

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

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

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-6, 10.

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

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Job xxii, xxiii, xxiv. Tuesday, Job xxv, xxvi, xxvii. Wednesday, Job xxviii, xxix, xxx. Thursday, Job xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii. Friday, xxxiv, xxxv, xxxvi. Saturday, Job xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix. Sunday, Job xl, xli, xlii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Job's Confession. Vss. 1-6. II. His Three Friends Judged. Vss. 7-9. III. Job's Prosperity Restored. Vss. 10.

QUESTIONS.—How greatly had Job been afflicted? See chaps. i. ii. How had three of his friends accounted for it? How had Elihu differed from them? Did God answer directly or indirectly Job's troubled spirit? How did he answer?

I. Vss. 1-6.—When did Job cease making his self-defence? When did his self-condemnation begin? How does he confess God's omnipotence? How God's omniscience? What past judgments does he deplore? Why does he now abhor himself? Why does the sense of sin deepen with clearer visions of God.

II. Vss. 7-9.—How did Job's friends prove themselves "miserable comforters"? What duty was now laid upon Job's friends? Why would not God hear the prayer of Job's friends? Why would he hear Job's intercession for them? Heb. vii. 25.

III. Vss. 10.—How is Job's condition changed? How many more years does he live? How old was he when he died? (Ans. about 200).

In the book of Job we are taught, (1) "That the apparently arbitrary distribution of the good and evil of this life is not the result of chance or caprice, for God, the Creator and Judge of all, the infinitely wise, just, and good, presides over and controls the affairs of earth. His providential care extends to all his creatures. He has power to restrain or chastise wrong and avenge suffering innocence, and this power he uses when the government of the world belongs of right to him who created it; whose infinite justice can do no wrong; whose perfect wisdom and love devise only what is best; whose omniscience cannot err in the choice of means; who is infinite in power and does all his pleasure. (3) That to know this is enough for man, and that more than this he cannot know: God can impart to him no more, since Omniscience alone can comprehend the purposes and plans of the Infinite. (4) That man's true position is implicit trust in the infinitely Wise, Just and Good, and submission to his will. That here alone the finite comes into harmony with the infinite and finds true peace; for if it refuses to trust until it can comprehend, it must be in eternal discord with God and with itself."

Solomon says, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." Eccles. vii. 8. It is so here in the book of Job. We see in it a righteous man afflicted, bodily and mentally, and in great doubt about its justice. So Job sits in silence until God himself comes into the scene in the manifestation of his lordship over creation.

EXPOSITION.—We may designate the first division, Job's confession to God of his own sin; the second, Job's intercession with God for his three sinning friends; and the third, Job's restoration by God to his original prosperity.

I. Job's Confession. Verses 1-6.—The confession is double; the first, that of judgment; the second, that of disposition. The second was the root, of which the first was the outgrowth. Job misjudged God because he was not right in heart. Depravity as to inward life, brings obscuration of the light. See I John i. 6.

Verse 1.—Then Job answered, etc.—This is merely to introduce what follows.

Verse 2.—I know that thou canst do all things, etc.—The last clause of this verse asserts negatively the truth asserted in the first positively.

Verses 3, 4.—Who is this, etc.—This was Jehovah's first sentence in addressing Job (xxxviii, 2), and its quotation by Job shows that he felt the rebuke to

be just. By reading Job's speeches, it will be seen how wide of the mark were many of his statements as to God's rule of man and of the world, and as to the relation of affliction to the divine will and human destiny. For example, xix. 6, 24. He had judged harshly and murmuringly because he did not have faith enough in God to "trust where he could not trace."

Job prays God to hear his prayer for wisdom, put up from a sense of his own utter lack of wisdom and incompetency to comprehend God's purposes. In the cry to God to hear, is implied a confession that he is not worthy to be heard, and that he dare not even venture to speak, save on God's gracious promise to hear. Compare James i. 5, and Matt. v. 3; also I Cor. viii. 1.

Verse 5.—I have heard, etc.—This begins the second confession, and is the statement of its occasion. The distinction here drawn, is the distinction between a knowledge about God and a knowledge of God, a speculative and an experimental knowledge, a revelation to the natural reason and a revelation in the conscience. The latter brings that which Christians call conviction of sin, and is the antecedent to repentance. We hear of that which is remote; and see that which is before us. Hence these two terms, hear and see, very naturally and impressively convey the distinction intended.

Verse 6.—Wherefore I abhor myself, etc.—This is the confession proper, "myself" is in italics. The best Hebrew authority decides that we must supply not "myself," but "it," referring to his conduct in murmuring against God. But this conduct was Job's sin, and in abhorring it, he abhors himself as thus sinning. Hence the two renderings amount to the same thing in the end. He felt himself as of himself condemned, hopelessly and justly.

II. Job's Intercession. Verses 7-9. Verse 7.—This is a Divine decision, contrasting Job's words with those of the three friends, approving Job and condemning his friends. Job had been right in asserting his conscious innocence of special wickedness, charged by his friends as ground of his special affliction. He was not guilty of a special sin, because he had been one upon whom suffering was fitted to have this effect.

Verse 8.—Hence Job, by this greater nearness to God thus effected, was prepared to intercede for them. God required of these men two things, which were exactly fitted to their case; the first, sacrifices in confession of their sin against God directly; the second, a request of Job for intercession, as having directly injured him in their sin against God. Thus they were to humble themselves, as truth and justice, and a true manliness required, before both God, and God's servant. We are here powerfully reminded of Jesus Christ, at once our Sacrifice and our Intercessor.

Verse 9.—The three obeyed, and so became reconciled, truly and thoroughly to both God and Job, and thus were they restored to him in a closer and sweeter relation than that which existed before the affliction.

III. The Restoration. Verse 10. Verse 10.—And the Lord [Jehovah] turned the captivity, etc.—It has been well noted that captivity was a very natural designation of any great affliction, because, in those parts and times, the custom was so prevalent for one tribe or nation to fall upon another and carry away from it captives. To "turn captivity" was to return the captives; hence, here, to end the affliction by restoring the prosperous state which preceded it. Here it is said that Job had twice as much as before; explained in Vss. 11-15. Of course the slain sons and daughters were not raised from the dead, but others were born in their place. The great lesson is that true blessing is to be found in holy fellowship with God and is in fact proportioned to the closeness of this fellowship, notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary.

"Ye have heard," says James, (v. 11), "of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." "All is well that ends well," and here cometh the end.

(1.) First comes a confession.—Job was a man of splendid intellect. He had undertaken to wrestle with great problems—he fancied he could master

them. In his pride of intellect, he had even gone so far to say, "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God." The first step towards true knowledge is, to know that we know nothing. And this step Job takes.

(2.) Next comes a supplication.—The last clause of the fourth verse, correctly rendered, reads: "I will ask of thee, and make me to know." So long as a man relies upon human reason, he is doomed to wander in the dark. But just so soon as, in conscious helplessness, he stretches out helpless hands unto the Lord, there comes a—

(3.) Revelation.—Just how it came to Job, and just what was the nature of it, we do not know. But this we do know: It was a nearer, clearer, more convincing revelation than he had ever had before.

(4.) Humiliation.—(2 Cor. x. 12.) Job, judged by comparison with his three reproachful friends, measured head and shoulders taller than the best of them. But when, standing alongside of the Infinite One—standing revealed in the light of his countenance—he seems a very monster of depravity.

We are not to compare ourselves with the worst of men, nor even the best of men; but with Him who is absolute perfection—and at the sight of whom even such holy men as Isaiah, and the beloved disciple John, were overwhelmed with a sense of their vileness, and became as dead men before him. After Job's humiliation, came his—

(5.) Exaltation.—The Lord "accepted" him, and lifted him up to a height of prosperity and blessedness beyond what he had ever known before. And it is worthy of notice, that "the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." God blesses us when we endeavor to bless others.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 20th, 1879.—Queen Esther.—Esther iv. 10-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."—Psa. xxxvii. 5.

Question on the three pictures in Job's life; his troubles, and why God sometimes sends such things. Get the children to name some ways in which God speaks to them. What is the greatest trouble that can happen to any one? Not the death of the body, but the death of the soul.

Job thought very well of himself; he only saw that he had been kind to the poor, been honored by his neighbors, been outwardly good. God having already spoken to Job through his troubles, now spoke to him in the midst of a storm. This sight humbled him, he confessed his sins, and asked God to teach him, and prayed for help.

Tell of the three friends who were very willing that Job should be charged with wrong, but did not think of their own sins. We all need a sacrifice for sin; Jesus, our Ransom, is our sacrifice, and God will only accept us through his sacrifice and prayers.

God does not always reward in this life those who suffer, but we will have far more by-and-by, than we could ever have here.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 12. (See page 92, March 19.)

"THE LORD IS RISEN."—Luke xxiv. 34.

- 1. Throne.....Luke i. 32.
2. Hair.....John xi. 2.
3. Emmaus.....Luke xxiv. 13.
4. Linen clothes.....John xx. 5.
5. Ointment.....Luke xxiii. 56.
6. Resurrection.....Acts xvii. 18.
7. Disciple.....Luke xiv. 26.
8. Idle tales.....Luke xxiv. 11.
9. Sepulchre.....Luke xxii. 53.
10. Rabboni.....John xx. 16.
11. It is finished.....John xix. 30.
12. Slices.....Luke xxiv. 1.
13. Elias.....Matt. xxvii. 46-49.
14. Nails.....John xx. 25.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 15. REVA. 3. 1. 10

- 1. A title of Christ.
2. A kingly ancestor of Christ.
3. One appointed by Christ.
4. A form taken by Christ.

The initials and finals read down give the name of a man, and of the place whence he was driven for his sin: (The answers to Nos. 14 and 15 will be given next week.)

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XIII.—More Changes.

The autumn was fast wearing into winter when the sunny parsonage was made still brighter by the advent of a little son. John sent to the anxious friends at home these characteristic words:

"It is all over, and God has been better to us than mother or sister. At half-past ten last evening our little birdling came. Everything is perfectly right and favorable. Help us to thank our Father, who has been so kind.

"Your happy son and brother, J. S." John was indeed a happy father, insisting that he could preach and pray and work every way better for his boy. Very fair and beautiful were the hopes built upon the young life. Ah! why are we suffered to build so heavily upon these peerless crystals which are so easily shattered, cutting through life's deepest centres? God only knows.

The young mother's private diary, a few months later, has these words:

"How the child-love enlarges our hearts! We have given him to God unreservedly. Oh, if we can but do our part in the work of training him, I am sure God will do his. How great the need of being ourselves all that we want our boy to be! I want to lead such a life of love that our boy may learn it of me."

As the Winter wore away and the Spring advanced, Mr. Saybrook was making definite arrangements to leave his western field and return to the eastern states for final preparations and leavetaking before undertaking the foreign work. His church had grown dearer meanwhile, and, like a faithful shepherd, he must find one to take his place suited to their needs. His people, loud in protestations of affection and grief, were not to be easily satisfied; but the great Head of the Church, who careth for his people, opened the door for one who, although also designing a visit abroad, was detained on account of health, and every way fitted for the place. Thus doth the Lord show his people that his resources as well as his care are infinite. It was not, as hitherto, missionary ground. Many heads of families, men of influence, had been added to the feeble few who first constituted a church which would soon be entirely self-supporting, and John's last efforts with his people were spent in raising their standard of principles, information, and liberality on the foreign mission question. During the season some returned missionaries passing through that highway of travel had visited them, and several of the western settlers, hitherto indifferent to the subject and its claims, avowed themselves converted to Christianity and missions by the sight and preaching of these men of God, whose lives had been so consecrated—some would say sacrificed—to such a cause.

Mrs. Hammond had risen with true fortitude to meet this fresh demand. If she suffered, God alone knew it; the world was annoyed, some calling her "heartless," others saying that she was "stunned" by her previous trial. Ah! do not some of us, pupils in God's school, know that he had not hammered and heated, beaten and chiseled, that poor heart in vain? But she wrote now that Fleda was "fast failing," and that "some serious difficulty had attacked Marion's eyes," so that their "song-bird was still and sad now, and wished for John to cheer and advise."

All this was scarce needed to hasten the young minister's family, so anxious were they, now that all was decided, to be again at work, so desirous of embracing the dear circle at home, and to show them the wonderful boy "Percy," as he was called. But just at this juncture the sweet babe, full of infantile charms, was taken ill, and all their plans were delayed. Hattie writes:

"I do not mean to feel alarmed, but it takes such a little thing to put out a baby's life, and we have no doctor to trust. Oh that we may be quite willing to leave ourselves and our little treasure in our Father's hands!" In deep anxiety and sorrow about Fleda's condition, she adds:

"I have no words, my sister, to express my love and sorrow for you, but am asking for you, especially during these days, that there may be a little lifting of the terrible pains, and that your spirit may find sweet rest as you pass through these deep waters. How little any of us know what the anguish and trial resting over your young life has been, but Jesus knows it all, Fleda. My sister-heart is sore for you. I am dumb, and find my only comfort in thinking of the certain bliss that is in store. How sweet to your worn spirit! Stay your heart with the bright hope, dear lamb. Lean hard on Jesus. I have been reading, with John, Bickerstieth's wonderful work, 'Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever.' How near and real it brings the heavenly world! Poor Marion! It is hard for her glad, loving nature to believe that there is love in the blow aimed at her; but oh, we are sure of it."

To Marion, John adds: "Do not lay your trouble to God, dear child. He is not the author of sin nor its effects, nor does he use them as his agents, except indirectly. He is controlling the suffering which flows from sin and checking it, so that it will do the least harm to each individual soul and to his universe. The idea that God sends us all our afflictions is wrong. He saves us from many of the evils flowing from broken laws, and offer his love, his presence, and the sure hope of eternal bliss to help us to bear the rest.

"Believe this, Marion, and it will throw light upon much that otherwise is perfectly dark in your life. It will reconcile you to the cloud which seems to rest over the lives of Louis and Fleda, which has been so impenetrable to you, and will help you to cease struggling against your own calamities. My sister, I beseech you to entirely yield yourself to him who longs to be your friend and Saviour.

Best, dear soul, he waits to give thee; Thou hast only dreamed of pleasure—Dreamed of gifts and golden treasure—Dreamed of jewels in thy keeping; Waked to weariness of weeping: Open to thy soul's one lover, And thy night of dreams is over; The true gifts he brings have seeming More than all thy faded dreaming."

"We hope to be with you soon; but to-night our Percy is worse, and we may come with empty arms. I cannot trust myself to think of it, but know that all will be well."

A fierce form of diphtheria had evidently attacked the child, and a few hours ended the sad scene. Not many days after, the Hammond household were overwhelmed with grief by the receipt of the following from the bereaved father:

"Nearly eight months ago we wrote you how good God had been to us in sending our babe so safely and well. Our Father has again been very good to us in opening a better home for our angel. Yesterday morning he sat up in his independent way laughing and playing a little. To-day he rejoices on high. Hattie bears the blow like a Christian. We have each other left, and thank God that Jesus and heaven are dearer than ever. We shall put the little form in a casket, which will be all that we can bring to you of our precious child. Break the news gently to Fleda. We did want to put our little Percy in her arms. But she will soon find him in the land to which she is fast going. We shall be with you next week."

Mr. and Mrs. Saybrook found Marion with bandaged eyes and almost wild with impatience and rebellion at God's dealings with her, as a celebrated surgeon had pronounced "probable blindness" as the result of the difficulty. Ah! where now would that careless, restless spirit find support and cheer? Her condition was Fleda's greatest grief; she forgot her own physical anguish in anxiety and efforts for the afflicted girl. Fleda evidently felt that her hour of release had not come until she had effected more in Marion's behalf, and the burden of her needs lay heavily upon the dear girl's heart.

John and Hattie felt, however, that the end was very near, and, grateful for the opportunity, took their place in the household to cheer and minister as need required. Despite the warnings and entreaties of friends and physician, Marion wept constantly, thus aggravating difficulty and rendering her case more hopeless. John was at an utter loss. Neither argument nor prayer nor