

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, April 21st, 1878.—Jeremiah in Prison.—Jeremiah xxxiii. 1-9.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 8, 9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."—Jeremiah xxxiii. 3.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Jeremiah i. Tuesday, Jeremiah ii. Wednesday, Jeremiah ix. Thursday, Jeremiah xvii. Friday, Jeremiah xxvi. Saturday, Romans ii. Sunday, Psalm cxxxv.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jeremiah imprisoned. Vs. 1. II. The promise of God. Vs. 2-9.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Jeremiah? Where born? In whose reign was he called to the prophetic office? Who reigned in Judah after Josiah?

Vs. 1. Who was king when Jeremiah was put in prison? Jer. xxxii. 1, 2.

Vs. 2-9. By what name did God reveal himself to Moses? What does this name import? How was the siege of Jerusalem conducted? Why was it useless for the Jews to resist the Assyrian besiegers? In spite of their sorrows, what does God promise to show them? How is prophecy distinguished from history? What does God say he will bring to his people? Have these promises as yet been fulfilled?

Where does this lesson teach the efficacy of prayer? Where that of God's forgiveness of sins?

"JEREMIAH WAS the most prominent personage in a period of deepest distress and humiliation of the Jewish theocracy. He witnessed, one by one, the departure of all its prospects of reformation, and deliverance from impending national ruin. Standing alone in a hostile world, fearless and immovable, he delivered for forty years his morning warnings and scathing rebukes, and thus brought upon himself the charge of treachery and desertion. He suffered the pains of the stocks and the darkness of imprisonment. He sometimes quite despaired, and showed torment from perpetual pain. Yet in the midst of his sorrow and gloom he beheld the dawn of a brighter day, of a new covenant of the gospel written in the heart." Jer. xxxi. 31.—Philip Schaff.

EXPOSITION.—We are to bear in mind that it had been nearly eighteen years since the first subjugation of Judah and Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the removal by him of some of the best part of the nation as captives to the far east. It had been ten years since the fruitless and foolish rebellion of Jehoiakim against Nebuchadnezzar, and a consequent second subjugation, and a removal of the mass of the best citizens. At this time the nation was miserably weak at best, and was also torn and distracted by two hostile factions of which one was for union, with Egypt in rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar and the will of God as revealed by Jeremiah and other prophets, while the other was for submission to God, and to the power which God had caused to have control over the nation.

Verse 1.—The word of the Lord [Jehovah].—The common formula to designate a message given to Jehovah to a prophet to be announced to others. The second time. Of the first we have an account in the preceding chapter. While he was shut up in the court of the prison. This was followed by a second similar imprisonment soon after (xxxvii. 11-15), which for a part of the time was far more rigorous and cruel (xxxviii. 1-13; xxix. 15-18). The king was largely under the control of the Egyptian party, whose counsels were against those of Jehovah and his prophet. God is not ashamed to visit his servants wherever they go or are found in his service. We think of John Bunyan.

Verse 2.—Here begins the message.—Thereof.—Of that which he saith. The meaning of this verse is that what Jehovah says, that he does: what he frames in purpose that he executes in deed. He is Jehovah, the Loving, Personal, Eternal, Almighty One, the I Am. Ex. iii. 14.

Verse 3.—Call unto me, etc.—A message not to Jeremiah directing him to pray for prophetic revelations as to the future (xxxii. 16-25), but to Israel to pray for the experience of the blessings about to be revealed. Mighty things. Literally inaccessible things, such as

were "cut off" from their approach at this time.

Verse 4.—For (because) thus saith the Lord.—The previous command to call on Jehovah for blessings is here justified by Jehovah's promise of these blessings. The God of Israel. God of the covenant. This city. Jerusalem. Of the kings of Judah. More strikingly exhibiting the present desolation, even the palaces now in ruins. Thrown down by the mounts, etc. The "mounts" were mounds raised by the besiegers over against the city wall to facilitate attack. "Sword" here as often represents all offensive weapons of war (xxxii. 24). The houses of the city and especially the massive stone palaces had been torn down to repair, or construct defences.

Verse 5.—They come, etc.—We have to understand the word "concerning," in vs. 4, as virtually extending in force over this entire verse, as though it read: Concerning those who come, etc. To fill them [the house], etc. The result to the Jews of their vain endeavor to withstand the enemy. Dead bodies of men. Of the men of Judah, their "dead bodies," in contrast with their previous life in the houses. I [Jehovah] have slain, etc. Giving the moral cause, and ultimate agency in their slaughter. Fury. Not the madness of blind passion, but the intensity of holy indignation. Hid my face. The token of displeasure.

Verse 6.—Here begins the revelation proper. Health. Literally the long bandage used for wounds. Cure. Following the use of the bandage. I will cure them. The inhabitants of the city, not the houses. The same one who slew cures, and in fact the two works make one consistent whole. Will reveal, etc. In the same sense as "show," in vs. 3, by causing an experience of the blessings. Truth. Peace, which is solid, is given only in truth of being, harmony of man with God.

Verse 7.—Cause the captivity, etc., to return.—The flower of the nation were already captives, and another multitude mass were soon to follow. This captivity, that is, these captives, should be brought back. Israel, that is, the kingdom of Israel, is added to Judah, because the return was to include men from the ten tribes also. Build them. Cause them, that is, the redeemed captives, to become again organized into a body.

Verse 8.—Sin, and consequent guilt, had caused the nation's ruin. Hence the recovery could be only by cleansing and pardon, by regeneration and justification.

Verse 9.—It.—The nation as rebuilt. A name of joy. The name expressing the object as to its inmost nature. An individual, or a society, that is wholly cleansed and wholly pardoned, is in nature the perfection of joy. Before all the nations of the earth. These, and the remaining words, are most naturally understood as looking ultimately to the Messianic times, and as promising that all the nations shall be blessed in Christ.

The topic of our lesson is God's promise of redemption. We have (1) its medium, (2) its purpose, (3) its occasion, and (4) its contents.

I. The Medium.—Verse 1.—(1.) A prophet chosen of God though dishonored of men, thus chosen and thus dishonored for the very same cause, namely, his faithfulness. (2.) Walled out from men, but not from God. (3.) The prophet can be bound, but not God, nor his word. (4.) A feeble instrument used for a mighty work: that which is naught to make naught of the high and proud. Always is God in the majority, though he stands alone, and he is, therefore, sure to be with the majority who is on God's side.

II. The Purpose.—Verses 2, 3.—(1.) To secure conversion from sin. The Jews had called upon everything, and everybody, except God. They are now urged to turn to him. (2.) Self-interest is made a motive. The experience of good in contrast with present evil is promised. (3.) The greatness of this motive is urged. The gospel does not consist of trifles. (4.) The character and power and past work of God insure the promise, and enforce the motive.

III. The Occasion.—Verses 4, 5.—(1.) In general the promise of redemption was occasioned by the misery already experienced. (2.) From this misery their own efforts could not deliver them. They fought, but only to fail and fall. (3.) God wills this failure of all such

attempts at salvation as reject him. "Whom I have slain." Self-righteousness is an offence to God. (4.) The procuring and meritorious cause of ruin is one's own sin, and not an arbitrary decree.

IV. The Contents.—Verses 6-9.—(1.) The promised redemption exactly and completely reverses the miserable condition. Healing instead of wounds; peace and truth instead of war and vanity; restored freedom instead of captivity in exile; reorganization instead of the chaos of dissolution. (2.) Again the redemption removed and reversed the causes of the miserable condition. These causes were sin and guilt. (4.) The blissful blessing of redeemed Israel was to issue in the salvation of others. See Rom. xi. 12-15. Each saved soul becomes a Saviour of souls.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 28th, 1878.—The Rechabites.—Jeremiah xxxv. 12-19.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Will ye not receive instruction, to hearken to my words? saith the Lord."—Jeremiah xxxv. 13.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, was now king. Though Nebuchadnezzar had taken so many of the people to Babylon, Zedekiah might still have been happy, if he had done right. But he did evil. The Lord had given to Judah a good prophet, named Jeremiah, who began, even while good Josiah lived, to warn the people of the punishment which God would send. Jehoiakim had shut him up in prison; but he could not hinder him from speaking the Lord's message, even there. Zedekiah had not treated him badly at first: but when Jeremiah said to him "Thus saith the Lord, 'Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt surely be taken,'" then the king angrily sent Jeremiah to prison, as if that would prevent these things. However, he let the prophet walk about the prison court-yard. It was that, though the people must be taken captives to Babylon, they should afterward return, and their sins should be cleansed their wickedness forgiven, and they should again be a joy, and a praise and an honor; for all the earth should know how good the Lord was to them.

Months' Department.

How Burt Ford ran away.

BY KATE SUMNER.

"Jim-iny!"

It was Burt Ford that uttered that startling exclamation, as he suddenly darted off from Main street into a little alley-way. Just after his sudden exit a portly, well-dressed man, with a very disturbed, annoyed expression on his face, came walking up the street in close conversation with Jordan. And Jordan was proprietor of a very second-class liquor and gambling saloon. The unmistakable likeness between the first-mentioned gentleman and our young friend proclaimed them to be father and son.

Mr. Burton Ford was the wealthiest man in M., and his family moved in the very first circles. Indeed, there was no family in town so exclusive in their acquaintances as Mr. Ford's. Therefore, you must admit that it was a little surprising to see Mr. Ford on the street with a companion.

Mr. Ford's only son, Burt, could have explained it; how he had got into bad company, for Burt was not "exclusive" at all; how he had been in this fellow's saloon, drank a little himself, and treated his friends (?) a great deal. In short, how he had run up quite a bill which he had not money to pay, and dared not ask it of his father.

"Won't there be a row now!" said Burt to himself, as he issued from his hiding-place. "Guess I won't hurry home," he added, with a bitter smile on his usually frank, boyish face. And off he sauntered down the old river road. "Father's home by this time," thought he. "The girls are up-stairs in mother's room, and he will tell them all about it. Mother'll faint, most likely, and the girls will be horrified for fear I've disgraced them. Won't one of them care

anything about me." The bitter smile deepened on the boy's face until it would have made a mother's heart ache. "If they had ever loved me, any of them, I shouldn't be in this scrape."

For some time the boy went slowly on, buried in thought, and gradually as he went the look of troubled indecision on his face gave place to a more resolute expression. He had evidently decided upon some way out of his trouble. Whether or not it was the right way time will show. He turned his face to the city now. Was it home he was going to so rapidly? No, he soon turned off into a low, disagreeable-looking street, and stopped in front of the worst-looking house. Instead of going in, he gave a low whistle, in answer to which there appeared, presently, a dubious-looking youth.

"Come in," said he, evidently well pleased at the sight of his visitor, plainly his superior in social standing.

"No," answered Burt, shortly, "I only want to know when your uncle sails."

"To-morrow. You ain't!"

"Do you suppose he has got the boy he wanted?" interrupted Burt.

"Hadn't yesterday. The governor ain't going to let you go, is he?"

"No matter whether he is or not; just tell me where your uncle lives."

The address was given and copied, and Burt made a hasty farewell to his friend, who watched him off with wide-open eyes.

"Believe my soul the feller is a-goin' to run away. Precious fool if he does, when he's got a rich father," was his brief and decided comment as he went into the house.

Two hours later, the outward bound train held, crouched in the corner of one of the seats, his coat buttoned close up to his chin, his hat low over his eyes, our friend Burt. In front of him sat a fine looking man, "just about papa's age and size," thought Burt to himself, with a sharp twinge as he thought of the sorrow he was bringing to that father.

Somehow, Burt felt quite attracted to the man, and constantly kept his eyes on him. Presently another man joined him, and they fell to talking of various things. Burt, not being interested in the conversation, almost forgot his interest in the stranger. Suddenly he started up. What was that they were saying? He thought he heard the last comer say, "Ford is pretty near failing, isn't he?"

"Could it be papa he meant?" thought Burt, listening eagerly for the reply.

"Yes, I am afraid so. That Western firm's failure to-day will finish him, I guess. He's pretty blue to-night."

"His wife and daughters are pretty extravagant, and not much comfort to him, I guess," added the other.

Neither of them saw the half-vindictive assenting nod of the little boy just back of them, and the kind-faced man replied,

"I know it. It has been a great trial to Ford. I know him well. We used to be chums at college. That son of his, too, is a terrible disappointment to him. I was there once when the boy was mere infant. Ford took him in his arms to show him to me. 'I look to you for comfort and help in my old age,' he said. I can't tell you how bad I felt for Ford, when I heard to-day that the boy was in bad company, and on the quick road to ruin."

Burt did not hear any more; he leaned back in his seat, pulled his hat yet lower, while something very like unto tears rolled down his cheeks. By-and-by he roused himself somewhat. The train was slackening, it would stop soon at a station. The conductor stood waiting for him to show his ticket.

"How soon does the next train go back to M.?" he asked.

"There is a train waiting now," he replied.

Burt's face brightened, and the conductor passed on, wondering if he were not some repentant runaway. The train stopped, and Burt got out to step on board the home-bound train. The clock was striking nine when he landed once more in M. Up one street, down another, and around the corners Burt went with flying feet. Yes, there was a light at home in the library. Papa was waiting for him, probably.

But he had an errand to do first. He stopped at the large white house on the corner.

"Is Mr. Wilson in? I want to see him on business."

The servant half smiled as she led the boy in. Mr. Wilson looked up from his paper in surprise; this was the boy he intended to expel from his school to-morrow.

"Good evening, Mr. Wilson. I have come to have a little talk with you. I have been very bad lately, in school as well as out, and I guess you mean to expel me, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. I must confess that was my intention," smilingly answered the gentleman.

"But if I promised to do better, wouldn't you try me again?"

Mr. Wilson looked at the boy a moment, and saw he was in true earnest.

"Indeed I would, my boy."

"That's settled, then," said Burt, with a sigh of relief. "Now I want something else. Dick Thorpe is going away, you know. May I have his place, taking care of the school-house? I'll do it tiptop, sir."

If the good man had been astonished before, he was doubly so now.

"I want to help my father," added Burt, by way of explanation. "He's in a hard place just now, and I'm going to take hold and help. Will you let me have the place?"

"Yet," heartily responded the astonished teacher, as he gave his wayward pupil a warm hand-grasp that spoke volumes of good will.

"Thank you a thousand times, and good night"—and Burt was out of the house and up the hill in a twinkling.

Yes, there sat papa in the library. He looked so careworn and anxious, Burt slipped in quickly, and the poor man was so absorbed in his anxieties that he did not hear him until he stood by his chair.

"Papa!"

"Burt—O, Burton—My son!"

Burt was in his father's arms, and two pairs of eyes were very moist.

"Will you forgive me, papa? I've come back to be your comfort and help."

"Thank God," came fervently from the father's lips.

A week later, Mr. Ford called his son to him.

How do you like your new occupation, taking care of the school-house?"

"First-rate, I guess," replied Burt, hesitating a little, for he was not used to work.

"Well, my dear, I rather think you can give it up now. We shall pull through, after all."

Burt hesitated. Work was very distasteful to him, but finally he spoke with a desperate effort.

"Papa, I guess, if you are willing, I'd better keep on. You see, I'm awfully tempted to go back sometimes, and if I'm busy I won't be so likely to. And I believe I shall think better of myself, if I earn enough to pay you what you had to pay that fellow."

But neither "that fellow" nor any of his class ever had Mr. Ford's son Burton for a debtor again.—N. Y. Examiner.

Does any one care for Father?

Does any one care aught for father?
Does any one think of the one
Upon whose tired, bent shoulders,
The cares of the family come?
The father who strives for your comfort,
And toils on from day unto day,
Although his steps ever grow slower,
And his dark locks are turning gray.

Does any one think of the due bills
He's called upon daily to pay—
Milliner bills, college bills, doctor bills,
There are some kind of bill every day!
Like a patient horse in a tread-mill,
He works on from morning till night;
Does any one think he is tired?
Does any one make his home bright?

Is it right, just because he looks troubled,
To say he's as cross as a bear?
Kind words, little actions of kindness,
Might banish his burden of care.
'Tis for you he is ever so anxious,
He will toil for you while he may live,
In return he only asks kindness,
And such pay is easy to give.

Translate the sense of Scripture into your lives, and expound the Word of God by your works. Interpret it by your feet, and teach it by your fingers. That is, let your workings be Scripture exposition, as living epistles read and known all men.

A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.—Solomon.