

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson VI.—AUGUST 8.

ABRAM AND LOT.

Gen. xiii. 1-18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 14-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee."—Gen. xiii. 8.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Abram and Lot, Gen. xiii. 1-18.
T. Seeking Peace, 1 Cor. i. 10-18.
W. Dwelling in Unity, Psa. cxxxiii. 1-3.
T. The Mind of Christ, Phil. ii. 1-11.
F. Christian Love, 1 Cor. xiii. 1-13.
S. Self-pleasing condemned, Rom. xv. 1-7.
S. Trusting wholly, Acts xx. 17-38.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 1: Gen. xii. 9.
With vs. 2: Gen. xxiv. 35; Ps. cxii. 3; Prov. x. 22.
With vs. 3: Gen. xii. 8, 9.
With vs. 4: Gen. xii. 7, 8; Pa. cxvi. 17.
With vs. 6: Gen. xxxvii. 7.
With vs. 7: 2 Sam. xvi. 14; Ezek. xxxvi. 20; Rom. ii. 24.
With vs. 8: 1 Cor. vi. 7; xiii. 4, 5, 7; Jer. xiii. 35; Eph. iv. 32.
With vs. 9: Gen. xx. 15; xxxiv. 10; Rom. xii. 18; Heb. xii. 14; Jas. iii. 17.
With vs. 10: Gen. xix. 17, 24, 25; ii. 10; Deut. xxiv. 3; Psa. cvii. 34; Isa. li. 3; Gen. xiv. 2, 8; xix. 22.
With vs. 12: Mark iv. 19; 2 Tim. iv. 10; Jer. ii. 15-17; Ps. cxix. 36, 37; Prov. iv. 14, 15.
With vs. 13: Gen. xviii. 20; vi. 11; Ezra xvi. 49; 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.
With vs. 14: Gen. xxviii. 14.
With vs. 15: Gen. xii. 7; xv. 18; xvii. 8; xxiv. 7; xxvi. 4; Num. xxxiv. 12; Deut. xxxiv. 4; Acts vii. 5; 2 Chron. xx. 7; Pa. xxxvii. 22, 29; cxii. 2.
With vs. 16: Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17; xxxii. 12; Ex. xxxii. 13; Num. xxxiii. 10; Deut. i. 10; 1 Kings iv. 20; 1 Chron. xxvii. 23; Isa. xlviii. 19; Jer. xxxiii. 22; Rom. iv. 16; Heb. xi. 12.
With vs. 18: Gen. xiv. 13; xxxv. 27; xxxvii. 14.

THE MAGNANIMITY OF FAITH.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Seeking Peace, Vss. 1-8. II. Sacrificing Self, Vss. 9-13. III. Trusting God, Vss. 14-18.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 1-8.—Trace the coming up of Abram and Lot from Egypt. How is their wealth described? What religious service did Abram hold on their arrival? Between whom did a strife arise? About what? What heathen observers were then in the land?

II. Vss. 9-13.—Should Abram or Lot have been the first to yield in a disputed point? Why so? Who did yield first? What self-sacrificing proposal did he make? What made Abram so magnanimous? On what did Lot base the choice he made? Did he walk by faith or by sight?

III. Vss. 14-18.—After the separation, what did the Lord command Abram? What did he promise concerning the land? What concerning Abram's seed? How did he order Abram to signify his ownership? What new home did Abram then select? What warnings may we gather from Lot's career? What duties may we learn from Abram's course in the case?

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 1.—The last verses of the preceding chapter tell us why and how Abraham left Egypt. Lot is still his companion, sharing his fortunes as one contented to be, is some sense, dependent upon him. Into the south. "To the south country;" that is, the southern part of Palestine.

Verse 2.—Cattle. In patriarchal times, "cattle" were a customary form of wealth. The precious metals were, it seems, a characteristic sort of treasure with Abraham, as they have never ceased to be with Abraham's posterity to this day. The blessing of God already began to enrich Abraham.

Verses 3, 4.—And he went on his journeys. "And he went on in his journeyings," Dr. Conant translates. The intimation is, that he performed his journey in a series of alternate advances and haltings. He encamped at a convenient centre of pasturage, and waited until the growth was, for the time being, exhausted, when he pushed on northward. He thus reached the spot of his

former encampment. "The place of the altar" is the designation of this spot. The altar was, no doubt, still standing. The fact that the spot takes its name in the text from the altar there, indicates probably that Abraham's sentiment in returning to it, was predominantly a religious sentiment.

Verses 5, 6.—Lot seems to have held his possessions separately from Abraham. Now, with the comparative shrinking of the surface of pasturage, accessible to them, they found it necessary to part company.

Verse 7.—The fact that "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land," is here mentioned, probably as furnishing a reason why strife between Abraham and Lot was dangerous to them.

Verse 8.—Abraham appears as the peacemaker. His expostulations with Lot seem to imply that the strife, if it did not begin with the masters, was likely to extend itself to them from the servants.

Verse 9.—Abraham was very magnanimous, since he was the stronger, as well as the senior in relationship. Of this seniority, Abraham makes nothing, with marked modesty and meekness rating himself merely as Lot's kinsman (brother), and not as his uncle. We doubt not that Abraham's experience in Egypt of his own moral weakness, had deepened his humility; and his humility made him meek.

Verses 10-12.—The language perhaps implies that Lot went to some commanding summit, (the "mountain on the east of Bethel," not far off, would be such a one), whence he could "behold" the country. Dr. Conant says: "Verse 10 describes the appearance of the valley-plain of the Jordan, as it was before the great catastrophe in which the five cities perished. (Chap. xix. 24-29.) From the lofty highlands on the west, more than three thousand feet above the plain of the valley, the eye could trace the stream of the Jordan, winding its way through meadow-lands, and groves, and cultivated fields, and losing itself in a beautiful lake bordered by rich plains, that furnished subsistence to the thronged cities that dotted their surface. The great depression of the valley-plain—more than thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea—gave to this tract a tropical climate; and being all a well-watered region; the more intense the

heat, the more active and vigorous was every form of vegetation. To the eye that beheld this scene, stretching far to the north and south, it seemed 'like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt.' As thou comest unto Zoar. Zoar (chap. xix. 20, 22) was near Sodom. The expression points out the direction of the river-valley, to which the description applies.

Verse 13.—Sinners before the Lord exceedingly. Perhaps, "sinners against Jehovah," is more exactly the sense. Sin committed before Jehovah is, at any rate, sin committed against Jehovah. The wickedness of the Sodomites was heaven-defying.

Verses 14, 15.—Up to this time it had, no doubt, been open to Lot to identify himself with Abraham, and so to share Abraham's blessing. Abraham's brimming cup had, in fact, overflowed already to Lot. Unhappily for Lot, he now chooses to walk by sight, rather than by faith. For ever. Abraham's seed, the people of Israel, did visibly possess the land of Canaan, until the Old Testament dispensation closed. Abraham's seed, Jesus, possesses it now, and will do so world without end.

Verse 17.—This verse is not to be interpreted as a command to be literally obeyed, but rather as a lively way of expressing the freedom that Abraham might enjoy in the sense of ownership.

Verse 18.—Then. Simply a connective "And." In the plain of Mamre. "By the oaks of Mamre." Mamre was an Amorite (see chap. xiv. 13), whose previous ownership gave his name to the place. The trees there, perhaps, furnished a grateful shade for Abraham's encampment.

Learn that God is able to overrule even your mistakes and your sins to your good and to his glory. If you cannot agree with your fellow, agree to disagree. If you are the stronger, be so magnanimous that it would be more to your advantage to have been the weaker.

If you are the weaker, teach yourself submission by considering that had you been the stronger, you would have foregone, of choice, the same advantage that you must now forego, of necessity. Have a place where you call upon the name of the Lord. Have more than one such place.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Learn of three things that Abram was that we must be. The first is, he was PEACEFUL.

Trace on the map the journeys of Abram, till he settled down near Bethel. Tell how he at once asked God's blessing on his new home. Explain how God had already blessed both Abram and Lot, and in what their riches consisted; what such large flocks would need, and the reason of the quarrel between the servants.

Abram was unselfish. Tell of Lot's selfish choice and what Abram would be likely to say or do when he saw Lot's selfishness. Which had the first right to the best place? Why? Tell what Abram really did.

Show in what way Lot's choice was a bad one. Lot chose the smooth plain, but it led him away from the promised land. Abram let God choose for him, and it was the beginning of his ownership of the whole land.

The third thing about Abram is, he was Trustful. He was willing to take the worse part, because he believed in the Lord's promise. If we believe that we shall have a glorious home in heaven, why need we care about having the best things here?

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 83.

Two friends are we. We own no mortal birth; Each to the other owes both life and worth; United—we are nourished from on high, But when divided, languish, pine, and die.

A narrow portal opens on the road, My first, and only they, have ever trod. My second was one "holy" child of three Who cared not for a wicked King's decree.

My third was he who straight the place supplied Of him who for his impious conduct died.

'Twas by my fourth on Syria's sea-girt coast, A city's wealth became its pride and boast.

Without my fifth, oh! who can paint the gloom That waits the sinful man beyond the tomb?

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- 71. Which is the most dangerous word in the English Language?
72. Which is the longest word?
73. Which is the next longest?
74. Take the letters of horse and cart and make a body of musicians.
75. Make "Real fun" into a very serious matter.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 82.

- 1. Locusts.....Prov. xxx. 27.
2. Olive-tree...Psa. lii. 8.
3. Venison...Gen. xxvii. 3, 4.
4. E urocydon...Acts xxvii. 14.
5. S tubble.....Exodus v. 12.
6. F ares.....Matt. xiii. 25, 39.

- 7. T histle.....2 Kings xiv. 9.
8. H oney.....Psa. xix. 10.
9. O nyx.....Ex. xxvii. 20; xxxix. 13.
10. U nicorns.....Deut. xxxiii. 17.

- 11. M yrtle-tree...Isa. lv. 13.
12. E merald...Rev. xxi. 19.

LOVEST THOU ME. Jno. xxi. 15, 16, 17.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 70. Abreast. Astronomers. Telegraph. Universe.

Nothing so hinders a soul from coming to Christ as a vain love of the world; and till a soul is freed from it, it can never have true love for God.

The Scriptures give four names to Christians, from the four cardinal graces: saints, for their holiness; believers, for their faith; brethren, for their love; disciples, for their knowledge.

Mrs. Howard's Experience in collecting Missionary Money.

Mrs. Howard first called on Mrs. Eastman. Mrs. Eastman was the wife of a wealthy physician.

Mrs. Howard was very kindly received at the door by the lady herself. "Good morning," said she; "will you come in?"

"A few moments, I have but little time to spare."

Mrs. Eastman conducts Mrs. Howard to the parlor, and requests her to be seated, then remarks, "It is a beautiful morning. You must indeed enjoy walking this morning."

"I have been much refreshed by my walk," replied Mrs. Howard; "but I have been thinking so intensely of the many calls I must make to-day, and of their purpose, that I have not entered into its fullest enjoyment."

Mr. E. replied, "Nothing ever occupies my mind so fully as that, provided I and mine are well. I think life in this world is beautiful; I enjoy everything. That is the way to do. Health, beauty, and good spirits cannot be retained if one's mind is constantly harassed."

"Indeed," answered her listener, "you are the possessor of an enviable disposition; but I am differently constituted. This morning I am on a collecting tour for foreign missions. The money from our society will be due next week—fifteen dollars. Thus far I have collected but little, and I have called on nearly all of those whose names are on the subscription paper. I began a fortnight ago, but nearly half of them are unable to pay at present for want of means, so I must in some way raise the rest if possible. I could not sleep last night thinking about it."

"Why not let it go over till next month?" asked Mrs. Eastman. "It will do just as well. I would not permit my mind to be so harassed by so trifling affairs."

Mrs. H., with a look of painful surprise, answered, "I cannot harbor such a thought for a moment, when I realize how much teachers are needed by those living in heathen darkness, I can't rest, I can't sleep. I thought if you could spare me two dollars, I could much more easily obtain the required amount, having your money and influence in my favor."

Mrs. Eastman replied, "I am very sorry for you, as your heart is so set upon the work, but I have almost no money this morning. I paid my dress-maker fifteen dollars for making my dress, and ten dollars for a bonnet yesterday afternoon, and I have very little left, with which I must purchase some necessary articles for the children. Indeed, I am extremely sorry for you."

"Will not Dr. Eastman pay the amount? He would never miss so small a sum?"

"To speak plainly," replied Mrs. E., "I dislike to ask him at present, he has so little sympathy with foreign missions, and he gave me sixty dollars only a few days since, and it is the last of that which I have spent. His debtors are somewhat delinquent of late, times are so hard. He expected me to take from what he gave me whatever I might want for charitable purposes. Really, I am very sorry for you, although I am no enthusiast in missionary affairs, I deeply realize my first duties lie in my own home."

"I must confess my feelings differ widely from yours; I would exist with hardly the bare necessities of life could the mission work in no other way be prospered. I must be going, for I must work persistently to-day to collect the required amount. I wish you good morning," said Mrs. H., rising.

"Good morning," answered Mrs. E. In conversation with a neighbor in the after part of the day, Mrs. E. related the circumstance of the morning and comment as follows: "It is nothing but beg, beg, in this church, and I should think by the way they call on us that the whole society had the idea that Dr. Eastman must support them. I think it is high time retrenchment was resorted to."

Mrs. Howard, in a somewhat disturbed state of mind, hastened to Mrs. Gasper, a poor carpenter's wife.

She met her with a smiling face, saying, "I can guess what you are calling around so early for this morning, but that does not lessen my desire to see you; won't you come in?" "Thank you," replied Mrs. Howard,

whose drooping spirits revived at so cordial a reception. "I do not feel as though I ought to delay a moment. I called to see if you could spare me any missionary money to-day?"

"Yes, Mr. Gasper, the children, and myself have tried especially hard the past month. We have become so much interested reading about the missionaries, and how much they need help that we have tried twice as hard as usual to save, and as a result have saved twice as much. We have three dollars in our box. I counted it last evening, thinking you must need it by this time. I was intending to send it to you this afternoon. I will get it for you."

When Mrs. Gasper returned and handed her the change, Mrs. Howard remarked, "Thank you, but it seems to me that it is more than is required of you."

"I have not once thought of it in that light. I insist upon your taking it. You know the saying, 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.'"

"Thank the Lord for such a woman as you are," remarked Mrs. Howard, as she turned away.

"I wish I had twice as much to pay to my Lord," said Mrs. Gasper as she entered the house, "for it is not giving, it is his due."

Mrs. Howard next called at the establishment of Mr. Jameson, a wealthy merchant. As she entered his store, he was counting money.

After the usual greetings, Mrs. Howard remarked, "Do you feel generous this morning, Mr. Jameson?"

"I don't know. If I really believed one suffering, I do not think I would withhold my aid."

Mrs. Howard remarked, "I know of many that are suffering for bread, so I have come to you to solicit aid to alleviate their condition."

"Mrs. Howard, I am surprised. The town authorities can not have been so delinquent in performing their duties that people are actually starving in our midst?"

"It is not in our town, nevertheless it is our imperative duty to aid the sufferers."

"Please explain yourself; do you not know that each town looks out for its own poor?"

"I am perfectly aware of that fact, but the people to whom I refer are starving for the bread of life far across the waters, and I called to see if you pitied them a few dollars' worth?"

"Oh, what an original way of raising missionary money you have resorted to. You actually frightened me with your thrilling account."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Howard, "I think it far more essential to feed starving souls than hungry bodies."

"Well, you do put things in a striking light. Perhaps I can do something for you, but my expenses are very heavy at present, and I do not believe in sending so much money to foreign lands, when it is so much needed at home. It costs more to get a dollar there than a dollar will bring after it is there." But finally he gave her a dollar. Mr. Jameson was a backslider.

Mrs. Howard, whose feelings were a mixture of encouragement and discouragement, went on her way, and next called on a poor teacher, who contributed twice the sum of the wealthy merchant. "Do you think Judge Hayford, who lives opposite here, would give a dollar?" asked Mrs. Howard of the teacher.

"He might possibly," was the hesitating reply. "He attends our church, and besides is very wealthy."

Mrs. Howard called, and lawyer Hayford met her at the door, smiling blandly, saying, "In what way can I serve you, ma'am; I am quite occupied, but think I can devote a few moments to your case, if it is urgent."

"Indeed, it is very urgent."

"I think you had better come in, then," replied he.

"No, thank you, to make my case more plain—"

"You had better come in, then I can better understand your case, and that is very essential for a lawyer."

"Really, I can not stop, but I think it lies in your power to grant or gain my case."

"I hope so," replied Mr. Hayford. "I make it my bounden duty to do my possible best for my clients."

"We owe a certain sum to some claimants—"