

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, September 8th, 1878.—The Good Samaritan.—Luke x. 30-37.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 33-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Gal. v. 14.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke x. 25-37. Tuesday, vs. 31; 1 Samuel xv. 10-23. Wednesday, John iv. 1-26. Thursday, Luke ix. 51-56. Friday, Prov. xxiv. 17-23. Saturday, Matthew xxv. 31-46. Sunday, James ii. 13-18.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. An object of pity. Vs. 30. II. A pitiless priest. Vs. 31. III. A pitiless and cruel Levite. Vs. 31. IV. A pitiful Samaritan. Vss. 33-35. V. Question and answer. Vss. 33-35.

QUESTIONS.—Where was Jericho? What kind of a road was it between Jerusalem and Jericho? What question had the lawyer just asked? Vs. 25.

I. Vs. 30.—What was the extent of the robber's abuse of this sufferer?

II. Vs. 31.—Where had the priest possibly been? How did he show his inhumanity? What truth had he forgotten? 1 Sam. xv. 22.

III. Vs. 32.—Where had the Levite possibly been? How did he surpass the priest in inhumanity?

IV. Vss. 33-35.—Why was the Samaritan the last man we should have looked to here for mercy? What acts of mercy did he perform?

V. Vss. 36, 37.—What is the Saviour's question? What is the lawyer's reply? What name will he not pronounce?

Who is our neighbor, according to this lesson? Who has perfectly set forth the character of the good Samaritan? How we may imitate him?

The scene of the parable is laid somewhere on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, eighteen miles apart. Robbers have ever been the terror of that precipitous way. Only just before the Christian era Pompey undertook the destruction of their strongholds in the mountains that “lie all about, as the waves of a stormy sea suddenly congealed and petrified.” No traveler can pass the cliff, ravines, and caverns all along this road, on its irregular descent of three thousand feet, without being impressed with the wildness and desolation of nature on every hand.

EXPOSITION.—The introduction to the lesson is found in vss. 25-29, and must be studied with care in order to make intelligible the Scripture of the lesson. Compare also Matt. xxii. 34-40; Mark xii. 28-34, where a similar but different occurrence is narrated.

Verses 30.—Jesus answering.—The answer following is known as “The parable of the good Samaritan.” He disarmed prejudice, and led the man to commit himself to an unwelcome truth. The Saviour often adopted this course. The question is that in vs. 29, “Who is my neighbor?” The questioner was a “lawyer,” that is, a recognized teacher of the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament. A certain man. A Jew, as the connection implies, and as would be naturally understood by the lawyer. Thieves. Robbers. Stripped. Hence having nothing with which to purchase help. Wounded. “Inflicted blows” till “half dead,” and hence unable to help himself.

Verses 31.—By chance.—The coincidence was that one able to help came where one needing help was lying, so constituting an opportunity. A certain priest. Going in the same direction, at Christ's time many priests lived at Jericho, “who, when their turn came, discharged their service at Jerusalem,” and then returned (comp. 2 Kings ii. 1-22), we may suppose this priest to have come directly from the offering of sacrifice. Thus to his office would be added this recent discharge of its duties, both marking him as the one who should now show in deed the spirit of his religion. Passed by on the other side. Literally, passed by over against him.

Verses 32.—A Levite.—Also a religious officer, but subordinate to the priests. Hence, like the priest, he might be expected to act out the spirit of the Jewish religion, though of the priest as the superior, it might be most confidently expected. Came and looked on him. This act indicates that the Levite was less heartless than the priest. His sympathy, which drew him to the man,

proved itself too weak for the task. There was danger, and haste was safety. The priest had no sympathy; the Levite too little. Where you might fairly have looked for the most you found the least.

Verses 33.—A certain Samaritan.—The Samaritans were not Jews, but heathen in origin. 2 Kings xvii. 24; Luke xvii. 18. The intense contempt of the Jews for the Samaritans is well known, and their mutual hatred proverbial. See ix. 51-56; John iv. 9. A Samaritan was thus the very last one of all mankind, even of all the heathen, from whom a Jew would have expected a good deed toward any one, and, above all, toward a Jew, wounded or whole, rich or well, “half dead,” dead or alive. Journeyed. Was journeying on an extensive journey, and hence still less likely, or able to give the needed time and attention to the case. Had compassion on him. The word so translated in the New Testament is used for the deep tender pity of God, Christ, and Christians, for those in need. i. 78; 2 Cor. vi. 12; Col. iii. 12, etc. The Gospel seems to have created this rich meaning for both the noun and the verb. Comp. vii. 13; xv. 20; Matt. xv. 32; xx. 34. This strong word, and this special use of this word, put in the most favorable light the Samaritan state of mind.

Verses 34.—Went to him.—Such pity always irresistibly draws one to its object, and all the more, the more repulsive, and therefore pitiable that object. Bound up his wounds. Some would say, with his [the Samaritan's] own clothing torn up for the purpose. Perhaps so, and if he had nothing else with which to make bandages, certainly so. Pouring in oil and wine. Trench says: “Having first [that is, before binding] poured in wine to cleanse them [the wounds], and then oil to assuage their smart, and to bring gently the sides of them together, these two being costly, but well known and highly esteemed remedies throughout the East.” See Isaiah i. 6. It has been suggested that travelers carried oil in order to anoint their limbs when weary. Gen. xxviii. 18. The wine, of course, was carried for drinking. Set him on his own beast. Adding to the Samaritan's delay and consequent danger of which, however, such “compassion,” refuses to take note. An inn. Alford says: “This is the only place where an inn, as we understand the word, a house for the reception of travelers, kept by a host, as distinguished from an empty caravansary [ii. 7] is mentioned. Took care of him. Personal attention. While it was possible, he preferred to give his own care. This is the method of such compassion. Besides by doing we deepen our sympathy, and so feel more and more like doing.

Verses 35.—Two pence.—Thirty cents, equal to the wages of two days' labor. Take care of him. Making provision for an effectual care and cure, a total full saving.

Verses 36.—Which one, etc.—Jesus has completed his parable. He has brought out into the clear light the principle by which the lawyer's question can be answered. He has thus furnished material by which the lawyer may, nay must, answer his own question. Hence Jesus now puts to him a question which he can answer in but one way, and which thus shuts him up to an answer of his own question very different from that which he expected, wanted, or would otherwise have accepted from Jesus. Here is the consummate art of teaching as practiced by the Great Teacher.

Verses 37.—He that shewed mercy on him.—He does not say “the Samaritan,” as though with a Jew's prejudice he could not bring himself to use that hated word where praise was to be given. Go, and do thou likewise. See, for an explanation of this, vs. 29, which states the lawyer's motive in asking his question, namely, the desire to justify himself.

The parable presents help needed, help refused, and help rendered. Its lesson is one of doctrine and of duty.

I. The Parable.—Verses 30-35.—(1.) Need. Perishing need. No help, no hope in the man himself. (2.) Neglect. This may come of utter indifference, or of a too slender sympathy. (3.) Succor. Compassion makes one give self first, and then all which self has, so far as need goes.

II. The Lesson.—Verses 36, 37.—(1.) The doctrine. Love, Christian love

which fulfills God's law, knows no limits save opportunity, possibility, and righteousness. It is self-forgetful, self-denying, and self-sacrificing. This especially is true in the work of bringing to God our perishing fellow-men, even as Christ has so shown it. (2.) The duty. It is not enough to know of the right spirit and right action, we must have both. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 15th, 1878.—Impunity in Prayer.—Luke xi. 5-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”—Luke xviii. 1.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

The Good Samaritan.

A lawyer who wanted to try what Jesus would say asked him, “Master, what shall I do to have eternal life?” Jesus asked what was written in the law. The lawyer answered: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.” Jesus told him he had answered right. Then the lawyer said, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered by telling him this story: A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was met by robbers, who took everything he had, even his clothes, and beat him and left him half dead by the roadside. A priest happened to come that way; but when he saw the wounded man, he crossed to the other side. Then a Levite came near enough to look on his sad state, but he, too, passed by on the other side. Then came a man from Samaria, one whom a Jew would not treat as a neighbor. This Samaritan was far from home; but when he saw the man, he felt very sorry for him, and went and tied up his wounds, and washed them with wine and poured oil on to ease the pain; then he set him on his own beast and took him to an inn. He nursed him all night; and when he had to leave the next day, he called the landlord and gave him some money to take care of the sick man, and told him if he spent any more he would pay it when he came again. Which one of those three, do you think, was the good neighbor? Jesus said, “Go thou and do likewise.”

Temperance.

A Touching Tale.

The following beautiful and touching tale was told at a meeting in New York, to hear the experience of reformed men. A drunkard, who had run through his property, returned one night to his unfurnished home. He entered his unfurnished hall, anguish was gnawing at his heart-strings, and language is inadequate to express his agony as he entered his wife's apartment, and there beheld the victims of his appetite—his lovely wife and darling child.

Morose and sullen he seated himself without a word; he could not speak, he could only look upon them. The mother said to the angel by her side, “Come, my child, it is time to go to bed,” and the babe, as was her wont, knelt by her mother's lap, and gazing wistfully into the face of her suffering parent, like a piece of chiseled statuary, slowly repeated her nightly orison; and when she had finished said to her mother: “Dear ma, may I now offer up one more prayer?”

“Yes, my sweet pet, pray.”

And she lifted up her tiny hands, closed her eyes and prayed:

“Oh God, spare, oh spare, my dear papa!”

The prayer was wafted up with electric rapidity to the throne of God. It was heard—it was heard on earth. The responsive “Amen!” burst from the father's lips, and his heart of stone became a heart of flesh. Wife and child were both clasped to his bosom, and with penitence he said: “My child, you have saved your father from a drunkard's grave. I will sign the pledge.”

What is the difference between a man and a tired dog? One wears a coat, the other pants.

The Boys and Tobacco.

There are some things to be said in favor of tobacco using. It is very fashionable. It prevails in what is called good society. The man who does not use tobacco is an exception in almost any community. Good men indulge in this habit—Christian men, Christian ministers, as well as men distinguished and successful in every branch of professional and business life. There is a social attractiveness about the habit. Lovers of tobacco find a certain companionship in a good cigar, which they think could not be found elsewhere.

But there are some very positive objections to tobacco using, aside from any debatable question of morals. One of the objections is its uncleanness. Cleanliness or purity of person is impossible to a tobacco user. The fragrance of a good cigar, while burning, is attractive to those who use tobacco, and to many who do not. But no one—literally no one—admires the stench which remains in the hair and clothing, and which befoils the breath of the tobacco user after the more delicate aroma of the weed has passed away. A tobacco user is invariably more or less offensive in his person to all nostrils not deadened by constant familiarity with the same fetid odor. He is rarely conscious of this fact. He has no idea how his entrance into a room fouls the air, and his very presence in a car, or his passing on the street, is notified to refined senses by his impurity of person. He little thinks of the diminished attractiveness of his presence to mother or wife, to sister or friend, through his impregnation with vile odors—unless, indeed, these loved ones have been brought by his habit to know no difference between the pure and the impure in fragrance. In any event, every tobacco user is, in a greater or less degree, offensive by his personal uncleanness to many whom he meets, if not to those whom he holds dearest. Most tobacco-using clergymen would be astonished if they knew to whom many in their congregations their stench of person renders them offensive; how many housekeepers open their doors and windows to air the rooms after the pastor's social call; how many persons shrink from the nauseating odors of the tobacco-perfumed study, when desiring religious counsel. For, be it remembered, that it is not his person alone which the user of tobacco renders offensive; his smoking-room and his whole house suffer similarly. Curtains, carpets, furniture, pictures, and books, all reek alike with the foul residuum of stale tobacco-smoke. There is no such thing as a clean room where tobacco is used. Said a gentleman recently, “I had a smoking gentleman at my house for some weeks. He smoked in the room which he used as a study. He has been away from us now five months. We have done everything in our power to cleanse that room; but on a damp day when the air is heavy, the smell of old tobacco-smoke is distinctly perceptible there.”

Another objection to tobacco using is its be-numbing influence on the nerves and sensibilities, especially of a boy or young man. Tobacco is a narcotic, even at first it seems to act as a stimulant. Its ultimate effect is rather to quiet than to stimulate the nerves. In doing this it tends to allay anxiety and discomfort. It makes its user measurably contented with his condition and attainments. This may, at first glance, seem to be an advantage, as preventing restlessness and worry. Indeed, the use of tobacco is advocated on the very ground; and the argument is made, that the lower classes in the community who can never hope to better their condition are kept in contentment by their pipes and cigars. But the average American youth needs all the nerves and all the brain power he possesses, to enable him to know his place and to fill it.

He ought not to have his sensibilities deadened. He ought not to be satisfied with his present attainments. If he has failed in his day's work, or in his day's hunting for work, he ought not to take an opiate or a narcotic, and lull his sensibilities to rest over his failure. He ought to face the facts with unclouded vision and with tense nerve, and determine on better things for to-morrow. Put two young men of the same ability side by side in a struggle to find occu-

pation, or to make progress in study or business, and if one deadens his nerves by tobacco, while the other is never half asleep in waking hours, the wide awake young man will soon be way ahead of the other. There are, in fact, many large business establishments where a young man who does not use tobacco is always chosen in preference to one who does, on the score of his increased ambition and quickness and practical efficiency through having all his nerves and sensibilities on the alert. The higher the intellectual and moral plane of the young man, the greater the evil from this benumbing influence of tobacco; for the more he needs strong impellings to carry him forward to his best accomplishment. When others are satisfied with him, a young man has least right to be satisfied with himself. When it does not seem necessary that he should work for a living, or work to keep ahead of his companions, he ought to be keenly alive to the necessity of working to do something worth living for, and to enable him to keep ahead of himself. Hence it is that tobacco using holds back so many young men of wealth and intellect and good moral character from doing as well as they can do—a great deal better and a great deal more than they do do. They sit and smoke, and think of how much they have done, and how much they intend to do, and how pleasant it is to live without doing all the time, and—they take another cigar, and are more than satisfied with doing nothing more. There is a deal of truth in the suggestion of old George Trask, that “a good cigar is the most satisfying thing in the world,” that “a young man while he is smoking doesn't even want salvation.” There are multitudes of boys and young men all about us, who are sure to be kept permanently upon a lower plane of performance and attainment because of their lack of ambition and unrest and determined energy through the quieting and becalming influence of tobacco on their nerves and sensibilities, when they ought to be wide awake to their duty and to their lack, and be struggling for success as for their lives. If their were no other reason why a fond mother should train her boy never to touch tobacco, it is enough that by keeping him from its use, she gives him a start before his companions who do use it, and helps him to have all his nerves and all his sensibilities and all his energies in their fullest and fairest play. Tobacco is the one thing which to-day keeps many a bright youth from the doing of his best work, and from the realization of his brightest possibilities.

And yet another objection to the habit of using tobacco is the bondage into which it brings a man. It is not merely that the habit itself is fastened on him so that, in most cases, he cannot get away from it if he would; but it is that he is bound and limited by it in his daily life, so that he must find time and place for it however he is circumstanced; and in meeting this necessity he is often compelled to choose between putting himself in the worst of company and in the most disagreeable of places, or he must make himself bad company, and the place where he is, disagreeable. It takes time to smoke a cigar, and more time to smoke five cigars. It is not always that a man can smoke in the presence of ladies, or in the common apartments of the home where he finds himself. If he is a guest where there is no smell of stale tobacco in the house he needs to leave pleasant companionships and go out of doors to enjoy his cigar, or be made uncomfortable by its lack. If he is at a hotel, or on a railroad train, he must seek the place of tobacco users, which is commonly a filthy apartment where are sure to be found the vilest occupants of the establishment, whoever else is there. If tobacco using were otherwise desirable, it would be indeed a pity that it forced a decent Christian man into the air and associations of the average smoking-car, and necessitated his remaining there, on a level, for the time being, in his tastes and pursuits, with those who are there assembled. If a refined and sensible mother had no other inducement to struggle and pray in dead earnest to keep her loved boy from the love of tobacco, she could find it in her desire to shield him from smoking-car influences and companionships. The tobacco user is in bondage by his habit to evil associations which he might otherwise avoid; and the necessity is, by that habit, upon him, of often separating himself from the influence of the purest and most refining society, and of having in their stead, influences which, as far as they go, are polluting and debasing.—Sunday School Times.