

Sabbath School Department.

[From the Christian Helper.]

International Bible Lessons.

Lesson VII. February 16.

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Psalm 1. 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT—"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. IV. 18.

The Book of Psalms.

The signification of the Hebrew word for psalms is *praises*. Most of the psalms, though not all of them, are hymns of praise. This book is justly esteemed to be a kind of abstract of the whole Scriptures; a general library, in which we may meet with whatever is requisite for salvation.—*Calmet*. It was divided into five books, ending respectively with the 41st, 72nd, 89th, 106th, 150th, psalms. Each of these books closes with a doxology.

"It is a tradition among the Hebrews and Christians, that Ezra is, if not the only, yet the principal collector of the Book of Psalms."—*Calmet*. And, if this is the case, he probably wrote the first—the preface psalm, and also the 119th, celebrating the beauty and perfection of the Word of God.

The psalms are the productions of various authors, writing in different ages. David wrote more of them than any one else did, yet only seventy-two of the one hundred and fifty bear his name, and even of these, several appear to be the work of other hands. Twenty-eight psalms bear the names of other authors, twenty-five others have a heading, but no author's name, and the remaining twenty-five have no inscription of any kind, and are called "orphan psalms." These inscriptions are not to be implicitly trusted. We can only rely upon them when they accord with the contents of the psalm. The Septuagint version has many more inscriptions than the Hebrew. In it the 91st psalm is attributed to *Adam*.

Cowles points out the fact that the psalms were mainly produced at periods of religious revival. Our Christian hymnody is, in great part, the offspring of similar periods.

Exposition.

1. Blessed is the man. To translate the Hebrew more literally this would read, *O, the blessedness of that man!* i. e. How great is his blessedness. Now follows the description of the man and in this verse it is negative, telling what he does *not* do. There is supposed to be a graduation of thought in these three negative clauses. To walk through a burning house is exceedingly dangerous, none but the greatest fool would stand still in it, and to sit down in it would be certain death. The righteous man neither walks, nor stands, nor sits in wickedness, but shuns it altogether. He neither follows the voice of the ungodly, nor habitually lives as sinners do, taking his stand amongst them as one of them, nor so completely sells himself to the devil as to settle down and feel at home in the seat of the scorner who only knows religion as a thing to make sport of.

2. Positive description of the man who is blessed. Delight. A very expressive word. The Hebrew verb from which the noun comes means "to bend, incline towards," and hence "to delight in." This man's mind turns to God's law as naturally as the leaves of a houseplant to the light. God's precepts and promises draw him, as a magnet draws steel, and delight him, as the will of a wealthy ancestor delights his heir. Meditate. We are not satisfied with the sight of food, we want to eat it, digest it, get the good of it by converting it into blood and bone and muscle. So with the righteous man in relation to the word of God.

3. In reading this verse, in order to bring out the richness of the simile, make a slight pause after "be," then make no other noticeable pause in the verse. "A critical journal has shown that instead of 'Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper,' the rendering might be, 'Whatsoever it produceth shall come to maturity.'"
—*Spurgeon*. Take this reading and what a rich and beautiful verse it is: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth its fruit in season, and whose leaf withereth not and whatsoever it produceth shall come to maturity." Tree. Righteous man often compared to a tree.—See Isaiah li. 3; lvi. 3; Jer. xvii. 8; John xv. 1. Planted as distinguished from one growing wild. By the rivers of waters. "This is an allusion to the Eastern method of cultivation, by which rivulets of water are made to flow between the rows of trees."—*Adam Clark*. "By the meditation and delight of v. 2, the good man is watered by the streams that flow from God and his Spirit and his Word."—*Peloubet*. That bringeth forth his fruit, etc. Here are enumerated the signs of a healthy tree. It is probably too fanciful to say that the fruit represents the righteous man's good works, the leaf, his professions, etc. It is rather intended to illustrate the truth that the good man, nourished by God's word, enjoys spiritual growth and prosperity; his heart is full of confidence and peace and hope, his life is regulated by God's law, his earthly experience helps to his growth in grace, and what has been so well begun on earth will be completed in the better world. Certainly the righteous man does not always prosper as the world estimates prosperity (see Psalm lxxiii), but he prospers according to God's estimate of prosperity. The world would say Paul had made a failure as he is seen lying in the Roman prison awaiting execution, but see his own words in 2 Tim. iv. 18.

4. With the blessedness of the righteous the fate of the wicked is now contrasted. To bring out the contrast sharply, read, "Not so the ungodly; but they are like the chaff," etc. Ungodly. A true and comprehensive description of the wicked.—See Psalm xxxvi. 1; lli. 1; xlv. 4; Job xli. 14, 15; Ephesians ii. 12. The attitude towards God constitutes the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Contrast with the passages just referred to Psalm xxiii; xli. 1, 2; xxvii. 1; lxi. 1; lxxiii. 1.

Chaff which the wind driveth away. We use fanning-mills now to separate the chaff from the wheat. In former times when the grain was threshed it was exposed to the wind, which drove away the chaff. Chaff is worthless, must be separated from the wheat, and is so light that the wind drives it away. What a terrible illustration of the ungodly and their fate!

5. Therefore. Because of their character. There is a sowing and a reaping, and the latter inevitably results from the former.—Gal. vi. 7, 8. Stand, i. e., stand out, endure. The ungodly shall be judged, but will not be able to stand the test of righteousness and will be condemned. Nor sinners, etc. "They shall not be reckoned as belonging to the company of the righteous." The righteous and the wicked dwell together. This verse points forward to a time of separation.

6. Knoweth, i. e., approveth, loveth, and also watches over. God is holy, and therefore loves holiness in His intelligent creatures. Shall perish. "It contains in itself the elements of ruin." The broad way leadeth to destruction.

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