

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, August 24th, 1879.—The mind of Christ.—Philippians ii. 1-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 5-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Philippians ii. 5.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke xxiii. 39-56. Tuesday, Philippians i. Wednesday, Philippians ii. Thursday, Phil. iii. Friday, Phil. iv. Saturday, 1 John i. 1-4. Sunday, Romans xii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Harmony and unselfishness. Vss. 1-4. II. Christ's humiliation. Vss. 5-8. III. Christ's exaltation. Vss. 9-11. IV. Concluding counsel. Vss. 12, 13.

QUESTIONS.—By whom and when was Philippi founded? Of what is our present lesson an epitomized history?

I. Vss. 1-4.—What is Paul's first exhortation? How would Paul have us "look"?

II. Vss. 5-8.—How does Paul here teach Christ's equality with God? In what sense, then, is the Father greater than the Son? John xiv. 28. By what successive steps is Christ's humiliation marked? What was the relation of Christ's obedience to his redemptive work? In what suffering was this most manifest?

III. Vss. 9-11.—How was Christ exalted? How is this exaltation more and more to appear? Is Christianity, then, a forlorn hope?

IV. Vss. 12, 13.—How did the Philippian disciples treat Paul, in his absence? Does he teach them that they can save themselves? What does he teach them?

Philippi, founded by Philip, of Macedonia (B. C. 354), was the place of Paul's first preaching in Europe. Acts xvi. 11-40. The Christian Church here was one of the purest of the Apostolic age. The Epistle, sent to it ten or eleven years after its founding (A. D. 53-64) differs from most others of the Apostle Paul, in not having any marked definite object, either to combat error or to establish truth. It is rather the effusion of a heart overflowing with affection and confidence. At the same time it is full of fatherly counsels to press on to the highest attainments possible in Christian life. To this end he stimulates them to the exercise of lowly, self-denying thoughts and desires for the good of others, and as an example sets before them the mind of Christ. The passage included in this lesson is one of the richest in God's word. It is an epitomized history of the greatest act of love with which the world is acquainted.

EXPOSITION.—I. Verses 1-4.—The exhortation in this division arises naturally from the previous mention (I. 28-30) of the situation of the Philippian Church. Then follows, in these subsequent divisions, the great example of self-sacrificing service, the glorious issue of it, and the assurance that God's mighty power in faithful Christians shall bring them through to share Christ's glory.

Verse 1.—If there be, etc.—This "if" is not to express doubt, but rather to emphasize the appeal thus introduced. Consolation in Christ. The word translated "consolation" sometimes means exhortation (Rom. xii. 8), and sometimes, as here, consolation or comfort including the idea of spiritual aid. (2 Cor. i. 4-7.) This is found "in Christ" as its source, and so can be administered by those in him to those in him. The "consolation," as also the "comfort," "fellowship" and "mercies," are best regarded as those which Paul himself had for the Philippians, not those which they had for him. The thought of their need (i. 29, 30), not of his own, is uppermost. If any comfort of love, Christian love prompts us to lift up the weak. If any fellowship of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is the perpetual bond of our union with Christ, and so the permanent ground of our Christian life. 1 John i. 3. If any bowels and mercies. The Greek word here translated "bowels" means "the inward parts," much the same idea as our word "heart," only more of tender compassion.

Verse 2.—Fulfil ye my joy.—Fill my joy to the full, make it complete. That ye be like-minded, etc., of the same mind, one with the other, at one. So "the same love" is the same love each for the other, one in love.

Verse 3.—Strife.—Or rather, party

spirit. Vain glory. As in Lesson VI. Gal. v. 26. In lowliness of mind, etc. Christian humility, which is that form of Christian love that chooses to serve, rather than be served, and so chooses rather to confer than to receive honor.

Verse 4.—Look not, etc.—Be not intent each on his own separate selfish ends and interests.

II. Verses 5-8.—Verse 5.—Let this mind.—The humility enjoined in verses 3, 4, and exemplified in Christ's humiliation, as described in verses 6-8.

Verse 6.—Who being [subsisting] in the form of God.—This word "form" does not mean shape or figure, but rather appearance, state or condition, according to the inward and essential nature of the object. See Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 8, and compare Mark ix. 2; xvi. 12. So in verse 7, "the form of a servant" [slave] is the actual (not merely apparent) condition of a servant. The particle "being" (or subsisting) is in present tense, not past. Compare John viii. 58. The essential form of Christ as "the word, which, in the beginning, was with God and was God," was invisible to fleshly eyes, while Christ was in the flesh, but it was none the less his, and by some was seen with a degree of clearness. John i. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 18; Col. i. 15. Christ's transformation ("transfiguration," Mark ix. 2) was the temporary exhibition to the eyes of sense of a light which symbolized his ever present, essential glory. Thought it not robbery to be equal with God. "To be equal with God," that is, the rights and prerogatives belonging to God. The thought is, that he did not insist upon these rights with that unyielding tenacity with which the victor takes and holds his spoil, simply because it is his. He did not say, as so many men did and do, "This is mine, and I will have and hold my own." Divine rights were Christ's because he was a divine being, but he did not stand for his rights.

Verse 7.—But [on the contrary] made himself of no reputation ["emptied himself"—that is, as to those "rights,"] and took upon him the form of a servant.—He acted, as Christians should, in a spirit of self-sacrifice rather than of his own claims, even where these were right. This self-sacrifice appeared in his taking "the form"—that is, the actual place and condition "of a servant" or slave—instead of keeping his place of supreme sovereign rule over those for whose salvation he became a servant. Thus the antithesis here is not [as is usually affirmed] between "the form of God" and "the form of a servant," but rather between being "equal with God," and being "in the form of a slave." And was made in the likeness of men. In order to be a servant, he had to become man or assume human nature (the incarnation), according to John i. 14; Gal. iv. 4, 5. The word "likeness" does not imply that he was not truly and fully man, but suggests, on the one hand, an unlikeness of the human to the divine nature; and, on the other, Christ's unlikeness as sinless, to all other men as sinful. Heb. iv. 15.

Verse 8.—Being found in fashion as a man.—"We have, in verse 7, Christ's humiliation or self-sacrifice in becoming man. In this verse we have the continuance of his self-sacrifice after he had become man, and while in the flesh. Humbled himself. Identifies the spirit of Christ's act with that enjoined on the readers. And became, [literally, having become—that is, by becoming] obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Not only to death, but to the most shameful and awful death—to that which was the mark of the very extreme of possible disgrace. For this Christ became a servant—to be made sin for us; to become for us a curse. Most potent and affecting example for our imitation! Will you stand up for your rights, Christians, while the cross is in sight? Will you insist on your dues, no matter what are the consequences?

III. Verses 9-11.—Verse 9.—Wherefore God also, etc.—God the Father also, was at one with Christ in this work; sent him to do it, and owned it when done. Christ sits as king, to give and effect salvation, because Christ, as our sacrifice, has made salvation possible on principles of righteousness. There could be no Saviour on the throne if there had not first been a Saviour on the cross. "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him."

Verses 10, 11.—Every knee, etc.—Not all that shall own Christ's Lordship at the last will do so lovingly.

VI. Verses 12, 13.—Verse 12.—Wherefore, etc.—The presence or the absence of a merely human teacher cannot affect duty. That comes from relation to the Lord. "Fear and trembling" are not slavish dread and cringing, but that wholesome fear that results from a sense of our own weakness and sin, and consequent peril.

Verse 13.—For it is God, etc.—The ground of encouragement for carrying out the Christian life, despite all perils, and also indicating the hope and solace in "fear and trembling."

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, August 31st, 1879.—Practical Religion.—Colossians iii. 16-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."—Colossians iii. 23.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

We need a pattern. This should be perfect; if we do not go by it exactly, our work will not be right.

Whom do we want to be like? Whom ought we to pattern after? Only Jesus is perfect. The Golden Text tells us where to find our pattern.

If you are going to do a piece of work, you have first to see what your pattern is like. So we must see what the mind of Christ is like. It was a loving mind. Jesus had an unselfish mind. Did he take all the best things for himself, because he was Master, and leave all the worst for his disciples? Did he say of anything, This is mine, not yours?

It was a lovely mind. Tell how He, who was King of Glory, might have made all the kings bow before him, yet he came as a servant, even washing his disciples' feet. Tell of the Moravian missionaries who, in order to teach the West India slaves, had to go and work beside them. But Jesus did much more than that. Repeat the parable of the man who was bidden to come higher, because he had taken a lowly seat.

Let us ask in everything? What would Jesus have me do about this? Do not try to have "a mind of my own," but "a mind of Christ."

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

- 1. C ana of Galilee.....John ii. 1-11.
2. A aron.....Ex. xxviii. 1.
3. I shmael.....Gen. xvii. 18.
4. N ain.....Luke vii. 11-15.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 34. Triumph at thought! the dark tomb could not hold thee; And these dim eyes of ours shall yet behold thee; Wrapped in the glory of thy great renown; But wearing still thy manhood for a crown. Thy death for our soul's life Thou freely givest, Our death is life, O Lord, for Thou too livest.

- 1. Seeker of goodly pearls! ere life decline Sell all, but make th' eternal jewel thine!
2. From Egypt unto Solomon they bring War-horses, and this also for the king.
3. Here dwelt the prophet, once a judge, and here His people buried him with many a tear.
4. He prophecies within the camp; but why Forbid him? Would that all could prophesy!
5. "Master, dismiss the multitude," they plead; "For here is naught to satisfy their need."
6. Along this valley fled the heathen band When fell their champion by a stripling's hand.
7. The serpent with the woman's seed shall war, And this shall be between them evermore.
8. "Why do ye in this place stand idly thus?" The answer comes, "No man hath hired us."
9. "Vengeance for these, I ask!" the captive cries, Pulls down the house, and in his vengeance dies.
10. We're prisoners now no more! O joyful sound! Deliverer from the pit! This hast Thou found.

- 11. These missives did a queen in treachery send To bring a righteous man to shameful end.
12. This costly substance formed a monarch's throne; The like of it had never yet been known.
13. Lo! here they lie, bleached white; What power can give The breath of life to make the dry bones live?
14. Trial works patience, if we give her scope; And patience working this shall end in hope.
15. Here lie his head and hands! Take, move him hence! No longer worshipped in his impotence.
16. Their lives they gained by guile, but this must be Their hard and ceaseless toil in slavery.

Booths' Department.

Only a Word.

Only a word! a little winged word Blown through the busy town, Lighter than thistle-down, Lighter than dust by roving bee or bird Brushed from the blossoming lily's golden crown; Borne idly here and there, Oft as the summer air About men's doors the sunny stillness stirred. Only a word! But sharp, O sharper than a two-edged sword To pierce and sting and scar The heart whose peace a breath of blame could mar. Only a word, a little that fell Unheeded as the dew That from the darkling blue Of summer midnight softly steals, to tell Its tale of singing brook and star-lit dell In yonder noisome street, Where, pale with dust and heat, The little window flower in workman's cell Its drooping bell Uplifts to greet the kiss it knows so well; A word—a drop of dew! But O, its touch could life's lost hope renew. —Mary Keely Boutelle, in Sunday Afternoon.

The Royal Guest.

"Oh! mother, mother, the Lord Jesus is coming here to-night." Was it the words, or the sudden flash of sunset drifting through the open door, that glorified the poor, low, dingy walls in the eyes of the wondering mother? "The Lord Jesus," she repeats dreamily. "I have never known Him sin I were a child. Did He tell you it himself?" "No, mother, it was the old minister. He said the dear Lord Jesus had written to us, 'Behold, I come quickly;' and I ran all the way home to tell you." "He'll be wanting the floor clean," she said, in the simple faith of ignorance, and she hastened to take down mop and broom. The wooden chairs were sanded and scoured, and a fresh bright flame kindled in the old-fashioned fire-place. "Maybe He'll be hungry and want something to eat," she said at last. "I will bake him a little cake, for He shall na be fashed for warm supper the night." Twilight waned, but still His footsteps lingered, and their watch was in vain. The father and Robbie were home from their work, and already baby Annie was fast asleep; but He came not. So they placed a candle in the window to guide Him through the darkness, and the welcoming light shone far out over the dreary waste. There was one who saw it and drew near, and a low soft knock sounded at the oaken door. "He's come," they whispered. The mother's face softened with an unspeakable tenderness; and even the baby smiled in her sleep, as if at some pleasurable dream. Robbie and Jessie stood on tiptoe with eager, waiting eyes, as the father trying to still the loud beating of his heart, walked slowly to the door, and with tremulous hands unfastened the latch. Out of the gloom and darkness there appeared a strange vision—not the King of Glory for whose coming the gates had lifted up their heads—but a poor lone woman, who stood shuddering on the threshold. Her ragged hood fell back, and revealed a dull, expressionless face. Her torn garments dripping with wet, hung about her in scanty folds, and her two thin hands were held out imploringly.

"I'm cauld," she said, "I'd like to bide a bit." "It is only daft Jeanie," they whispered. And in the first disappointment they had almost closed the door upon her. But better thoughts prevailed, and they brought her in and placed her gently in the chimney corner. They chafed the red hands and quivering limbs while the mother wondered if the Lord Jesus, when He came, would notice the muddy tracks across the floor. "I wouldna have Him see daft Jeanie so," she said to her husband; and so she bathed the poor creature, combed her hair, and put on a clean calico dress, too large for her by half; but I doubt if the angels saw a wrinkle in it.

A half remembered verse came dimly into the mother's thought as she spoke through the door to Robbie: "Seek Him that's coming here to-night, if happily you may find Him!" She did not know the rest poor soul—"though He be not far from every one of us." She gave food to the poor famished waif, who eagerly devoured it, sitting in the chimney corner with her motionless stare. Then they waited till midnight, and the expiring candles sent them up the rough ladder to the dark loft above. Morning stole softly in, and found the same weird figure crouched over the smoldering embers on the hearth. The "parritch" was prepared, and she ate her share with the same stony face. Then Robbie went to his work, and the father hastened to the old minister to tell him the sorrowing story of the disappointment at not seeing the Lord Jesus. "For we wouldna grudge Him aught we had," he said: "and mayhap He would have left His blessing with us."

Reverently the aged pastor opened his Bible, and with trembling voice read the wonderful story of the judgment day: "Then shall the King say unto those on his right side: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me.'

"But I canna claim it," he answered sadly, "for He didna come. There was only daft Jeanie to eat the cake and 'parritch,' and to wear the missis' gown." "Listen a little longer," and the gray-headed man read on: "Then shall the righteous answer Him saying, Lord, when saw thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'"

A Negro's Experience.

As I passed a small colored church I halted a moment to speak with the aged sexton who was sitting, in pensive mood, upon the front steps. His once stalwart form was much bent, by reason of the weight of years and the infirmities of age. His locks were silvery, while his ebony face was lighted up with an expression of the purest kindness. I said: "Uncle Payne, where were you raised?" "Ober de mountains, sah, down in ole Forquier." "What is your age?" "I's nigh on eighty, so de white folks say." "Well, you are getting quite aged, Uncle Payne?" "Yes, sah, I's gettin' ole, and has spent de most ob my life in sin an' folly, serbin' de debil." "Ah! that is bad, Uncle Payne; but how long since you became a Christian?" "Sens jis' afore de wa', sah." "Well, it has been a good while since then, Uncle Payne; you should have considerable experience by this time." "Yes, sah, I ought to hab; but I's jis' now learnt how to chew crusts." "How is that, Uncle Payne; I do not quite understand what you mean?" "Well, sah, you see I came to Jesus, an' gib my heart to him, and for a long time I thought de Lord mus' be feedin' me wid pie an' cake, an' all good things. I was not pleased if he didn't, but now I's satisfied any way. I can take a crust' from his hand as well as anything. I's got de witness in me." How many are there who follow the Master, not because of the miracles which he did, but because they eat of the loaves and fishes, and are filled. How many seek the "pie and cake," but spurn the idea of crusts, though presented by the Father's hands. We must take crust as well as the cake, if we would have the witness in us.—S. M.