

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, March 9th, 1879.—The Joy of Forgiveness.—Psalm xxxii. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 7-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."—Psalm xxxii. 1.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Psa. xxxii. Tuesday, Isaiah liii. Wednesday, Rom. iv. 6-25. Thursday, 1 Tim. i. Friday, Matthew xxvii. 1-10. Saturday, Eph. ii. Sunday, 1 John ii. 1-17.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Blessedness of forgiveness. Vs. 1-2. II. Contrasted experiences. Vs. 3-7. III. Application to others. 8-11.

QUESTIONS.—How does the thirty-second Psalm differ from the fifty-first? Who beside God can forgive sin? Luke v. 21-24.

I. Vs. 1, 2.—Who is the truly happy man? By whose righteousness alone may sin be covered? See Romans i. 16, 17.

II. Vs. 3-7.—How does David describe the former struggle of his conscience? What confessions does he review? Why are all good people praying people? Acts ix. 11. How may all go to the throne of grace? Hebrews iv. 16. When is it an accepted time? 2 Cor. vi. 2. When will it be too late to find mercy? Isaiah lv. 6.

III. Vs. 8-11.—When men are converted what story do they begin to tell? Luke viii. 39. Psalm lxxvi. 16. What advice does David give to sinners? What will be their sure experience in the end? What the experience of the righteous?

EXPOSITION.—This Psalm admits of more than one analysis.

The following division best suits the purpose of this Exposition:

I. The Blessedness of Forgiveness.—The theme of the Psalm and its introduction.—Vs. 1, 2.

II. Conviction before Forgiveness.—Vs. 3, 4.

III. Confession Securing Forgiveness.—Vs. 5.

IV. Security Following Forgiveness.—Vs. 6, 7.

V. A Life befitting Forgiveness.—Vs. 8, 9.

VI. Contrast between the Unforgiven and the Forgiven.—Vs. 10, 11.

Verses 1, 2.—These two verses express each substantially the same thought, the first positively, the second negatively; the two together therefore more emphatically. Again the two clauses of each verse declare each substantially the same truth, but in a slightly changed form, and thus the two together declare the truth more emphatically. Thus the two verses together give a powerful affirmative of the one blessed doctrine. The Hebrew for forgiven, is literally borne (i. e., borne away), the conception being that the sin or transgression, as a burden, is taken from the person and carried out of sight so that he has nothing more to do with it. See this symbolized in the ordinance of the scape-goat. Leviticus xvi. 21, 22. To cover sin is to hide it from God's eyes so that to him it shall become as though it had not been. See Exodus xxv. 17-22; and Romans iii. 25; where the word "propitiation" is literally cover, i. e., this cover of the ark. To join both figures of bearing away from the sinner, and of covering from the eyes of God is to express the thought strongly.

To impute iniquity is to hold the man so responsible for it that he must meet its penalty, that is, that he must bear the sin as guilt to be punished instead of its being borne away from him. To have guilt or deceit in the spirit is to have a spirit which holds to the sin. All sin, as we have seen before, is untruth, a lie, and the heart which clings to sin is always self-deceived. Romans vii. 11.

Verses 3, 4.—We may substitute groan for roar, but even then we have a seeming contradiction, a man keeping silence while constantly and mightily groaning. But the silence is put in contrast with subsequent confession and it thus could co-exist with the groaning and constitute its cause. The bones are spoken of as consuming or utterly wasting (not waxed old), to indicate the complete nothingness to which he felt himself reduced, the collapsing even of the frame work of a self. See Prov. xiv. 30; xvii. 22; and compare Prov. iii. 8; xvi. 24.

The hand is for action, execution. The heavy hand of Jehovah upon the Psalmist was a revelation of God's holy displeasure brought home to him. Com-

pare 1 Sam. v. 6. The moisture meant is not the perspiration of the skin, but the life-sap, the very essence of life. Instead of turned into the drought of summer read: is changed (i. e., dried up) in the heats of summer. His inward misery was as the consuming heat of the hottest season of that hot climate to wither and shrivel his very being.

Verse 5.—The point of genuine repentance is now reached. The sin is no longer nursed and covered within, but acknowledged to himself and to his God. The change is a change of the man and of his relations, but a corresponding change in his feelings because he was truly alive to his true state and relation, both before and after forgiveness.

Verses 6, 7.—The clause "in a time of finding," is in the margin "in a time of finding," that is, the finding of pardon such as the Psalmist now rejoiced in. That the godly man only is mentioned is perhaps because the writer's experience was that of a godly man fallen; and perhaps also that the recognition of sin is the recognition of God, and a repentance of sin is a transition to true godliness. Troubles are often, and fitly compared to overflowing and whelming floods. Pardon has translated the pardoned into the very bosom of the Pardoner, so that there is good reason why the floods shall not reach him. The gospel has made us familiar with this precious and sublime truth, for the very pith, narrow, sum and consummation of the gospel is this: "IN CHRIST." The songs of deliverance must be understood in harmony with what has preceded, as songs of grateful joy for deliverance from the just sentence of condemnation. See this doctrine in its New Testament form in Romans v. 1-11; viii. 1, 4, 29-39.

Verses 8, 9.—Jehovah's answer back to his forgiven child's address to him in verse 7. One whom God takes into his heart he also instructs, so that his way or permanent course of life shall be that which befits this holy relation. How full is the New Testament of this doctrine. See for example, 1 John ii. 27. I will guide thee with mine eye. God keeps his eye upon the child of his love, and so marks this every act as giving counsel, as the child needs it to keep him from straying, stumbling, falling, failing.

The 9th verse presents under a figure the contrary course which characterizes an unforgiven man, and dissuades from that course. The child of God knows God, his will, and his way, and loves to go in it. The dumb beasts come not near us, as our companions, in such fellowship as our sons, and in such fellowship as God's sons have with him. They are kept off as being beasts, to be driven.

David gives us to understand that his experience was not like that of, alas, too many others—a flash of morning sunshine, to be followed by a day of gloom—it was abiding; life-long. "Thou art my hiding-place"—a refuge from every danger. "Thou shalt preserve me from every trouble"—a solace for every sorrow. "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance"—victory in every conflict. How large this is, and how lasting! How completely it covers life and death, time and eternity!

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 16th, 1879.—Delight in God's House.—Psa. lxxxiv. 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee."—Psalm lxxxiv. 4.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Review last lesson. Shew that all sin must be punished; God has no where said that children's sins are not too little for him to notice.

Make sure that they understand what repentance is; such true sorrow for sin, as will make them turn away from it, and try to do better. Little children have as many fallacies on this subject as older folks. Make them see that it is not tears alone; one may cry bitterly, and yet have no true sorrow for sin, and another not shed a tear, and yet repent fully.

Write again on board the same word we had last week—A sinner—in white letters; cover them over with the word Jesus, in deep red. So if we trust in Jesus, God does not see those words op-

posite our names, but that of his own dear Son which covers it over. Instill the precious promises of verse 8, that no child need plead that they are too weak, or small, or ignorant, when God himself is ready to lead, teach and guide.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 9.

UCAL.—AGUR.—Prov. xxx. 1.

- 1. Uzz a.....2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.
2. Clothin g.....Psalm xlv. 13.
3. A bishLevit. x. 1.
4. Lucife r.....Isaiah xiv. 12.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 10.

- 1. A bosom friend of David.
2. A letter in the Greek Alphabet.
3. A king of Moab, killed by Israel.
4. A kingly head-dress.
5. A prophetess mentioned in the New Testament.
6. The father of Joshua.

The initials read down name a river, the finals read down name a man who was ordered to bathe therein.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER X.—The Island Resting-place.

At this juncture Mr. and Mrs. Elmore were rapidly nearing Ebon, his former field of labor, and where his few household treasures which had survived the moth and rust and depredations of natives were to be gathered into a new home. Some uncertainty was felt as to their ultimately remaining on this island, and the result proved that Ponape was the field Providence designed for them. The story is best told, however, by Alice's pen, with all the motives which were urged for this decision.

"Namerick, Sept. 2, 18—,
"Can it be that September has come! It seems such a little while since that April morning when you and I waked up so early—Fleda dear, do you remember what we did?—and when I last looked in your dear faces; yet how much I have thought, felt, and seen in these five months!

"The last entry in my journal for home was written from Mille. The next Lord's Day we reached Ebon, landing at about four in the afternoon. The Hawaiian missionary, surrounded by a crowd of natives, was on the beach to welcome us. And such a welcome! Mingled shouts and tears, carresses and blessings, were showered upon us. It makes me very happy to see how greatly beloved Dwight is by this dark people for whom he has labored.

We went first to the house of Pia, the Hawaiian, followed by a company of natives, who filled the place, sitting all about us on their mats. Dwight talking with them earnestly, but all that I could do was to answer their smiles and say my one word of greeting. Pleasant kindly faces they had and I found myself loving them already. After an hour of converse and prayer, in which there was much to ask and more to hear, we went to our house—our home—which was but a few steps beyond. Mr. Earle had been living there until he went with his family to Honolulu, so their furniture was in the house, as well as some Dwight had left. We rummaged about and found some bedding, made up our beds for the night, and then, after taking supper at Pia's laid our weary selves to rest, for we were wofully tired.

"I remember waking up in the night oppressed with such a sense of loneliness as I never experienced before. My journey was accomplished, and the thousands of miles stretching between me and my darlings loomed up before me with fearful force. Could it be myself that I found on this little lone island of the sea, in the strange old house, and with only these dark faces and wild forms for neighbors and friends? The question seemed too much for me; but over and over again came those words to my heart, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' Then Dwight waked to comfort me, and soon all the tears were chased away; for not even then did I regret for a moment that I had come to tell of Jesus to these perishing ones. It is a glorious work, and

I am more and more thankful every day that the door of this vineyard opened to my waiting feet. Why, mother, I am happier than I can possibly tell you.

"But we did not sleep any more that night. A heavy rain came down, and we found that the water made its way into the old house rather freely for comfort. We moved our bed, and then went exploring from room to room, moving furniture and wiping up water. Dwight climbed the ladder up into the loft, I after him, but stopped on the middle round to think how Hattie and Fleda would laugh to see us.

"Morning came at last, bringing strength and spirits to begin operations, which means housekeeping. I wish I could give you an idea of the queer old house. I was surprised to find it so large, for indeed, with its outhouses, it seemed quite like a settlement. There is a wide, pleasant veranda in front, looking down through the beautiful trees upon the lagoon. The house is completely shaded by the wide-spreading bread-fruit trees; and a cocoa nut grove stretches from the back of the house to the water. Opening the front door, we enter a large room, very high and ceiled with matting, which answers also for many other useful purposes. The native matting is made from the cocoa-nut tree, and is very pretty. At the right is a wing, which serves Dwight for his study and the native prayer-room. It is a pleasant room, well filled with books, which are covered with mould and damp now. On the left is the dining-room, and, beyond, three store-rooms; the cook-house is opposite, and two outhouses beyond. The cooking is all done in out-buildings. Our bedroom opens out of the little square hall, and a smaller one adjoins. Back of all are the verandas.

"We took our breakfast on that particular Monday morning at Pia's again; then Dwight went off to the vessel to see after our goods, and I was at liberty to begin operations. Was it not pleasant to be in my own house? and was I not ambitious to make it look pleasant and home-like? But there were no servants, to begin with, and I went to work with a very earnest wish that I had been taught more of household duties at home. First, there was any quantity of dirt to be expelled. So, mounting a table, broom in hand, I swept the walls, then wiped the dust-stained windows and brushed the matted floors. After the room was clean, then it must be tasteful. But I had not much to draw from, for the dear home treasures and furniture were not at hand. Improvising from some closed chest a bright spread for the centre-table, some fairy led me to spy a fancy basket among the debris of the house, also some pretty shells and nice books from the study-drawer, and presently my table was quite charming. Dwight's arm-chair was wheeled to one window, and my low rocker to another; a little stand with the family Bible and a vase of flowers between, and the secretary opposite. But enough of this. I gained an appetite for dinner, and was well repaid for my efforts in the pleased smile on my good husband's face. In the afternoon we attacked the study, with its shelves of mouldy books and papers, and at night I found myself tired enough to sleep, not dream, even in that lonely island home.

"The next morning, while cleaning up bedrooms and store-rooms, the cries of the natives informed us that the mission-vessel, 'The Star of the East,' was in sight. This is joyful news to the lone missionary, as through this vessel he receives all his regular supplies and his mail, and on its yearly visits the scattered little band of workers in the sea gather at some point for a glad reunion. The vessel was not expected so soon by a month, but of course we were glad, as she had on board our associate missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Earle, with their little ones. So we hurried to get everything in order, ourselves included, and not without a palpitating heart for your Alice; for was I not all untried—a new wife, a new housekeeper? and how could I compare with the sweet woman whose place I had come to fill? Mingled thoughts of pain and pleasure filled my throbbing heart as I sat down in my orderly house to await our guests.

"It was almost night before the 'Star' came to anchor and landed her passengers. 'Father Emerson,' one of

the Sandwich Island pioneers, came with them, sent out by the Hawaiian Board to visit the different Micronesian stations. Mr. and Mrs. Earle are devoted heart and soul to this work, and gave me such a warm-hearted greeting as to put me at ease at once. As night came on the problem came up how to store ourselves for the night, as there was but one bedstead in the house. We gave 'Father Emerson' our room, Mr. and Mrs. Earle spread their mattress on the parlor floor, and Dwight carried ours into the study, only too happy to have white neighbors.

"The 'Star' was to remain but a day or two, and the great question was to be decided at once whether we should remain at Ebon or go on in her to Ponape. I say great question, because it was so to us and to the brother and sister that would be left alone by our departure. I will try and give you some of the pros and cons of our convention on the matter.

"The work on Ponape is a difficult one, and is suffering from need of more laborers. Mr. and Mrs. Hart, who are laboring there, have no associates; and the language being a very intricate one to acquire, the Hawaiian helpers cannot do as well there as on the Marshall Islands. Here the people are much more kindly and docile, and there are several Hawaiians to assist Mr. Earle in his work. But Dwight is very much attached to this people, and it is a great trial to both to separate. Still, the conviction was growing stronger and stronger in our minds that our duty was on Ponape; so, after earnest prayer, not unmingled with tears, it was decided that we should go to the relief of the lonely laborers beyond. How they will rejoice at our coming! for they have quite given up any expectation of help, and are struggling bravely with many perils. You will understand how much unselfishness was required on the part of our noble brother and his wife here to vote for a life of loneliness to themselves; but they bore the test bravely.

"But now the word was action, and in two days we found ourselves and goods on board the mission vessel. Mr. Earle was with us, going on to visit his little church at Strong's Island. We sailed out of the lagoon at sunset, making a very narrow escape from running on to the reef in the passage. Saturday morning we made Namerick, the most western of the Marshall group, where there were two Hawaiian missionaries to be visited, and this is why my letter is dated at this point.

"We reached Namerick at low tide, so the vessel could only take us to the reef, and then, between us and the sandy beach, was a long stretch of shallow water. The gentlemen of the party pulled off their boots, rolled up their pants, and waded over; but what do you think they did with me? Two brawny natives seized me in their arms and carried me baby fashion. I did not forget to wish that Fleda could see my novel way of riding. It would just suit her, if she would not be afraid of the dark faces.

"We spent a pleasant day listening to the report of the laborers there, and to the school examination. Portfolio in lap, I seated myself on the pebbly beach to write to the home circle, with a group of native women and children at my feet, watching every movement with curious interest. After a dinner of chicken and bread-fruit, which is a delicious vegetable, we returned to the shore at about five o'clock. This time my carriers made a chair with their hands and carried me over in our old play-fashion. Don't you remember, Hattie?

"The vessel was lying on and off, not at anchor, and a squall came up before we could reach her. It was a grand sight, the sky and water inky black, with the white caps of the waves by contrast. The small boat was tossed about like a nut-shell on the waves; then, as we made for the 'Star,' the wind took her, and she came sailing down upon us in royal style. It seemed as if she must strike us; but as we just escaped, she ran past us, leaving us far behind, with no resource but to follow as best we could. We succeeded at last in catching the rope she threw us, and soon stood on deck, well drenched.

"Sep. 20th.—My thoughts are much with you these quiet days when I have nothing to do but think, for we are, becalmed down here on the bristled Pacific,