

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, February 3rd, 1878.—Jehoshaphat Reproved.—2 Chron. xix. 1-9.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."—2 Chron. xix. 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xviii. Tuesday, 2 Chron. xix. 1-11. Wednesday, 2 Kings viii. 16-27. Thursday, vs. 1; Matthew xix. 23-30. Friday, vs. 2; 2 Chron. xvi. 7-10. Saturday, vs. 2; Ephesians v. 6-16. Sunday, Job xxi. 14-40.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The return of the king. Vs. 1. II. Reproved by Jehu. Vs. 2. III. Commended. Vs. 3. IV. Care for public justice. Vss. 4-11.

QUESTIONS.—Why was the alliance of Jehoshaphat with Ahab strange? What marriage led the way to it? What did Jehoshaphat consent to do? What seems to have been his chief fault?

I. The Return of the King. Vs. 1.—Had Jehoshaphat learned anything by experience?

II. Reproved by Jehu. Vs. 2.—Whom does Jehu resemble? Compare John the Baptist (Luke iii. 19); Peter (Acts iii. 14, 15); Paul, Acts xxiv. 25.

III. Commended by Jehu. Vs. 3.—For what was Jehoshaphat commended? Ought a man to censure if he withholds just praise?

IV. Care for Public Justice. Vss. 4-11.—To what does Jehoshaphat now give special attention? What would he have all magistrates remember? What does he say of the great Ruler of the world? What court does he now create? Why?

Where has this lesson taught us that God is "good to his erring children"? What intimacies with the ungodly are to be shunned?

The time of a man's deliverance is an opportunity for his instruction. Vs. 2.—Jehu's question is a grand one for the guidance of human conduct. Vs. 2.

JEHOSHAPHAT IN ALLIANCE WITH AHAB.

—Of all the strange alliances formed on earth, no one was ever more unaccountable than that between Jehoshaphat, the reformer, and Ahab, the corrupter, of the people of God. An unwise marriage was at the bottom of it, for Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. 2 Kings viii. 16-27. Jehoshaphat possibly had given his consent to this in the hope of securing an enduring peace between Judah and Israel. The fault of his character is seen in this to have been an easy pliability. Accordingly, he went to Samaria; was most hospitably entertained by Ahab and his court; was induced to pledge the aid of Judah in a conquest on foot by Ahab, the king of Israel. Still, Jehoshaphat had good in him. He would first inquire of the Lord. Then followed the contrary opinion of Ahab's prophets, and that of Micaiah, the prophet of the Lord. The battle came. Jehoshaphat was in distress and cried to the Lord, and the Lord delivered him; but Ahab was shot by a random arrow, and died. Worldly intimacies and flatteries had thus endangered Jehoshaphat's honor and life. He was saved, however, in the moment of danger, "yet so as by fire."

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—King of Judah.—Of the kingdom of Judah in distinction from the kingdom of Israel. Returned.—From the battle described in chap. xviii. In peace—"Safe and sound." Compare Micaiah's prediction in xviii. 16.

Verse 2.—Jehu.—Quite another person, and different character from the Jehu of 2 Kings ix; x. Hanani—Also a prophet, who had held to Asa the same relation as Jehu now held to Jehoshaphat. xvi. 7-10. The ungodly—(Singular); that is, Ahab. Them that hate—(Plural) including Jezebel and her sympathizers. 1 Kings xxi, xxii. Wrath upon thee—Not here the feeling of God's wrath, but the effects of it in judgment. See xx. 1-4; 35-37; xxi. From before the Lord—His calamities were not less from God because coming in a perfectly natural way.

Verse 3.—Good things found in thee—See xvii. The fruits, and thus the evidence of a heart which, though in the wrong, was in its chief bent, right. Groves—The wooden pillars in the sanctuaries of the Phœnician goddess Ashtoreth.

Verse 4.—Went out again.—When he

provided for the instruction of the people. xvii. 6-9. Beer-sheba—Mount Ephraim—The southern and northern limits respectively of the kingdom of Judah. "From Dan to Beer-sheba," was from the northern to the southern limit of the two kingdoms conjointly. Brought them back, etc. His alliance with Ahab, and the consequent war with Syria, had helped on corruption.

Verse 5.—Set [appointed] judges.—See on the original provision for such arrangement Deut. xvi. 18. Jehoshaphat probably constituted new courts additional to those in existence. Fenced cities—These were the most important, and hence natural centres of population. City by city—A court in each.

Verse 6.—Judge not for man, etc. Judah was essentially a theocracy, since its fundamental law was that given at Sinai. In fact, all true law rests at last upon God for its authority, and hence must be obeyed for "conscience sake." Rom. xiii. 5. With you—To note, and hence to approve, or to condemn, as Judge of the judges, and of their judgment. Compare Eph. vi. 9.

Verse 7.—The fear of the Lord be upon you—The reverent regard for God. No iniquity, etc. See Deut. i. 17; xvi. 19. The judge could please God only as he was like God.

Verse 8.—In Jerusalem—A Supreme court of appeal here, because this was the nation's capital, and the seat of government, civil and religious. Levites, Priests, the Chief of the fathers—As all these were men most conversant with the law in both of its departments. Compare Ex. xviii. 17-26; Deut. i. 15-18. When they returned, etc. After "controversies" there should be a period; instead of "when," we should read "and"; "they" refers not to the judges, or the causes in trial, but to Jehoshaphat and his attendants, who had made the tour mentioned in vs. 4.

The subject of our lesson is "Jehoshaphat Reproved." The lesson brings before us the reproof, as respects its origin, its substance, and its fruit.

I. The Origin of the Reproof. Verses 1, 2. (1.) The king's own fault was the meritorious cause. If he had not sinned, he would not have needed rebuke. (2.) God's fatherly care of the king was the true source and fountain. (3.) The agency of communication was a prophet. As speaking in God's name and authority, he was above the king, above all earthly office and dignity. (4.) The occasion was the return of the king in disgrace, and so in circumstances which humbled his mind and enforced the message.

II. The Substance of the Reproof. Verses 2, 3.—It had two parts—blame and praise. (1.) The blame. In this is set forth the man's sin, and God's judgment. The father Asa had sinned in joining Syria against Israel; Jehoshaphat, in joining Israel against Syria. God would have his servant keep clear of alliance with both powers working for wicked ends. The lesson is ever new and vital. Keep clear of the lead of bad men, and stand in Christian integrity, even if you stand alone. (2.) The praise. Jehoshaphat had been drawn into sin, contrary to the real ruling principle of his character. Hence God regarded him as an erring son, not as a confirmed rebel.

III. The Fruit of the Reproof. Verses 4-9. (1.) He now kept his place; "dwelt at Jerusalem." His true policy was defence; to abide in his own capital. (2.) He gave new care to his own proper business. Instead of looking after other nations to destroy them, he looked after his own to improve it. It is good for a man to "mind his own business." (3.) This new zeal led him to provide for the better administration of justice in the country at large. Vss. 5-7. A sound piety loves a sound morality. (4.) The attempt was wisely carried out. A court of final appeal was constituted by the right man, at the right place, and the charge of the king to the judges of the court might well be read every morning and evening by every judge of every court, high and low in all the earth. Vss. 8-11.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February, 10th, 1878.—Jehoshaphat helped by God.—2 Chron. xx. 14-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."—2 Chron. xx. 20.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Jehoshaphat had done wrong, by helping the wicked king, Ahab, to fight the king of Syria. Ahab was killed in the battle; but though Jehoshaphat returned safely, he did not come back, as he had done before, with the blessing of the Lord. Before he entered the city he was met by a prophet, named Jehu. He was the son of Hanani, whom Asa had put in prison for reproving him. But Jehu was not afraid to reprove Jehoshaphat, in the name of the Lord. He said, sternly, to the king, "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." This was a dreadful thing for Jehoshaphat to hear. But the Lord was so kind as to let Jehu praise as well as blame: "Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God." Jehoshaphat did not do like Asa, and sent the prophet who had brought the Lord's reproof to prison; but he tried to undo some of the wrong he had done. He went all over the land, and tried to bring the people back to God. He appointed judges for the cities, and ordered them to do their duty faithfully, in the fear of the Lord. For, said he, "Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord."

Boys' Department.

Little by Little.

"Uncle," said Tom one day, "it seems to me your things don't look as well as they might." They were in the garden, and "the things" the boy had his eyes on were the currant bushes.

"I don't expect they do," replied his uncle; "I'm no great hand at a garden. Well, sir, what can you improve?"

"I can try on the currants," said Tom. "They want to be trimmed out and the wood cut off, and the right suckers trained. Don't you ever dig around them, and put ashes on the roots?"

His uncle had never done these things, and did not know that they ought to be done. He thought, he said, "Currants took care of themselves."

"But they can be cared for," said Tom, "and do all the better."

"Suppose you try, boy," said his uncle.

His uncle did not believe much would come of it, but he had reason to change his mind. Much did come of it. All at once, it seemed to him, for time goes fast to an old man, his bushes were loaded with fruit, fine large currants, such as his garden had not seen for many a day, if ever before. People when they walked into the garden exclaimed, "What splendid currants you have!"

"That boy knows how to take care of his gold dust," said his uncle to himself, and sometimes aloud.

Tom went to college, and every account they heard of him he was going ahead, laying a solid foundation for the future.

"Certainly," said his uncle, "certainly. That boy, I tell you, knows how to take care of his gold dust."

"Gold dust!" Where did he get gold dust? He was a poor boy. He had not been to California. He never was a miner. Where did he get gold dust? Ah! he has seconds and minutes, and these are the gold dust of time—specks and particles of time, which boys and girls and grown-up people are apt to waste and throw away. Tom knew their value. His father, or minister, had taught him that every speck and particle of time was worth its weight in gold; and his son took care of them as if they were. He never spent them foolishly, but only in good bargains; "for value received" was stamped on all he passed away. Take care of your gold dust.

"By little and little," is the true secret of gaining knowledge.

A very busy man who had very little time for reading, or study, was asked by a friend how it happened that he knew so much more than other people. "O," said he, "I never had time to lay in a regular stock of learning, so I save all the bits that come in my way, and they count up in the course of a few years."

One sometimes observes an intelligent boy, who is always on the lookout to

learn what he can. While waiting in a newspaper office for a package, he will notice how a mailing machine is made to do its work, and if he is sent to the florist's he will be able to tell you many things which he noticed there. In these and a hundred other ways, such lads are educating themselves.

The same rule of "little by little" is equally true in the accumulation of a fortune. Rome was built of single bricks piled up one by one. The little coral insect seems too small and weak to accomplish much, and yet it labors on, and at last rears those great reefs, which serve as breakwaters against the mighty ocean.

Not only are all good things secured to us "little by little," but people accomplish their ruin in the same way. It is by small concessions to evil, and slight indulgences, that the final destruction of life is accomplished. The child who steals lumps of sugar and apples will go on to steal bigger things.

In one of Gulliver's tales of his fabulous travels he tells us of being pinned down to the earth by pigmies no bigger than his thumb. But they came upon him by thousands. They bound him finger by finger with tiny ropes no thicker than a hair. Each one he could have broken in an instant, but altogether they bound him as fast as if he had been tied with cables and fettered with iron.

In a Carolina forest of a thousand acres you can scarcely find a tree that is not dead and crumbling to decay. No fire has swept over it, lightning scathed those naked, bleaching pines. This ruin was wrought by a little insect's larvae, no larger than grains of rice. What a hundred axemen could not accomplish by years of hard labor this seemingly insignificant insect sent its feeble offspring to perform. One alone could have little power, it is true. But millions were marshalled, and all the skill of man could not stay their course.

Such is the power of little sins. By performing the same act over, for even two or three times in succession, the habit is formed, from the dominion of which it is hard to deliver one's self again.

"Little by little," an acorn said, As it slowly sank in its mossy bed; "I am improving every day, Hidden deep in the earth away." Little by little each day it grew; Little by little it sipped the dew; Downward it sent out a thread-like root; Up in the air sprung a tiny shoot. Day after day, and year after year, Little by little the leaves appear; And the slender branches spread far and wide. Till the mighty oak is the forest's pride.

"Little by little," said a thoughtful boy, "Moment by moment, I'll well employ, Learning a little every day, And not spending all my time in play. And still this rule in my mind shall dwell.

"Whatever I do I'll do it well; Little by little, I'll learn to know The treasured wisdom of long ago; And one of these days perhaps we'll see That the world will be the better for me." And do you not think that this simple plan Made him a wise and useful man? —The King's Ferry-Boat.

Boy Wanted.

I went once to an intelligent man of business to apply for a situation on behalf of a friend of mine out of employment. I was able to give a good account of my friend's qualifications, and I did so.

"Send him along," said the business man, "and let me see him. If he is what you describe, we want him a great deal more than he wants us."

It does not matter for my purpose, but as I am writing for boys, and boys always like to know how things come out, I may as well tell them that my friend got the situation, and made a valuable assistant.

The fact is, boys, what this business man said is true almost always and almost everywhere. Situations are hunting for men far more keenly and far more constantly than men for situations. And the same thing is true in respect to boys. There is always a boy wanted. "Is there?" you brighten up and say. "If that's so, then I'm the chap they are looking for."

Hold! not so fast, my lad! Let us see. Are you honest? Yes. How do you know you are? You never steal? Very good so far. That means, I suppose, you never did steal. But there is

many and many a boy—and man too, for that matter—that never stole, who yet is not honest. They have not had the chance, or not the temptation; that is all. Put them to the test. Alas for their virtue! The question is not simply, "Did you ever steal?" but "Would you ever?" You are sure, perhaps; but it takes time for us to be sure about you. We shall have to try you. We want, first of all, an honest boy. He must be a boy that would not steal. Boy wanted.

Again, are you truthful? Do you never tell a falsehood? Did you never? Would you never? How near can you come to telling a lie, and not quite tell one? Have you done anything smart in this line?—ever deceived your mother, your brother, your playmate, and bragged of it? Well, then, perhaps, indeed, you never told a lie outright, but you are not truthful, nevertheless. Did you ever hear of the gentleman that advertised for a coachman? He asked each comer, "How near can you drive to the edge of a precipice and not go over? One man could drive within two feet, another within one foot, another within six inches, still another would undertake to shave along within an inch. None of these would suit. Finally a man came that said, "I would keep as far away as I could." "You're my coachman!" exclaimed the gentleman; and he hired him.

The boy that keeps as far from a lie as he can, is the boy for us. Boy wanted.

Are you faithful? Now, a modest boy may claim to be honest and claim to be truthful without damage to his modesty. But to the question, "Are you faithful?" a modest boy can only say, "Try me." Still, my lad, if you are not faithful, you are neither truthful nor honest; for if you accept a trust or undertake to do an errand, you virtually, by so doing, promise to be faithful, whether you promise in words or not. If you are not faithful, you fail in truthfulness. You have not kept your promise—your virtual promise—and you are not honest, for you have not done right by the person whom you undertook to serve. You did not, indeed, steal the money from his letter, but not putting his letter in the office when you should, you have, perhaps, done him more damage than the loss of so much money twice over. We want a boy who will do what he undertakes to do when he undertakes to do it, and as he undertakes to do it. That is faithfulness. Boy wanted.

Are you capable? Modesty forbids you to say, "Yes," and truthfulness forbids you to say, "No." Well, keep silent; then we shall not think the less of you for holding your tongue.

And, by the way, can you hold your tongue? This is an important talent in a boy—in a man as well, but it is a little rare in a boy. Do not talk too much. Do not brag. Do not tell long stories. Do not let out secrets that you happen to know. A quiet boy—one that goes about his work and says nothing—is a treasure. Do not ask many questions. Watch with eye and ear and keep up a "terrible thinking," but keep a close mouth. Learn silently. Make few excuses. Do the thing. Be sure there is a boy wanted. Do you be the boy, —W. O. Wilkinson, D. D.

LENDING A PIE.—"Mother," said Johnny, "haven't you a pie that you would like to lend to the Lord?"

"Why, Johnny, what do you mean?" she asked, for she thought at first it was a joke.

"Don't you remember," he said, "that the Bible says, 'He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord?' I don't believe old Betsey has had a pie for a long time, and I thought perhaps you would like to have me take one over to her; then you would be lending to the Lord, you know."

One of mother's best pies went to old Betsey; only she was sorry she had not thought of sending her one before. But if she had she would have lost Johnny's way of "putting it."—Moravian.

The Gypsy ring, in which a precious stone is buried in the heavy gold, leaving the surface of the jewel only exposed, is now the fashionable engagement ring.

At a recent fashionable wedding, in New York city, the bride was presented with a bouquet of three hundred flowers, each flower of a different variety.