

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, August 11th, 1878.—The Centurion's Faith.—Luke vii 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 6-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."—Matt. ix. 29.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke viii. 1-10. Tuesday, Matthew viii. 5-13. Wednesday, Isaiah xi. Thursday, Matt. xxvii. 54-66. Friday, Acts x. 1-48. Saturday, Acts xxvii. Sunday, Psalm ciii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jesus in Capernaum. Vs. 1. II. His healing power sought. Vss. 2-5. III. The centurion's faith. Vss. 6-8. IV. Jesus marvels at him. Vs. 9. V. Servant healed. Vs. 10.

QUESTIONS.—I. Jesus in Capernaum.—Vs. 1.—After what discourse, according to Luke, did Jesus enter Capernaum?

II. His Healing Power Sought.—Vs. 2-5.—What was a centurion? How did he at first seek aid? Why did he not go to Jesus himself? What arguments do these elders use?

III. The Centurion's Faith.—Vs. 6-8.—Whom does the centurion a second time send? To say what? In what do we see his genuine humility? In what his remarkable faith? On what was this faith founded. How does the centurion reason?

IV. Jesus Marvels at Him.—Vs. 9.—At what does Jesus marvel? What praise does he utter? What warning does he add? Matt. viii. 11, 12.

V. Servant Healed.—Vs. 10.—How perfect was the healing of the servant?

Summing up Questions.—Did any heathen receive miraculous power at Jesus' hands before the Roman centurion? What Scripture does this lesson verify? Matt. iv. 23; Mic. vi. 8; Mark ix. 23; Acts x. 34.

On the first Sabbath after the call of the four disciples at the seaside, Jesus entered the synagogue at Capernaum and taught. Here he healed a man possessed with a devil, because of which his fame spread rapidly through Galilee. Mark i. 28. During these days—for it was probably in midsummer—he called Levi the publican (Matthew) to be one of his followers, and afterwards formally chose twelve from the number of his disciples to be his apostles. The multitudes now gathered to him on a mountain side about a quarter of a mile from Capernaum. Here he delivered the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus then returned to Capernaum, followed by multitudes, and there healed the centurion's servant, of which our lesson speaks.

EXPOSITION.—The miracle recorded in John iv. 46-54, would seem to be not the same as this one. The difference is so striking that a contrast may well be drawn between the faith of that centurion and the unbelief of this nobleman.

Against all this the points of apparent identity are very slight, as the mere death of the sufferer, the healing at a distance and by a word, and the returning and finding him healed."

Compare parallel account in Matthew viii. 5-13.

Verse 1.—Ended.—Literally, "filled;" that is, fully spoken, or spoken in full. All his sayings. His words in vi. 20-49. called by some "the Sermon on the Plain" (vi. 17), and distinguished from "the Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. v. 1) as given by Matthew. Others regard this as the same with that. Into Capernaum. Situated on the northwest shore of the sea or lake, known by the three names of Tyberias, Gennesaret, and Capernaum. Its exact site is in dispute, but it was in the beautiful, fertile, and then populous region of Gennesaret. Here the Lord had taken up his abode in so far as any place can be said to have been his abode in the years of his ministry, when he "went about doing good." John ii. 12, etc.

Verse 2.—Centurion.—Commander of a hundred. Palestine was now under Roman government, and detachments of the Roman army were in the more important centres in order to secure obedience to Roman authority. "All the centurions mentioned in the New Testament of whom we learn anything beyond the strict line of their office, appear in a favorable light." Compare Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47; Acts x. xxvii.

Verse 3.—Sent unto him the elders of the Jews.—Matthew says the centurion "came to Jesus," on the principle that

we are said to do that which we cause to be done. Comp. vss. 6-8. The man knew that Jesus was a Jew, and a teacher of Jews, and thought that his request would be more likely to be granted if presented by Jews of influence than if he, a Gentile and heathen, and officer of the hated army of occupation, and not personally acquainted with Jesus, were to go in person. Both faith and humility appear, with sound practical sense, and a touch of the military appreciation of official courtesies and proprieties. Beseeching. Or, more exactly, requesting.

Verse 4.—When they came, etc.—The inhabitants of Capernaum, as a whole, were more friendly and believing than those of Nazareth, and these Elders may have shared in this favorable regard; but see Luke x. 15. Besought him instantly. Earnestly besought him. He may not have shown at once a readiness to go, and that for the very purpose of testing these officials.

Verse 5.—Loveth our nation.—A rare virtue, no doubt, in a Roman officer exercising authority in a subject province. The elders recognize Christ's love of his own nation, God's chosen people,—his genuine patriotism.

Verse 6.—Not far from the house.—Either seen from the house, or his approach reported to the centurion. Sent friends to him. The officer shows the highest possible respect in sending his friends (hence more than one), not his servants, and as his friends his equals. Trouble not thyself. Does not here refer to the very slight additional labor of coming to the house already nearly reached; but to the supposed annoyance, or offence to the sensibilities, which the great Jewish Rabbi might experience by coming into the house of a Gentile. I am not worthy, etc.—Recognizing the symbols of Jewish distinction between Gentiles and God's chosen people.

Verse 7.—Neither thought I, etc.—Honest, humble, reverential, believing words, explaining his conduct as already noticed. Say in [or by] a word, etc. By a word only, and without the addition of a personal presence and contact. This, to human appearance and judgment, at least, would be a greater display of Divine power, than a cure wrought when present. Hence the faith of the centurion is thus shown to have been the greater.

Verse 8.—I also, etc.—The I is in the Greek made emphatic. The word of military command, especially in a Roman army was final, and absolute.

Verse 9.—He marvelled at him.—The original allows both this translation, and also he admired him. Such a surprise would bring with it also admiration. No, not in Israel. Not even in Israel. As God's people prepared by their separation, their Scriptures, and especially by John's ministry, they ought to have had and shown the very highest faith; but this Gentile, soldier surpassed them all.

Verse 10.—Found the servant whole.—See Christ's word of healing in Matt. viii. 13. The Saviour seems not to have visited the man, but left him to himself, in answer to his prayer.

COURSE OF THOUGHT.—Our lesson brings before us a request, its spirit, and its treatment.

I. The Request.—Verses 1-5.—(1.) The place was Capernaum. The works of grace awaken the desire for grace. The contagion of religion. (2.) The time was after the call of apostles and the exposition of the law of the kingdom. Thus was opened the way for this miracle which brings clearly to light that mankind need and care to have the gospel grace. (3.) The beneficiary was only a slave and a Gentile, but, nevertheless, a MAN, with all of worth that belongs to the nature of man as man. (4.) The petitioner was a Gentile or heathen, but a child of God. (5.) The favor requested was a great one. (6.) The mode of request was indirect. Kindness to the Jews had conciliated the Jewish authorities, and these were thus made willing to intervene. We see here how a good deed sometimes comes back to the doer with its hands full of blessing.

II. The Spirit of the Request.—Verses 6-8.—(1.) As we have seen, it springs from love to his servant. The kindness of a kind master for a subordinate. (2.) The ordinances of God were respected. The centurion knew that the Jews were

the chosen people. He accepts it, he conforms to it. (3.) Humility went with this, and characterized his requests. He did not count himself worthy, and that not merely as being a Gentile, but as being a sinner. We might not have expected this in a military officer. (4.) Strong faith. The centurion had faith rather in the power of Christ than in his readiness to use the power.

III. The Treatment of the Request.—Verses 9, 10.—(1.) Jesus admired the spirit of the man. He loved to be trusted, to be honored, to be believed in. He did, and does, love this spirit.

(2.) He turned this Gentile's request into a rebuke to the more favored Jews. He would provoke them to a like faith. (3.) He granted the request at once, in full, gladly, with words of approbation and commendation. So does he love to do even now.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, August 18th, 1878.—The Widow of Nain.—Luke vii. 11-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."—Luke vii. 13.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Jesus had been preaching a sermon on a mountain. After he came down and had gone back to Capernaum, he was met by a soldier. This man was captain over a hundred men, and was called a centurion. The centurion had a servant whom he loved very much, who was lying at home so sick that they thought he was dying. When the centurion heard that Jesus was coming, he hoped that he would help him, but he was not a Jew, and thought that Jesus would listen to him sooner if he sent some Jews to ask him. The elders of the city went, for the centurion had done many favors for them. When they came to Jesus, they begged him to go instantly, for they said, "The man who wants you is a good man, and loves the Jews, and has even built us a synagogue." Jesus always goes where any one really wants him; when he came near the house, the centurion sent some of his friends out to explain that he knew that he was not worthy that Jesus should do so great a thing as to come into his house. Nor could it be useful: "Speak a word only, and my servant shall be healed; I know you can do this, for even my soldiers and servants obey when I speak the word. Jesus turned to those with him, and said, "I have not found so great faith in all Israel." When they went back into the house, they found that the servant was well.

Booths' Department.

Farmer Penniman's Dream.

BY MRS. E. M. STEWART.

"There's no need of a donation for Mr. Goodman," growled out Mr. Penniman, on his way home from church, after the notice of a proposed donation visit had been given; "he has salary enough without—six hundred dollars a year and a parsonage and garden spot—that's enough for any family to live on; why, it don't cost us near that, and we have six children, and they have only four. 'Twas real mean for Mr. Goodman to exchange, and get that man to give out the notice." And Mr. Penniman fretted away in the ear of his silent wife till they had nearly reached home, quite unmindful of the four children who, with wide open ears, were eagerly listening to every word.

Rev. Mr. Goodman was pastor of a little church in a small village of Massachusetts—a Home Missionary church composed of farmers, with a few members in the village, where two other churches of different denominations were also endeavoring to live and thrive.

Four hundred dollars was the nominal salary of Mr. Goodman from the Home Missionary Society. Of the four hundred Mr. Penniman gave twenty-five dollars, usually in advance, "to get it off his mind" he said. If all the subscribers had followed his example it would have been better for the minister. But the last year's subscription was two hundred dollars in arrears, and the Home Missionary Treasury was empty.

It was mid-winter; the minister's credit and provisions were well-nigh exhausted, and nothing had been said of the accustomed donation visit.

Driven almost to desperation, Mr. Goodman rode over to a neighboring city, where one of his classmates was preaching to a large, prosperous church, and laid the case before him.

"Let's exchange," said the sympathizing listener, when the story was told. "I'll give notice of a donation visit on my own responsibility." The exchange was made; and the notice was given, to the astonishment of every one, Mrs. Goodman included.

Mr. Penniman's family went into their large, warm kitchen, laid aside their wrappings, and sat down to a bountiful dinner prepared by the eldest daughter during their absence; and with the appearance of the hot mince pies began the discussion of the coming donation visit.

"Mother, may I go?" from a chorus of little voices, and comments from the elder members of the family according to their moods.

"Well, I paid the whole of my subscription long ago," said Mr. Penniman, with a satisfied air, "and if the rest had done the same, there would be no excuse for having a donation visit."

"I don't believe Mr. Jones has paid a cent, and he's rich, too," said Clara, a bright little girl of eleven.

"No, nor Mr. White, nor Mr. Cook, nor even Deacon Slocum," added George, a stout lad of sixteen, who knew more, in his own estimation, than any man in the neighborhood. Mrs. Penniman and the eldest daughter, Mabel, said nothing.

"Mother, I heard my teacher tell the superintendent that if people would only give tithes now, as the Jews did, there would be no need of donation parties. What are tithes?" said Robert, the nine year old son.

"I will tell you all about it this afternoon. Finish your dinner now," was the reply.

An hour later, according to promise, the mother sat, Bible in hand, explaining to her younger children the Jewish law of benevolence. Clara and Robert were finding the references, and James and Minnie were asking numberless questions. Jacob's vision interested them greatly. Robert read the dreamer's morning vow, "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." "Then tithes means tenth. Does it mean a tenth of everything?" asked Robert.

"Turn to Leviticus, 27 chapter and 30th, 31st, and 32nd verse," was the mother's reply.

"Why, mother, it says cattle, too," exclaimed Robert in astonishment, "and a tenth of all their grain and their fruit! Whew! I guess my teacher was right; but does anybody do that now-a-days?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Penniman, "I have known several men in the city who conscientiously gave to the Lord one-tenth of their income, and some of them were far from rich."

"Why can't farmers do the same?" asked Clara.

"I suppose they might," replied the mother with a sigh. "Now turn to Malachi iii. 8-10."

"Let me read that," said Clara, and while she read her father said to himself, "That's all right; I am glad my wife is so faithful in teaching the children, especially in teaching them benevolence. I guess I have paid my tithes this year; twenty-five dollars for the minister, and as good as twenty-five for Chicago—fifty dollars. That's a tenth and more too, but I don't begrudge it, not a bit," and with a self-satisfied smile he fell asleep, and dreamed.

Half an hour passed, and the sleeper awoke with a groan and a start. Rousing himself, he said to the children, "Run away now and crack some nuts; I want to talk with your mother a while." The children obeyed, and the mother sat with folded hands, and heart trying to prepare itself to listen patiently to more fault-finding.

"I have had such a fearful dream, Jennie," said Mr. Penniman, in a low, troubled voice; "a warning from God, I do believe. You are a better Christian than I am—let me tell you my dream, and I know you will help me do my duty."

Then, in words often choked with emotion, he told his dream, while tears rained down his wife's cheeks.

The profound silence which followed was broken by the husband's voice solemnly repeating the vow of Jacob, henceforth to be his own vow: "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

"Amen!" was the wife's joyful response.

"Isn't it Sunday work to look over the books? It seems to me I shall feel better to have this matter all arranged to-day," said Mr. Penniman, after a few moments' thought.

Mrs. Penniman brought the books, in which her husband kept a full record of all farm products.

"Now, Jennie," said he, "take a piece of paper, and as I call off the yield you take out the tenths, and we will estimate the value and see how much we fall short."

200 bu. Wheat—tithes 20 bu. @ \$1.00 per bu. \$20.00  
150 " Potatoes " 15 " @ 0.60 " 9.00  
300 " Oats " 30 " @ 0.30 " 9.00  
600 " Corn " 60 " @ 0.28 " 16.80  
200 " Apples " 20 " @ 0.50 " 10.00  
10 " Beans " 1 " @ 1.50 " 1.50  
10 bbl. Turnips " 3 " @ 0.25 " 0.75  
10 bbl. Pork " 1 bbl @ 10.00 " 10.00  
20 tons Hay " 2 ton @ 10.00 " 20.00

The amount of Tithes is.....\$97.05  
said Mrs. Penniman, and

Deducting the.....\$50.00  
already paid here and for Chicago

Leaves.....\$47.05

"Yes, that is correct," remarked Mr. Penniman, looking over the figures; "now, how shall we arrange the rest? Let us see. We will give the minister One barrel of pork.....\$10.00 and the tithes of turnips, beans and potatoes which will

Amount to.....\$11.25  
\$11.25

This sum deducted from the.....\$47.05  
Leaves.....\$35.80

a little more than the price of two tons of hay, as we valued it. But we have not tithed our cattle yet; we have ten cows, you know—shall they 'pass under the rod?' asked the husband with a meaning smile.

"Yes, certainly," was the earnest reply.

"Well, then, one cow—you shall say which one—and two tons of hay to feed her on. There are a good many things we cannot tithe this year, so I will take a good large grist, and you may take what you like from the house, and next year we will be more exact," said Mr. Penniman in a tone of great satisfaction.

"A good deal to give away," said Mrs. Penniman, doubtfully, for in her heart she feared her husband would repent his liberality when the excitement of his dream had passed away.

"Why, Jennie, you are not sorry the Lord made the tenths so large, are you?" he said, half reproachfully. "Nine-tenths are left for us to use without doubt or reproach. How blind I have been all my life!" he added, with a sigh.

"Father, George says it is milking-time," called out little Clara, looking in at the door.

"Yes, I'll come," answered the father, rising. "Jennie, which cow shall I give," he asked, turning to his wife.

"Give the best to the Lord," was her reply.

"Mabel, come here a few minutes," said Mrs. Penniman to her eldest daughter, a young lady of nineteen, when the door had closed on the father and the two boys. In a few words the mother related what had transpired within the last hour; and the daughter listened with clasped hands and glistening eyes.

"Oh, mother, I am so glad!" she exclaimed. "Giving a tenth has always seemed right since I read God's own law to the Jews. He must know best if the Jews were commanded to give tithes, surely, with our greater blessings, a tenth of our income is the very least we ought to think of presenting to the Lord as a thank-offering. It seems a great deal because God gives us so much."

"Well, my dear, you and I must look up our tithes to-morrow," said Mrs. Penniman with a smile.

The day of the donation visit came at last.

"George, I guess we'll take over our loads this morning," said Mr. Penniman while they were doing the chores at the barn. "You may fasten Brindle's rope to the back of that load of hay, and let her eat while you help me load up the other sleigh; then you may harness the old horses, I will take the colts, and we will go over together."

"Why, father, what are you going to do with old Brindle?" asked the astonished boy.

(Conclusion next week.)