

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, October 19th, 1879.—The Triumphs of Faith.—Heb. xi. 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."—Hebrews xi. 27.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Heb. xi. Tuesday, Heb. xii. Wednesday, Heb. xiii. Thursday, Genesis iv. Friday, Genesis vii. Saturday, Genesis xii. 1-9. Sunday, Psalm xc.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Definition of faith. Vs. 1. II. Efficacy. Vs. 2. III. Reward. Vs. 3-10.

QUESTIONS.—What themes have we already studied in the Epistle to the Hebrews? What has its writer enjoined upon Jewish Christians? See Heb. x. 38, 39.

I. Vs. 1.—How does the writer define faith? What is meant by "the substance"? How is faith the evidence of things unseen? What did faith do for the elders?

II. Vs. 2.—What does faith make us to understand?

III. Vs. 3-10.—What new instruction does the writer give upon Abel? Upon Enoch? How does he tell us we must approach God? How did Noah show his faith? How Abraham? In what did Abraham dwell? How are we like him? 2 Cor. v. 1; 2 Peter i. 13. For what did Abraham look? To what other Old-Testament characters does the writer appeal? With what great example does he draw his list to a close? Heb. xii. 2.

The chapter from which our lesson is taken is one of the most stirring in the Bible. The writer gives a popular definition of faith, and shows its efficacy and its reward in various cases. All these he gathers as witnesses around his Christian brethren to incite them to perseverance, presenting finally as the great exemplar the Lord Jesus, who was sustained through shame and death by this divine principle (ch. xii. 1-3), and exhorting them to bear all suffering as fatherly chastisement adapted to their good.

The great thought of this lesson is Faith in future and unseen things can sustain us under present trials. The Hebrew Christians needed to learn this, for the Jews sought, both by argument and by persecution (compare x. 32-34), to make them abandon Christianity. We need it too, for skeptical arguments and assertions, the pleasures of sin, evil examples, etc., are constantly at work to turn us away from the life of faith.

EXPOSITION.—I. Verses 1, 2.—Verse 1.—Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.—We must observe the connection with x. 35-39 in order to see how the writer came to make this statement. He is there urging his readers to hold on and hold out, and not faint and turn back to Judaism. They were faint-hearted. In vs. 39 faith is set over against a timid and discouraged, and ruinous turning back. Then are added these words, to show how faith operates to save from such destruction: "The things hoped for" are the blessings promised, but not yet gained, faith gives to them such a present reality and power as the very things themselves in their own "substance" have for us when actually in our possession and seen. With such a firm, fixed assurance one will not waver and turn back, having a clear title to a large estate, and by holding fast to this title shall, in due time, come into possession, I lay all my plans with reference to this result, and go straight on, nothing daunted, whatever others may believe or deny. Such is the position of the true Christian. The evidence of things not seen. Or a conviction as to things not seen. There are present invisible realities not less than future blessings, of which the Christian must be assured. A risen and reigning Christ, an eternal God, the whole system of Christian truth, one must say yea to these realities—must have no hesitation, doubt, uncertainty here if he will either stand fast or go forward. There is no strong Christian life without such conviction.

Verse 2.—For by it the elders obtained a good report.—More exactly, For in it, that is, in this faith, as the very element in which they lived, moved and had their being, which was their life. "The elders" are here the men of the olden

time, of the days of the Old Testament history, as the examples given in the succeeding verses show. The "good report" is, literally, were witnessed, that is, had witness borne concerning them, namely, by God, especially in his word, where their names and deeds are recorded as the names and deeds of God's own servants and friends.

II. Verse 4.—By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, etc.—See the account in Gen. iv. 1-8. The implication here is that Cain's fault was, at bottom, lack of faith, which appeared in failing to comply with God's known will and command as to the sacrifice acceptable to him. The witness "obtained" by Abel was, first, some token of approval, perhaps as in later cases the fire from heaven devouring Abel's sacrifice, known to both brothers; and the occasion of Cain's murderous envy and hate, and, afterward, the condemnation and punishment of Cain. And by it [that is, by his faith] he being dead yet speaketh. Compare Gen. iv. 10.

Verse 5.—By faith Enoch was translated, etc.—See Gen. v. 21-24, and compare the account of Elijah's translation in 2 Kings ii. 11. To "see death" is to die. Some change, no doubt, passed upon Enoch and Elijah, similar to that which those alive at Christ's coming are to experience. Was not found. In Genesis "was not," that is, on the earth or buried in the earth. For before his translation, etc. The record is "he walked with God;" but this implies not only conscious communion, inwardly revealing himself to him, but probably also such outward visible revelations as were customary in like circumstances in those early days.

Verse 6.—For without faith, etc.—God was pleased with Enoch because of his faith, and translated him because of this good pleasure. This instance the writer uses to set forth to his readers the general principle which holds in their case as well as in Enoch's, that God cannot be pleased with one who has and shows no faith. He that cometh to God must believe, etc. "Coming to God" is not simply to engage in the act of prayer, but rather designates the whole movement of the soul in the origination and perpetuation of its divine life. The two things to be believed are God's existence and his grace toward the believers. The atheist believes neither; the demons only the first. But to believe the first without the second is to have despair, not hope. Diligently seek him. Seek him out. As opposed to a half-hearted, halting, and hence failing search.

Verse 7.—By faith Noah being warned, etc.—See the history in Gen. vi. 9-22; vii. ix. The "things not seen as yet," [that is, at the time of the warning] were the facts as to the coming flood. To sight, and to the mere scientist, nothing could have been more improbable, more incredible, than the predictions. But faith in God's truth and goodness gave to Noah an assurance as clear and strong as that of sight, and hence motive to action not less clear and strong than sight gives. When men get so sublimated as to be above fear as a motive, they get quite too ethereal for this life and for the fellowship of the gospel. By the which he condemned, etc. That is, by his faith, not by his ark, his salvation. His condemnation of the world was by his faith as expressed partly in words and partly in works.

Verses 8-10.—By faith Abraham, etc. On his call to leave his own country. See Gen. xi. 31; xii. 1-6. The "place," Palestine, was received rather in his descendants than in his own person. The committal of his way to God, to allow him to direct, is the great lesson of these verses which every one needs to learn, especially those whose fidelity to truth and duty takes them into the midst of opposition, trial and loss. "The city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," is not the Jerusalem of Palestine, but "the New Jerusalem," the heavenly city of which the other was symbol. It is the perfected bliss of the saint. To this he looked.

Faith, like the telescope, "brings distant glories nigh," and makes them real to the soul's apprehension. It has sometimes been familiarly said that "seeing is believing," but the converse would seem to be nearer the truth—believing is seeing—even as Jesus said to the sister of Lazarus, "Did I not tell

thee that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

Few men are indifferent to fame, and none ought to be, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

The heroes of faith are God's great men, and God alone is the infallible judge of man.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, October 26th, 1879.—Faith and Works.—James ii. 14-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."—James ii. 26.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

The sun and the moon and stars move, no other but God himself could move them. Through a telescope we can see stars which can not be seen by the naked eye, so faith brings distant things near, and makes us see things we cannot see with our eyes.

Who made the world. How? How do we know these things? There is a country called China, tea comes from there. We have faith that there is such a place, and that people live there. So though we have never seen heaven, nor God, nor anyone who has, yet faith makes us believe what the Bible tells us of these things. Jesus says "Blessed are they that have not seen, yet believe."

Faith will help us to do wonderful things. Draw out as much as possible of the stories of those of whom examples are given, and show how it was faith that made them do all these things. Though we do not see Jesus, faith makes us sure that he sees us, and is grieved when we do wrong, and pleased when we do right. Faith will make us try to please him, just as much as if we could see his glad look.

Faith will help us to do, or to bear, many hard things, because we know he wants us to. That is what the Golden Text means.

Here are five things that faith is: Firmly to believe what God has said; Always to follow where Jesus has led; Instantly to do what Jesus has taught; Trusting in him, who our souls has sought; Heartily praising for what he has wrought.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 41.

COME UNTO ME.

- 1. Cornelius.....Acts. x. 1. 2. Obed.....Ruth iv. 17. 3. Melchizedek.....Gen. xiv. 20. 4. Eli.....1 Sam. iii. 19. 5. Uriah.....2 Sam. xi. 3. 6. Nazareth.....Luke iv. 16. 7. Timothy.....Tim. iii. 15. 8. Olivet.....Acts i. 12. 9. Mephibosheth.....2 Sam. iv. 4. 10. Eunice.....2 Tim. i. 5.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 42.

BIBLICAL WORD SQUARE.

- 1. One of the minor Prophets. 2. The last letter of the Greek alphabet. 3. The father of Jeroboam. 4. A stone of the third row of settings in the High priest's breastplate. 5. How did Jesus tell his disciples they would be treated for his name's sake.

The words are the same from the top to bottom as from left to right.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- 1. At what time of the day was Adam made? 2. What cardinal virtue does water when frozen represent?

Youths' Department.

Blown Away.

There were three of them—Kitty, Mary, and little Tommy—the children of the station-master at Black River Junction, on the Great South-Western Railroad. The station stood alone on the open prairie, miles and miles from anywhere in particular. Black River flowed through the mountains, a hundred miles away to the north; and on clear days, the snowy mountains could be seen glimmering on the grassy horizon. The line leading to Black River met the South-Western here, and thus it was the place was called Black River Junction. The station-master and his wife and three children lived in the little depot quite happily, but there was not another family within ten miles, in any direction.

At times the children thought it rather lonely. There was nothing in particular to be done, except to watch the trains that stopped at the junction several times a day. Once in a while, a freight-car would be left on the side track, and the children soon found that an empty freight-car makes a capital play-house. They could keep house in the corners and make visits, or set by the open door and make believe they were having a ride.

One morning they were awakened by a curious humming sound out-of-doors, and they all scrambled up and looked out of the window. How the wind did blow! It whistled and roared around the house, and played on the telegraph wires upon the roof as upon a huge harp. As the wires were fastened to the roof, the house became a great music-box, with the children inside. After breakfast, the morning trains arrived, but the passengers were glad to hurry from one train to another as quickly as possible. Then the trains went away, and the great wind-harp on the roof sang louder than ever.

The station-master said it blew a gale, and that the children must stay into the house, lest they be blown away in the prairie and be lost. The station-master's wife said it was a pity the children must stay in the house all day. There was an empty freight-car on the side track; perhaps they might play in that. The station-master thought this a good idea, and he took Kitty by the hand and Tommy in his arms, while Mary took hold of his coat, and they all went out to the empty car. Whew! How it did blow! They certainly thought they would be lifted up by the wind and blown quite into the sky. The empty car was warm and snug, and once inside, they were quite out of the way of the wind.

Mary thought the rear end would be a good place to keep house but Tommy preferred the other end, so they agreed to keep house at both ends of the empty car. This was a nice plan, for it gave them a chance to visit each other, and the open part by the door made a grand promenade to walk on.

Louder and louder roared the gale. Safe and snug in the car, they went on with their play and thought nothing of the weather outside.

Suddenly the car seemed to shake, and they stopped in their housekeeping and ran to the door to see what had happened.

"Why, it's moving! Somebody's pushing it," said Mary.

"They are taking us away on the freight train. Come, we must get out."

"I didn't hear the whistle," said Tommy. "I guess something is pushing the car."

The girl leaned out of the door to see what had happened. Why, where was the platform? What was the matter with the station? It is moving away. No, it was the car. It had left the siding and had rolled out upon the main line, and was moving faster and faster along the road.

"Oh, we must get out! They are taking us away."

"No, no," said Kitty. "We must stay here till the brakeman comes around. I didn't hear them when they took us on the train."

"There isn't any train," said Tommy, looking up and down the line.

"Oh, it's the wind! It's blowing the car away. We must put on the brakes and stop it."

This was a good plan, but how were they to carry it out? The brake-wheel was on top of the car, and they were inside. Faster and faster rolled the car. It began to rattle and roar as if dragged along by a swift engine. In a moment, Tommy began to cry. Mary tried to look brave, and Kitty stared hard at the level prairie flying past. It was of no use. They all broke down together, and had a hearty cry alone in the empty car as it rolled on and on before the gale.

The station-master's wife rolled up her sleeves to put the house in order while the children were safely out of the way. The station-master, feeling sure the children were safe in the freight-car, sat in his office nearly all the morning. At last the beds were made, the dinner put on the fire, and the mother wondered how the girls were getting on in their play-house on the track. She threw a shawl over her head and went on the platform. At once, the wind blew the shawl over her face and she could not

see exactly where she stood. Turning her back to the wind she began to call the children. How loudly the wind roared through the telegraph wires! Perhaps, they could not hear in all this din. Maybe they were inside the car, out of hearing. She walked on toward the siding. Not a thing to be seen! She wondered if there had not been a mistake? Perhaps, the car was on the other side of the track? No, the rails were unoccupied as far as she could see in every direction. What did it mean? What had happened? She staggered back into the station, and startled her husband with a cry of despair.

"The car! The children!" The station-master ran out upon the platform and looked up and down the line. Not a car in sight! It had been blown away before the terrible wind, and was perhaps at this instant rolling swiftly onward with its precious load to destruction. What would happen to it? Would it meet a train or run into a station? Would the children try to get out or would they stay in the car till it was wrecked?

He sprang to the door of the depot to telegraph the terrible news down the line, but just as he opened the door he saw a faint white cloud on the western horizon. It was a train. Help is coming. At the same instant, his wife appeared with a new grief and terror in her eyes.

"I cannot get a call in either direction. The wires are blown down."

This only added to the danger, for there was no means of sending in advance of the runaway car. It must go on to its fate without help or warning.

"Help is coming, mother. Here's train bound east."

Nearer and nearer came the train, and the father and mother stood watching it as it crept along the rails. It seemed as if it would never come. At last it reached the platform and proved to be a passenger train bound up the Black River Road, and not intended to go in the direction in which the car had been blown away. The instant it stopped, the station-master ran to the engineer and told his terrible story. The mother, with quicker wit, found the conductor and demanded that the engine be taken off and sent after the children.

The conductor was a man of regular habits, and such a bold request struck him as something extraordinary. Take the engine off, and leave the train and passengers waiting at this lonely station? The idea was preposterous! Some of the passengers gathered near and asked what was the matter.

Three children lost, blown away in an empty car. Some one said, "Yes, go at once. We can wait here till the engine returns." The conductor said he must telegraph for instructions; but some one said, "The wires are down," and the people only cried out the more, "Let the engine go!" so the mother ran to the tender and began to pull out the pin, that the engine might start.

"Hold on, marm," said a brakeman. "I'll cast her off. You jump aboard, if you want to go too. Fire up, Jack, and make her hum."

It was all done in a moment, and away flew the engine, leaving the conductor and the station-master staring in surprise at this singular proceeding. The station-master did not feel very happy. He had half intended to go with the engine, but it would never do to leave his post.

"Fire steady, Jack," said the engineer to the fireman. "It's no use to get excited, for we're in for a long race."

"It's enough to make a fellow excited to see that woman," said the fireman.

The engineer turned around, and there by his side stood the mother, her eyes straining ahead down the line in search of the missing ones.

"Oh, sir! open the throttle wide. Don't try to save coal at such a time as this."

"We must keep cool, marm, and go steady, or we shall run out of coal and water and come to a stand-still on the line."

The woman said not a word, but nodded mournfully and leaned against the side of the cab for support, and then the fireman gave her his seat, where she could look out ahead over the line. How the engine shook and roared! The little finger of the steam-gauge trembled and rose higher and higher as the steam pressure increased over the raging fire. The engine seemed