

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, August 17th, 1879.—The Christian Armor.—Ephesians vi. 10-20.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 14-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—Ephesians vi. 11.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Ephesians i. Tuesday, Ephesians ii. Wednesday, Ephesians iii. Thursday, Ephesians iv. Friday, Ephesians v. Saturday, Ephesians vi. Sunday, 2 Timothy iv. 1-8.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Exhortation to conflict. Vss. 10-12. II. Armor described. Vss. 13-17. III. Prayer enjoined. Vss. 18-20.

QUESTIONS.—From what place was the Epistle to the Ephesians probably written? When?

I. Vss. 10-12.—Why is passive indifference to sin not allowable to Christian life? What is meant by the "wiles of the Devil"? Does all temptation come from our wicked hearts?

II. Vss. 13-17.—How many pieces does Paul include in a Christian's armor? Which is put on first? Which is for the breast? The feet? The head? The left arm? The right? Which one only is designed for offensive war? What is the effect of this sword, when well used? Heb. iv. 12.

III. Vss. 18-20.—Why is personal effort presumption without prayer? Why is prayer without effort a mockery? For what does Paul ask prayer? What is the difference between brave and sensational preaching?

Our Lord used common things in life in illustration of Christian truth—birds, flowers, seed-times and harvests, tares, leaven, salt, vineyards, shepherds. So Paul, as also the other Apostles, used illustrations familiar to his eyes, as he stood on the borders or in the heart of Greek civilization, and always in the midst of the Roman Empire. The sight of soldiers was common to him all through his Apostolic career. The war-like symbols of the Roman Empire were especially prominent to Paul, while in the midst of the pretorian guards at Rome, from which city he probably wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians. Our lesson, to-day, is not on the doctrinal part of this Epistle (chaps. i-iii), but on the practical. Chaps. iv-vi. The passage selected for the lesson is called "an allegory, with a running interpretation, where the image and interpretation are given side by side."—Howson. It is a striking picture of the use and nature of the Christian Armor, and will repay close study and a life-long application.

EXPOSITION.—I. Verses 10-13.—The exhortation is, not for Christians to seek or provoke a needless conflict, but to act well their part in a conflict which is inevitable. God lays on his children the necessity of spiritual warfare, while he keeps them on earth. The question for each is: "Shall I fight, or perish?" The call to fight, is thus a call to live. To decline battle for God, is to join battle against him. We ask God not to lead us into temptation, giving us over into its power; and he asks us to stand our ground, and wage our (and his) warfare, in the temptation in which we find ourselves. He will answer our call, and we his.

Verse 10.—Finally.—The closing appeal, comprehensive of all previous particular injunctions. Be strong in the Lord, etc. The first requisite for a soldier is strength. Only men of the age at which there is most vigor, and sound and healthy men, at that, are chosen for the army. We have our life by union with the Lord, in faith; and in this life of our Lord, thus made ours, his Divine, spiritual strength becomes ours. "The power of his might" means, not simply his mighty power, but that active force which proceeds from him as mighty. The exhortation to have this life, implies a power, on our part, to cultivate our fellowship with the Lord. We freely direct our effort to this end, as to any other.

Verse 11.—Put on the whole armor [panoply] of God.—"The whole armor," is the complete equipment of the soldier with all the requisite parts of the armor, both defensive and offensive. The man himself is to put it on, though it is "of God," as furnished by him, because, as with our spiritual life, so with all provisions for it, they are received by us,

and made our own, in the way of free appropriation and personal responsibility. There is no such notion to be cherished as this: "If I am to be armed, I shall be armed." That ye may be able, etc. The end in view, the business in hand, requiring the arming. Mere spiritual, inward life, is not enough; but there must also be a putting forth of that life, according to the exigencies of the situation, and with the appropriate means. The devil is here, as elsewhere in Scripture, regarded as the chief of the demons, and at the head of that great, organized kingdom of wickedness, within which men, not born of God, are comprehended. The word "wiles," or stratagems, indicates the nature of wickedness as at heart a lie, and as manifesting itself in innumerable forms of deceit, falsehood, untruthfulness, unreality—a kingdom of darkness. There is great skill, with great resources of will, organization, etc., at the command of this skill.

Verse 12.—For.—Or because—introducing the urgent reason for the entire previous exhortation. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Literally, the wrestling to us is not, etc. That is, the wrestling in which we have to engage, as distinguished from that of Roman athletes, or soldiers. The word "wrestling" usually designates the hand-to-hand contest of athletes; but is fitly used also of the hand-to-hand engagement of soldiers in battle, when fighting at close quarters. What a forcible suggestion is here, as to the nature of the Christian's warfare! "Flesh and blood" does not, here, mean the corruption of our own nature, but, rather, mere men. The Roman soldiers were men, and fought with men; and so were their own men-made armor. But our spiritual foes are more mighty, and must be met and fought with other strength, and other arms. But against principalities, etc. The Apostle has just stated what our foes are not, and now states what they are. This is emphatic, double affirmation—first negatively, and then positively. On this gradation of rank among wicked spirits, compare i. 21; Col. i. 16; 1 Peter iii. 22. Mark the emphatic repetition of the word against—making us feel the shock, on shock, on shock—of the fierce battle. For "the rulers of the darkness of this world," the more exact rendering is, "the world-rulers of this darkness."

The word "darkness" is here, as often, used in a moral sense—the opposite of the word light; as when it is said, "God is Light." "The world" of man's kind is often represented as hostile to God, and so "in the power of" the wicked one." See John xvii. 11; xiv. 30; 1 John v. 19; 2 Cor. iv. 4, etc. The justness of this representation, the crucifixion of Christ, and the history of Christianity, attest. Instead of "spiritual wickedness," Ellicott, with good reason, translates, "spiritual hosts." "High places" is literally, "the heavenly"—doubtless referring to "the air," and thus repeating the conception of ii. 2. The word thus carries the ideas of authority and invisibility. Comp. i. 21; ii. 6; where invisibility and exaltation are, in like manner, combined with reference to the good.

Verse 13.—Wherefore, etc.—Emphatic repetition of the urgent exhortation of vs. 10, 11, occasioned by the statement (in vs. 13), of the fearful nature and greatness of the conflict. Notice how, instead of "stand" (vs. 11), it is here "with-stand"—that is, stand against. The whole of every man's life on earth is, in a true sense, an "evil day," because sin and temptation are ever encountered. But there are special times of special evil, crises, when the fight is most hot and dreadful.

II. The Armor Described. Vss. 14-17.—Verse 14.—The "girdle kept the armor in its proper place," and was "commonly used to support the sword." "Truth" is, here, not the Gospel, but that characteristic of spirit described by our Saviour as being "of the truth." "Righteousness," also, is that uprightness which God's Spirit imparts to the Christian, and is consequent upon our being "of the truth." The "breast-plate" was made of leather, or metal, and "covered the breast, back, belly and sides, as far as the waist."

Verse 15.—That which is to make one ready [preparation, or readiness] to go to the battle, and to go or stand wherever required, is the peace of God in the heart, which the Gospel, or good news,

both announces and brings. This peace is harmony with God—oneness with him; and we fight only that which is at war with him. So, if we have Christ's peace, we must, like Christ, endure "the contradiction of sinners."

Verse 16.—Above all.—Over all the other pieces of armor named. The word here translated "shield," designates the oblong shield, "about four feet long, by two and a half wide, formed out of boards like a door, firmly joined together and covered over with coarse cloth, under an outer coating of rawhide, attached and strengthened round the edge by a metal rim."—Rich. Rom. Antiq. The use of darts, tipped with some inflammable substance, and ignited when about to be hurled, was not uncommon. Simple faith in God and his word—simple reliance on a "thus saith the Lord," is the only way in which we can stand in these days, when arrows, whose blazing, poisoned points make all the atmosphere aglow, are hurled from the highest places of thought, learning and power.

Verse 17.—In 1 Thess. v. 8, the "helmet," is described as being "the hope of salvation," and not simply salvation, as here. Hope makes the completed salvation, which lies beyond the conflict—a thing present and certain—and so, in this assurance of hope, we lift up the head, and feel that it is safe. The sword of the Spirit, etc. This is the one offensive weapon. We need no other, and God has given us no other. It is the sword of the Spirit, because the Divine Word has been given by inspiration of the Spirit. We use the sword thus given.

III. Prayer Enjoined. Verse 12-20.—Verse 18.—Praying.—Ever recognizing God as supreme over both us and our spiritual enemies, and also as "a very present help," to give us whatever is needed for our success. Always. The constancy of dependence makes needful constancy of petition. With all [every kind of] prayer and supplication. The earnestness and universality of petition. In the Spirit. See Rom. viii. 26, 27. Watching thereunto. Ceaseless vigilance in prayer, as in observation of the enemies' plans to find the best ways to thwart them. For all saints. No selfish warfare, in which the laws is, "Every one for himself." The army of God is one, and its success is common. Oh! that we now could better see and own this!

Verse 19.—And for me, etc.—Especially, as he was, under God, the leader. There is something touching, and very instructive, in the Apostle's recognition of his helplessness as a preacher, without God's gracious aid, and of his conscious need of the prayers of his brethren in securing that aid. The appalling dangers of his mission, made necessary the more grace.

Verse 20.—An ambassador.—Of God, authorized to announce God's will. In bonds. Rather, in a bond, or chain, by which he was bound to a soldier, according to Acts xxviii. 16. The plural was used when the hands and feet were bound. The persons of ambassadors, from one government to another, were inviolable. The more shame that Paul was bound.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, August 24th, 1879.—The mind of Christ.—Philippians ii. 1-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let us have the mind of Christ, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Philippians ii. 5.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Christians are often called soldiers of Jesus? Last week we saw how love for Jesus should make us bear good fruit. Now we will see how this love will make us fight for him. Our fight is with badness itself; bad thoughts; bad wishes; bad words; bad deeds; and the worst of it is, the badness is in ourselves, quite as much as in other people. And we must fight against this badness in ourselves, before we can do much about the rest of the badness that is in the world.

The Bible calls it the "Good Fight for Faith." It is a good fight, because it is a fight for good things, for goodness itself; and it is a fight of faith, because we do not see our Captain, nor the help he gives us; sometimes even, the thing that we fight. But we know that our Leader is there, and he will make us

strong—strong in the Lord, who is our Captain.

The soldiers of olden times used to wear something to keep the swords and spears of their enemies from striking them so easily.

Describe the armor, piece by piece, drawing as near the shape as you can, or showing pictures of them. Tell for what they were used. Truth is like the belt which is to be wrapped tightly about us; to be always strictly truthful, will not only help us to fight against lies, and all that is false, but will keep us from much that is wrong. The breast-plate which shelters the breast, covers the head, is Righteousness, which means, doing right.

Good soldiers obey their captain's orders cheerfully, quickly, without questions. Weak soldiers, good for nothing, and are left behind; but they can get strength by simply asking Jesus for it.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 32.

- 1. T hyatira.....Rev. ii. 18-29.
2. H azael.....2 Kings viii. 9-16; x. 32.
3. Y ear of Jubilee.....Lev. xxv; 9, 10; [Isa. lxi. 2.
4. Wilderness.....Num. xiv. 26-35.
5. I ce.....Job vi. 15, 16, 17.
6. L ot.....Gen. xiii. 10-13.
7. L amech's.....Gen. x. 28, 29; [2 Peter ii. 5; Gen. ix. 19.
8. B abylon.....Jer. xxvii. 6, 7; Is. xiv. 4, 23.
9. E phraim.....John xi. 54.
10. D amascus.....Acts ix. 3.
11. O bediah.....1 Kings xviii. 3, 4.
12. N ain.....Luke vii. 11-16.
13. E phesus.....Acts xix. xx. 17-27; [Eph. v. 8.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 33.

The initials of the subjoined give the name of a man on whom the Lord "set a mark."

- 1. The town in which Christ performed his first miracle.
2. The first high priest of the Jews.
3. The son of Abraham, for whom his father prayed to God "that he might live before Him."
4. The city where Jesus raised from the dead, the only son of a widow.

Booths' Department.

The Spider and the Butterfly.

The spider was full of business; he darted this way and that, fastening his thread now to this leaf, then to that flower, crossing it at regular distances with wonderful care; he did not stop to rest, for Mistress Spider was hungry, and there was no dinner for her as yet, so he darted round and round, up and down, till at last the web was finished; he retired under a leaf to watch, with all his eight eyes, for the approach of some thoughtless insect. The minister and his little daughter passed that way, and had seated themselves on the bank to watch the spider. "O papa, I wonder if he will catch anything?" whispered the child. She was not long kept in doubt, for at that moment a white butterfly was seen dipping his long proboscis into the depths of a flower, then flitting in the sunlight till he came to another, every time getting nearer and nearer to the web and the watchful spider. The beautiful insect did not dream of danger as it sported with a companion, or folded its delicate wings for an instant to rest on some blossom. Then again it flitted nearer and nearer, happy in its ignorance of the hidden snare, for the web was so placed that only in one light could its delicate threads be seen. A convolvulus was growing on the other side of the web, and the butterfly flew straight toward it, thinking what delicious honey there would be in its painted cup; but, alas! at that very moment its beautiful wings were entangled in the silken trap, and the spider, starting from its hiding-place, rushes upon its victim. The butterfly struggled, but it was in vain; the treacherous threads seemed only to hold it the tighter, and its enemy, approaching cautiously, began to weave round it a close web, so that it soon hung helplessly, unable even to struggle.

All this while the little girl had been looking on with breathless interest, and now she uttered a low cry of distress, and turning to her papa, she exclaimed. "Papa, save it, save that poor butterfly!" The clergyman stretched out his hand, and began to disentangle the insect, the

frightened spider darted back to his shelter, the web was broken, and the rescued butterfly once more fluttered freely in the sunshine.

"I am so glad it is safe," cried the child, as, after resting for a moment on a leaf, the pretty creature flew gaily away. "You look grave, papa; are you not glad too?"

"My child," her father replied, "I was thinking of other snares and other victims."

"Where, papa?"

"They are most dangerous where they are expected least."

"I don't understand, papa; who makes them, and why?"

"Our great enemy makes them, my child, that he may ensnare all those who forget to watch, and we call those snares temptations." The child looked thoughtful, and her father went on: "Just as the spider puts its web where it can least be seen, so Satan put his traps where we think it least likely that we should find them; when we feel least disposed to think of hidden dangers, then is the time we should look out for them most, for they are sure not to be far from us; and when once we fall into them, no power of our own can save us."

"What would happen to us then papa?"

The good man looked tenderly at the child as he replied:

"There is a hand ever ready to help the helpless, and an ear that always hears the cry of the distressed; just as you saw the poor butterfly, though it could not help itself, it was saved by a strength not its own, so our heavenly Father hears and saves those who cry to Him."

"But what must we do to keep from falling into Satan's traps?"

Her father looked up and answered, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

The Donkey's Lament.

SUGGESTIVE TO YOUNG POETS.

"Oh, when I was a little ass, I frisked and frolicked on the grass; I'd nought to do, and nought to fear—But that was long ago, my dear.

My master came one mournful day, And found me with my friend at play; 'Tis time that you should work,' said he; And there was no more fun for me."

Now to you or me this little song would only have sounded exactly like the braying of a donkey, but a flock of geese, who were grazing near the singer, understood donkey language perfectly, and crowded around him to listen. The melody wound up suddenly, and ceased as they approached.

"Isn't there any more?" said Mrs. Goose.

"Well, yes," answered the donkey; "there's a great deal more, but it isn't made yet."

"Who makes it, then?" asked the gander.

"Well," answered the donkey, modestly, looking down at his hoofs, "I do; it is my own sad experience."

"Really, it isn't at all bad," said the gander; "I could detect very few faults in the metre."

"I was watching these young creatures in the field at play," went on the donkey still looking down at his hoofs, "and the sight recalled the happy days of my foalhood, and somehow, when much moved, my thoughts are apt to flow into verse."

"Do give us some more," said Miss Molly Goosey; "I am sure there must be a little more, and it is so sweetly touching—what did your master do next?"

The donkey cleared his throat several times, and began again, stopping between the two verses to remark that the rope around his nose by which he was tethered made it very difficult to open his mouth wide enough.

He tied me to a heavy cart, And dragged my head to made me start, And if I strove to bite or kick, He banged about me with a stick.

Now, all along the stony roads, I stagger under heavy loads, And when I stop to pant and puff, He cannot scold at me enough."

At this point Miss Molly became so visibly affected that she was obliged to turn away and hide her head for a moment under her wing. "The cruel, wicked man!" she murmured. Then, after a moment's pause, she added, "Isn't there any more?"