



SUNDAY READING

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE.

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 dollar. 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 These need not be published except in the case of prize-winners and successful competitors.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 efforts.
5. No post-cards can be received. All replies should be addressed to the "SUNDAY READING," EDITOR *PROGRESS*, St. John, N. B.

Miss Mary B. Clewley, St. Stephen, is the successful competitor for Prize Bible Questions No. 15. Although all the answers received were very good, there was only one other correct answer, Miss Nellie Flewelling, Centreville. In answer to the first question, Gibeon and Jericho were given as the city near which five confederate kings were defeated and executed. If those who gave Gibeon had followed the history of the battle, given by Joshua 10 chapters, they would have seen it was near Makkedah, a chief city of the Canaanites, where these confederate kings were defeated, taken from the cave to which they had fled for refuge and executed. Genesis xiv. 3, given by other competitors, refers to the battle of the kings, in which instance Abraham rescues his nephew, Lot, and property from nine confederate kings, Genesis xiv. 9. The second question was answered correctly by all. In answer to the third question, Stephen was given as the first martyr among the apostles. Stephen was the first christian martyr; he was one of the seven deacons chosen by the church at Jerusalem to minister to the Grecian widows, and distinguished among them "as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." These seven deacons were set before the apostles for their prayers. Acts v. 5, 6.

Very many beautiful answers were given to scripture character No. 3, each containing a short history of Balaam's life, proving familiarity with the old testament characters, and a knowledge of scripture history, for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy, iii, 15.

NEANI.

Answers to Prize Bible Questions, No. 15.

1. Makkedah, near which five confederate kings were defeated and executed.—Joshua, x, 22, 23.
2. The hardness of heart of the Pharisees.—Mark iii, 5, 6. The action of the disciples.—Mark x, 13, 14.
3. James, the brother of John, was the first martyr among the disciples.—Acts xii, 1, 2.
4. Balaam, the son of Beor, (1) He sinned against the convictions of duty through love of worldly gain.—2 Peter, ii, 15. (2) Being expected to say one thing he was constrained by the power of God to say another.—Numbers xxiv, 10, 13. (3) He was spoken to by one who never spoke to any other man.—Numbers, xxii, 28, 30.—2nd Peter, ii, 16. (4) He died a violent death.—Numbers, xxxi, 8.

MARY B. CLEWLEY.

PRIZE BIBLE QUESTIONS.—No. 17.

1. In whose school did Paul publicly defend the doctrines of the gospel?
2. How often does the term "martyr" occur in the New Testament?
3. Where was the first contribution-box placed, and for what purpose?
4. Scripture characters, No. 5.—To whom do the following statements refer, and where are the facts recorded: (1) He was a native of Cana in Galilee. (2) He was one of the first to recognize the Messiah. (3) He was presented to Jesus by one of John the Baptist's disciples. (4) Jesus pronounced a remarkable eulogy on his character. (5) He was one of those to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection. (6) He was present at the ascension.

One dark and stormy night the children at one of the large educational hospitals in Germany were sitting down to supper, and the teacher said their usual grace, "Come, Lord Jesus, and be our guest at this time," when one of the boys looked up into the teacher's face and said, "You always ask the Lord to come; why does He never come?" "Oh, yes," replied the teacher, "He will come." "Then," said the boy, "I will set a chair for Him tonight to be ready when He comes." Shortly after a knock was heard at the door, and a poor man was let in, all dripping with rain and famishing with hunger. They tended him with care, and led him at length to the vacant seat by the child. This opened the boy's eyes to the whole truth, and he said, "Teacher, I see it now; the Lord Jesus could not come Himself, so He sent this poor man in His place."

GENTLEMEN!

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The cross of Jesus: To St. Paul it was the power of God and the wisdom of God, but by our explanations of it, by our definitions and dogmatism, we have done about as much as we can do to turn its wisdom into folly and its power into weakness. We have secured its beauty and robbed it of its deepest and sublimest pathos, by making it part of our theological schemes and plans. Around it have gathered the clouds and storms of sectarian controversies. We have vulgarized it by our superficial and conventional ideas, by our mean and mechanical views of redemption, atonement, forgiveness, sacrifice, salvation. Christ in heaven forgive us.

Face loved of little children long ago;
Head hated of the priests and rulers then,
Saw was not this Thy passion to foreknow,
In Thy death's hour the works of Christian men.

O, that the cross could be lifted out of the troubled atmosphere of our mortal controversies, out of the misconceptions which hide all that is beautiful, out of the darkness and confusion of the evil tempers which religious disputes ever generate. Let us gather around it with simple, humble and loving hearts, and it will speak to us with a power and a pathos which we cannot resist.

What is the significance of the cross? This is an old question, yet it is ever new, as fresh, vital and imperative today as yesterday. To find the significance of the cross, to interpret and apply it, has always been and is still the highest work of the christian preacher. What can I say? I do not presume to think I can exhaust its significance. I ever St. Paul could say that he only knew in part, and prophesied in part, then surely we ought to be far from imagining that the little part which we see, and know and teach is the great whole. God save us from such presumption. The man who secures an understanding of the cross by belittling it, by denying its infinite range and depth of meaning, pays a very large price for a very small acquisition. Every subject we can study runs out and up into infinitude—how much more the Cross of Jesus Christ! No one can hope to interpret and express its significance adequately, and no one knows this so well as the men to whom it is the theme of constant and serious study and speech. All I can hope to do and seek to do, is to put before you two or three of the aspects of the cross which are to me the most real, helpful and impressive.

1. The cross is the symbol of sorrow, and sorrow patiently accepted and borne. It is only in our light, easy, self-indulgent, Pagan moods and moments that the cross has no attraction for us; in all our deepest experiences, when we are most truly men, in sympathy with the sadness and pain of the world and life, we seek the man of sorrow. Christianity has been called "the worship of sorrow," and that is true to this extent that it has made sorrow no longer repulsive but spiritually attractive and beautiful. To a race whose life is often darkened and troubled, the cross is ever dear. It is the symbol of a universal experience the representative experience of all. And we learn from it to accept sorrow and suffering as part of the discipline of life, as something which it is better to accept with patient endurance, than to fight against with useless strife. Our Lord did not suffer that we might not suffer. We must be reconciled to our human lot and discipline before we can be fully reconciled to God. O could we but take to the inevitable ills of life as Jesus took to His, could we but bear the limitations and burdens of our days as He bore His, then would they lose all their sharpness and sting, and the way of life would become like a way of triumph, the crown of thorns like a crown of glory, and our crosses be full of the very power of God.

II. The cross of Jesus is the revelation and symbol of perfect obedience, of faithfulness unto death. It embodies a principle that is not illustrated in His life; but it is the culmination of the whole movement of His life: it crowns and glorifies His life. It was the glory of Jesus to obey; apart from His Father He had no desires, no purposes, no interests; in the Father only did He exist. This absolute dedication of Himself to God, this absolute identification of Himself with the mind and will of God is the key to the understanding of His place in history. The cross is the proof and sign of His uncompromising, unflinching, perfect loyalty to His Father's will and work. His life was not taken from Him; He laid it down of Himself. "Master," said Peter, "save Thyself"; but if Christ had saved Himself, saved Himself by concessions to popular tastes and prejudices and by avoiding inevitable collisions, He would not be the Christ we worship tonight. We have that idea of Jesus that it disturbs our sense of His dignity even for a moment to suppose that He could have yielded a little, compromised a little, and when His hour was come could have run away from His enemies or have hidden Himself. When He stepped forth from the shadows of Gethsemane and said to the soldiers, "Whom seek ye?" if ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, then I am He," we feel, not only that He acted sublimely, not only that He bore Himself like the Son of God and the Redeemer of men, but that He could not have done anything else. "If Thou be the Son of God," cried His enemies, "come down from the cross," but we feel that it is just because He is the Son of God that He cannot come down: it is His filial faithfulness which led Him there and which keeps Him there.

The cross teaches us that the true life of man is to be found in obedience, in faithfulness, is covered with the robe of righteousness which Jesus wore. Whoever then professes to glory in the cross must be judged by this standard: "are you obedient, faithful, brave to do the thing that is true and right when it is hard to do it?"

How far we are from having and living by the obedient and faithful spirit. What petty excuses we can make for our unfaithfulness. It is against this unfaithfulness the cross renews today its ancient rebuke.

We are not glorying in the cross, we are turning away from it, we are ranging ourselves among its real enemies, it is we are yielding to the evil passions and tempers which crucified Christ, if we are careless and indifferent in our attitude toward the things which are all in all to that lonely, bleeding, dying Son of God. The foundation principle of the christian life is the cross, the cross of loyalty to the will of God, the cross of faithfulness unto death, the cross of self-surrender.

III.—The cross is the revelation and symbol of the universal law that it is only by sacrifice man and man's world can be redeemed and perfected. The history of human life is the history of vicarious sacrifice. Our securities and sanctities spring out of sacrifices, and our dearest rights and holiest joys are built on the agonies of prophets and saints. Without shedding of blood, blood of body, blood of brain, blood of heart, there has been no taking away of sin and no true progress. The law of sacrifice which is wrought into the constitution of the world was the law of Christ's life, and the law which was uplifted and glorified on His cross. We see and confess, not the only fulfillment, but the most perfect fulfillment of that ancient ideal of sorrow and sacrifice which we find in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, in the thorn-crowned and crucified Christ. We are called, not only to worship the cross, but to carry it. The everlasting law of sacrifice is laid upon us. It is not enough that the sacrifice was made in Palestine 1850 years ago, it is the will of God that it be made over and over again in every human life. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is prolonged and repeated in the sacrifice of His followers—this is the truth of which the Romish doctrine of the mass is the corruption and caricature. We are called to offer up ourselves to God, to lay down our lives for the brethren, to be in our measure and degree Jesus Christ over again. He is our representative, not doing things instead of us, but, as it were, before us that we may be inspired to do them after Him. This is the meaning of a hundred great sayings in the New Testament in which all the things attributed to Christ are expected and demanded from His followers. St. Paul's mind was steeped in the idea of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings and death. We, too, must have our passion and cross. We must suffer and die with Christ. We can only be saved through the sacrifice of the lower life, which is not self-destruction but self-fulfillment—the redeeming and perfecting of the true self. We can only save others by the sacrifice of ourselves. Sacrifice is the secret of all the noble, redeeming work that has ever been done in our world. We are called to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, to become an active part of that divine, eternal sacrifice by which the world is being redeemed from its evil. He only who is making his own life a sacrifice unto God, is in real communion with the Lord of love. To say that we glory in the cross is to say that we are making its law of love and sacrifice the law of our life. It is not an idle adoration our honest Master seeks. Let us tonight before the cross of the great sacrifice offer ourselves, mind, heart, soul, simply, loyally, unreservedly to the will and work of God, to the service of mankind.

IV.—The cross is the revelation and symbol of victory in failure and because of failure. There never was such an apparent failure as the crucifixion. Every form of evil seemed to have won a triumph. Roman soldiers could not crucify and kill the divine life. Jesus Christ was not the victim of the cross, rather was the cross His victim. Christ conquers and reigns by His cross. Let us learn from the cross that the truest and noblest successes and triumphs come, not in spite of, but just because of the lower failures and the apparent defeats. Better suffer than purchase comfort and peace of life by compromising with falsehood and wrong, and better fail, as the world counts failure, than grasp at an ignoble success. Out of such defeats come the divinest triumphs, and such self-sacrifice is self-fulfillment.

I sing the hymn of the conquered who tell in the battle of life,
The hymn of the wounded, the beaten, who died overwhelmed in the strife,
The hymn of the low and the humble, the weary, the broken in heart,
Who strove, and who failed, acting bravely a silent and desperate part,
They only the victory win
Who have fought the good fight, and have vanquished the demon that tempts us within,
Who have dared for a high cause to suffer, resist, fight, if need be to die.
Speak, history: Who are life's victors? Unroll the long Annals and say: Are they those whom the world calls the victors?
Who won the success of a day?
The martyrs or Nero? His judges or Socrates?
Bliss or Christ?

V. The cross is the revelation and symbol of the redeeming sympathy of God. It stands for a new hope to humanity because we see in it such clear revelation of the Divine compassion and grace. It reveals a God, not demanding life, but giving life; not claiming a sacrifice, a God who suffers in the sufferings of His creation and His children. It is far more than the testimony of a teacher to the truth He taught, far more than the crowning faithfulness of a faithful life; it is a manifestation to our sinful world of the love of God such as had never been made before. There never was a time, it is true, when God was not as full of love, as pitiful, forgiving, self-sacrificing, as Christ revealed Him to be: Christ revealed He did not create the Divine love; but He revealed it as it had never been before revealed. The cross is the manifestation in space and time of an eternal fact namely, that the father of infinite love always bears on His heart the sorrows of His creatures, and the sins and woes of His children. Apart from this eternal passion and eternal sacrifice the love of God is a meaningless phrase. Sacrifice is the very essence of love, and the highest manifestation of love human and divine. The cross of Jesus is the revelation and symbol of the cross which God bears and has borne from the foundation of the world of the eternal love afflicted in

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our afflictions and seeking to save unto the uttermost. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." God so loved the world," that is Christ's own interpretation of His character and work and cross.

It is the thought of the cross as revealing the redeeming sympathy and grace of God which under various conceptions and theories of the atonement has touched the world the most. When we begin to explain and define it, we soon get lost and bewildered, and by attempting to put it into cold and formal statements we add to the revelation, if we do not contradict it. But let us hold fast to the reality. Let us worship God in Christ. God in Christ is Christianity. In the face of Jesus marred more than any man's face we see the light of the divine pity and sympathy, and in His wounded broken heart we see the heart of God revealed. What a gospel the cross of Jesus preaches to men and women troubled with the sense of sin and guilt, tormented with the dark and shameful memories, and with fears of God and the hereafter. Accept the cross as the revelation of an eternal love, and passion, and travail, and you cannot believe that you have any divine indifference or hostility to subdue. It is not from God you require to be saved. God himself is your Savior. The sacrifice of the cross is not made to God, it is made by God—God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Let not your sins and fears keep you from God. You may begin a new life at once with the assurance that God loves you, and that He has forgiven you, and that neither things present nor things to come will separate you from His love. What a gospel the cross of Jesus preaches to men and women troubled by the burden and mystery of the world and life. It says, standing up against that dark sky, that God is not cruel, not impassive that love is at the heart of the almightiness; that sympathy and sacrifice are enthroned in the very life of eternal God; that the Father feels with His children while He is redeeming and educating them, and that they are learning obedience by the things they suffer. Men and women of sorrow, and struggle, take to your hearts this gospel of the cross, and then in a most real sense Christ's wounds will be your healing, His sorrow your joy, His death your life. And now unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us be praise and glory. Amen.

Prayer.

Holy and ever Blessed God, who dost ask abundant labors and sacrifices from those whose lives are enriched by much love we thank Thee especially at this time for sending The Beloved Son to live and die for us men and our salvation, and whilst we meditate on His final conflict and

passion may we be filled with His Spirit, so that we may be enabled to offer up ourselves entirely, even as He did, to Thy holy and perfect will. Amen.

Christ on the Cross.

Of my own will did I offer up myself unto God the Father for thy sins. My hands were stretched forth on the cross, and my body laid bare, so that nothing remained in me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the appeasing of the divine majesty.

In like manner oughtest thou to also offer thyself willingly unto me in the holy communion as a pure and sacred oblation, with all the strength and affections, and to the utmost of thine inward faculties. What do I require of thee more, than that thou study to resign thyself entirely unto me? Whatsoever thou givest beside thyself is of no value in my sight for I seek not thy gifts, but thee.

As it would not suffice thee to have all things whatsoever without me, so neither can it please me, whatsoever thou givest, if thou give not thyself.

Offer up thyself unto me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thine offering shall be acceptable.

But if thou abidest in thyself, and dost not offer thyself up freely unto My will, thine oblation is not entire, neither will there be perfect union between us.

Therefore a free offering of thyself into the hands of God ought to go before all thine actions, if thou desire to obtain liberty and grace.

For this cause so few become inwardly free and enlightened, because they are loath wholly to deny themselves.

My sentence standeth sure, "unless a man forsake all, he cannot be My disciple." If thou therefore desire to be My disciple, offer up thyself unto Me with thy whole heart.

Love and Sorrow.

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, I say all.

—Isaac Watts.

Benediction.

The Lord bless and keep us; the Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up His countenance upon us, and give us peace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.