

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson IX.—AUGUST 29.

ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION.

Gen. xviii. 16-33.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 23-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Hebrews vii. 25.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Abraham's Intercession, Gen. xviii. 16-33.
T. Abraham's Guests, Gen. xviii. 1-8.
W. A Mother's Intercession, Matt. xv. 21-28.
T. A Father's Intercession, Mark ix. 17-29.
F. The Spirit's Intercession, Rom. viii. 9-27.
S. The Son's Intercession, Rom. viii. 28-29.
S. An Ever-living Intercessor, Heb. vii. 14-25.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 16: Rom. xv. 24; 3 John vi.
With vs. 17: Ps. xxv. 14; Amos iii. 7.
With vs. 18: Gen. xii. 3; Acts iii. 25.
With vs. 19: Deut. iv. 9; Josh. xxiv. 15.
With vs. 20: Gen. iv. 10; Jas. v. 4.
With vs. 21: Gen. ix. 5; Ex. iii. 8; Deut. iii. 2; Luke xvi. 15.
With vs. 22: Gen. xix. 1.
With vs. 23: Heb. x. 22; Num. xvi. 22; 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.
With vs. 24: Jer. v. 1.
With vs. 25: Job viii. 3; viii. 20; Isa. iii. 10, 11; Rom. iii. 6.
With vs. 26: Ex. xxii. 30.
With vs. 27: Luke xviii. 1; Gen. iii. 19; Eccles. xii. 7.
With vs. 32: James v. 16; Judges vi. 39.

THE INTERCESSION OF FAITH.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Occasion, Vss. 16, 20-22. II. The Intercessor, Vss. 17-19. III. The Intercession, Vss. 23-33.

QUESTIONS.—What did God covenant with Abram? What was the extent of the land promised? Point out its extremes upon the map. How much of this did Abram's seed ever occupy? Why have we Abraham here instead of Abram? (Gen. xvii. 5.)

I. Vss. 16, 20-22.—From vs. 1-8 give in your own words an account of Abraham's reception of three guests. Who was one of these? (vs. 1, 17.) Who were the others? (vs. 16; chap. xix. 1.) What was the errand of this company? Where were Sodom and Gomorrah located? Where was Abraham living? What does this narrative teach about the work and appearance of angels? What about God's interest in human concerns? What about his views of wicked cities? What of wickedness anywhere?

II. Vss. 17-19.—What honorable title does God give Abraham in Isa. xli. 8? How does Jesus speak of his own disciples? (John xv. 15.) How may we be his friends? (John xv. 14.)

III. Vss. 23-33.—To whom was this intercession presented? (vs. 22.) How many distinct appeals did Abraham make? What is asked in each? What is the answer to each? What evidence is there of Abraham's humility before the Lord?

TO TEACH THE LESSON.—Show how unbelief (chap. xvi.) is impatient, and tries to hasten the fulfillment of God's promises. Mark the development of the promise in chap. xvii; the change of Abram's name, in itself a promise; the covenant possession of Canaan forever, ratified by the sign of circumcision; the pledge that through Sarah, and not Hagar, the great blessing should come. In chap. xviii., God's time has come, and three angels appear with joyful news to Abraham, and on an errand of judgment to Sodom. Note the pleasing picture of Abraham's hospitality, and see Heb. xiii. 2.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 16.—The men. The three men that visited Abraham, as he sat at the door of his tent. Vs. 1, 2. Of these, Jehovah himself apparently was one, at once manifested and concealed in a human form. Vs. 13.

Verses 17, 18, 19.—The Lord [Jehovah] said. Perhaps in conversation with Abraham; perhaps in communion with himself. For I know him. Not simply, "I know of him," that, etc. The word implies favorable regard. "I have set my favor upon him, in order," etc. That he will. "That he may." And

they shall keep. "And they may keep." God's choice of Abraham is not represented to be in view of what it was foreseen would be the result of the choice. On the contrary, the choice was made in order to secure the result.

Verses 20, 21.—The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah. Possibly "the cry against," but more probably the cry conceived to be sent up to heaven by the sins of those cities. Compare Isa. lix. 12; Jer. xiv. 7. It is exactly in keeping with the human form in which God was now manifesting himself to Abraham, that he should actually use the language of these verses. The best way is to suppose that such was literally the case. No sensible person ever was misled by such representation into imagining that the Creator really is like that creature of his, whom, for the sake of communicating with him, and doing him good, he condescends, upon occasion, to resemble.

Verse 22.—The men. The two men, distinguished now from Jehovah. (See chap. xix. 1). Jehovah remains, and Abraham stands yet before him.

Verses 23, 24, 25.—Abraham draws nearer to Jehovah—the spirit of intercession moving him. This accords with the exhortation (Heb. x. 22): "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;" also with that, (James iv. 8): "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Not unlikely, we owe the form in which these exhortations are expressed to Abraham's example. We have little conception of the filial terms on which God loves to have his children stand and plead with him. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Abraham was filially jealous for his Father's honor.

Verses 27, 28, 29.—Abraham is encouraged with the prosperity of his plea, and he presses it. Note the delicate ingenuity of it. He puts his present estimate in the form of a possible falling short of the former. Instead of saying, "Wilt thou for forty five?" he says, "Wilt thou for five lacking of the fifty?" And again God assents. Then a third plea, and a third success.

Verses 30, 31, 32.—As Abraham continues his importunity, he interposes a deprecatory prayer: Let not the Lord be angry. "The Lord," here, does not translate "Jehovah." Dr. Conant translates uniformly, throughout the present passage, "my Lord," for "the Lord," in all Abraham's addresses. The advance is now made from five to ten. Abraham does not express his request, but makes his supposition, and leaves his request to be inferred. This delicate omission occurs twice more, and the last supposition is prefaced with the announcement that it is to be the last. The intercessor prevails to the end. It was eminently a case of the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availing much. But it did not save Sodom.

Verse 33.—And the Lord. "And Jehovah." Jehovah withdrew, and then Abraham went to his place. Chap. xix. 24, shows that Jehovah's withdrawal was to heaven, whence he rained down the brimstone and fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

LESSONS.—God's choice of souls is not in view of what they either are, or will be, so much as in order to their becoming what he desires them to become.

God's judgment of men is not hasty, but mature and well-considered, proceeding upon knowledge personally obtained.

Abraham's zeal burns for the honor of God's name, pleading, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God is willing to have humility and faith argue points of his administration with him.

Abraham's intercessions are, all of them, conditioned upon a proviso—a "peradventure."

Pray earnestly, and be righteous, like Abraham, if you would have your prayers, like Abraham's, avail much.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

The angels' visit, and the change of name, must be told very briefly. Then, tell the sentence which was passed upon Sodom, and on another wicked city named Gomorrah; and of Abraham's earnest prayer to God to spare those cities. Six times he prayed, naming fewer and fewer people each time, for he wanted to feel sure of its safety. Were these people whom Abraham was

so anxious about, his dear friends? No; he had no friend there but Lot; and how had Lot treated him? In what way had God tried to teach Lot a lesson about living in bad company? And yet, after all his danger, Lot had gone back to Sodom.

Abraham was called a friend of God. God promised to spare the cities for Abraham's sake.

Abraham died and now can intercede for no more people. But Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession." We need never be afraid He will leave us. Abraham did not know all about the people of Sodom; he had nothing to do with their wickedness. But Jesus knows all our wants, all our temptations, feels for all our weaknesses.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 86.

Find the names of the persons here described, and their initials form the name of a city in which was a church more highly commended than any of her seven sister churches, and which remains to this day, while the others have fallen to decay.

- 1. Who, heedless of warning, by a faithful wife, Condemned to death the Lord of light and life?
2. Who on a gallows was uplifted high, And justly for his crimes condemned to die?
3. Who by a father's hand on altar laid, A type of Him whose blood our ransom paid?
4. For whom did Abraham plead and plead again, That God in mercy would His wrath restrain, And saved his nephew from the dreadful doom Which sank two cities in a fiery tomb?
5. Who to an idol would not bow the knee, Regardless of the cruel king's decree?
6. And who, though facing a dreadful death, would dare Undaunted bow to the true God in prayer?
7, 8. Mother and grandmother who, with sweet accord, Their children trained to love and serve the Lord?
9, 10. Two cruel kings, who issued a decree To slaughter children in their infancy?
One of the Old Testament, one of the New, For selfish ends this fiendish scheme pursue.
11. What prophet wrote in sweet melodious strain The coming glories of Messiah's reign?
12. The name of Him in whom it is confessed, Shall all the nations of the earth be blest?

—Selected.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

82. CHARADES.—Unite 1. an abbreviation of company; 2. a female under vows; 3. a pulsative musical instrument; and of these form a puzzle.

83. Combine, 1. two thirds of an eel; 2. the name of the first note in a musical scale; 3. the second note in the scale, and 4. the last note in an octave, and form the land of gold.

84. Make a square of four words, 1 and 4. A celebrated prophetess. 2. Meridian. 3. The grammatical class of names.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 85.

- 1. H ephzibah.....2 Kings xxi. 1.
2. I nspiration.....2 Tim. iii. 16.
3. L aish.....Judges xviii. 27-29.
4. K edar.....Psa. cxx. 5; Jer. ixl. 5.
5. I mmortality.....2 Tim. i. 10. [28, 29.
6. A ntipas.....Rev. ii. 13.
7. H azael.....2 Kings viii. 7-15.
HILKIAH. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 80.

- 1. mouths. 2. arms. 3. two chests. 4. three feet. 5. a cloud. 6. three eyes. 7. two calves. 8. two satchels. 9. fringe. 10. hands and faces. 11. a newspaper (the Christian Messenger.) 12. a bow. 13. skirt. 14. heads. 15. straps. 16. Cap—3-4ths of Cape. 17. pants. 18. shoulder-arms. 19. curve' lines. 20. collar.

No. 81. G A M U T A R I S E M I S E R U S E R S T E R S E

Life is not done, and our Christian character is not won, so long as God has anything left for us to suffer, or anything left for us to do.

How Uncle Tom ran away.

It was a rainy afternoon, and my six year-old nephew and I were sitting on the rug in front of the fire. Frank was stretched out full length on the sofa, white fur; I, in my own particular chair, sat patiently awaiting the request for "a story," which I knew would be very sure to come sooner or later.

"Make it a real true one, auntie," he said at last, planting his chin on his brown hands, and gazing straight into the burning coals.

"When your Uncle Tom and I were children," began I, slowly, "we were ever such good friends; and although I am eight years older than he, we were always together. My pleasure was never real unless Tom shared it too. Taffy was not sweet nor even my peanuts good unless Tom had some; half my goodies was always saved for him.

"But Tom's temper sometimes got the better of him, and when provoked—but wait a little, and you shall see what happened to your big Uncle Tom by letting his temper run away with him.

"One afternoon—a cold, cheerless, rainy one like this, dear—I sat looking out of the window at a poor little meadow-lark that stood shivering and wet on the edge of the porch. I soon called Tom to look too, but when I turned to see if he was coming, and not knowing he was so near me, I accidentally struck him in the face with my elbow.

"Horrid, awkward thing," growled Tom; and I received a blow from his strong little fist which I am sorry to say was not accidental. Mother had just come in, and she saw the whole scene. She made Tom sit alone on a sofa, away from the window and the bird, till he should grow good-natured again. But Tom was not to be soothed in any such way, for he was really angry.

"Horrid, awkward old thing!" he muttered again, between his teeth. "I just won't stay in the house with such a girl! I'll run away, so I will. I'll run away to-night," he added in a louder voice, intending to attract my attention and thinking to frighten me.

"What's that?" said mother. "Run away from home, and to-night?"

"Yes, and I am going right off now, if Jen don't say she's sorry."

"Very well," said mother, looking at me, and seeing no signs of repentance in my face. "You know I allow no one in my house to tell a lie, so I suppose I must say "good-by" to you, Tom."

"Upstairs to his room directly overhead went the angry boy. We heard him shake his long-saved pennies out of his tin hank, heard him pull out bureau-drawers, and then all was still, till master Tom, flushed, angry, yet calm, tramped down the stairs. He said, 'good-by' to all the family except me, and started out in the rain and wind.

"I shall never forget how forlorn the little fellow looked as he walked down the path from the house to the barn. An immense umbrella, old and torn, he tried to hold over him with one hand, while in the other he held a bundle, containing his best suit of clothes, clean shirt, and his pennies. No overcoat had he, no rubbers, and only an old straw hat which he had pulled down over his eyes.

"Bang! went the front door after him. O-o-o roared the wind as it followed him! Splash! came down the rain through his torn, worn umbrella; and even the grim tall cypress trees swayed their dripping tops over the path as he passed, as though they would send down an extra shower on poor Tom's head.

"Soon it grew dark. But no Tom returned. Of course none of us thought he would really go away. We supposed the hottest of tempers would soon have cooled in that night's storm.

"An hour passed; the darkness grew blacker.

"Poor Tom! I thought, 'It's all my fault, every bit of it; and although I was fourteen years old and considered myself quite a woman, I began to cry.

"But suddenly, much to my joy, I heard Tom's step on the porch. I was about to rush out to meet him when my mother stopped me.

"No, child," said she, firmly.

"That minute the front door bell rang—then it was not Tom at all, I thought.

"Mother went to the door, and there indeed was Tom. Lifting his hat to her

in the most distantly polite manner, he said:

"Good evening, madam. Will you have the goodness to tell me the shortest way to B—?"

"We were then living at Alderwood, in the country, and B— was the nearest railroad station.

"Oh, certainly," mother said; "take the first road to the right. B— is three miles from the turning."

"Thank you, madam," came the answer from Tom's proud lips; but his moist eyes said plainly, 'I'm so sorry, mamma.'

"He lifted his hat once more and walked calmly down the porch, off the steps into the dark garden, and among the moaning cypress trees.

"O, mother, mother, how could you! I sobbed, no longer ashamed of my tears. 'Tom will perish, I know he will, and—I—and I.'

"Jennie, my child," said mother, 'do I not know best?' And that answer was all I could get her to make.

"Supper was forgotten; we all sat gloomily around the fire. I was most miserable. I could do nothing but think how I loved Tom, and how lonely it was without him, and how dreary he must be feeling.

"But another hour had ticked its slow way around the clock before we heard those steps on the porch again. Then the bell rang again, as before. This time I went with mother to the door. Tom stood there. His hat was gone—his umbrella too—his frowny hair was wet, and his hands purple with cold; but in a plucky voice he addressed mother:

"Please tell me the price of a night's lodging in B—."

"I gave a man fifty cents yesterday that bought him both bed and supper."

"Will you take me in here to-night?" asked Tom. "I can pay you." And he coolly showed mother his handful of pennies.

"No," mother replied; "we don't take in tramps here. Perhaps they would at Nichol's, across the road."

"But," said Tom, his little lips trembling, "I—I—love you!"

"Mother's lips trembled too. 'That's a very strange thing for a strange man to say to me. What do you mean, sir?' And then, somehow, she shut the door in poor Tom's face."

"Oh, oh!" broke in Frank; "how could she do it! how could you let her, Auntie! it was just meaner than—O, Auntie, how mean it was!"

"But by the time mother had gotten back into the sitting-room, and into her chair, looking so pale, I began to understand that she was giving her darling boy a lesson—but she nearly broke my heart as well as Tom's and her own in doing it. "Eight o'clock came, and with it faltering, slowly, came Tom's step on the porch. He rang the bell, but it only tinkled feebly. This time we all sprang to meet him, mother leading us, and opening the door.

"Would you? sobbed poor, tired Tom, 'would you—would you let me come in and warm my poor little hands? I am—Jennie, I am so sorry!"

"In a minute, in a second, Tom was folded in mother's arms, sobbing, repentant, wet, drabbed—yes, we were all sobbing."

"Well, Auntie," was Frank's comment, "I think Uncle Tom was just a brick!" emphasizing the last word with a thump of his clenched fist on the white fur rug.

"No, I think mother was the 'brick,' as you say. At least all she ever after that had to do to 'disperse' Tom's temper, was to say 'Does my little boy wish to be taken at his word?'—Nellie Hopkins in March Wide Awake.

No man knows, at his first entrance upon any sin, how far it may carry him and where it will stop; the commission of sin being generally like the pouring out of water, which, when once poured out, knows no other bounds but to run as far as it can.

In general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes. All the other passions do occasional good, but wherever pride puts in its word, everything goes wrong, and what might be desirable to do quietly and innocently, it is morally dangerous to do proudly.

A woman cannot become a successful lawyer. She is too fond of giving her opinion without pay.