



# SUNDAY READING

## BIBLE QUESTION COMPETITION.

This competition is open to all the readers of *PROGRESS*, but is more especially intended to interest the young people—the boys and girls who are, or should be attending Sunday school. The following rules should be strictly observed:

### RULES FOR COMPETITORS.

1. A prize of one dollar will be awarded every week for the first correct answer that reaches *PROGRESS* office. If there is no correct answer the person who sends the first best answer will receive the prize. In case two correct answers reach the office at the same time the dating stamps of the post offices at which they are mailed will be taken into consideration.
2. Competitors must write on one side of the paper only, giving name and address in full with each answer. These need not be published except in the case of prize-winners and successful competitors.
3. The winner of a prize will not be eligible to compete for another for four weeks.
4. All replies must be received on or before Saturday one week after publication of the questions, thus allowing competitors a clear week for their studies.
5. No post-cards can be received. All replies should be addressed to the "SUNDAY READING," EDITOR *PROGRESS*, St. John, N. B.

I have much pleasure in congratulating Miss F. M. Woodworth, Windsor, as the successful competitor for "Prize Bible Questions No. 6." These questions were answered correctly by the following eight: Miss Alice Thompson, North end, city; Master A. J. Nesbitt, city; Miss Mary Johnson, city; J. Stewart, Hampton; Miss Frances M. Woodworth, Windsor; Miss Florence Boyce, Fredericton; Miss Katie Knapp, city; Miss Anna Victoria Newnam, St. Stephen. There were many different answers given to the first question. Who exhibited kindness to Paul during his imprisonment? Such as Claudius Lysias, the keepers of the prison, and Paul's nephew.

With regard to Claudius Lysias, he was commander of the Roman guard at Jerusalem, during Paul's last visit there. In the discharge of his duty he several times saved Paul from the malice of the Jews, and allowed him to defend himself; which defence we have in the 22nd chapter of Acts. Again when the conspiracy against Paul was made known to him by Paul's nephew, he provided for his safety by sending him to Felix, the governor, with an escort of Roman soldiers (Acts 23:23). In answer to the fourth question, many gave the "little captive maid." She was the means of curing Naaman of his leprosy by telling his mistress of the Prophet Elisha in Samaria. Naaman was captain of the Syrian army; Benhadad was king of Syria.—2 Kings, 5:1, and 1 Kings, 20:1. The second and third questions, which I thought would puzzle so many, were answered correctly by all.

Wishing you all every success in your study of the bible. NEAL.

### Answers to Prize Bible Questions No. 6.

1. Give the name of one who exhibited kindness to St. Paul during his imprisonment? Onesiphorus exhibited kindness to St. Paul during his imprisonment at Rome.—2 Timothy 1:15, 18.
2. How many knives did a Babylonish king carry away from Jerusalem? Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonish king, carried nine and twenty knives away from Jerusalem.—Ezra 1:9.
3. Whose daughters were reproved for their haughty deportment, and for wearing an excess of jewelry? The daughters of Zion were reproved for their haughty deportment, and for wearing an excess of jewelry.—Isaiah 3:16, 23.
4. Name a Jewish captive who was the means of saving the life of a heathen king? Mordecai, a Jewish captive, was the means of saving the life of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, through his niece Esther.—Esther 2:1, 22.

### PRIZE BIBLE QUESTIONS.—No. 8.

1. Who was Rufus?
2. Give the name which a king gave to the district assigned to him for his services in building the temple?
3. Give the name of an Assyrian river on whose banks a noted prophecy was written?
4. Give from the Old Testament, at least six quotations indicating "Spring"?

### THE LAW OF LEAST RESISTANCE.

The Rev. Hugh MacMillan, D. D., LL. D. (Free West Church, Greenock.)

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."—Psalm 68, 3.

The following sermon was delivered by Dr. MacMillan, in free St. Peter's, Glasgow, on the occasion of the last communion:

In the physical world the law of least resistance is universal. Nature uniformly chooses to move in the path in which fewest obstacles are to be encountered. The lightning cleaves its way through the air in a forked or zigzag figure; the streamlet flows to the sea in a series of meandering curves; the planets revolve around the sun in ellipses or elongated circles; the plant grows in a spiral form; and all because these are the shortest routes compatible with the forces acting upon them. Innumerable examples of this law might be given from every department of nature and of human art. The bee constructs its cell in a six-sided shape because that shape requires the least material for a given capacity when associated with other cells. The engineer chooses for the course of his rail-

way the ground which has the fewest curves and inclines. Capital flows into the business that has the fewest disadvantages. We introduce into our manufactures processes that economize labor and material, and the success of these processes depends upon the wisest economy. In short, it may be laid down as a universal principle that the law of least resistance is the law of all action, and however complex or contrary may be the forces that act either in the natural or in the human world, the total result is in strict accordance with this law.

Nor does this law cease to operate when we enter the spiritual realm. There, indeed, it is seen in its most striking manifestations. It is said that God's people shall be willing in the days of his power. Their will is to give way to the higher will of God, and his strength is to be made perfect in their weakness. There is no irresistible grace to turn men into mere automatons. It is in the power of man to resist God, and it is only when man himself is willing that the power of God prevails.

The reference of the text is very interesting and instructive. For many years David had been slowly attracting to his side all the most patriotic spirits in Israel, and organizing them with the utmost care. And now in the day of his power, when elected king at Hebron, he was about to launch against the house of Saul a splendid army, officered by the most skillful and gallant captains. The troops were prepared to march with him to the field with one heart, and with one step. They were carried captive by the moral purity and elevation of David's character. They did not doubt that God had chosen him for their king, and therefore they were bent, whatever might be the hindrances, on forcing a passage for him to the throne of the whole land. The rivalries and jealousies that kept them apart in the chaotic days when every man did what was right in his own eyes, were swept away. They forgot all their old tribal divisions, and animated by a single purpose, by an entire devotion, they flocked round the standard of their king. The sight of such a willing people, glittering in their armor, going forth in the way of his power to make him king of the whole nation, was as refreshing to the eye and heart of David as the brilliant dew-drops that shine on the parched grass on a summer morning.

The psalm of the text is a Messianic psalm, and David is a type of Christ made a king forever. In discoursing upon the words of the text, viewed in this typical light, there are three obvious ideas which suggest themselves. First, the day of Christ's power; secondly, the willingness of Christ's people in that day; and, lastly, the effect of Christ's power in connection with that willingness.

1. First, then, let us consider the day of Christ's power. It is not of the power which belongs to Jesus Christ as the Almighty God that the psalm speaks. The thought of that power baffles all comprehension and illustration of man. Since He made all things, and since they all depend upon Him, we can only say: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." The power attributed to Him in the text is of another kind. It is a power of which we are competent to judge, for it rests on moral considerations, and appeals at once to the conscience and judgment of men. It is not an inherent and essential power, but an acquired power; strength that has become victorious in actual struggles with the sins and evils of the world.

Our Lord divested Himself of the eternal power of the Godhead when He came into our world, and into our nature. He became weak like other men. He wrought out our salvation not as God, but as man, in obedience to the laws and limitations which regulate our life. He hung as a helpless babe on the bosom of a human mother; he passed through the dependence of childhood and youth. He assumed the condition of a servant. His miraculous power was held and used for the benefit of others, never for His own. Before His entrance on His public ministry, His own hands earned His subsistence; and when He abandoned His common calling and followed His high calling exclusively, women ministered to Him of their substance. He suffered all the sinless infirmities of human nature. His hands were bound in the garden and He was led away to prison. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. He was lifted up to be a spectacle of woe to the world. He came under the power of death, and lay buried for a time in the dust of the earth. In all these experiences, we see how thoroughly He has emptied Himself of the eternal power of the Godhead which belonged to Him when He came as our surety and Redeemer. And only in this way could He have worked out our salvation. He who would free us from the curse must Himself be made a curse. If He is to deliver us who are under the law, He Himself must be made under the law. In the wonderful vision of Isaiah, the prophet does not represent the Messiah as coming down straight from heaven, cleaving the clouds asunder, a mighty apparition, armed with the lightnings of irresistible power. No. He pictures the Deliverer coming into Edom, the enemies country. It was in the struggle with this ruthless power that the Conqueror acquired His skill and His mightiness to save. And He has not left His might behind him in the conquest.

He comes, not faint and weary, and worn out, but travelling in the greatest of His strength, His raiment stained with the blood of His foes. And with the same power with which He subdued His enemies, He is prepared to rule the nation He has saved. God rewarded our Redeemer in kind. He emptied Himself of His eternal power, and God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a new power—the highest of all power—the power of One who is mighty to save, because He has gone through all our trials, and conquered in them all. Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death. Through captivity he led captivity captive.

The Cross became His throne. The power that He gained was the power of experience, the power of sympathetic help, because He knows the frailty of our frame,

and can adapt His divine help in every respect to our human necessities. This is the kind of power that we require and can appreciate. The day of our Lord's power was the day when, like Samson, He burst the green withes of death, and carried the gates of the grave up the hill of God. The day of His power was proclaimed to all the world when He ascended up on high and sat down at the right hand of God; and the day of Pentecost witnessed, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled thousands, the work of Christ was finished and accepted, and had achieved all the mighty results for which it was undertaken. Ever since then, the day of Christ's power has continued. All the years of the world since, are years of the Lord—Anni Domini. Each subsequent age could realize that day for itself.

The day in which we live, like the days in which our Father's lived, is the day of Christ's power. He is exalted to be to us what He was to all who went before, who believed in Him—a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins. All power on earth and in heaven has been given to Him for the purpose of carrying on His mediatorial work. He who suffered and died in His human nature has transferred that nature to the Throne of the universe, that as a man He might rule over the destinies of men, and more effectively work out their deliverance. And He must reign until, under the feet which were pierced, all the powers of sin and death shall be finally subdued.

This, then, is the great truth which every Christian preacher has to proclaim. This is the day of Christ's power. The Victor has fought the battle; He has come to reap the fruits of His triumph, and to be owned as King in the hearts of men. This is the day of salvation.

All things on the part of Christ are ready. He has conquered sin and death; Satan is bruised under His feet; He has removed every hindrance and obstacle in the way of our salvation; He has satisfied the utmost demands of divine law; He has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He has conquered everything else that was opposed to God's holy will; there is only one that remains to be conquered, and that is the heart of man for whom He has done all this. He is victorious everywhere else. How is He to be received in this part of His work? The Redeemer is willing to begin and carry on His own good work in you—to make you, His subjects, kings and priests unto God and the Father. Are you willing, with your faith and love, to accept Him as your Redeemer and King?

2. And this leads me to consider the second point, viz.: The willingness of the people in the day of the Lord's power. We have seen throughout the world of nature and of human life, how power uniformly operates in the line of least resistance. However great the power may be, it invariably seeks the easiest way in which to manifest itself.

The lightning is the greatest force we know. It can rend the rock and the tree, and yet it prefers to move along the lightning rod, because that rod is the best conductor of electricity, and there it encounters fewest obstacles in its passage from the sky to the earth.

And even when it rends the tree or the rock, it seeks the weakest point—the joints in the armour as it were, the lines of least resistance. The power of life is a tremendous power, we see how the soft, tender root of a tree, or the spongy, cellular tissue of a mushroom can push aside in growing, a wall, or split a rock, or lift a pavement; and yet the power of life in a growing plant uniformly chooses the softest parts of the soil in which to expand itself, and if the creatures of God act in this way, according to His will, we cannot but believe that His own power must be manifested according to a similar law. His will must also be exerted along the line of least resistance. His will must operate only on the willing. Christ has all power in earth and in heaven, but He cannot exert it in opposition to the will of human beings, whom He has endowed with the marvellous gift of liberty, and in regard to whom He must stand aside and leave them room to act. He cannot compel men to be saved against their will. He is Lord of the heart, and yet He must stand at the door and knock, and say, "If any man will hear My voice and open the door, I will come in." His people must be willing in the day of His power.

It is strikingly said of our Lord that in His own native place of Nazareth He was grieved and disappointed because of His want of success. He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. The marvellous power was present, but the people were not willing to take advantage of it. They were incredulous of its very existence. We know how our Lord must have felt from what we ourselves experience in a humbler way in similar circumstances. We are powerfully effected by the kind of society we happen to be with.

If we are properly appreciated, we are stimulated to do our best: we unfold our finest qualities in the congenial atmosphere, as the sea-anemone displays its beautiful fringe of tentacles in the undisturbed water. But if we are treated with coldness and indifference our powers are repressed, and we cannot speak or think at ease and to advantage: we shrivel and shrink into ourselves in the freezing air, as the sea-anemone becomes a more formless lump of jelly when its quiet haunt is invaded. Love not only idealises the beloved object; it induces and enables it to become really lovable. Praise to a generous mind has tendency to make it praiseworthy. While, on the other hand, contempt or dislike makes a man appear less capable and estimable than he really is. It is for this reason that a prophet has no honour in his own country. The unsympathetic treatment of his familiar friends, who do not believe in his powers, prevents him from exhibiting to them the qualities which have earned his fame among appreciative strangers. Our Lord, who was in all things made like unto his brethren need sympathy

in order to reveal Himself in His true light; and realised, as we all do, that a man must be believed in order to do his best.

While the faith of the woman with the issue of blood drew healing virtue from the very hem of His garment, the unbelief of His countrymen at Nazareth restrained His mighty arm. He felt chilled and repressed in the presence of those who regarded Him only as the Son of Joseph, the carpenter, and connected Him with circumstances in which there was no mystery, or marvel, or novelty. He could do no mighty works in such unfavourable atmosphere. And as with the Master, so with the servant.

The secret of many a minister's want of success is the unbelief of his people. His appearance has become familiar to them, and his work dull and commonplace; and their indifference reacts upon him, and chills down his zeal and enthusiasm. Their want of faith in his message, their want of regard for himself, prevents him from putting forth his powers, and being to them all he might otherwise be.

What a world of meaning then, is there in that word willing. It denotes the condition of one who offers the least resistance to the saving power of Jesus, and in whom, therefore, that power finds it easiest to work and carry on its gracious purposes. Such a person has no self-will, giving it freely up to be moulded by the Divine will, willing to give up all—to give first the heart and then the life—a living sacrifice. Such a person is not impelled by law, but by love. He does not yield a constrained obedience to an outward code of conduct; the law is in his heart; he loves the law, because he knows in his own experience that it is holy and just and good. He has tasted and seen that God is good, and, therefore, he is not only all his salvation, but also all his desire. "Not my will, but Thine be done" is his rule, not only in regard to the salvation of his soul, but also in regard to all the duties and relations in life. Christ will bless such an one up to the fullness of his own loving heart, because there is nothing in his heart to prevent it. The power of Christ is in him, and towards him can be exerted to the utmost, for there is no obstacle in the way. Christ can do many mighty works in him and for him, because there is no unbelief to hinder. The miracle of faith has been wrought in him. He has been made willing in the day of Christ's power. That is the reason why it is said of the power in spirit, that theirs is the kingdom of heaven; because they are so empty that, like air coming into a vacuum, the kingdom of God has only to come into their heart and occupy it, and fill it to the full, and work out its own gracious ends with it, with nothing to interfere.

It is those who are thus willing that are called the people of God. He rules over no reluctant subjects. Napoleon said, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded great empires, but the creation of our genius depended upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him. His is no kingdom of terror." "I will have no state of siege," said Cavour, the great Italian minister. Christ establishes a nobler chain of influence than fear can produce, and brings human hearts into sympathy with His own. The Lord of all draws us by the cords of love, and all who are thus willing are truly His in a way they could not otherwise be. Their will is merged in the divine will, and thus their hearts turned to harmony with the Divine purposes, made one with His heart, leaps ever forth in glad obedience.

3. Let me now ask in conclusion what does their willingness in the day of Christ's power lead to? What will the day of power do for them? The Psalm of the text tells us that it will do two things. It will adorn them with the beauty of holiness and it will renew their youth. The will of God is our sanctification. The dearest wish of His heart is that the fair image in which He created us, and which we have marred by our sin, should be restored. He wishes us to place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, that He may create us anew in Christ Jesus. The glory of the Godhead shines in Him who assumed our nature; and all power is given to Him in order that He may make us conformable to His image. Who would not accept a king to reign over them who could thus make them what they were meant to be—sons of God and heirs of heaven, who could fulfil here and hereafter, to the fullest extent, their prayer,—"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

But, besides the beauties of holiness, perpetual youthfulness is also what the grace of Christ will produce in those who are willing in the day of His power. In His service, the dew of their youth, the brightness of life's morning, will be ever upon them. He who has the power of an endless life, who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, will renew their strength from day to day from the fountainhead of His own strength. Eternal life is eternal youth; and he who takes away the old nature of sin and gives the new nature of grace, with it makes all things new. The order of nature which is to grow is reversed, and the life that is made willing to live in Christ and for Christ, becomes truly younger and more beautiful as the years advance, and after death enters into immortal youth.

But it is sad to think that, just as in the hiding of Christ's power in the days of His flesh, there were many who were not willing that this Man should reign over them; so now, even in the days of His manifested power, there are hard, cold hearts that will not yield to the persuasive grace of Christ, but "do always resist the Spirit," blindly at strife with their own blessedness, miserable conquerors, who conquer to their own terrible defeat. He is willing; but His mournful complaint regarding such as harden themselves under His highest influences and attractions, is, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." And as they reject Him, and struggle out of the very clasp of His love, they are paralyzing and wedding to death the will

within themselves, which would have made them willing in the day of His power.

It is sad to think of such. But when those of us who profess to be willing in the day of Christ's power look around and within upon our own inconsistent lives, our unchristian tempers, our worldliness, and selfishness, how are we mortified and humbled: Is this all that the day of His power has done for us? Where are the beauties of holiness in those who place the mere dead orthodoxy of outward religion observations above a living faith in Jesus Christ, and a gracious love to their fellow creatures? Where is the dew of grace in those who esteem the possessions of earth more than all the joys of heaven? We need, indeed, to get a new revelation of the wonderful self-sacrifice of our Saviour, so that the love of Christ may constrain us. We need to be renewed and quickened by the power of the Spirit, so that we may be willing to become all that His grace would fain have us to be.

### EASTER PRAYER.

Almighty and Everlasting God, by whose power thy son, Jesus Christ, overcame death, grant that we may purify ourselves even as He is pure; and, by continually mortifying our corrupt affections and seeking ever to do Thy whole will, may rise through death into a higher and diviner life. Amen.

### BEATITUDES.

(From the Old Testament.)

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord, and in whose heart are the high-ways to Zion.

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they will be still praising Thee.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Blessed are they that are upright in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the way of the scornful: but his delight is the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night.

Blessed are they that keep the testimonies of the Lord, and that seek Him with the whole heart.

Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

Something for Mothers to Get their Boys to Read and Think Over.

My son, trouble not thyself, it thou see others honored and advanced, whilst thou art contemned and debased.

Lift up thy heart unto heaven to me, and the contempt of men on earth shall not grieve thee.

Lord, we are blind, and are quickly misled by vanity.

If I look rightly into myself, I cannot say that any creature hath ever done me wrong, and therefore I cannot justly complain before thee.

But because I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, all creatures do justly take arms against me.

Unto me, therefore, shame and contempt is justly due, but unto Thee praise, honor and glory.

And unless I prepare myself with cheerful willingness to be despised and forsaken of all creatures, and to be esteemed altogether nothing, I cannot obtain inward peace and stability nor be spiritually enlightened, nor be fully united unto Thee.

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### HYMN.

#### Peace Be Still.

Lord, in whose might the Saviour trod  
The dark and stormy waves;  
And trusted in His Father's arm,  
Omnipotent to save.

When darkly round our footsteps rise  
The floods and storms of life,  
Send Thou Thy Spirit down to still  
The elemental strife.

Strong in our trust in Thee reposed,  
The ocean path we'll dare,  
Though waves around us rage and foam,  
Since Thou art with us there.  
—S. G. Bushnell.

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