

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, September 21st, 1879.—The Christian Citizen.—Titus iii. 1-9.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.”—Matt. xxii. 21.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Titus i. Tuesday, Titus ii. Wednesday, Titus iii. Thursday, Romans xiii. 1-7. Friday, Matt. xviii. 15-17. Saturday, Matt. xxii. 15-22. Sunday, Psalms clxix.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Obedience to rulers. Vs. 1. II. Slander to be avoided. Vs. 2. III. God's grace reviewed. Vs. 3. IV. Good works enjoined. Vss. 8, 9.

QUESTIONS.—What was Titus by birth? Under whose ministry was he converted? In what island did Paul leave him? To do what work?

I. Vs. 1.—What would Paul have subjects show to rulers? Why? See Rom. xiii. 1, 2. What would he have rulers be? Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

II. Vs. 2.—How would Paul not have us speak? What can we do when we cannot speak good? Whom does Paul mean by brawlers? Has this race died out?

III. Vss. 3-8.—Why has no one of us reason for boasting? Why have we all reason for humiliation? On what may common sympathy and love be based? How alone may we be saved? What is baptism, since it is not a saving ordinance?

IV. Vss. 8, 9.—What is faith without works? What, in particular, would Paul have believers avoid? Why? To what end should we all live? Rom. xiv. 19.

Titus was of Gentile origin (Gal. ii. 3), and converted to Christianity under Paul's ministry. Titus i. 4. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the council at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1), and was afterward sent on important missions to Corinth. (See 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13; vii. 5-7; viii. 16-24; xii. 17-21.) After ten years, as appears from the Epistle to Titus, he was left in Crete for the purpose of regulating and further organizing the churches in the island. This Epistle strongly resembles the First Epistle to Timothy. Its immediate design was to correct existing evils in the churches in Crete, and to arm Titus with the authority of discharging an apostolic service among them. “It is an Epistle remarkable for its brevity and comprehensiveness, comprising within a very small compass a large amount of instruction as to doctrine, morals, and discipline.”

May Jews held that it was not a duty, and some that it was not right, for them to be subject to heathen rulers. (Matt. xxii. 17.) So some Christians were likely to think, and some have thought, in various later ages. Not only Paul here, but Peter about the same time (Pet. ii. 13-17), and Paul, some five years earlier (Rom. xiii. 1-7), urged that Christians ought to “be subject” to the civil authorities, although this then meant the infamous Nero and his subordinates.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers.—Titus is bidden to urge this duty upon the Cretan Christians, possibly because of some known tendency among them to fail in this virtue. “Principalities and powers” is an expression broad enough to cover all legitimate authority, whether in state or church, though state authority is doubtless chiefly intended. A regular established government is regarded in Scripture as “an ordinance of God” (Rom. xiii. 2.) whatever its form. It is not that God immediately and expressly constitutes every such government, or any specific form of government, but government is a necessity of man in his present circumstances, arising from the very nature of man. Acts v. 29. To obey magistrates. Literally “to obey,” the word magistrates being added by the translators. Submission is the general attitude toward government, and obedience its specific manifestation. To be ready to every good work. Most naturally this is spoken with reference to the preceding injunction and requires hearty performance of all the duties of good citizenship: The

exact nature of such duties, or “good works,” varies somewhat with different governments, and the different positions of citizens in the same. The tendency which has sometimes appeared among Christians to keep aloof from civil government, on the ground of belonging to the kingdom of God, is a grave mistake; and utterly unscriptural. Christians are to give their whole influence to “whatsoever things” are right and for man's good. Nothing truly and rightly human is alien to a Christian. No man can be more thoroughly devoted to the furtherance of anything and everything that is for the good of society than is the consistent Christian.

Verse 2.—To speak evil of no man.—Especially as the connection suggests, “of dignities.” 2 Peter ii. 10. The good citizen, the true patriot is slow to believe evil of men in office, and especially in the highest offices of the country, and far more slow to speak evil of them. Respect belongs to the office, and cannot be shown to the office save as it is shown to the officers. No brawlers. Literally, fightless; that is, not contentious. But gentle, etc. The spirit of positive goodness which keeps one from disorder. The expression “all men,” holds here a reference specially to those not Christians, who were even hostile to Christians and might act against them, possibly, in the exercise of civil authority.

Verse 3.—This verse doubtless sketches, boldly and vividly, the real character of the Cretan Christians as they were before conversion, and Paul joins himself with them, saying “we,” because such conduct, or rather misconduct, sprung from that common principle of evil which constitutes alienation from God.

Verse 4.—After that, etc.—The preaching of Christ crucified, and his believing acceptance by Paul's readers. “God our Saviour” seems here to be the Father, not Christ. See vs. 6.

Verse 5.—Not by [from] works of [in] righteousness, etc. Paul insists strenuously upon good works. They are the fruits, and so the evidence of God's sovereign and gracious work within man, changing the nature and “creating” the man anew “unto good works.” According to his mercy he saved us. Mercy stands in contrast with justice. He treated us in our sins exactly contrary to the deserts of our character, and brought us into the state of salvation, in which, however, we are still to keep and be kept. By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Instead of “washing,” we may read bath. If the reference is here to baptism, the meaning is not that the water of baptism is the instrument of regeneration and conversion. The word “bath” indicates immersion. The proper author of regeneration is here designated as the Holy Spirit in distinction from the Father (vs. 4) and the Son (vs. 6).

Verse 6.—Which he shed, etc. Reminding us of the Day of Pentecost, but apparently referring to the gift of the Spirit, in and after the conversion of his readers, which was a continuance of the Pentecostal effusion. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Christ is the Mediator, and on the ground of Christ's atoning work, and his intercession, the spirit is sent to us and remains in us.

Verse 7.—That being justified by his grace.—God pardons and accepts the sinner in the way of “grace,” and yet it is “justification;” that is, it is in accordance with and in fulfillment of the righteous principles of that very law, which, as broken, condemns, and from whose curse the sinner is rescued; for Christ is for us the end of the law for righteousness, having been made for us “sin” and “a curse.” Condemnation is removed from the sinner, with no sacrifice of that righteousness that condemns. We should be made heirs, etc. One with Christ, we have, and shall have, his life, his standing, and his destiny. How has the Apostle here comprehended, in clear but brief statement, the source and nature of that character which makes the true citizen, because it makes the true man.

Verse 8.—This puts the duty of persistence in good works positively, as the next verse puts the same duty negatively.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 28th, 1879.—Third Quarter Review.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Explain why we have rulers, and our duty to them. If we first learn to obey God's laws, then we will be careful to obey parents and teachers, and when we grow up will make the kind of men and women who have learned the use of law and order.

Illustrate by the obedience of Jesus to his parents; and also by the story of the tribute money, Matt. xvii. 25-27, and Matt. xxii. 17-21. He obeyed the laws, though the man who ruled over his country had no real right, and though he himself was King of kings.

Gentle-boys, make gentle-men. Teach strongly the sin of evil speaking. If we are not Christians, we have no right to find fault with others, when our own sins are not washed away. And if we are Christians, then we should remember how hateful and foolish we once were, and yet Jesus had such love and pity on us, that he washed our sins away, changed our hearts by his Holy Spirit; and it is only by his grace that we are at all different.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 37.

In “malice” be ye children; but in “understanding” be men.—1 Cor. xiv. 20.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 38.

The initials of the subjoined give the name of a priest and ready scribe.

- 1. The name which Jacob gave to Luz in memory of the Lord's appearing to him there when he fled from Esau.
2. The wife of Moses.
3. A woman noted for her affection to her mother-in-law.
4. A man remarkable for his swiftness of foot.

Booth's Department.

From Sunday Afternoon.

Cris-Cross.

(Concluded.)

Miss Lydia took up the telegram again. “Coming on four o'clock train,” it said, over Mariette's signature. She looked round at her neat and orderly house, and groaned in spirit; habit was strong and the words sprang to her lips, “How things do go cris-cross!” but scarcely had they been uttered when she checked herself with a feeling of shame.

Like many lonely people she had a habit of talking aloud to herself, and now she went on: “I never did! I've forgot already! If I had something or another to kind of remind me. I'm as dumb as a child about learning. I had ought to be ashamed of myself. I wonder what there is to sort of jog me when I forget?”

She hunted up an old-fashioned ring, but hard work and rheumatism had swollen and knotted her joints; the ring would not go on any finger. Then a bright thought came to her. She went out of the door and cut the crossed end of a fir twig from the great green tower of a Norway fir that guarded the north door: she tied the cross pieces straight to a bit of wire and hung the symbol above her mantel-piece; a simple reminder of her duty, touching enough had any spectator seen it gathered and placed there; but to her humble, simple soul just the help she needed.

Years after, when grace had ripened and softened her still more, Miss Lydia would never allow any scorn or ridicule to be poured upon the symbols of other sects before her.

“Mebbe it helps them greatly,” she always said. “Such things do sometimes; I've been helped by 'em myself.”

After this was pinned and tacked safely, she went about her preparations for dinner, and when that was over, made up a bed for her guest in the spare chamber, and then tying on her bonnet went to the cars. Lyndon Station was a lonely platform, half a mile from the small village, and she was the only waiting woman; so when the train stopped it was no wonder that Mariette at a glance threw herself into Miss Lydia's arms crying out: “You are Aunt Lyddy, ain't you? Oh you dear, dear thing!”

Miss Lydia was taken by storm; never in her life had she seen anything like this pretty child, for Mariette was small of her age and only seventeen at that; her face was pure red and white as the fragile petals of a sweet pea, and the hazel eyes and red-brown hair curling in countless rings and waves about her pretty head, betrayed an excitable temperament that the clinging arms and chattering tongue did not belie. Miss Lydia could not help folding her arms about the little thing and giving her a kiss that was almost motherly; there was something so bright and sweet and childlike in the girl's aspect nobody could help petting her, and Miss Lydia conveyed her home in a state of shame-faced triumph that surprised herself.

This however was the beginning; a hundred times a day the tiny green cross helped Miss Lydia to bear the daily annoyance that this pretty spoiled child brought into her quiet home; yet as often as she looked at it, and remembered for whose sake she must be patient and gentle with this burden that had come on her, just so often she took a step forward in the divine life, and learned to know the Lord who led her. For “if any man will know of the doctrine” let him first put it to the test of practice; the work that Christ reveals to us, also reveals Him; if we love Him we keep his commandments, and in keeping them learn to love Him more and more. It is true that the habit of a life-time was not at once broken; day after day when Mariette's disorderly, careless, idle habits manifested themselves, Miss Lydia did more than once snap at her, and more than once the old word of “cris-cross” rose to her lips, but that worked its own remedy; the primitive meaning of her favorite expression rose up and confronted her every time, and she had again to bow her head in shame and ask grace to help her.

Yet with all the minor trials of her presence, Etty, as she learned to call her niece, grew dearer daily; youth and beauty and gayety seemed to illuminate the formal house like an incarnate summer; and though at first Miss Lydia even rebelled at the flowers which were gathered to deck the parlor shelf and the sitting-room table every day, she opened her heart to them before long, as she had to Etty.

For a few weeks Mariette was restless and expectant; evidently she wondered and grieved because her lover neither followed nor wrote to her. Aunt Lydia had let her parents know of her safe arrival in Lyndon, but even from home no answer came. At last the poor child's reticence gave way; she leaned her aching head on the spinster's shoulder, and poured out her girlish sorrows and profuse tears together. It was a strange office to Miss Lydia, that of comforter; but she did as well as she could, and perhaps better than she knew, by assuring Etty that no doubt Mr. Peck was a great scamp and had never loved her at all. This naturally made Mariette angry, so angry that she forgot to cry, and called Aunt Lydia a heartless old maid, in good set terms; so arousing the ancient Adam in that good lady's breast that she scarce refrained from boxing Etta's ears, and did call her a “little minx” on the spot.

But the next day's mail brought a letter from Mariette's father which vindicated Miss Lydia's penetration into character. He had gone at once to young Peck when Mariette could not be found, and demanded his daughter, but the fellow denied all knowledge of her and after a time, under threat of personal chastisement, and warned in the most impressive way that Etta never would have a cent of her father's money if she married him, he had promised solemnly to let her alone for the future and had even left town and gone West.

Till he had disappeared Mr. Crane resolved Mariette should not come home, and therefore did not write; now he was ready to receive and forgive her if she was ready to repent and return. But Etta did not want to go. She loved Aunt Lydia, and she had become attached to Mr. Sylvester who had kept his promise to her aunt, and helped her guide and guard the wayward girl. Besides, she did not like to go home and face the gossip of the village, and the end of the matter was that Aunt Lydia asked her brother to leave Etta with her for the next year at least. It was surprising, even to Mr. Sylvester, to see how

Miss Lydia took his words to heart, and lived up to them. He had not reckoned on the extreme honesty and simplicity, of her real character, or the readiness of the good ground to receive and fertilize the truths sown in it, but they did indeed bear fruit a hundred fold.

It was her aunt's life that proved a living epistle to Etty: when a few years after some one asked her under whose preaching she had been converted, she smiled and said, “Under Aunt Lydia's practicing.”

For Etta never left Lyndon. Before her year's visit was over she had formed a very intimate acquaintance with a well-to-do young man who kept the village store, to whose character and principles even her father could not object; so it turned out that she came to live close by Miss Lydia, who blessed the day many a time that she had so dreaded,—the day of Etty's arrival at her house.

The boys profited by Miss Lydia's re-conversion; grace, like sunshine, warms even the corners of life.

She let them freely now into her orchard to pick up the abundant wind-falls, and when they were so free to come there was no fun in coming. So this, like many other of her minor trials faded utterly away; for when our eyes are fixed on the mountain tops we do not see the pebbles under our feet; if now and then they cause us to stumble, we are hardly conscious of it in the absorbing splendor of those radiant heights where our home is.

As years went by patience became a habit, and peace an abiding guest: she forgot to say that things went “cris-cross” and she entered more and more into the meaning and service of Christ's cross. Old age came, and decrepitude; but the Master she had served cared for her still; as she had grown into His image friends had also grown up about her, and were glad to make her last days easy with affection and sympathy; her life was hid in the deepest sense, with Christ in God; and when it passed away from this world it was only to be found in another and a better, redeemed and glorified. If she had lived an eventless and quiet life, at least she left behind her one lesson that is the greatest any of us can learn—that “cris-cross” means, and is, Christ's cross.

Rose Terry Cooke.

Trusting to Ravens.

Many people are always trusting to the ravens, or awaiting a long-expected fortune—some miracle that is going to be wrought in their behalf, and bring them peace and plenty without any trouble or even effort upon their part. When you remonstrate with them upon the subject of their general good-for-nothingness they are always ready with pertinent quotations from the Bible or some other reliable source, which they offer in excuse for their general delinquency. “Consider the lilies,” they will exclaim, with as much assurance as if they resembled these flowers in any remote degree. Should you mildly suggest that they can scarcely be classed with lilies, they are ready to repeat the story of the ancient prophet. Elijah, quite oblivious of the fact that they do not bear the slightest resemblance to that holy man of old, least of all, in character, and that the ravens of the present day are fain to keep to the woods, or, if they do venture forth, it is in quest of rather than to dispense food.

When at last they have been disappointed so many times, they begin to wisely conclude the ravens are not going to appear, they have their small revenge in railing against fate and the ruling powers, and, considering themselves especially ill-used and unfortunate, never dreaming their ill-fortune is the result of their own indolence, and, consequently, altogether their fault.

A party of would-be naturalists, who were writing a dictionary, once said to Baron Cuvier, “Here is a nice definition of a crab.” “What is it?” asked Cuvier. “A little red fish that moves backwards.” “Very good,” said he, “only there are three mistakes; it is not a fish, it is not red, and it does not move backwards.” This is just the style of definition that some men give to Christianity. Let them denounce the Chadbands as they will, but these are not Christian men and women.