

Sabbath School Department.

[From the Christian Helper.]
BIBLE LESSONS, 1878.

LESSON XI. NOVEMBER 3.
THE TEN LEPROSERS.
Luke 17: 11-19; A. D. 30.

In the Study.
This incident is only related by Luke. In harmony with his general plan of preparing a Bible only for the Gentiles, he leaves out the details of the village where it took place, which would be of no interest, and draws attention to the fact that only one returned to give thanks, that he was a Samaritan, not a Jew, and of a despised race.

It is difficult to give this incident its exact theological position. Robinson, in his Harmony, places it immediately after John 7: 2-10; Luke 9: 51-56. If this be its true position, it will explain the peculiar expression, "through the midst of Samaria and Galilee." If he had travelled through these districts, the order would have been through Galilee first and then Samaria. But on account of the hostility manifested towards all persons journeying to the feast at Jerusalem, by the Samaritans, from the fact that He had closed His ministry in Galilee, He passed along the frontiers of Samaria, or between the two districts, having His left hand on Samaria and His right hand on the Jordan. Luke 9: 52-53; Matt. 11: 20-24. Josephus gives an account of a massacre by the Samaritans of a number of pilgrims, at a date not long after that of our Lord.

It will be observed that though these lepers belonged to, at least, two nations which were deadly enemies with each other, yet these companions in distress were content to make a company. Their common misery had drawn them together, and had even caused them to forget the fierce hatred that existed between the mongrel and semi-idolrous Samaritans and the Jews, who prided themselves on the purity of their blood and religion.

"As is the custom in the East, this dismal company hovered near the village which they thought not enter, Num. 5: 4; 2 Kings 1: 3. Sad emblem of those who behold the blessedness of that heavenly Kingdom from which they are forever excluded!"—Whedon.

The 13th and 14th chapters of Leviticus, give the Mosaic enactments concerning the disease of leprosy. It was not infectious in the ordinary sense, but seems to have been taken, under Divine directions, as the symbol of the evilment and deadly character of sin. "The whole ordinances relating to leprosy were symbolical and typical. This disease was specially selected as being the most loathsome and incurable of all, to represent the effect of the demerit of sin upon the once pure and holy body of man. The leper was the type of one dead in sin; the same emblems are used in his misery as those of mourning for the dead: the same means of cleansing as for uncleanness through connection with death, and which were never used except on these two occasions. Comp. Num. 19: 6, 13, 18; with Lev. 14: 4-7. All this exclusion and mournful separation imported the perpetual seclusion of the abominable and polluted from the true city of God, as declared.—Rev. 22: 15.—Alford. "Leprosy was indeed nothing short of a living death, a poisoning of the springs, a corrupting of the humors of life; a dissolution, little by little, of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away."—Trench. The legal limit lepers were compelled to observe was one hundred paces.

In the Class.
In this lesson we have a striking example, 1st. Of misery; 2nd. Of mercy—implored—granted—acknowledged; 3rd. Of Salvation.

Misery.
And it came to pass—apparently by chance, but no more so than His journey through Samaria, and His meeting the woman at Jacob's well, as recorded in John 4th chap., of which it is said, "He must needs go."

As he went to Jerusalem, to the feast of the Tabernacles October, 11. His last journey. And as he entered—was about to enter: lepers were not permitted to enter any village or city, but they hovered about the suburbs for the charity upon which they depended. There met Him ten men—who stood afar off. How unutterably sad their condition! Hopelessly diseased, beyond all human power to heal, with no prospect but a living, lingering death, a miserable end, and meanwhile shut out from all the privileges and joys of home, and all the holy services of the sanctuary, so wretched that all social and national distinctions are forgotten, and Jew and Samaritan seek in companionship some relief to their sorrows. Leprosy was Divinely chosen as the fittest emblem of sin in its character and consequences,—polluting—separating—incurable by human power—and ending in death. Leprosy destroyed all human distinctions as to purity and superiority, the self-righteous Jew would take his place with the cursed outcast Samaritan. So when a man discovers the leprosy that is within him, he takes his true position, before God among those defiled by sin and needing cleansing; his self-righteousness vanishes. He too, is a leper in God's sight, requiring and ready to implore mercy.

It is Finished.
Glory be to God that His suffering Son could now at last exclaim, "It is finished;" that now after enduring all that human malignity could heap upon him, and all that Divine justice and a broken law, could demand of him, he could "meekly bow his head, and give up the ghost;" and be released from suffering! Surely he was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" he suffered, but not in vain; there was a joy set before him, which enabled him to endure the cross, and despise the shame—there was a glory to follow.—Rev. H. M. Richardson.

Character and Work of Christ.
A revelation rises before us, and that is in the fulness of the character and work of Christ. It has pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell—a fulness of grace to pardon all our sins and cleanse our souls from every stain; a fulness of merit to atone for all transgressions, and in the power of which we are accepted of God, a fulness of glory in which we shall share with him in his triumphs; because he lives we shall live, and where he is there we shall be also. Then to the divine preparation again, and you find it in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There is regeneration, in which the man is made a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. There is comfort, for is he not the Comforter? and the consolations of the gospel are neither few nor small to those in whom he dwells. There is sanctification to cleanse the soul and make it meet for the mansions above. The things God has prepared in the work of the Spirit are manifold and precious indeed. I look again and see these things in the glories that are reserved above. There is the crown, and that means triumph and honor. There is the harp, and that means praise and joy. There is the mansion, and that means rest and bliss. There are the living fountains of water, and that means the ever-springing joys of the Divine presence in which the soul shall have its endless portion. These are some of the things God has prepared for them that love him. These things are what human understanding cannot conceive; eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them. It cannot be because, as we are reminded in this chapter, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It cannot be, because even with the purest and best of what this world can offer, there is nothing can furnish a comparison by which any adequate idea can be afforded. There have been men wonderfully gifted and exalted, before whom the vast and rich regions of knowledge have been open; but never one who, by mere intellect, can form any idea of these Divine blessings. It is not needful, however, to dwell upon this, because it is only subsidiary to the main thought of the text.—Rev. J. P. Chouin.

And they lifted up their voices. On the approach of any person they were compelled by law to raise the warning cry from covered lips, "unclean, unclean," but this cry was not one of warning. In some way they were aware that He who drew near with His company was Jesus, the healer, and out of a deep sense of their misery and with a hope of healing, they cry for mercy. However slow they may afterwards be to manifest gratitude, they are intensely in earnest now in imploring mercy. Had they known that Jesus was passing by for the last time, how much more in earnest, if possible, they would have been! They needed cleansing;

there was an opportunity—they seized it; so every sinner needs cleansing. "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," it may be for some, the last time. "Now, is the accepted time," what tomorrow may be, we know not.

And when He saw them. As ever, when the cry of mercy reached His ear, He had compassion on them, albeit He saw fit to manifest it in a different way, yet one that was, as ever, a test of their faith in His power. So Christ ever has mercy on those who ask it, yet ever in a different way. Let us then not expect Him to save us in precisely the same manner that He has saved others; but let us ever believe that He has power to save in any way He pleases.

Go show yourselves unto the priests. Lev. 14: 1-2. This command was given before they were cleansed, and to be obeyed, required faith, strong faith, in Jesus, without knowing how the desired blessing would be imparted. And it came to pass. So it ever is—as we believe, according to our faith, it is done. How many look for salvation before trusting in Jesus to save, look for all the joy of salvation before exercising the faith required. Believing, trusting, they obeyed; so must we trust in Jesus to save us. Cast ourselves on His mercy, and in His own way and time the evidence will come.

And one of them. Only one, and he a Samaritan, when he realized what had been done for him; turned back to give thanks. "All are glad; but one is glad and grateful. The thoughts of his benefactor so fill his heart, as to drive the priests from his mind. The others will visit the priests to make sure of the result; but whether they ever see their Saviour or not is the least of their concern." It was only physical cleansing they wanted; as to anything higher they had no concern. But in the heart of this poor Samaritan, there was some 'good thing towards the Lord,' as manifested in his turning back and giving Him thanks. How many there are who care only for temporal blessings, and when they secure these, are so taken up in the enjoyment of them, that they forget even to thank the Giver. Ten were ready to ask for mercy, only one to acknowledge mercy received. Those from whom Christ had greatest right to look for thanks, withheld them, while the unlikelyest gave them.

Salvation.
And He said unto him. Gratitude for the blessings we have, is the surest way to have greater. Already this man's heart was prepared for the greater blessing of salvation from spiritual leprosy. In his giving glory to God, we see an evidence of faith in him, as the giver of every good and perfect gift; and in giving thanks to Jesus, a recognition in some measure at least, of His relation to God, and so there was but a step between him and the kingdom; this step Jesus enabled him to take, and he went away doubly cleansed. So if we recognize all our mercies, as the gifts of our gracious heavenly Father; all our deliverances as from Him, we may hope that He will show us His great salvation, and reveal Jesus Christ in our hearts. The nine went on their way lepers still in heart. This one went away cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

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OPEN LETTERS TO
Rev. D. D. Currie,
Methodist Minister, of Moncton, N. B.

AND
Rev. A. W. Nicolson,
Editor of the "Wesleyan," Halifax, N. S.

Occasioned by a charge made against the former by the "Bible Index" of Toronto, of falsifying certain Greek Lexicons. With an appendix.

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