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The Sabbath-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter-Lesson IV.—Oct. 27.

SIN, FORGIVENESS, AND
PEACE.—Ps. 32:1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*—Rom. 5:1.

DAVID'S SIN.—The great crime of David's life is recorded in 2 Sam. 11. It was a double crime consisting of the two most heinous wrongs one person can commit against another.—adultery and murder. Moreover, it was a sin against God amounting almost to treason.

The Steps. (1) Increasing luxury and self-indulgence. Self-indulgence in any one direction weakens in every direction the soul's power of resistance to temptation. (2) Great popularity and success tend to give one an overweening sense of his own importance compared with that of others. (3) David parleyed with temptation. He should have shut his eyes and turned away, and then he would have been safe. (4) After the first sin one step led to another, till David had done that at which he would have shuddered with abhorrence had the whole been presented to his vision at once. He never dreamed of going on from temptation to adultery, then to murder, not only of one person, but of several, then to the spiritual dearth which comes to those conscious of abiding in sin. Sins never stand alone.

The Guilt. There is no apology for David's sin. It was a sin against light. He knew the commandments. He himself never apologizes for his sin. But it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did. Again, David had no such degree of light and of helpful influences as we have. The same sin would be vastly worse in us. Nor can we rightly judge of David's character by this sin alone, without remembering his deep repentance, his bitter tears, his longing for a clean heart and a right spirit.

Why Recorded. In most human biographies there is a tendency to touch very lightly the faults of the great or the good "for the good of the cause." But the Bible speaks out plainly and fully. Two chapters of Samuel and two Psalms are given to the sin and repentance of David, while his whole list of victories and conquests is briefly narrated in one chapter of Samuel and one of Chronicles. (1) The Bible would give a true picture of its saints. The book of truth must be true in its history. (2) The record brings hope and comfort to true penitents in all ages. Who would dare to hope if only good things were recorded of Bible saints? (3) The record shows us the way out of sin into a holier and better life. I am sorry David sinned; but I am glad that, having sinned, his sin is recorded.

THE FAITHFUL PROPHET'S WARNING.—See 2 Sam. 12:1-15. The Lord allowed David to go on in apparent peace for a year or more. In the meantime a child had been born to Bathsheba, and the sin of David with her must have quietly been made widely known. Probably the 3d and 4th verses of the 32d Psalm expressed David's feelings during this time. God's hand was heavy upon him day and night. His conscience knew no peace. When God sent his faithful prophet, Nathan, with great wisdom he spoke an apologue to David which led to a king indignantly to condemn another, unconscious that his condemnation fell upon his own head, till the prophet spoke the terrible words, *Thou Art the Man.* Nathan showed David the consequences of his sin.

DAVID'S REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION.—(See Ps. 51; 2 Sam. 12:15-23.) The boy was taken sick soon after the prophet left, and David fasted and prayed, lying upon the earth for seven days, when the child died.

The Repentance. This bitter fruit of his sin, brought David to the deepest and most sincere repentance. One great object of punishment is to compel men to see the terrible nature of their sin. The proof of David's sincerity, that he was not merely sorry for the consequences, but repented of the sin, is shown by his forsaking that sin and hating all sin, and by his efforts to remove the evil effects of his wrong.

The Confession. The 51st Psalm was David's public confession to both God and man. Confession should always be to those whom the sin has injured. He who taught men to sin by his example should also by his example teach them repentance. The king on his throne publicly acknowledges his sin before his subjects, and the temple services resound with his confession. No one sees David's character unless he places the repentance beside the sin.

The Consequences. David's repentance led to many beneficent results, as we shall see, but it could not remove all the consequences of his sin. It could not ward off the bitter trouble to come from his polygamous household in the death by the sword of two of his grown-up sons; it could not preserve Bathsheba's child alive; it could not bring Uriah back from the dead; it could not keep some from blaspheming the name of God (2 Sam. 12:14) down to the latest ages.

DAVID'S SONG OF FORGIVENESS AND PEACE.—Ps. 32:1-11. This is the second of the "Seven penitential Psalms." *Blessed * * transgression . . . sin . . . iniquity.* Sin is spoken of under three appellations, so as to include the whole idea of sin in all its manifestations. (1) Transgression signifies the passing over a boundary,—doing what is prohibited. (2) Sin signifies the missing of a mark,—not doing what was commanded. (3) Iniquity signifies what is turned out of its proper course or situation; anything morally distorted or perverted,—what is contrary to equity or justice.—*Forgiveness . . . covered . . . imputeth not.* Here is a threefold blessing, forgiveness viewed from three standpoints. All forms of sin need each and all forms of removal, and must be forgiven, covered, and not imputed. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* No falseness, that is, either to himself or to God. God only thus forgives and justifies one who, with all truth and sincerity of heart, confesses his sin, making no reservation, no excuse, no attempts still to hold fast and hide some darling lust. *When I kept silence.* Sought to conceal my sin, and was ashamed to confess it even to God. This experience lasted for a year or so. *My bones waxed (grew) old.* Became decayed, weakened, painful, as in old age. David's distress of mind brought on bodily as well as mental prostration and sickness. *Thy hand, O Lord, was heavy upon me.* No doubt this "roaring" was partly in prayer. *All the day long.* Continually, without cessation. *Thy hand was heavy upon me.* God's hand, i. e., his power was in these sufferings. The hand of God in laying punishment upon him was very heavy. God loves men too well to let them go on in sin without feeling the bitter effects which tend to make them forsake it. *My moisture, etc.* The figure is taken from a tree whose sap is dried up, or a field whose verdure is burned up by a drought. It is to be understood as referring to the Psalmist's spiritual condition, perhaps also to actual fever in his physical frame, produced by his mental anguish.—All his freshness was gone from his spirit; all the joy and delight of living was taken away; his graces faded, his spiritual life languished. *Into the drought of summer.* The Oriental summer. The cloudless sky and burning sun dry up all the moisture. The grass withers, the flower fades, the bushes and shrubs take a hard gray look, the soil becomes dust. *I acknowledged my sin.* We have seen above how the bitterness of concealment and the reproof of the prophet led David to take this step. *Sin . . . iniquity . . . transgressions.* The three forms of sin mentioned in vers. 1, 2. *Acknowledged . . . not hid . . . confess.* The three words expressing the completeness and thoroughness of the confession. Nothing was withheld. *And thou forgavest.* God loves to forgive, and he will forgive as soon as the sinner comes to that state of mind when forgiveness will do good to him, and at least not injure others. *For this.* Because God has proved his love and his readiness to forgive in David's case. *The godly.* Those inclined toward God. *In a time when thou mayest be found.* At the right time for finding thee; an allusion to the interval between the sin and punishment, during which the penitent confessions and importunate petitions of the sinner may avail to avert the judgments which must otherwise follow. There is a "too late," a time when God cannot be found, but the difficulty lies in the sinner himself. *Surely in the floods of great waters.* The trouble, the consciousness of guilt, the punishments for sin come like a sudden and overwhelming mountain torrent. *They shall not come nigh unto him.* That is, the waters shall

not reach him. God's forgiving love, shown to us in Jesus Christ, is his safety and defence. *Thou art my hiding place.* An allusion to those rocky fortresses and crags inaccessible to an enemy, which were sought in times of danger. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.* In two ways. (1) Many troubles shall be kept away from him, such as God's indignation against sin, direct punishment, an evil conscience, exclusion from God's presence and from heaven. (2) He shall be victorious over all other troubles; they may assail him, but he will grow stronger and better by means of them. *Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.* As he was besieged on every side with troubles, so on every side there would be victories and songs to celebrate them. *I will instruct thee and teach thee.* By means of his own bitter experience of sin and joyful deliverance. Having passed through the way, he could give counsel and warning to others. *I will guide thee with mine eye.* The idea is that of one who will watch him, or keep an eye upon him; he will not let him go wrong. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule.* Irrational animals who are guided by force and not by reason. Sin is always irrational; to sin is to act without understanding. *Bit and bridle.* Instead of noble moral influences. God will govern men by reason, if they are willing to be so governed; by force, if they reject his words. *Lest they come near unto thee.* Better as in Rev. ver., else they will not come near unto thee, will not be subject to your control. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:* and he cannot escape them or gain the victory over them so long as he remains wicked. Evil will pursue and overtake him. *But he that trusteth in the Lord.* He receives mercy, because faith implies that he has forsaken and confessed his sin, hates it. *Mercy shall compass him about.* Mercy is around him on all sides, so that in no direction can harm come to him. *Be glad in the Lord.* It follows that the righteous have abundant cause for exultation, not in themselves, but in Jehovah; i. e., in their knowledge and possession and enjoyment of him

AN ANCIENT PRIZE-FIGHT.

Virgil's Description of a Mill Between Two Trojan Sluggers.

The first prize-fight of which we have any detailed description, says the New Orleans Picayune, was specially reported by the great Latin poet, Virgil, in the fifth book of the *Æneid*. When Prince Æneas was escaping with his followers from the destruction of Troy he anchored his fleet off the coast of Sicily and landed the men and women for a season of rest. To celebrate the occasion he organized contests of archers, wrestlers and boxers, besides a regatta and foot-races. The prize-fight was between Entellus, an old athlete, and Dares, a young champion of the ring. We are not told if the Marquis of Queensberry's rules were used or not, but there were scientific regulations. Both champions had their fists armed with gloves of rawhide and leather.

Entellus, "stripped of his quilted coat, his body bared, composed of mighty bones and brawn," while Dares "his brawny back and ample breast he shows."

Both on the tiptoe stand at full extent, Their arms aloft, their bodies inly bent Their heads from aiming blows they bear afar, With clashing gauntlets then provoke the war. Before, behind, the blows are dealt; around Their hollow sides with rattling thump resound.

Heavy with age, Entellus stands his ground, But with his warping body wards the wound. His hand and watchful eye keep even pace, While Dares traverses and shifts his place, And like a captain who beleaguers round Some stronghold castle on a rising ground, Views all the approaches with observing eyes, And more on art than upon force relies.

Finally the old man grows warm and rushes upon his antagonist: He lays on loads with either hands amain, Nor stops nor stays, nor rest nor breath allows, But storms of strokes descend on Dares' brows.

The young man is beaten and has to be taken from the field. His mouth and nostrils pour'd a purple flood, And broken teeth came rushing with his blood.

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