the precepts which follow. The command, a danger of forgetting. To forget here is not simply to let slip from the memory, but to disregard and treat as not existing. Law involves authority of one person over another, and the control of one by another. This submission is self-rendering, and leads to self-sacrifice. But let thy heart keep my commandments. The one Divine law, whose principle is love, comprehends an innumerable multitude of separate precepts or "commandments." God does not undertake to govern us mechanically, but by principles brought out in his word in a great variety of applications, which help us to right decisions in the conduct of life.

Verse 2.—For length of days, etc. Here, as everywhere, Scripture makes self-interest a motive to duty. Long life, or "years of life" (see margin), is an earthly blessing which godliness tends to secure, though it has often been the occasion of shortening a man's days, as in the cases of Jesus Christ and the martyrs. But long life is the symbol of spiritual good which infallibly results from godliness. Peace. This stands here, as usually, for all most desirable prosperity, and is therefore currently used in salutations. Judges vi. 23; xix. 20.

Verse 3.—Let not mercy and truth forsake thee. These, in their perfection, are found only in God; but as we were made in God's image, we are perfect only when we are "like him." God's mercy is that which, as sinners, we first need for the removal of our sins. This may be one reason why mercifulness is here first named as a human excellence. We want mercy and truth. In fact, a genuine mercy and a genuine truth are inseparable. The tendency in life is for immorality to destroy even natural kindness, and to create instead inhumanity. Bind them [these virtues] about thy neck. Either as a necklace for adornment—"the beauty of holiness"—or, as Keil thinks, as the Hebrew was wont to wear on his neck his seal (Gen. xxxviii. 18), in order to have it ever with him for use. Write them upon the table of thine heart. Apparently there is a reference here to the Decalogue, and to the command in Deut. xi. 18, with an involved explanation of the symbolic meaning of that command. That which is here commanded God is said, by his Spirit, to do in the New Covenant. Heb. x. 16. Our obedience, to be worth anything, must be inward, spontaneous, hearty.

Verse 4.—So shall thou find, etc. "Favor and good understanding" are the kind feeling and favorable regard which both God and man feel to the

virtuous. So it is said of Christ that he grew as in wisdom and stature, so also in favor with God and men. Even wicked men honor virtue, though when it too much rebukes them they will, if possible, kill the virtuous, as the Jews killed Jesus.

Verse 5.—Trust in the Lord [Jehovah] with all thine heart, etc. Not only with the law and commandments of God do we deal, but with the God who has given law and commandments. As we obey the latter we must trust the former. The alternative is that we shall either trust him or our own wisdom, and that to trust him is to distrust our wisdom. He not only allows, but bids us trust.

Verse 6.—In all thy ways, etc. Some will go to God at great crises in life, or with certain weighty affairs; but only then and with these. But life is one whole. The command is suited to our nature, and its promise is clear and sure that God will direct the steps—all of them—making the whole of life, in its physical, intellectual and spiritual features and activities one complete and consistent ministry and service, acceptable and accepted. No promise could be more full, as none is more precious, often proved, and always holding good.

Verse 7.—Be not wise, etc. Paul's statement is that we should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. One does well to know what he knows, and to think of himself more meanly than he should. It is no part of true humility to depreciate ourselves.

Verse 8.—It shall be health, etc. Health of body is the symbol of spiritual soundness, and we must take this promise of temporal good as having for us a far higher meaning.

Verse 9.—Honor the Lord [Jehovah], etc. To honor is to show respect, or reverence. "Substance" is here property. All is his, and for him, not less what we spend on ourselves, or families, than what is given for preaching. As of property, so of powers, opportunities, all. The principle is of wide application. We are stewards.

Verse 10.—Promise again, and in terms fitted to the precept, though its spirit is larger than its terms, and for us, in the light of Christ's teaching, it has an infinite reach of meaning.

Verse 11, 12.—My son, despise not, etc. The best comment on these verses is that incomparably consoling chapter, the 12th of Hebrews. How true it is, that the highest proofs of God's love to us is in the afflictions which he brings upon us.

Verses 13-18.—Here the blessings of piety are depicted in a continuous sketch, but in language similar to that already considered. Calling wisdom "a tree of life," is a reference back to Eden, and a glance forward to heaven. Rev. xxii. 2.

Verse 19.—The Lord [Jehovah], etc. See chap. vii. We are to be like God.

QUESTIONS.—How did Solomon obtain his wonderful knowledge?

Vs. 2. Why do the godly have the greater chances to long life? Who have "great peace"?

Vs. 3. Are pretentious people ever long unknown? What adorning of character is to be sought? Peter iii. 4.

Vs. 4. How fully are we to obey the teaching of the Bible? Is any man's judgment qualified to supersede God's law?

Vs. 7. Of whom is there more hope than of a man "wise in his own conceit"? Prov. xxvi. 12.

Vs. 8. Is piety ever a deterioration to manhood? Is impiety anything else than such?

Vs. 9. What is it to be rich? What is it to be poor?

Vs. 13. What have we in the following verses of our lesson? If Wisdom has been a counselor to the Most High, must she not be valuable to erring men?

—Baptist Teacher.

Sunday, Aug. 27th, 1876.—Honest Industry.—Prov. vi. 6-22.

"What one point did that superintendent try to impress on his school in his twenty minutes' talk?" was a question which one visitor might have asked of another, as the two came away from a Sunday-school.

"I am sure I don't know," would have been the only fitting answer.

"Then what was the good of the address?"

"There again I can't answer you," would have closed comment on that service.—S. S. Times.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

"I Haven't Time."

BY E. PATSON HAMMOND.

At the children's meeting in the Berean church, a few months since, were gathered a crowd of children and youths. While they were singing with all their hearts from the "Song Evangel," a gentleman approached, and said that a certain boy was wanted, as his mother was dying. I at once stopped the singing, and said: "Some one of you has a mother who is dying this very hour," and looking all around I pointed to one and another and said, "Is it your mother? If she were dying now and going home to heaven, could you hasten to her bedside and say, 'Dear mother, I have found Jesus precious to my soul during the past week. I believe that God, for his sake, has forgiven me all my sins, and I feel sure that I shall meet you in that bright world above where there is no parting, and no tears?' It seemed as if I could hear hundreds of children saying, "I wonder if it is my mother that is dying!" I then said: "Will Lewis Watts please step this way?" He did so, and as he stood upon the platform before a church full of children, I asked:

"Are you a Christian, Lewis?" His quick reply was: "No, but I wish to be one."

I then said to him: "Will you not bow your head now, while all the children pray for you, and pray yourself, that God for Christ's sake will receive you as his own dear child. You can then go home and tell your dear dying mother that you feel sure that you will meet her in heaven."

Tears at once filled his eyes, and he exclaimed: "I HAVEN'T TIME TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN NOW."

Thus he hastened out of the building, sobbing as if his heart would break, and nearly every one in the audience followed him with tearful eyes. It was one of the most touching sights I ever witnessed. The mother died that very hour. I wonder if her dear son will meet her in heaven?

Is your mother a Christian, my dear young reader? And were she dying this hour, could you stand by her bedside and say, "Dear mother, I shall surely meet you in heaven"? If not, let me entreat you to come to the dear Saviour who bled and died on the cross for you, and give yourselves up to him. Believe on him with all thy heart. He will receive you. He will wash your sins all away. He will fit you to lead a happy life, and will finally receive you to dwell forever with your Christian friends in those bright mansions which he has gone to prepare for them that love him.

How sad it is to think that families will be separated at the last great day!

Alteration.

This game consists in repeating a string of words beginning with the same letter. Old and young can join in this evening pastime. Thus:

"One ox opening oysters," commences the father.

Each in turn repeats it: "One ox opening oysters."

"Two toads, totally tired, trying to trot to Toadsbury."

This runs rounds the circle; little Minnie striving in vain to pronounce all the words, and causing great amusement to the older children:

"One ox opening oysters."

"Two toads, totally tired, trying to trot to Toadsbury."

"Three tame tigers taking tea."

(The fun of the game consists in repeating these absurdities in regular order, not omitting one word. Poor little Minnie fails entirely, but adds to the fun, even mamma stumbles over the sentences.) But to continue:

"Four fat friars fanning fainting flies."

"Five furriers flying to France for furs."

"Seven Severn salmon swallowing flies."

"Eight elegant English gentlemen eating eggs."

"Nine nimble noblemen nodding their noses."

"Ten tin tea-pots turning topsy-turvy."

"Eleven elephants eyeing the elements."

"Twelve tipsy tailors twirling tops." This game can be carried on according to a person's ingenuity, and is productive of laughter and fun. For a while it is amusement enough to laugh over each's mistakes.

Servia and its Neighbors.

The war between Turkey and its discontented provinces will add much to our knowledge of South-eastern Europe. Many well-informed men would have been puzzled, a few months ago, to give an intelligible account of Montenegro or Herzegovina, or possibly, of Bosnia and Servia. Now there is a busy searching of maps and geographies and encyclopedias, for one is ashamed to be ignorant of countries whose revolt against Turkey may change the history of Europe.

Servia is the most important province among the disturbed districts, for it is peopled only by a Slavonic race, proud of their purity of blood, and of their heroic history. Their ancestors migrated from Asia in the sixth century, and found a home on the banks of the Danube, in a region laid waste by war. They built up subsequently a strong empire, and their most warlike emperor was leading an army to make Constantinople his capital, when his ambitious plans were foiled by a sudden death. In the next century the empire was conquered by the Turks, and only since this century came in, and more particularly within a few years, has this small section of the old empire recovered independence. It is self-governed, but pays an annual tribute to the Porte. It comprises twelve thousand square miles, about as large as the State of Maryland, and has a population of over a million souls.

Herzegovina is a narrower and more mountainous district, near the Adriatic Sea, having an area of seven thousand square miles, a trifle smaller than Massachusetts, and a population of over two hundred thousand, nearly one-half of whom are Mussulmen, and the other half nearly equally divided between the Greek and the Roman Catholic churches. This division puts the province at great disadvantage in the struggle with the Turks, for Catholic and Greek are not united in council and action, and their strength is neutralized by the large Turkish element surrounding them.

Montenegro, having one thousand five hundred square miles, about the size of Rhode Island, joins Herzegovina on the south-east, but has no seaport, the adjoining sea-coast belonging to the Austrian province of Cattaro. This lack of a seaport is a serious hindrance to the commercial growth and prosperity of the little province. It is a mountainous region, and its brave inhabitants, exulting in their mountain fastnesses, have never been conquered by the Turks. The population is small, numbering only one hundred and twenty thousand, but every man among them is a warrior, trained to the use of arms, and inspired with a deadly enmity to the Mussulman. In their difficult passes and inaccessible heights, they have won signal victories over the invaders, often defeating armies tenfold larger than their own. The chief successes of the present campaign have been won by their heroic army, and it is certain to make a good report of itself in every encounter with the Turks.

Bosnia, which borders on Servia on the east and Herzegovina on the west, is larger than both united, comprising an area of twenty-three thousand square miles and a population of one million, four hundred thousand. But the races are greatly mixed, four hundred and fifty thousand of the people being Turks, and only three hundred and seventy thousand Bosnians, of true Slavonic descent. This mixture makes a united movement impossible, and subjects the province to bloody domestic strife in all attempts to throw off the yoke of Turkey.

The same is true to a larger extent of Bulgaria, where such horrible atrocities have been committed in the present war. It is a large district, of thirty-three thousand square miles, lying to the east of Servia, and stretching to the Black Sea. Of its population of three million and a half, only one million and a half are nominally Christian, and these are at the mercy of their more numerous and powerful Turkish neighbors. They can render, therefore, little help of value in the present struggle. Wallachia and Moldavia, lying north

of Bulgaria, and also bordering on the Black Sea, form an important principality called Roumania, with an area of forty-five thousand square miles, and a population of four millions. They are virtually independent, like Servia, paying only an annual tribute to the Porte. But, unlike Servia, their people are not of a single race, or of a pure blood. The chief stock is Dacian, anciently subdued by Rome; but mixed with this are Roman, and Gothic, and Hungarian, and Sclavic, and Tartar elements, defying the most skillful ethnologists to discriminate in the strange mixture. If Roumania should take part in the war, as some complications seem to indicate, it would bring valuable help to Servia and Montenegro, which are vastly over-matched by the Turkish power.

The sympathies of American Christians must run strongly with the provinces in their doubtful struggle. They are nominally Christian, and Servia is pervaded by an earnest religious spirit, which leads to general Bible study. They are all oppressed by the Turk, and no justice can be had at a Turkish court, or at the hands of a Turkish official. Any true prosperity or rapid growth is impossible until the Turkish yoke is utterly broken and all fear of its re-establishment is at an end. How this good is to be reached, it needs a bold prophet to foretell. The jealousies of Christendom keep the Turk in Europe; but internal decay is so rapid that no outward bolstering can long save the empire. When it falls, a Christian State may be possible, and the splendid provinces now weak and impoverished from long misgovernment may enter on a brilliant future.—Watchman.

Must wait till we are Better.

I never knew a man to be saved that came to Christ in that way. You cannot make yourselves any better. You cannot cleanse yourselves. Every day and hour that you are staying from Christ you are getting worse, instead of better. The very act of your staying away is a sin, and so, instead of trying to get better, and getting ready to come, just come as you are, and be clothed with the garments of salvation. He will clothe you with his own righteousness. I noticed when our war was going on, men used to come to enlist, and the man who came with a fine suit of clothes on, and the hod-carrier in his dirty garments, would both have to take off their clothes and put on the uniform of the Government. And so when men go into the kingdom of God, they have to put on the livery of heaven. You need not dress up for Christ, because he will strip you when you come, and put on you the robes of his righteousness. My friends, you cannot stand before God in your own righteousness. Come to God as a poor beggar, and he will have mercy upon you. I heard some years ago of an artist who wanted a model for the Prodigal. He went to many institutions and prisons, but could not get a man who suited his ideas of the Prodigal. One day, however, while walking down the street, he met a poor, miserable tramp, and he suited the artist's eye, so he asked him if he would be willing to sit for his portrait. The tramp said he would, if he would pay him for it. The artist promised, and set a day and hour for him to come. At the appointed time, while the artist was sitting in his studio, the man came in, but he was so well dressed the artist didn't know him, and told him he had no appointment with him. When the beggar told him the circumstances, the artist said, "What have you been doing?" "Why," says the man, "I thought if I was going to sit for my portrait, I would get a new suit of clothes." "Ah," said the artist, "you won't do; I wanted you just as you were." So, when you go to Christ, go just as you are, with your rags, your filth, and your sin, and he will receive you. I don't care how bad you are. He came for that purpose, and there is not a man or a woman in this hall to-day that is so bad that Christ would not have you if you will only come.—Moody.

Indolence is a distressing state; we must be doing something to be happy. Action is no less necessary than thought to the instinctive tendencies of the human frame.

Politeness is too often but a perfidious generosity, which leaves the heart cold and the prejudices untouched.