

Poetry.

Take it to God.

Hast thou a care within so deep  
It chafes from thine eyelids sleep?  
To thy Redeemer take thy care,  
And change anxiety to prayer.

Hast thou a hope with which thy heart  
Would feel it almost death to part?  
Entreat thy God that hope to crown,  
Or give thee strength to lay it down.

Whate'er the care that breaks thy rest,  
Whate'er the wish that awells thy breast,  
Spread before God that wish, that care,  
And change anxiety to prayer.

Sabbath School Department.

[From the Christian Helper.

International Bible Lessons.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

August 2.—2 Cor. 5:14-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.

We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.—2 Cor. 5:20.

EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT.

14. For. On account of his intense zeal, it would seem that some of Paul's enemies declared that he was deranged, "beside himself," Acts 26:24, Mark 3:21. In v. 18 the Apostle says that his zeal was for the glory of God and the good of the Church. Then this verse goes on to tell what made him so zealous. THE LOVE OF CHRIST, i. e., Christ's love for us as manifested in His suffering for us. CONSTRAINTED, compels, drives forward, so that as it were, one cannot help one's self. WE TRUST JUDGE. This is the way we look at it. THEN WERE ALL DEAD. Christ our substitute died for us, and that was in effect the death of us all. "His people are so united to Him that His death is their death, and His life is their life." Hodge.

15. THAT THEY WHICH LIVE &c. The design of His death as it respects us. WHICH LIVE, i. e., have been quickened by the Holy Ghost and draw their life from Christ. SHOULD NOT &c. What a Christian should not do, and what a Christian should and does do, not unto self but unto Christ. "He only is a Christian who lives for Christ. If we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us, as to lead us to confide in the merit of His death, we shall be constrained to consecrate our lives to His service."—Hodge.

16. WHEREAS AS A RESULT of this living unto Christ. KNOW, judge, estimate. AFTER THE FLESH, i. e., according to his worldly circumstances. The world esteems men according to their nationality, riches, learning, social position, &c. But a Christian is not estimated in this way; he now judges them according to their spiritual state, their relation to Christ. FLESH here means that which is external, which the world sees and prizes, as contrasted with that which is hidden and spiritual. YEA, THOUGH WE HAVE KNOWN &c. Before his conversion Paul had judged of Christ only according to externals, only a poor suffering man, "as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness," and hence he had despised and hated Him. But how different he thought of Christ when he himself had become "a new creature." This different way of looking at things all result from being a converted man, "risen with Christ," now one sees things as Christ sees them.

17. THEREFORE, i. e., from what has been said, it follows that, IF ANY MAN &c. IN CHRIST, "Observe the relation, we in Christ here, and God in Christ (v. 19); Christ therefore, is the mediator and reconciler." Bengel. Notice the intimate union with Christ implied in this expression. A NEW CREATURE. See Gal. 6:15, John 3:3-7, Col. 3:9-11, Eph. 2:10, 4:22-24. He has received "passed into" a new life. "A Christian is human nature revolutionized." Robertson. Notice how radical the change is. "The man is not only mended, he is new made." Adam Clarke. It is not a little correcting and improving of the old life, but it is the implanting by God's spirit of an entirely new life. OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY. This can be easily illustrated and explained by any teacher who is a Christian, and has therefore experienced it.

18. ALL THINGS. This "all things," spoken of in v. 17. God is the author of the new life with all its characteristics and manifestations. WHO HAVE RECONCILED &c.; i. e., removed the existing enmity and brought us into harmony with Himself. It is reconciliation God is not changed in character, but man is. "On the part of God it was necessary that His Holy law should be maintained; this is done by the voluntary sacrifice of Christ, and now God can be just and receive the penitent." On the part of man rebellion is given up, repentance for sin takes possession of him, and harmony is restored. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Christ has removed the obstacle to reconciliation out of God's way; Christ by His wonderful love and the Holy Spirit overcomes man's rebellion. GIVEN TO US, i. e., the apostles and all preachers of the Gospel. THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION. The work of proclaiming to the world what God has done in Christ in order that reconciliation may take place in the hearts of men.

19. To WRIT. An old word meaning to know or to be known. It is now used only in this form (to write) as an adverb, meaning namely, THAT GOD WAS &c. This is the Gospel, the message of apostles and preachers. GOD WAS IN CHRIST &c. Most interpreters adopt this construction. "God was reconciling the world unto himself in Christ, (i. e., by His death), meaning, God was making atonement for the sins of the world." Hodge. Not factually, but forgiving them for Christ's sake; and

once a messenger and a representative. He does not speak in his own name; he does not act on his own authority; his message derives no part of its importance or trustworthiness from him; at the same time he is more than a mere messenger; he represents his sovereign; he speaks with authority, as accredited to act in the name of his Master. All this is true of ministers.—Hodge. GOD DID RECONCILE. God has not only made reconciliation possible, but entreats men to be reconciled. What a proof of His mercy! IN CHRIST'S STEAD, i. e., we are His ministers, we are doing what He would be doing if He were here.

21. For. The reason, the plea we bring in, asking you to be reconciled to God is this, that HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN &c. He who never sinned took the sinner's place and was treated as a sinner, in order that we who have sinned might be treated as righteous.

TOPICAL ANALYSIS.

1. The constraint under which the Apostle felt himself, and which filled him with enthusiasm in his work, v. v. 14, 15. This was the love of Christ; that love was manifested in Christ dying for us; and the effect of this upon the believer is that he too is virtually dead, and risen to a new life, a living unto Christ.

2. The mighty and radical change wrought in the believer, v. v. 16, 17. He judges men from a different standpoint; Christ, who was before "a root out of dry ground," is now "all and in all." He is a new creature as contrasted with his old self, and the change is such that he seems transported into a new world.

3. The message of reconciliation, v. v. 18, 19. This message all centers in Jesus Christ; the effort of bringing about reconciliation began with God, not with man; and God's proposal is to forgive man's sin, to receive him as if he had not sinned, if man will repent and return.

4. The office of Christian ministers, v. v. 20, 21. To declare to this, God's proposal, to speak in the name of Christ the Mediator, to make known God's earnestness for man's salvation, to plead with man for God, to entreat man to be reconciled, and ever to present, as ground and motive, what God has done through Jesus Christ.

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She entered, listened awhile, then went away, but the hymn went with her. She became a Christian and determined to leave the stage, but the manager would not release her from fulfilling her engagement. The last night she played with unusual brilliancy, and at the close was called before the curtain. Her contract was discharged; she had no master now but God. She clasped hands with clapping hands and streaming eyes, she sang—

"Depth of mercy! can there be mercy still reserved for me?  
Can my God His wrath forbear,  
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?"

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