

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, March 2nd, 1879.—The Prayer of the Penitent.—Ps. li. 1-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 9-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."—Ps. li. 2.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Sam. xiv. Tuesday, 2 Sam. xv. Wednesday, Ps. li. Thursday, Ezekiel xxxiii. 10-19. Friday, Rom. iii. 19-31. Saturday, Gen. iv. 1-15. Sunday, Luke xxii. 54-61.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. A prayer for forgiveness. Vs. 1-8. II. A prayer for renewal. Vs. 9-12. III. A resolution. Vs. 13.

QUESTIONS.—How long had David kept his sins secret? Were they secret to God? Psalm xc. 8. Who was sent to arouse his conscience? How should a rebuke from a good man be received? Psalm cxli. 5; Prov. xv. 5.

I. Vs. 1-8.—With what prayer may David's be likened? Luke xviii. 14. What is David free to confess? Will any one who refuses to confess his sins be saved? Prov. xxviii. 13. What is meant by "my sin is ever before me"? Against whom does David feel he has chiefly sinned? Comp. Luke xv. 18.

II. Vs. 9-12.—With what petitions does David pray for renewal? Why is the joy of salvation the highest conceivable? John iv. 3, 4.

III. Vs. 13.—What does David now pledge to God? What can he not do? What can he do?

How could David be a "man after God's own heart?" 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

David sinned greatly (2 Sam. xi), but bore reproof meekly, and repented deeply (2 Sam. xii).

EXPOSITION.—I. THE BURDEN OF THE PSALM.—(1) In general, for God's mercy; (2) in particular, for consequent deliverance from sin.

II. THE CONFESSION.—The Psalmist confesses his sins (1) As ever before him; (2) as against a righteous God justly condemning; (3) as rooted in hereditary depravity.

III. THE RESTORATION.—(1) In inward renewal; (2) in evangelical justification; (3) in consequent return of peace and joy.

IV. THE PRESERVATION.—(1) As to his pardon; (2) as to his renewal; (3) as to the divine agency maintaining the renewed state; (4) as to the consequent joy; (5) as to its grateful expression in fitting service.

Verses 1, 2.—The first sentence is a cry from out the depths, as of one utterly whelmed. Have mercy, is at once a confession of sin, guilt and helplessness, and a petition for deliverance from all. God's loving kindness is conceived of in distinction from his righteousness as the attribute from which, as from a fountain of mercy, as an act, springs, and also as being the immeasurable measure of possible mercy. The "loving kindness" is here viewed in the multitude of tender mercies, which, as acts, the record of Israel's history made known. To blot out transgressions, as though "a book of remembrance" and reckoning were kept, is to take them out of the account so that, with reference to the object in view, they should be as though they had never been—annihilated. The second verse takes up this thought of that which the Psalmist would have God's mercy accomplish for him, and makes it include not simply a pardon, but an inward change, without which there is and can be no pardon from God. It covers both points of renewal and forgiveness. The reference is doubtless to the use of water in the legal purifications among the Hebrews. See Ex. xxix. 4; xxx. 20; xl. 12; and often.

Verses 3-5.—After the first cry for help there comes, as is natural, a full confession. The sense of sin, the thorough conviction of sin, as something in us which works our ruin and from which as against God, only God can save us.

I acknowledge, literally I know, conscious of transgression, convicted of it as being sin. The permanency of this conviction, the refusal of the sin to go out of mind is next brought out. The sin was always before him so that he must see it, and hear its condemning voice. Against thee, thee only. Not as though there were not a sense in which the sin was also against his fellow men or against his own soul, but in all rela-

tions, in all activities, it is the law of right and righteousness which is the will of God, that is to control us. That (it is in order that) thou mightest &c., not however the purpose of the Psalmist, but of God as controlling all things and bringing all things to an end which shall be to his glory. Romans iii. 4. In the writer's mind the sense of the law as God's carried at once the sense of the justice of God's condemnation of him as transgressor.

The fifth verse is a powerful recognition of inherited depravity. The doctrine clearly taught in the New Testament and in the world's history.

Verses 6-8.—In the transition to the sixth verse, the Psalmist passes from what he is to what he ought to be, from a recognition of his existing state as being what God would not have it, to a recognition of his desired state as what God would have it. If sin is a lie so is it a folly, and against sin as a folly is placed righteousness as a wisdom. To know is here to experience. This is clearly a prayer for inward renewal or re-generation.

The hyssop is a shrub which was used in the sprinkling of water for purposes of purification; for example, of lepers. Exodus xii. 22; Leviticus xiv. 4, 52, etc. A person thus visibly cleansed was restored to the congregation of Israel, and to the privileges of the sanctuary. It was the act of restoration.

The result of union with God in Christ is a conscious peace and joy. He could but wish first of all for the removal of sin and guilt, and for the peace and joy, not as the chief end, but as a blessed result, holding just that relation to the new state that the conscious wretchedness did to the old. Joy and gladness, or perhaps better, bliss and rejoicing; the inward feeling and its fit outward expression. The last part of the verse is a powerful image, bones crushed rejoicing in restored wholeness and vitality.

Verses 9-13.—The Psalmist is now asking for stability and permanence in the restored state and relation. To blot out all iniquities, is to make them not to be, and hence never more to be seen. This is the same thought that is in the words hide thy face, look no more and never more, on my sins.

The next verse does, indeed seem, at first sight, to regard only the beginning of the new state. But the clean heart is the fixed disposition, the permanent state, which is the source of constant right action. And this is emphasized in the word translated right, which should be translated established.

The 11th verse asks negatively what in verse 10 is asked positively, and here as there the permanency of the renewed state and relation is the burden of his cry. With thy free spirit, ought to read in a willing spirit. The Psalmist's own spirit or state of mind, ready joyfully to respond always to God's will and law, in holy service.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

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

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

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Tell a brief story of a child who had done wrong, but tried to hide it. But he kept on thinking of it, till it seemed worse and worse to him; he felt more troubled, couldn't sleep, and at last went to his mother, and confessed it, and asked her to forgive him, which she freely did. But she told him that she had known all the while of his disobedience, and would have punished it in her own time, if he had not shown that he was sorry, and asked for forgiveness.

Call for Bible instances of those who have sinned, but owned it, said, "I am sorry, and asked for forgiveness." Such as the Prodigal Son, Zacchæus, the Publican, Peter. Show how all these were forgiven as soon as they felt true sorrow, and asked for help. Sometimes a child says, "I am sorry," because they are afraid of being punished, and the first time they are tempted the same thing occurs again. Is that true sorrow for sin? Ask a very few questions about king David; tell that he too sinned, how sorry he felt; read a few sentences of his prayer, having class repeat. Teach the words of the Golden

Text, trying to draw out their thoughts as to how they themselves can be washed, from the stains of sin.

God writes our sins in a book. David knew this, and so he asked God to blot them out. Did any of these children ever ask teacher to rub out the black marks against them in her school-book? Write—A sinner. Get several children to read this with their own names where the dash is, or ask all to do so silently. Then rub it completely out. Ask where it has gone, whether those very same marks can ever be put back? So God for Jesus' sake will blot out, rub out, wipe out the marks he has made against us, if we are truly sorry, and ask him, believing that he will do it.

Drops of ink soil a large basin of water. So one bad child will make many others bad. It is in vain that the outside is washed, the real stains are inside. So we don't want just our outward behavior changed, but the stains washed from within. We need a new heart, one that won't want to sin. Jesus can create in us a clean heart. It needs to be kept clean, Jesus will send his Holy Spirit to stay in our hearts to keep them pure, and help us to do right.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

- No. 8. 1. E no s.....Gen. iv. 26. 2. V asht i.....Esther i. 3. E de n.....Gen. ii. 10, 11

Scripture Enigma.

- No. 9. 1. He to a holy thing put forth his hand, And smitten was for breaking God's command. 2. 'Twas wrought of gold, and worn by a princess. Ours should be that of perfect righteousness. 3. He took his censor, and put that therein, Which was forbidden, and therefore counted sin. 4. He that exalts himself, the scriptures tell, Shall be abased, and by his pride he fell.

My finals read, the name of one enfold Who speaking, of the Almighty's power told. The initials, if in order then we take, Reveal his name who listened while he spake.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER X.—Out on the Ocean.

Alice Hammond knew something of all this before consecrating herself to this life of Christian labor, as Mr. Elmore had spent some years first on Ponape, and afterward on Ebon, before returning to his native land. But its extreme isolation from civilization, having no regular communication with the outer world except by the yearly visits of the mission vessel, and consequently but yearly mails and supplies, the scarcity of food, except native fruits, all added to the horrors which clustered about this remote land to the fond mother's imagination, making her cry out, "If it were but some other field, I could bear it."

But rich blessings are in store for dark-eyed Ponape, well named Ascension. Her climbing may be slow, but she is destined to reach heaven's gate, and Alice knew that she may have a hand in lifting her up. That mother, too, to-day tells us with a smile of the blessed work, and one reads but a shadow of her pain under the peaceful brow.

During the long sea-voyage Mr. Elmore and Alice divided the hours not spent in sea-sickness in study of the language, reading, music, and writing home. Mr. Elmore was familiar with the language, of course, and could teach his wife, who was eager to learn, that she might assist him in translating portions of the Bible and hymns, and in preparing school-books, etc. Before reaching Honolulu, Mr. Elmore wrote:

"Alice has been a great sufferer from sea-sickness. She used to boast what a seaman she would be, because on the lakes she met and conquered old Neptune; but here on the ocean, the true home of that sea divinity, she has to yield, and it was truly a complete victory he gained over her. But at this time of writing, within three days of

Honolulu, she is quite recovered; and save that she is a little bronzed by sea-winds and tropical suns, she is the same as ever, sitting on deck sewing and singing.

"During a terrible storm which we encountered three days out from New York she had her courage and fortitude severely tried. The captain had just ordered out the life-boats; you know how selfish we all are to get the first chance to save life. We were clinging to anything that would give support as the noble vessel pitched from side to side, and I shall never forget how Alice begged me not to urge her forward, but let others have the chance. Dear mother, I could but weep, although that unselfish thoughtfulness of the welfare of others is the foundation-stone of a true missionary spirit. But, thanks to our Father, we were not called to act in such an emergency."

At Honolulu Mr. and Mrs. Elmore enjoyed for a fortnight the kind hospitalities of resident missionaries and native Christians. Here Alice saw for the first time the practical workings of missionary labor. Perhaps no other point of Christian effort has ever borne richer fruit than is witnessed on the Sandwich Islands. With a glowing heart and pen Alice hastened to write out her impressions for the benefit of her family and that portion of the church who were watching the horizon for signs of the dawn in the far Pacific. One of these letters, written to her sister Fleda, I am allowed to copy:

"HONOLULU, July 31, 18—

"I wish you could have attended with me the grand native celebration to-day. This is the Hawaiian fourth of July, the anniversary of the restoration of their independence. Any one who could have gone with us into the beautiful pavilion holding about three thousand people, been seated at the bountifully-spread tables, looked into the bright, intelligent faces, and have listened to the fine addresses from native tongues, must acknowledge that a marvelous change has come over this people, so lately buried in heathenism.

"Last Wednesday I attended the 'mothers' prayer-meeting.' It was a precious sight, those mothers gathered to pray for their little ones. When they were told where we were going, they crowded about me with tearful eyes to press or kiss my hand, and their musical greeting, 'Aloha'—that is, 'Love to you'—was very pleasant. On the Lord's Day we attended first the Sunday-school, where a thousand children were gathered to hear and sing of Jesus. Bright little faces they had, and sweet voices too, as they sang our own familiar tunes. Surely this was hearing the Lord's song in a strange land. I could hardly keep back the tears all day. I was so touched by the sight. Dwight preached that day, the pastor translating for him sentence by sentence. Oh that you could have seen those dark faces lit up with Christian love and sympathy! What a reward for those who have toiled here for forty years! One can have no conception of the marvelous change effected till he can behold it.

"We visited last week at the residence of Major Mahamie, a native convert. He and his wife are as fine a looking couple as ever I saw, of any race or color. They have a charming house and grounds, and entertained us with trust, grace and courtesy.

"Horseback-riding is a very noticeable feature of life here. Every one rides, and rides on the gallop. You would think it a continual horse-race. The native women sit astride, but they have a flowing skirt folded about them in such a manner that it does not seem as ungraceful as you would suppose. We have had some delightful horseback-rides. Dwight and I climbed to the top of 'Old Punch-bowl,' where we had a magnificent view of the town, the harbor, the peaceful valleys below, and the surrounding mountains, a most beautiful living panorama.

"We take sail from here in the brig 'Pfeil,' to journey on three thousand miles farther. I should tremble at the distance between us were it not that heaven is equally near to each. I love to think that we look at the same stars and kneel to the same Father. Nothing can ever separate us from him. Do not grieve or fear for me. He will protect and love me through all the way, and with such a presence 'what can I want beside?'"

As the reader can best become acquainted with the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Elmore by following them in their progress over the sea, by their journals and letters, and through the same medium see much of "light on a dark shore," extracts are here introduced at length. We get a glimpse of seafaring life in the following letter from Mr. Elmore:

"ON BOARD BRIG PFEIL, Aug. 18, 18—

"DEAR ONES, ALL: We are now far away in the heart of the great Pacific Ocean. This is our tenth day from Honolulu. In about four more we hope to see land, but expect to be at sea four weeks longer.

"I know you would give a small sum to know how we are now situated, what doing, how spending our time, what we eat and drink, how we sleep, what we talk about, and what conveniences we have. Could you see our general situation, you would not find much to admire in a sea-going life. But we have not embarked on this enterprise to find smooth sailing, so we do not complain.

"Darling wife is now getting to be a good sailor, can make her toilet, and not suffer as she has done. Our little vessel affords us no state-room, so the sweet secret duties with our God have to be omitted. But we manage after breakfast to get under the awning which the captain erects for us daily, and turn the pages of the book of life, reading often to each other, and hereby gaining strength for the difficulties of the day.

"We breakfast at half-past seven; have good coffee and tea, also good bread, but only salt meats, often hashed with potatoes. As our captain is a German, onions are added, to my infinite disgust; but with eggs and sardines, we make a comfortable meal. For dinner we always have good soup, but other-wise an inferior meal for as delicate a stomach as our Alice's. She has, however, her relish of guava jelly, made and given by Honolulu friends; and thus we fare tolerably.

"A part of each day is spent by me in compiling and arranging hymns and school-books for our hand-press, and with wife in study of the language.

"Thus, with reading, writing, and much happy singing, the day wears away. Sleeping is our worst difficulty. There are no arrangements for beds but in the low, hot berths in the open cabin, so we resort to other means. Alice takes the sofa; no place to disrobe, but sinks to rest from utter weariness. For the past ten nights hardly her shoes have been removed. I take for myself a native mat and lie upon the floor, but we are glad when morning comes. This is a bird's eye view of our life on shipboard from the hardships of which I would gladly relieve our darling; but she is so heroic it chides one for even complaining, and love so fills our hearts for each other and the good work before us that the trials have a free go-by. They will soon be over, and we think our after life will be the sweeter for them."

From Alice's pen in the sweet familiarity of home-chat we gather something of that happy spirit of trust and hopefulness with which all discomforts were met, mingled with a vein of humor so like herself. To her mother she writes:

"To-day is Monday, and two weeks last Saturday since we left Honolulu harbor. While they have been uncomfortable, let me assure you they have been also very happy, days; for I do find dear mother, that when I have the most trials, then I have the most joy. Would some call this an anomaly? Oh, but it is such a precious privilege to bear anything for Jesus!

"Let me give you a little sketch of these days on shipboard: We came on board Saturday noon, loaded down with the kindness of friends, little last packages of delicacies, and conveniences for the voyage. Kind friends stood on the shore to wave a last good-bye, and the little vessel was soon scudding out of the harbor before a good breeze. Wouldn't we like you to take one look into our cabin! Such a little room, and with more articles of vertu in it than I can number or find places for. We get some air from the skylight above; but when it rains (we are in a land of constant showers), you will believe it very close and warm.

"We go down into our hole by a steep sort of ladder. I am so amused to see the sailor way of backing down. As our cabin is dining-room also, you can imagine that we have no superfluous room.