

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, August 3rd, 1879.—The Ministry of Reconciliation.—2 Cor. v. 14-21.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 18-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—2 Cor. v. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Corinthians i. iii. Tuesday, 2 Cor. iii. iv. Wednesday, 2 Cor. v. Thursday, 2 Cor. vi. vii. Friday, 2 Cor. viii. ix. Saturday, 2 Cor. x. xi. Sunday, 2 Cor. xii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Impulse of love. Vss. 14, 15. II. Ministry of reconciliation. Vss. 16-19. III. Apostolic appeal. Vss. 20, 21.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 14, 15.—By what love was Paul constrained? What is here meant by “constraineth us”? For what is God's love in Christ remarkable? Rom. v. 7, 8; 1 John iv. 10.

II. Vss. 16-19.—For what did Paul give up his Jewish prejudice? What is conversion? Does entire sanctification agree with Paul's teaching elsewhere? 1 Cor. iii. 1. Does it agree with the experience of believers? Ps. li; cvii. 32, 33; Gal. ii. 11. Who is reconciled by Christ's death?

III. Vss. 20, 21.—What does Paul pray men to do? Should this be a first or secondary object in modern preaching?

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth, to enforce the instructions and commands of his First Epistle, and to report to him its effects. 2 Cor. ii. 13; vii. 6; xiii. 7. Then he went forward to Macedonia, and there received the long-desired tidings. The report brought by Titus, on the whole, was encouraging. There was, however, in the Corinthian Church a minority of embittered spirits, who charged the Apostle with insincerity and fickleness. Besides all this, the church still was tainted with heathenish immorality. “Under the conflicting emotions of this intelligence, Paul wrote this Second Epistle, in which the language of commendation, love, and thankfulness, blends with censure, indignation, and grief.”

EXPOSITION.—Our Scripture, to-day, presents to us “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” with reference to—(1) its regulative principle; (2) its fundamental doctrine; and, (3) its actual exercise.

I. Regulative Principle. Verses 14-17.

Verse 14.—For the love of Christ constraineth us.—Christ's love to him, not his to Christ; though this dying love of the Saviour wakes a reciprocal love in the saints—otherwise, it would have no “constraining” power. The word translated “constraineth” does not mean impels, urges on, but, rather, holds fast; that is, so as to give to us law, guidance, direction—keeping us from going about our own business, for our own ends, as did the enemies of the cross. Comp. Phil. i. 23; Luke viii. 37. The Apostle says “us,” joining with himself his companions in the ministry. ii. 13; vii. 6. Because we thus judge. Paul did what every man does in conversion—he took the risen Christ as the life of his soul, and so the living Lord of his life. If one [that is, Christ], died for all. The world, the whole world of mankind, was in sin; and all men alike, apart from Christ, are lost, and can find their hope only in him. Thus is his atoning death “for all,” as a provision, though it avails only for “the all” who accept Christ in faith. Then were [the] all dead. Literally, “then the all died.” Through faith, his atoning death on the cross becomes, at conversion, and thenceforth, to all believers, their death to sin; as, for Christ's sake, God takes and keeps them as his children, forgiving all sin, and imparting the holy spirit of loving, obedient sonship.

Verse 15.—That [in order that] they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.—The life of sin is a life to self. Self is the centre in the unrenewed soul. In regeneration, this law of supreme self-pleasing is broken. Comp. Phil. ii. 4. But to him which died for them, and rose again. Or, better, who died and rose for them. Christ's work is all for his people not less his exaltation than his humiliation; his resurrection, than his self-sacrifice. Again: Christianity is not a merely negative thing. It aims, not to leave in man's nature a vacuum, but to fill him

with all the fullness of God. Comp. Rom. vi. 6; Gal. ii. 20.

Verse 16.—Wherefore henceforth know we, etc.—To know a man “after the flesh,” is to know or regard him with reference to his merely earthly, temporal, worldly relations and interests. Comp. John vi. 63. In personal fellowship with the risen Lord, one's supreme interests, and true life, are no longer earthly. Though we have known Christ, etc. The emphasis, in this statement, is upon the words “have known,” not upon “Christ.” In becoming a Christian, one takes the Christ that now is, and takes him as he is. There is no longer the low view which the world takes of him in his outward, earthly relations.

Verse 17.—Therefore, etc.—A summing up of the statements of vss. 14-16. “A new creature,” or new creation, because the principle of his life is new, totally new, and so regarded as a creation. Regarded as a creation, also, as being of God's sole authorship. In declaring “all things” to be new, complete sanctification is not asserted; but the presence of a principle which will ultimately secure a complete transformation—a pledge of the total and final recovery.

II. The Fundamental Doctrine. Verses 18, 19.

Verse 18.—All things are of God.—Literally, “the all things,” etc. The proper, Divine origination of his character in man, is a doctrine of utmost practical and theoretical importance. Who hath reconciled us, etc. Or laid the foundation for reconciliation, in the atoning death of Christ, according to vs. 15. This became to the Apostle and his fellow-Christians a reconciliation in their experience, when they became Christians in conversion. And gave to us the ministry of reconciliation. As against the false teachers, enemies, who denied his authority, Paul here asserts and insists, that his ministry was of God. The whole Gospel is very fitly called the Gospel “of reconciliation,” because man's salvation consists in his re-union to God, and his perfection in that re-union. The Father's gift of the Son and the Spirit, and the work of both Son and Spirit, are to transform God's enemies into his sons forever.

Verse 19.—That God was in Christ reconciling, etc.—“God was in Christ”; that is, in Christ's atoning work in the flesh. The moral influence drawing men to God, is also real; but it presupposes the work of propitiation. “Not imputing,” is forgiving; and forgiving is, in fact, justifying; and justifying, with God, is adopting or receiving as sons. And hath committed unto us, etc. Emphatic repetition of the last assertion of vs. 18; showing the importance which Paul attached to it.

III. The Ministry Exercised. Verses 20, 21.

Verse 20.—Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.—“For Christ,” not from him; the Apostles with the authority, went forth as ambassadors. This full authority is the emphatic thought. As though God did beseech you by us. In the name of God the Father, and as ambassadors from him, according to vss. 18, 19, Paul and his associates taught and wrought. There is something striking in the idea of an “ambassador” “beseeching”—beseeching rebels—the government begging those to accept mercy, who ought to be begging the government for mercy. And all the more, when the government is God's; and so it is God that beseeches, begs, pleads with us to save ourselves, by letting him save us. We pray you in Christ's stead, etc. Or, rather, “for Christ”; as acting in his interest, to give effect to his atoning, redeeming eternally saving work. Be ye reconciled to God. God has “reconciled the world unto himself,” but this avails nothing unless one be reconciled, accepts the offered, proffered mercy, “lays hold of the hope set before him.” Here is our side in this work—the sinner's response to the Saviour, the AMEN of the soul to the call of God. If this be not given, the salvation becomes an added condemnation.

Verse 21.—For he [the Father] hath made him [Christ Jesus] to be sin for us who knew no sin.—Christ “knew no sin” in that he was sinless; and hence, had a sinless, a perfectly holy consciousness. He was “made sin,” in that he was made to take, with his own full, joyful consent, the place of the sinner,

to satisfy the law, and make expiation by his vicarious death. That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. His standing with God is ours, because we are found, and so stand in him. Thus his holy life becomes ours, ours eternally, because the re-union with him is vital, like that of the branch to the vine. God grant that all who study this lesson may thus “become the righteousness of God in him.”—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, August 10th, 1879.—The Fruit of the Spirit.—Galatians v. 22-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”—Gal. vi. 7.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Jesus' love made him die for us while we were sinners; he forgives us, justifies us, gives us peace; makes us know that we are safe, if we are his; gives us victory over death.

Some things Jesus' love should make us do. It should make us love him, because he first loved us. The love of Jesus will make us new people. Those who have a new heart will have new thoughts.

Another change is, that we are friends of God, where we used to be enemies. We are his friends, if we do “whatsoever I have commanded you.” God is our friend all the time, but we won't have him.

Explain what an ambassador is. Great men, messengers from a king. Children can be ambassadors for Jesus. Must first obey the message themselves, then can carry it to others.

Boys' Department.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 30.

- BABEL—TOWER.—Gen. xi. 1-9. 1. Banque t...Esther vii. 1. 2. A bedneg o...Dan. iii. 23. 3. Bo w...Gen. ix. 13. 4. Examp e...1 Pet. ii. 21. 5. Laughte r...Eccles. vii. 6.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 31.

Build on, Ye workmen of the Lord, and bring Your gold, and gems, and every precious thing,

To rear a stately temple to your King. He layeth for the work a glorious stone in Zion, city chosen for his own; See that ye build on this, and this alone.

- 1. From the pursuer's hand the fierce shafts sped. And smote the Monarch, even as he fled. 2. Look from this mount, see Israel's thousands fly; Utter thy parable, and prophecy. 3. Come up and take the town, O king! such fame Should grace the Master's, not the servant's name. 4. This ripened grain was made the cause of strife; Yet was the Sabbath Thine, O Lord of life! 5. O Eastern Monarch! to the conqueror's lot The Lord hath called thee, though thou know'st it not. 6. God strews it forth like morsels o'er the land; And who against the bitter cold can stand? 7. Low bows the Mighty King before the seer, And offers this to him in reverent fear. 8. Not as the horse or stubborn mule be ye; They have not that which makes us strong and free. 9. Shall this man's sons the demon drive away? Jesus he knows, and Paul; but who are they? 10. Here were the moulds where moulten brass was poured To make the temple vessels of the Lord. 11. Take each your pound, my servants, seek to learn Its value, and this do till I return. 12. Such title bear not—though an honoured word— One is your Master, even Christ the Lord. 13. Pernicious sect, whose doctrine reprobate, 'Twas judged a virtue in a church to hate! 14. Beside the well two friends in hiding stayed And learnt great tidings from a lowly maid. 15. As swift as this the warrior plies the chase,— And will not stay though death be in the race. 16. Thou wert our teacher, ancient Jewish law, For thou didst show us Christ in days of yore.

- 17. A city, as the outpost of his land, The great king built among the desert sand. 18. Fairer than gems that do the eyes allure, Is this, a gentle spirit, meek and pure. 19. Such is the way that leads to life, and few, Alas! are those who do the path pursue. 20. They had the will to work, but not the power; For none would hire them till this latest hour.

[From the Helping Hand.]

Visit to a Christian Village in Burmah.

BY MISS BROMLEY.

YESTERDAY, Jan. 15, I left Promé for Enma. The railroad does not come within six miles of this place, so I was obliged to ride on a Burmese cart that distance. One of the Christians came to meet me with his cart and oxen, and was waiting for me when I arrived at Wai Gye. I had with me a Burmese girl, a cook, my bed, food for several days, and cooking utensils; so by the time the girl, the driver, the goods, and myself were in the cart, there was no room for the cook, who had to walk. The road was very rough, so the man did not drive fast. At one village we stopped a few minutes; and a living giraffe would not have made a greater sensation in America than I did there. They wanted me to stand up in the cart, so that they could get a better view of me; then they wanted me to walk, but the cook was very careful of me, and said “no” in a very savage tone. In some villages the children ran after the cart just as children in America run after the wagons containing the animals of a menagerie.

It was too early for breakfast when we started, so we unloaded at a zayat on the way, and I ate some cooked food I took with me, while a crowd of natives stood gazing around. Very few even of the men could read, so I was not able to divert their attention by giving them tracts. The driver acted as a sort of guard, and kept the children at a safe distance.

On reaching Enma, the Christians gave me a hearty welcome, bringing me eggs, rice, sugar-cane, and a chicken. I am very tired this afternoon, there have been such swarms of natives here to look at me. It is a long time since a white woman has been in these parts, so I am a natural curiosity; this morning a dog saw me, and ran to the other side of the street from sheer fright. I walked through some rice-fields to day, and saw the grain cut and laid in little bunches on the ground. It reminded me of sheaves of wheat. I went to see the deacon and his wife this evening. He is the one who wept when Mr. Stevens returned, and said he had sometimes thought the Lord was not going to let him live to see the teacher again. His wife offered me betel to chew, which of course I was obliged to decline; but, to please her, I tasted the stem of a leaf, and found it was sweet. To reach their village I had to walk across a board placed over a big mud hole; and to get to the house I was obliged to pass buffaloes, but as they did not seem afraid, I was not. I managed to understand and answer many questions about myself, my age, family friends, etc. One girl, seeing my light hair, said I was getting old, my hair was gray.

Jan. 17.—During my stay here I am living in the Chapel, one end curtained off to sleep in. One of the Christians has made a bedstead for the teachers to sleep on when they come, that they may not, as in many places, be obliged to sleep on the floor. My cooking is done under the house with a fire built on the ground. Last night the weekly prayer-meeting was held here. The pastor brought a little Burmese lamp filled with crude earth oil; the lamp was made of red clay with a little spout; in the spout was a rag, that drew the oil up. The lamp gave about as much smoke as light. I have one glass candlestick with me which graced the occasion, holding a tallow candle. A little milk pitcher and a bottle held two more. The Chapel roof is full of holes. It rained, one day, and the place where my bed stood was about the only dry place in the building. The Chapel contains two tables and two chairs; the chairs were once cane-seated, but the cane has long

since disappeared and has been replaced by boards. This morning the pastor's wife, several girls, and myself went to see a Christian family in a village near by. I had to climb a ladder to enter the house, but that is better than a small notched log that I went up yesterday to go to a Burmese house. The people were glad to see me, and their neighbors came to stare at me. Among other questions they asked if there were trees in America, and how much it cost to come from there here. I wish they were as anxious to hear about Christianity.

Jan. 20.—Yesterday the usual Sunday services were conducted here. As the people have no clocks, the hour for meeting is after they have finished eating rice. This is rather indefinite, and they were coming for an hour or more before the preaching commenced. Besides the usual Burmese congregation, there were four Christian Karens present, also heathen Karens and Burmans. It made me sad to see some of them leave after they had listened awhile.

For the evening meeting I manufactured another candlestick by placing a candle in a quart cup with a small tin pail inside to hold the candle straight. The native light interested me; it was made of the wood of a tree chopped fine. This wood is of a pitchy nature, so, when lighted, it burns like a pine torch. After the wood is chopped, it is rolled in a long palm leaf, and tied at intervals with a bamboo string. At this meeting one of these rolls was put in a table chatty, and a bowl placed at the side to catch the cinders that fell from the candle when it was picked and stirred by a girl who sat near. It would almost go out; then she would poke it, and it would smoke and blaze a while longer. Once she gave it a good squeezing, which had a very good effect. A man who sat near one of my candles was so choice of it that when one hymn was finished he would blow it out, and then pass it along to have it re-lighted when the next hymn was given out. I had hard work to keep a straight face at such times; and if certain friends of mine at home had been with me, I should surely have disgraced the name of missionary by laughing in meeting.

Jan. 22.—I was awakened early by the creaking of a Burmese cart, that was to take me through the jungle. The cartman said he lay down and slept a little while, and then got up and started; he had no clock, and was afraid he should be late. I arose, and after I had been up some time I opened the window, and there was the Southern Cross low in the South, shining as brilliantly as if it had not even thought of saying good-morning to the sun. After waiting a long time, the second cart finally crept along, the oxen drawing it wearing bells. After all this delay, when we drove away, the Big Dipper and the North Star were still visible. We were glad when the weary ride to Wai Gye was over. The station there had neither chair, clock, nor table; but after a while I found a box to sit on and ate my breakfast which I had brought with me, using my lap for a table. The ride to Promé was comfortable. I found, while at Enma, that when I was obliged to talk Burmese or nothing, I could say considerable. I enjoyed my trip very much; it was a real pleasure to me to see the jungle people keeping the Sabbath, and sustaining a weekly prayer-meeting. They are very fond of the native pastor and he is worthy of their love. Their kind attentions and simple gifts to me showed that they were glad to have a missionary among them.

This is a specimen of what a little band of suppliants at a prayer-meeting can do. You can never tell what God may be doing through the petitions you send up in your place of prayer, what heart he is comforting, what sickness he is healing, what sinner he is convicting. One thing we know, and that is that praying-breath cannot be spent in vain. So long as those dykes held at Szegedin the people were safe from the deluging waters of the Theiss. And in our land the dykes that hold back the deluge of iniquity are kept in their place in large degree by prayer. Let prayer cease, and the world will soon hear tales of disaster vastly more fearful than any that have reached our ears from the heart of Hungary.—The Presbyterian.