

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, April 6th, 1879.—Sanctified Affliction.—Job xxxiii. 14-30.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 23-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."—Heb. xii. 5.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Job i, ii, iii. Tuesday, Job iv, v, vi. Wednesday, Job vii, viii, ix. Thursday, Job x, xi, xii. Friday, Job xiii, xiv, xv. Saturday, Job xvi, xvii, xviii. Sunday, Job xix, xx, xxi.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. God's voice in dreams. Vss. 14-18. II. In bodily sickness. Vss. 19-22. III. Sickness interpreted. Vss. 23. IV. Blessed results. Vss. 24-30.

QUESTIONS.—What sacred writers appeal to the book of Job? What is the great question of the book? How did the theories of Job's three friends differ from that of Elihu?

I. Vss. 14-18.—Why does God use a variety of means in saving man? Why has he ever employed dreams? What instances can you recall?

II. Vss. 19-22.—How is all sickness a voice of God? Rom. v. 12. What, then, should be the chief concern of the sick? Matt. x. 28.

III. Vss. 23.—When men are afflicted, what counsel should they seek? What is the great ransom provided for sinners? 1 Peter i. 18, 9.

IV. Vss. 24-30.—Why is piety conducive to health? What is the gain of ungodliness? To sum up the lesson, why does not divine chastisement necessarily prove guilt? Compare Hebrews xii. 5, 6.

Job.—Job would seem to be an historical or real person, from the manner in which he is spoken of in other parts of Scripture. Ezek. xiv. 14; James v. 11. Of his ancestry it is known only that he was of the land of Uz (Job i. 1), a country that lay between Palestine and the Euphrates. As to the time in which he lived, there is a wide difference of judgment, but it was probably at some time between the Deluge and the Exodus.

Dr. Conant believes that Moses was the author of this book, but we cannot help feeling that this is doubtful. "The style," says Lowth, "is materially different from that of Moses." As a monument of intellectual power it stands quite alone. It transcends the intellect of all buried ancient civilizations. The great question to be solved in the book is, Why are the righteous afflicted? Job's friends differ in the consolations they bring to him. Three of them hold his affliction to be punitive, as the just desert of wrong doing; but he rebels against their judgment. A fourth holds affliction to be corrective and beneficial to the sufferer. Heb. xii.

EXPOSITION.—I. God's Voice in Dreams. Verses 14-18.

Verses 14-16.—The first two verses are to be joined together as expressing one thought, as appears in Dr. Conant's translation: "For once does God speak, yea twice—when one heeds it not, in a dream, a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbers upon the bed." Elihu in the preceding verse, as indeed throughout his speech, emphasizes to the utmost God's sovereignty. Here God's sovereignty appears in the choice of a time and method of making known his message. The Bible neither here nor elsewhere regards all dreams as divine revelations, but implies that such as were could be and were distinguished from such as were not. The word "sealed" (vs. 16) carries this thought here.

Verses 17, 18.—These express the design of God in giving the message. The first clause of vs. 17 is translated by Dr. Conant: "That man may put away a deed." Of course an evil deed, contrary to God's law or will. To put it away implies the actual commission of sin and the continuance of the sinful state, and is the reformation or repentance in the full Scriptural sense of the word. To hide (or cover) pride is to get it out of sight by getting it out of existence, which is always done by such reformation or repentance, in which self-will gives place to God's will. In vs. 18 the result of the sin represented as death, for the pit is the grave, and the sword (or "dart") is the instrument of

retributive death, or penal execution. Thus God interferes in dreams (or in revelations) to save men first from sin, and hence, second, from the consequence of sin; that is, death. He neither will nor can save from the consequences without saving from the cause.

II. Bodily Sickness. Verses 19-22.—Verse 19.—The commission of sin is here as in the preceding verses implied, and the sickness is held to be its consequence for correction.

Verses 20-22.—The results of the disease are given in these verses with reference (1) to the appetite, (2) to the flesh, (3) the life itself. Loss of appetite brought loss of flesh, and this threatened loss of life. This affliction is all regarded as of God, as due to sin, and that the man's own sin, as expressing God's condemnation of the sin, and yet as designed to correct, or at least to serve as a warning and call to correction, its occasion or means.

III. The Sickness Interpreted. Verse 23.—Verse 23.—If there be a messenger with him.—With the sick man. The Hebrew word translated messenger is, also the word for angel, and is the same as that used in i. 14. Here Elihu evidently has himself in mind, as may be inferred from vs. 1-7. An interpreter.

One sent to interpret the meaning of the disease as related to the man's character and duty; that is, God's purpose in sending it. Just this question of the purpose of God in afflicting, is the question of this whole book, about which Job and the other three friends could not agree. One among a thousand.

Evidently this was then as it now is with us, a proverbial expression to indicate a distinguished person. To show unto him his uprightness. God's rectitude in inflicting the disease by emphasizing God's sovereignty and incomprehensibility he seems to recognize that we may not see the reasonableness, and must supplement sight by faith.

IV. Blessed Results. Verses 24-30.

—Verse 24.—First result. God's purpose to save. This purpose exists (1) as a gracious disposition; (2) as an authoritative revelation; (3) as a consequence of a ransom. On the Old Testament use of the word rendered ransom, see Ex. xxii. 30; xxx. 12; Psalm xlix. 7; Prov. vi. 35; xiii. 8, etc. The doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, or of substitution of some kind in some way underlies the whole of revelation, and is of the very substance of the Gospel. This verse in its connection recognizes this prevalent principle. It implies that sin is forgiven, and both it and its consequences removed only in view of a ransom, a satisfaction of divine justice, and that no interpreter, and no interpretation would or could be true that should extend hope on other ground than that of such ransom or atonement. The magnificent fullness of meaning in this doctrine is to be learned in sight of the cross of Jesus Christ, in the light of apostolic interpretation of the meaning of that cross.

Verse 25.—Second result. Restored health. The symbol of spiritual cleansing and soundness. Man experiences this cleansing in regeneration, though the work of cleansing has need to be still carried on through a life-time. The contrast implied in this verse between Job's body and the restored body will be seen and felt by turning to ii. 7, 8.

Verse 26.—Third result. The joy of conscious friendship and fellowship with God—right relationship. He shall pray. The beginning of fellowship on man's side, yet consequent on the previous manifestation of saying mercy on God's side. He will be favorable unto him. God's answer to man's prayer. And he shall see his face with joy. Man cleansed and accepted, can then look into the face of God as a loving Father. For he will render unto man his righteousness. Not treat the man according to the man's own righteousness or desert, but as having the righteousness of God; that is, as being forgiven and accepted on God's terms, on the ground of the "ransom" (vs. 24).

Verses 27, 28.—Fourth result. Glorifying God. The translation by Dr. Conant's Bible Union Version, shows this as follows: "He [the restored man] will chant it before men, and say: 'I have sinned, and have perverted the right, and it was not required me.' He has redeemed my soul from going into the pit, and my life that it may behold the light." The confession before men of that which God has done for the soul.

Verses 29, 30.—A general summary of the results mentioned in the preceding verses.

Elihu has the gospel, but in a dim and shadowy form.

Repentance, Redemption, Restoration are the three Gospel Topics of the lesson.

Job was not the great sinner that his so-called friends suspected; he was, in all the externals of life law, a very righteous man. But there was a good deal of self-righteousness in him, that needed to be taken out of him; and the severe discipline through which he passed was eminently adapted to do it.

(1.) Repentance.—To this God leads men, sometimes, by inward monitions of conscience, by his written word, by the whispers of his Spirit. If this avail not, he resorts to sharper methods. God's chastening hand is laid upon him; afflictions come like successive blows.

(2.) Redemption.—Implies a Redeemer, who, in order to be appreciated, must be "an interpreter" of life's dark problems. Seeing that all of us have gone astray, and become corrupt; this Heavenly Messenger must provide a righteousness for us, and "show" it unto us, if our redemption is to be accomplished.

(3.) Restoration follows. (a) First, of legal status. God can now be just, and yet justify the sinner, when he becomes a believer.

(b) Of moral condition. Disease and age are the symbols and the signs of sin—for sin evermore produces disorder, decrepitude, and torture of soul. Christianity makes one young, and keeps him young forever.

(c) Of Divine communion. This was broken off when Adam fell. "So he drove out the man." Between God and man there was "a great gulf fixed." But now, "he shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him."

(4) But mark, that all these blessings are only bestowed upon the man who is truly penitent.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 13th, 1879.—Prosperity Restored.—Job xlii. 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, we count them happy which endure."—Jas v. 11.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Give three pictures in Job's life. First, Rich and happy in his children, looked up to by the poor, the great man of his neighborhood. Second, Job hearing the sad news of his losses, as one after another arrived with their story, but in it all saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Third, Job, covered with sores, sitting on the ashes, scraping himself with a piece of a broken dish, even his wife telling him that he had better die; his three friends around him, saying that all this must have been sent as a punishment.

Have any of these children ever been very sick? Did they understand what everything the doctor did, meant? Just what each medicine was for? No; but they knew it was all to make them well. The sickness itself is often the medicine which our heavenly Father sends to make our souls well.

If we listen to God when he speaks, say from the heart, "I have sinned" (vs. 27), then Jesus will give us of his goodness (vs. 26), and we shall be full of joy.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

- No. 13. 1. One of the fiery serpents which bit the children of Israel in the Wilderness. 2. Find the solution in Numbers xxi. 6, 7, 8, 9; also 2 Kings xviii. 4.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 14. Her lot seemed bitter, all her loved ones lost, But grief hath proved the treasure that is left. They count not now the billows they have crossed, For joy hath filled the hearts once sore bereft.

- 1. They knew not their full bliss, but we may know, For in this lowly cot may we behold, Born of their sons, the Mighty one laid low, While earth, unheeding, on her journey rolled.

2. In priestly office called to serve the Lord, He might have found his life; but read instead The awful word that doth his fate record;

Strange fire is in his hand; so falls he, dead.

3. Nor thought nor care for this did e'er begin While Eve was spotless as the lily's bloom.

But sin crept in; and this, the fruit of sin, So fills some hearts that God can find no room.

4. "No strange God shalt thou make, nor bow the knee Before them," saith the Lord. Oh, Israel! thou, Too soon art turned aside; too soon we see God's people to Zidonian goddess bow.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XII.—The Parsonage in the Prairie.

"Why, John, John! what has started you on that track?"

"I have been thinking a great deal, and you know how wonderful are the accounts sent us from there—how wide open are the doors which have been closed for ages, how eager the cry for laborers. I am neither crazed nor fickle, so do not look at me so astonished. I love the field here, and was needed. When I first came here, there was no church, no organization of any denomination; now there are five. How can I in my strung young manhood be content to labor for a hundred or two for whom some one else can do as much, when the thousands—nay, millions—of Japan are begging for one man?"

"Oh, John, you have forgotten the good you have done and are still doing here. You are discouraged to-night. Perhaps duty will look different to you after a cup of this fragrant Hyson," said Hattie, with a bright smile and a caressing touch upon his brow as she drew him toward the table. He did not hear the soft sigh heaved at thoughts of leaving their first home, reared under such difficulties, or of sundering ties all the more precious on account of trial and hardship; for Hattie knew her husband well enough to feel assured that his words were the outgrowth of deep and deliberate conviction, so she smothered for the time her pain as he answered lightly:

"Ah, wife, you can argue me into believing almost anything with your woman's art and the powerful ally of a delicious meal." So, yielding with native grace to the charms of home and his wife's fine conversational powers, the subject was dropped. After tea John helped his wife to put away the tea-dishes and set things to rights generally, and then the two went up stairs to the study, as was their usual custom, to write, study, read, talk over the next Sunday's sermon or the interests of their field. Many hours of evening John spent in reading aloud to his wife as she plied her needle, but often with gentle force her work was laid aside and she made to take her turn in the delightful readings. The young minister did not intend to leave his wife behind him in intellectual pursuits or suffer her to spend the best of her strength in household cares, lest she become discouraged in her efforts to keep pace.

Together they were reading, not only theology, but history, travels, poetry, and other graceful works of the imagination, the standard quarterly, monthly, and newspaper. Together they labored in the home, in the town, in the church—one heart, one aim, one hope. Do you think they were to be pitied? And where is the fault that there are not more such married hearts?

On this particular night there were letters to finish to the far-away brother and sister in their island home, and as John folded down the last sheet he said to his wife: "Hattie, less than another year will see us embarked for the foreign work. I propose to publish an appeal which, coming from one here in this so-called 'sandy West,' will shake our theological seminaries, and turn at least four other young pastors into the foreign field. Come and sit down here, dear, while I

read what I have written to Mother Hammond to-day about it, and give me your approval. I am sure of that, Hattie, when you have thought more about the question."

The reader should have a portion of this letter in order to understand Mr. Saybrook's position. He says:

"I have always had a deep interest in the foreign missionary work, and had no other idea of my eventual life-work until turned aside and delayed so long in my studies by family circumstances. But during my last year in the seminary the descriptions and appeals from secretaries of mission boards and missionaries on the field gave a new impetus to my convictions and fresh longings. I was engaged to Hattie at the time, and knew much of the fearful ordeal through which you, dear mother, were passing on Alice's account. I feared to propose it, and smothered my convictions, but determined to keep myself informed in regard to the world's evangelization, and also preach to my people on the missionary question, striving to raise their standard of privilege and duty. This has kept alive the flame in my own soul.

"I am not satisfied here simply because the field is not large enough. With a town of fifteen hundred inhabitants, only about one-third can be reached in any way, and there are five churches. Laramie, with a thousand people, has four; Greeley, not quite as large, has six organizations. So it is all over the West and in many portions of the East. Every little village has from three to six ministers. There is no difficulty in finding men for this work. But how is it with the foreign field? Despite my strong convictions, I should not offer myself to the Board if men enough were forthcoming. But what are the facts? I have listened to the appeals for helpers for the last few years, and scarcely any one responds. I have watched the needs of the world and hearkened to its clarion calls until I am ashamed of our American Christianity. China, with nearly half the human race, has only one Protestant teacher to four millions. Japan has less. The missions are in danger of breaking down for want of men; stations and schools are actually abandoned, because Christian young men in this country refuse to go to their aid.

"This is overwhelming. I cannot stand it, mother, when wide regions are ready to receive the truth, when large cities which are the centres of millions of people are pleading for teachers, and not enough among our students and ministers will volunteer for one in a million.

"I hope God has prepared you for this, mother, and believe that you will rejoice to give another of your children to the glorious cause. I feel almost sure that you will give your consent without a struggle; if so, we may truly say, 'Blessed art thou among women!' I propose to offer to make one of five pastors to enter the foreign field. I know the world will not understand it, but know of only one principle to guide us: 'Where will our lives amount to the most for Christ?' I am selfish about the matter somewhat, as I long to have a hand in laying the broad underpinning of Christianity among those millions. I want the honor of it in eternity, and do not want another man to take my crown. My health is firm, and Hattie's better than that of most of our American women. Besides, she has proved herself a hero under difficulties. Why should we not go? Living as we do on this great highway of nations, we realize the fact that the world is one, the race is one, and that distances are all but annihilated, and one must be tame indeed who does not feel every nobler impulse of his being touched with electric thrills sent round the world.

"We pray that this long letter may bear no poison-tipped arrow of grief, but rather may go freighted with joy. Let us have your blessing. I am weary with contending against the objections and impediments offered by some of our best people, and long for a 'God speed you.'

"Ever your son, JOHN SAYBROOK."

As John slipped this epistle into its envelope he raised his eyes and looked anxiously at his wife, who with brimming eyes clasped his hand, saying: "John, you are right. Why have I not seen it so before? I am with you heart and soul when God opens the way. I think it will take another winter to prepare ourselves and people for the change. It is a great undertaking, and much lies between us and the spring, dear. Never fear for mother, though; she has had her struggle, and now her outlook is very clear. I have more fear for Marion's rebellion and Fleda's suffering, though I know she will say, 'Go.' But she does cling to you so, John."

"And to you, her last sister, dear wife." "Yes, but she has always said, 'John must be with her when she went to heaven.'" "Perhaps I shall," answered John; "God only knows. Precious sister! I think there will be light at eventide for her, surely. But, dear, it is late; let us kneel and talk with our Father about all this."