

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, January 23rd, 1876—David in the Palace.—1 Sam. xviii. 1-16. B. C. 1063.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 1, 12-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Prov. xvi. 17.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Psalm xxxvii. 14-40. Tuesday, Proverbs xvi. 7-25. Wednesday, Romans xiii. 10-14. Thursday, Esther vi. Friday, 1 Cor. xiii. Saturday, Genesis xxxix. 1-6. Sunday, 2 Cor. x.

ANALYSIS.—I. Jonathan loves David. Vs. 1-4. II. Saul envies David's praise. Vs. 5-9. III. Seeks to kill him. Vs. 10-12. IV. Feels him for his prosperity. Vs. 13-16.

EXPOSITION.—The narrative divides naturally into four parts. David is the hero to whom are directed (1.) The royal favor, Vs. 1-5; (2.) The popular applause, Vs. 6, 7; (3.) The king's rage, Vs. 9-11; (4.) The king's fear, Vs. 12-16. Under these heads the subject will be discussed.

I. The Royal Favor.—Verse 1-5.—This comprehends the favor of both the king and his son Jonathan. The present lesson traces to its partial issue Saul's favor; the next will trace out Jonathan's favor. These five verses are therefore introductory to both lessons. Jonathan's love for David and his compact with him are described at the beginning doubtless because of their important bearing on the mutual relations of Saul and David.

The love.—Verse 1.—When he [David] had made an end of speaking. See xvii. 58. He may have before seen and heard the young minstrel at his father's house; he had never before known him. Jonathan loved him as his own soul. More than this he could not. This was "perfect love," friendship the most intense. The history of the two shows that this was not exaggeration.

The covenant.—Verse 3.—A covenant of course is mutual, thus showing, as does the later history, that the love was mutual. Only Jonathan's was mentioned in verse 1, because his had been mainly kindled by the exhibition of David's character in the account, and David's was mainly a response to his. Besides, it was for Jonathan, as prince, to make the advances, and it was his affection whose bearing on David's course is to be traced. We need not perhaps suppose the formal entrance into the covenant to have taken place at once.

The pledges.—Verse 4.—Only Jonathan is said to have given any. His superior rank explains it. He will give the shepherd a token of his perfect social equality. Saul tried to honor David when going as Israel's champion. See also Esther vi. 8. The bow with Jonathan was the favorite weapon. 2 Sam. i. 18.

II. Saul's favor with David. It is probable that his favor also sprang in part from affection. But it was not strong and pure enough to keep out or keep down envy and its workings.

The detention.—From that day; that is, the day of the combat. This began a new chapter in David's life and education. The elevation was military, to the command of the body-guard. This, however, was not till a later period when he became the king's son-in-law, xvii. 22-30; xx. 25. At first was employed about the king's person, according to xvi. 21, as armor-bearer.

The public honor.—He was accepted in the sight, etc.—Verse 5.—He was in favor, but as the connection implies with the king's approbation, and doubtless his active co-operation or manifestation of approval. The king honored him, and hence he had honor in the eyes of the king's servants, the military, and other high officials.

III. Popular Applause.—Verse 6, 7.—The importance of this in the narrative is manifest, since this occasions the loss of the king's favor. It was then a turning point in the history.

(1) The time.—Verse 6.—When David was returned, etc. Probably months after the killing of Goliath.

(2) The circumstances.—Verse 6.—By the women and children come out to shout, and sing, and dance the welcome honor to the king and his army for a great national victory and deliverance.

(3) The declaration.—Verse 7.—Saul hath slain, etc. True and honest, but unwise words. The enthusiasm for David broke over proper bounds. Few kings would willingly hear their people praise even their favorites above themselves.

(5) The King's Rage.—Verse 9-11. The rage was, of course, the rage of jealousy and envy, and was more keen and intense on its first rise, and indeed all the fiercer because of his love for David. Its manifestations are described as being by words, by looks, and by deeds.

By words.—Verse 8.—What can he have more but the kingdom? David had saved the king and his kingdom when the king was pitifully helpless. He had been true and loyal to the king, and it was not David's fault that the people made the odious comparison.

By looks.—Verse 9.—Saul eyed David. The eye was all ablaze with hot envious, jealous hate.

By deeds.—Verse 10, 11.—On the morrow; that is, after the odious comparison. Evil spirit from God. God permitted Saul to come under the baleful influence of an evil spirit, and hence the spirit is said to be from him. God's control is as perfect over demons as over men. Prophesied, etc. Rather, was in a frenzy, raving. David pl-yed, etc. Faithful still, perhaps not fully aware of the extent of Saul's enmity to him. A javelin. This was a spear of the largest kind. See Goliath's described in xvii. 6. It "was the habitual companion of king Saul, a fit weapon for his gigantic stature." Cast his javelin [spear] with a furious deadly threat, like the madman he was. Yet his madness was not that of an irresponsible man. David avoided, etc. Escaped once and again. The repetitions shows the king's fury and David's fidelity.

IV. The King's Fear.—Verse 12-16.—We observe its rise, its manifestation, and its increase.

(1) Its rise.—Verse 12.—How came his rage to turn to fear? Verse 12 says because he saw that Jehovah was with David, but had left him. His attempts on David's life failed; they brought to himself in his calmer hours self condemnation. He saw David both preserved and advanced, and gradually, naturally, terror took the place of burning rage. The fear was, like the rage, rooted in jealousy.

(2) Its manifestation.—Verse 13, 14.—Gave him place away from the royal residence and presence. This seems to have been intended as a dishonor. If so, the effect on David was not to drive him into rebellion. He was just as faithful there as he had been before. The Lord was with him. Both to guide him in the right way and to give him favor with the people.

(3) Its increase.—Verse 15, 16.—The cause of the increase was David's fidelity and success. How miserably wrong is that man who is terrified or enraged at seeing another, especially his own servant, doing well his duty and gaining its just reward. The fear must have continued to grow, because verse 16 shows that its cause increased. Whether, Saul had learned of David's anointing, and had divined its meaning, is not told. We need not suppose he had.

QUESTIONS.—How did Saul treat David at first? How afterward? What is envy? What are some of its causes? What is its effect? What does the apostle James say of it? James iii. 16.

Vs. 1. Meaning of the name Jonathan? What corresponding word have we in the New Testament? John i. 45. Why did Jonathan love David?

Vs. 3. How were covenanted friendships made?

Vs. 4. David rejected Saul's garments; why did he accept Jonathan's? How are we taught to give? Rom. xii. 8.

Vs. 7. Was the praise of David discreet?

Vs. 9. What spirit of evil is there more tormenting than jealousy? What more cruel? Cant. viii. 6.

Vs. 11. What kind of a life does David already seem to have? Will any one of us be unprotected if faithful to God? 1 Pet. iii. 13.

Vs. 13. What was Saul's probable motive in making David captain over a thousand?

Vs. 15. Of whom does David's good behavior remind us? Gen. xxxix. 2, 3.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

A singular instance of skepticism is recorded in the case of a man who said the Bible was "too good to be true."

A man is successful when he makes life give him what he wants.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

A Beautiful Father.

"Tell your mother you've been very good boys to-day;" said a mission school teacher, to two little new scholars.

"O," replied Tommy, looking up eagerly into her face, "We hasn't any mother."

"Who takes care of you?" asked the lady.

"Father does; we've got a beautiful father,—you ought to see him!"

"Who takes care of you when he is at work?"

"He 'takes all the care' before he goes off in the morning and after he comes back at night. He's a house painter, but there isn't any work this winter, so he's doin' laborin' till spring comes. He says he won't let us eat city soup and wear other folk's old clothes when he is well and strong. He leaves us a warm breakfast when he goes off; and we have bread and milk for dinner, and a good supper when he comes home. Then he tells us stories, and plays on the fife, and whistles out beautiful things for us with his jack-knife! you ought to see our home and our father,—they are both so beautiful."

Before long the lady did see that home and that father. The room was a poor attic, graced with cheap pictures, autumn leaves and other little trifles that cost nothing. The father, who was at the time preparing the evening meal for his motherless boys, was at first glance only a rough, begrimed laborer; but before the stranger had been in the place ten minutes, the room became a palace and the man a magician. His children had no idea they were poor; nor were they so, with such a hero as this to fight their battles for them.

This skilled mechanic, who thought it an honor to work for the city rather than eat the bread of dependence, and whose grateful spirit lighted up the otherwise dark life of his children, was preaching to all about him more effectually than is many a man in sacerdotal robes in a costly temple. He was a man of patience and submission to God's will, showing how to make home happy under the most unfavorable circumstances. He was rearing his boys to be high-minded citizens, to put their shoulder under burdens, rather than to become burdens to society, in the days that are coming.

He was, as his children had said, "a beautiful father," in the highest sense of the words.—The Watchman.

A Little Sermon.

"The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven."—Jeremiah vii. 18.

This verse tells you what some boys and girls did a long, long time ago, in the country where the Saviour was afterwards born, and in a famous city, Jerusalem. The people who dwelt there were called Jews. They had been taught to worship the true God, who made all things, and who is wise and good. But after a while they became like the heathen around them. Instead of worshipping God, they worshipped the "queen of heaven," for so they called the moon. Now the moon is beautiful to look at, and ought to make us think of God, who made it to give light in the night-time. But those evil Jews thought it was a god, though it has no more sense than a lump of clay. They used to get together in the streets of the city and in groves to offer to it sacred cakes, thinking the "queen of heaven" would be pleased with such worship, and would love and favor them. Everybody had something to do in this work; the father, the mother, and the children. The women made the cakes, and the fathers made the fire to bake them in. But it was the children that gathered the wood to make the fire with, each one bringing an armful or a handful; and perhaps a very little child tottling along with a single twig in its tiny hand. You see that but for what the children did, the poor "queen of heaven" would have had no cakes!

How very foolish all this was, you say. Yes, it was, and very sad, too. But it shows how very important even little folks can be in any work.

You who live in this happy, Christian land, know better than to do as these Jewish children did. But their active and cheerful zeal is worth your imitation.

Can you not do as much to please and honor your kind Heavenly Father, the King of Heaven, as they did to please the senseless moon? Surely there is something you can offer to God. It may be very small, no more in value than a handful of sticks. But if it be all you can give, and you give it out of love, God will accept it. It may be a kind word, a loving deed, an act of self-denial, or of obedience to your parents. It may be giving of your little treasures to teach heathen children to love and worship the true God and Jesus Christ His Son, instead of bowing down to senseless idols. There are many thousands of such children. Will you not honor your Heavenly Father by doing something for them? Gather and bring in your little sticks to make a fire of love that shall lighten and warm the dark, cold homes of those little ones over the sea, who have never heard His name.—Ib.

"New every Morning."

How many bright things there are in the book of Lamentations! It has a sad title, and in our happy moods we should hardly think of turning its leaves. Our instinct would be to go to it in our grief to find suitable utterances of our burdened hours. We open to its lines as those who walk under a weeping sky and beneath the rain of falling tears. But our walk will often, as we look up, show us a rift in the clouds, and the blue sky shining through, and the blessed sunshine streaming down.

Here is an utterance that has the sunbeams in it: "The Lord's mercies are new every morning." What an assurance this is to carry with us in all our wayfaring through this world!

The future is always dark to us. The shadows brood over it. A veil hides it from our sight. What is under the shadows, what is behind the veil, what advancing to meet us out of the imperious mist, none of us can know. Nor need we care to know. We have no anxious questions to ask. This is enough for all that is coming—"The Lord's mercies are new every morning." The mornings yet to break upon us may be heavy with storms; no matter, the new mercies will not fail.—Dr. Stone.

A Figure from the Orchard.

Do you see that pear-tree—you don't see it now for the leaves are all off, but you might have seen it six weeks ago. There is a great load of splendid pears upon it, and the boughs hang down ready to break. Stand under it, and you can almost hear it talk. I stood under one of mine lately, and I fancied I could hear it say, "Baskets, baskets, baskets." Do you know what for? Suppose I had got some baskets full of fruit and laid them under the tree, would the tree have wanted them? No; the tree would still be crying out, "Baskets, empty baskets, empty baskets." But suppose the baskets had said, "No, we are not fit to be under the tree; if we were half full we should be fit." Then I should have said, "Nonsense; the emptier the basket is, the fuller it is for the tree's purposes and wants. Get ready, for empty baskets are the very thing the tree wants." And so with the precious Lord Jesus. He is like the apple-tree in the midst of the wood, laden with beautiful fruit; and he wants you to come to Him that you may be filled. Is any half full? Let us be filled to the brim, brother; and those that are empty, let your very emptiness be an encouragement to you. You can hold the more of Christ the emptier you are. O empty sinner, there is a full Christ for you—an everlasting, omnipotent, ever-blessed, never-failing Saviour. Cast yourself into His arms, and just follow me with your hearts while I say this verse—

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm, In Christ's kind arms I fall; He is my strength and righteousness, My Jesus and my all.

—C. H. Spurgeon.

THE LITTLE ONES GRATITUDE.—The Mayor of Leeds (Alderman Marsden) has been presented with a bible and an illuminated address, which had been subscribed for by 23,000 Sunday school children, in recognition of the mayor's kindness to them on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to open the Yorkshire Exhibition.

The Pilgrimage of Sorrowful.

By ELIZABETH PATTEN HUNT.

Edited by Mrs. Hunt-Morgan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sorrowful closed the book, and thus mused within herself:

"By what I have read, this is a forbidden road, and if I would have the blessing of my Lord, I must not enter it. Oh! what shall I do? I do not think that any pilgrim has ever met with such thorns and briars as I have; they are not left to wander so long in Tribulation; they know little of my woes—of the anguish that is rending my heart—of the sorrows that are drinking up all my spirits! I am weary of my life; I am a burden to myself; my tears are my meat and my drink; the sorrows of my heart are enlarged; O! was ever any mortal sorrow like unto my sorrow; O! what have I already endured in Tribulation! I cannot endure the like again! But stop, why is it that my sufferings have been great? Ah! I well know the reason! If, like other pilgrims, I had said, when difficulties presented themselves to my view; 'Lord, thy will be done;' instead of looking to the right hand, and to the left, to see how those difficulties might be avoided, then I should have known something of happiness even in Tribulation; and shall I wander again? But would it be wandering to go in this way? Perhaps it would not; it does not appear like a by-path; and, as Plausable says, it may have been cast up on purpose; but then it is not the direct road, it is not straight forward, I must turn to enter it; but then, can I proceed in the way right before me? It is nearly choked up with thorns and briars, that grow on each side; O what shall I do! Did I read the words in my book correctly? I will turn to them again:—'If ye wholly set your face to enter into this road, and go there, then it shall come to pass that the evil which ye feared, shall overtake you, and the things whereof ye are afraid shall come upon you there; there shall ye meet with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence; and none shall escape from the evil that I shall bring upon them; and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse and a reproach.'—Ah! it is indeed clear, notwithstanding all that Plausable may say—notwithstanding the fair appearance of the road itself,—that I ought not to take one step in it. O! what shall I do!"

She looked at the briars and thorns and saw in her path the Lord the Prince. He looked at her and said: "If you wish to be plunged deeper in Tribulation; if you wish to have difficulties to encounter of which as yet you know but little; if you wish to spend the remainder of your days in bitterness of soul; if my blessing, my presence are not desired by thee, then follow Plausable."

When he had so said, He commissioned Grace and Everlasting-Love to attend her very closely, and they spoke of Him in strains so exalted, that she sprang forwards, exclaiming: "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest!"

Sorrowful's heart so entirely accorded with the last words she uttered, that she passed with ease over those thorns which she had before so greatly dreaded; and although they wounded her a little, yet she scarcely was aware of it.

She now entered Self-Denial a pleasant country, and one in which none who love their Prince can be miserable. Here she was so happy as to be a wonder to herself; here, day after day, she walked with her Lord, and with Grace and Everlasting-Love. The enemies who used most to distress her, were kept at a distance, or if they were near, she saw them not. It is true that Mistrust would sometimes get near enough to tell her that this happiness could not last long; and she herself often feared that it would not. But not only day after day, but week after week, and even month after month, her bliss continued, to her joyful surprise. The sun shone brightly, the birds sang sweetly, and flowers of lovely appearance were on each side of the way. Her Lord was daily with her, and daily was she comforted. She would sometimes stand still, not from any desire to halt in her race, but in order to view the surrounding country; she would then think of her past wanderings, her past miseries, and contrast the past with the present;