

NEEDED

TRUTH.

EDITED BY

J. A. BOSWELL, JOHN BROWN,
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They read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.—
NEH. viii. 8.

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LIBERTY.

Consider well, my soul, and trace
The way by which thou'rt led,
And praise, through all earth's wilderness,
The Hand from which thou'rt fed ;
From Egypt's thralldom thou art free,
Prize well thy precious liberty.

Thine eyes beheld the spoiler crushed,
His pride all humbled lie,
On eagles' wings thou hast been borne,
To God Himself brought nigh,
The bond-slave of thy God to be,
This, this indeed is liberty !

The hand that laid the tyrant low
Now guides thee to thy rest,
Through desert way, by night and day,
His choice is always best.
He knows the road though rough it seems,
And on thy path His pillar gleams.

To humble and to prove thy heart
God moves in wondrous ways ;
At every turn His faithfulness
Confronts thy wond'ring gaze ;
Unfaded garments, heavenly food,
Proclaim aloud that God is good.

Then trace, my soul, His way with thee,
And contrite still remain ;
Ah ! fear thy God, and love His law,
For this is life and gain !
Thus shall thy tongue His praises tell,
Thy latter end indeed be well.

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NEEDED TRUTH.

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THE SOURCE OF POWER.

“THEN gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council and said: What do we for this man doeth many miracles? If we let Him alone all men will believe on Him.” The result of this council was that series of events with which every one is so familiar. They crucified the Lord of glory; they set and sealed a great stone over His grave, and posted beside it the sleepless sentries of Imperial Rome.

Just about seven weeks later the same council met and before them stood two unlearned and ignorant men who, they evidently had ascertained, had been with Jesus; and another, a man over forty years of age, known to be a beggar, formerly lame, who used to lie at the gate of the temple soliciting alms but now able to stand and walk and even leap. The council wanted to know by what power or by whose name these men had done this thing. Well might they marvel when they heard the answer: “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, doth this man stand before you whole.”

Was their former question in their hearts, “What do we?” This time, however, “they could say nothing against them,” and in their helplessness “threatened them and let them go.”

Consider in the light of this the prayer of thanksgiving

in which their brethren united when these two apostles were released: "O Lord, Thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is. Who by the Holy Spirit by the mouth of our father David Thy servant didst say

Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
And the rulers were gathered together,
Against the Lord and against His Anointed:

. . . And now Lord look upon their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants to speak Thy word with all boldness . . . And the place was shaken wherein they were gathered," as it had been that day when the Spirit first came. Truly, He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.

What had it availed that they had set themselves against the Lord. "This man doeth many miracles; if we let Him alone all men will believe on Him," and they put Him to death; only to find a few weeks later that the very power they feared was being further manifested through His "ignorant and unlearned" followers; and that the resurrection they had tried to hide by bribing the sentries was being boldly proclaimed.

The secret of it all was that the Holy Spirit had come. And when later they realized how utterly futile was their utmost opposition they gnashed their teeth in the bitterness of their baffled hatred. They were now face to face with a Presence and a power that they could not withstand. They might wreak their fury upon those through whom they saw this power manifested, as they did in the slaying of Stephen, but the present Holy Spirit they could not touch. And one of their number, Saul, was taken from them and made a greater than Stephen.

The Lord had said; "It is expedient for you that I go

away"; and the mighty working of the Holy Spirit makes it possible to understand why it was expedient.

Nearly nineteen hundred years have passed since the Lord went away, and since the Spirit came; and we are inclined to regard that time as one to which we are only linked by faith; and to look upon these years as a great gulf separating us from a time when there was upon this earth any manifestation of divine power. So in a sense they are; for it is not by signs and wonders that the Holy Spirit is convincing of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; nevertheless the same Holy Spirit with the same mighty irresistible power of God is here with us to-day.

There has been no unfilled gap since the night when the angels' song rang over Bethlehem's plain, unless it be the week or so between the ascension of the Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit. There has been and there is now He Who came when the Lord ascended.

And the same fight rages yet. The Lord said He was and proved Himself to be the Son of God; and men in presence of the manifestation of His divinity seemed in some incomprehensible way to be moved only to hatred and blasphemy, and tried to rid themselves of its convicting presence by crucifying "Jesus of Nazareth." Stopping their ears to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in Stephen they murdered the disciple in the same vain endeavour.

And to-day, as ever, though the methods have changed and are changing, the same futile conflict goes on.

We may have the Scriptures, we may believe in and follow "Jesus of Nazareth," but the "divine element" in the writings and the divinity of the Person arouse the same incomprehensible hostility as they ever did, and these must be discarded.

But He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.

May we realize that Presence more; may our belief in,

and our dependence upon, the Holy Spirit increase as the difficulties that beset faith become more formidable. For nearly nineteen hundred years He has led the saints through conflict and tribulation, as He is leading and will lead them in triumph to eternal victory.

“O Lord Thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is: Who by the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Thy servant David didst say

Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
And the rulers were gathered together,
Against the Lord and against His Anointed.

And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings; and grant unto Thy servants to speak Thy word with all boldness.”

G. S. McNAIRN.

NOTES ON PROVERBS.

I.

THE first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs form a distinct division of the book. With the tenth chapter commence the actual proverbs of King Solomon. This first division, comprising nine chapters, is therefore somewhat of an introductory nature, and is calculated by God to prepare good soil in which the seed of the precious proverbs which follow may spring up and bear fruit an hundred-fold. As the farmer who desires a good return from his fields in harvest time must prepare the soil with all diligence and care in the spring, so too much attention cannot be given to this introductory portion of the book if the proverbs are to effect in our lives the salvation which God had in view in causing them to be written.

In the main the first nine chapters contain the advice of a wise father to a beloved son—a son who is possessed

of the capabilities of becoming a wise man, which also supply the sore possibility of his becoming instead a great fool. The weaknesses of strong men are usually very weak, and the follies of wise men are usually very foolish, so the one who is possessed of pre-eminent abilities will be regarded by subsequent generations either as a wise man or a fool.

The father speaks with authority. His words are words of weight and of worth, for he speaks of what he knows and testifies of what he has seen. His actual experience of men and things under the sun gives him a right to speak, and adds to his words the weight and authority which age, wisdom and experience should ever command. He does not talk from hearsay about the vital matters he speaks of, but having proved and tried these things for himself, out of the fulness of his experience he gives counsel to his loved son who as yet has not had the opportunity of testing things for himself. Therefore the first proof of wisdom in the son will be manifested by his giving diligent heed to the wise counsel of his father. His wisdom will be seen in his acknowledging that he does not know everything, and that there are a few people on earth wiser than himself.

Here indeed, at once, the parting of the ways between one who promises to become a wise man and one who bids fair to become a fool is reached; here is the first distinguishing mark of the one or the other. The fool of Proverbs according to the able scholar, Robert Young, is "a self-confident one." A wise man is not self-confident, he is ever learning, and, in measure, is dependent upon others, though, paradoxical as it may seem, there is none so independent as he. The self-confidence of the fool is the father of his folly.

Should the son turn a deaf ear to his father's counsel and presume to be old enough and wise enough to know things for himself and to shape his course without the aid

which the father's experience of the world offers, he has entered the highway to become a fool and has boldly set his face towards death. Should he incline his ear to his father's sayings, and refuse to let them depart from his eyes, and keep them in the midst of his heart, he has entered the way of wisdom, which as the dawning of morn shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His path leads to life.

The first division of the book of Proverbs—chapters 1 to 9 inclusive—treats in particular of three predominant subjects. These are:

THE INFINITE VALUE OF WISDOM.

THE EVIL MAN AND HIS WAYS.

THE STRANGE WOMAN AND HER WAYS.

The value and importance of Wisdom is here enforced and reiterated with such pathos and power that it is impossible to fail to be struck therewith. Wisdom is shown to be the greatest necessity under the sun. Everything which is good for man, for time and for eternity, is personified in her. Therefore the father urges his son with all earnestness to make her the pursuit of his life. She offers life and riches and honour to those who lay hold of her. Both her hands are full of good things. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. Moreover, she alone can grant deliverance from evil in its double aspect as personified in the evil man and the strange woman. Without Wisdom salvation from the ruin effected by the one or the other is impossible.

In Wisdom is personified the perfection of the whole counsels of God, the treasures of Divine wisdom and knowledge. These are alone to be found in the Holy Scriptures. By taking heed thereto the son will prove himself to be wise, and thereby will make his father's heart glad. God's anxious desire for the salvation of His people is most fittingly portrayed in the unrelenting energy displayed by Wisdom

in this division of the book of Proverbs. No labour is spared, no effort is wanting in order to lead the son to enter the path of life through the seven-pillared doorway of her house. From without her house is beautiful to behold, her seven pillars are worthy of admiration. The beauty of the without is a fitting index to the glory of the within. Here is no empty show or dazzling display to beguile the hearts of the simple. Her beasts are killed; her wine is mingled; her table is furnished. She cries aloud at every available place in the city, and, pointing to the feast spread in her well ordered house, seeks to save the simple from being destroyed by the prosperity of fools and from going in the way of the evil man or entering the path of the strange woman.

In all this we repeat God's constant effort to effect the salvation of His people is strikingly manifested. He knows the value of a saved life and labours to make us understand how this is possible, namely, by taking heed to Wisdom's voice in the Holy Scriptures. Others there are as active as Wisdom seeking to gain our ear and win our allegiance, so the earlier we enter Wisdom's house the better. Here stretches out before us

ONE ONLY PATH,

straight as the plumb-line of God's truth, bright as the dawn of morn and becoming ever brighter as the perfect day is reached. Here a furnished table is ever free with mingled wine and pleasant bread. No need to turn to the right hand or to the left. With eyes looking straight on and eyelids straight before us we may press on unimpeded towards the goal. This is the path of life. Happy they who find it!

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

Correspondence.

"Hearken to me,
* * * * *
I also will answer my part,
I also will show my opinion."—*Job 32. 10, 17.*

IN reply to the question asked as to how one should be received into the circle of overseeing men, Mr. Boswell gives a somewhat lengthy reply, much of which I endorse.

He speaks of the elderhood of the Jerusalem assembly. Can the word elderhood be applied to the elders of a single assembly?

For if this is so the act of receiving into the local company of overseeing men becomes binding on the overseeing men of the county, since it is by the elderhood they have been received.

W. R.

The scriptural use of the word elderhood in connection with assemblies of God occurs in 1 Tim. 4. 14 and as we have previously sought to show refers to the elders of Lycaonia, that is to say, elders from more than one assembly of God, having responsibility in a larger area than that of a city. It is indeed of importance that can scarcely be exaggerated that overseers in a town should clearly recognize that they are but parts in a larger whole. Independency once repudiated and denounced may indeed again make a more insidious effort to resume its sway and wreck the Community. Hence whether in a town or in a group of towns, a county, a district, a province, care should be taken lest we act as lords over the portions allotted to us as our special spheres of work, and make them to be as an impress of our individual minds or local ideas; whereas we ought to be showing the flock what unity really is, an ensample to them collectively as well as individually.

In its early days the circle of overseers was in this unique position that the only assembly of God was that in

Jerusalem so that when the apostles there came together, with such if any as were their co-workers in oversight, these formed the only circle of elders in the Community. Even when the persecution arose about Stephen and the assembly was scattered throughout Judæa the apostles were kept together at Jerusalem which thus remained still for a time the centre of rule. But after the multiplication of assemblies took place in the will of God we judge that Jerusalem no longer occupied this unique position though it would probably be the convenient centre for elders in Judæa to meet together as occasion required and opportunity offered. We do not suppose that those who were called together in Acts 15. were only such as had responsibility to do oversight work in Jerusalem itself. Compare "went out from us" in verse 24 with "came down from Judæa" (not Jerusalem merely) in verse 1.

One word more:—the Elderhood is one as the Fellowship is one, and the House is one. The smallest expression of the Elderhood requires overseers from more than one assembly of God. But the overseers of two or twenty assemblies do not constitute the Elderhood in its completeness. One would have the elderhood in Asia, the elderhood in Galatia, the elderhood in Bithynia; but only one Elderhood throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

C. M. L.

"Lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees."

"LIKE the cloud that hangs on the hill all day—
Like the cloak that clings to the hero in clay—
Is the song men sing when their mirth is spent,
In the well-known monotone Discontent.

"Like the voice of a lark that is lost to view—
Like a shower of snow on a sea of blue—
Are the songs to the Lord that sweetly swell
From the hearts where hope and harmony dwell."

For Young Believers.

"As newborn babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 Peter 2. 2.

BIBLE WOMEN : HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(REBEKAH.)

MOST are familiar with the word God has given concerning the bride of Isaac, yet we ever find delight in contemplating the wondrous subject. She is first brought before us in Genesis 24, as a fair damsel at the fountain of water, not only drawing water for herself, but willing also to draw from the same fountain for others. "She hastened and let down her pitcher upon her hand and gave him to drink . . . and the man looked steadfastly on her, holding his peace."

With what delight must God, the Holy Spirit, look upon a believer as she comes with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation (Isa. 12. 3) not only for herself but willing also to draw out and give to others! Here is a service which Christian women may excel in to-day. Having tasted of the sweetness of the living water themselves, they should ever be ready to give out to others. This can be done in many ways. A little word in secret spoken in fellowship with God; a Gospel message given away from door to door; an hour spent in instructing a class of children on the Lord's day—in these and a multitude of other ways women may serve the Lord with acceptance and profit. Do not let them excuse themselves by saying that they have no time for these things, but rather let them bestir themselves and buy up the opportunities, because the days are evil and the time is short, and in this way be "a help" in the work of God.

From Genesis 24. 22 we learn that she who had come to the fountain of water, and had hastened to give of that to others, becomes the recipient of some of the precious things of

Abraham at the hand of his faithful servant Eliezer. And lo! when her brother Laban came to the man at the fountain he beheld his sister adorned with these precious jewels. Who would not envy similar adornments? Is it not verily possible for women to-day to possess that of which they speak? That it is so 1 Peter 3. 1-6 and other Scriptures prove. May Christian women, therefore, be enabled to manifest in their daily lives that they have known and that they constantly enjoy fellowship with the Holy Spirit at the fountain of Living Water!

But "still there's more to follow," and the servant must tell his errand whilst Laban and Bethuel listen (Gen. 24. 33-49). What have they to say? "The thing proceedeth from the Lord" is their confession. What has Rebekah to say when the question is put to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" As at the first, we find her willing and ready, so now she replies, "I will go." No easy journey was it she was called to face, but a wearisome and toilsome one across the desert on the camel's back to meet the one who wanted her for his own.

Would to God that to-day young Christians might manifest a similar willingness to follow on where the Spirit of God would lead; that they might learn the things which accompany salvation, and know that their salvation from the lake of fire is not all that God desires, but that they are called to cross the desert, in company with the Spirit of God, to meet the heavenly Isaac. Well, it is for all who can sing truthfully:

Long the blessed Guide has led me
By the desert road;
Now I see the golden towers—
City of my God.

He and I in that bright glory,
One deep joy shall share;
Mine, to be for ever with Him;
His, that I am there.

MEDITATION.

COMELY is the habit of mind that causes the young Christian to give attendance to meditation ;

The more so when having meditated he gives himself, spirit, and soul and body, to just and lawful conclusions.

Thereby shall he evidence to all the profiting he hath acquired ;

Nevertheless, here and now as always—

“ Wisdom is justified of her children.”

Wherefore an Isaac seeking to meditate finds a Rebecca while “ the people ” but reap vanity.

The exceeding value of meditation is shown even by God Himself in the plaintive protest :—

“ My people doth not know,”

“ My people doth not *consider*.”

So again by the great Apostle of the Gentiles in directing his young child and son Timothy :—

“ *Consider* what I say, for the Lord shall give thee understanding.”

Here are offered a few suggestions as to the excellencies of Meditation.

We are assured that only by this exercise of the mind, with due restfulness of one's spirit, can the truth be gained and errors avoided.

By meditation is the understanding made clear that—

ADOPTION is not birth ;

As also AUDACITY is not true BOLDNESS ;

Nor is COMMUNION confounded with cant ;

Neither is DEVOTEDNESS outwitted by mere devilishness ;

Nor yet “ PRAISEWORTHY EMULATION ” reckoned but envy, which is covetousness ;

No more shall FAITHFULNESS be accounted faithlessness (or spleen) ;

No ! nor shall GODLINESS be confused with mere goodness ;
Neither shall HOLINESS be degraded to be as is hollowness
(hypocrisy) ;

No longer shall IDLENESS be served as a very idol ;
Nor JOY of and in the Lord be valued as synonymous with
the joy of the fool ;

While KINDNESS shall not be mistaken indulgence of or
winking at sin ;

Nor LOVE be as honey which makes the meat-offering
abhorrent to the Lord.

JOHN BROWN.

AT THE FRONT.

FOR the last two years we have read a good deal about the men who have gone to the front, and risked their lives fighting for their country. Like Uriah, who was placed in the forefront of the battle (2 Sam. 11. 15), many have fallen to rise no more. Others have passed unscathed through many battles and have returned to this land to have special honours bestowed upon them for their valour and work. The dangers at the front are great, but these dangers are gladly faced, seeing that the path to promotion and honour lies that way. The soldier who shirks his duties and fears to brave the dangers of the battlefield will never merit promotion, if, indeed, a worse fate does not overtake him.

The Apostle, when writing to Timothy, urges him to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, so that it is the privilege of all to be at the front, fighting the beautiful fight of the faith. As in an earthly battle some are called to occupy more honourable positions than others, and some are called to stand in the thick of the fight, whilst

others may be in comparative safety well nigh beyond the zone of fire, so is it also in this fight of the faith. Some stand forward to lead the saints, some are special targets for the enemy, others follow on knowing little of the reality of the struggle, but all have their own work to do, each his own particular part to play.

And our Princely Leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, has His eye on all and on each. Though the battle rages over a very wide area, He is in perfect touch with all. How grieving it must be to Him to behold any shirking their duties or fearing to brave the dangers of the strife! The Lord has given "to each one his work" (Mark 13. 34); and whatever that work may be, whether it appears to be great or small, whether we are in the thick of the fight or at the equally necessary work of tarrying by the stuff (1 Sam. 30. 24), let us obey the commands of our Lord and, soldier-like, seek to do without question, to the best of our ability, whatsoever He saith unto us (John 2. 5).

Moreover, let us remember well that the battle is one, that the work is one, even as our Leader and Lord is one. In the fight of the faith no man liveth and no man dieth unto himself. Brave men at the front—faithful unto death—are urgently needed, but none the less must the camp followers be steadfast and trustworthy.

Dear young believer, you may only be a camp follower tarrying by the stuff, but bravery and faithfulness to the Lord at your humble post will fit you for promotion, and you may ultimately rise to high distinction in the fighting ranks. The humble, who are not above doing the little things with a willing heart, are sure to be exalted by the Lord. What inexpressible joy must thrill a soldier's heart when his general mentions his hitherto unknown name, and marks him out for high distinctions! Let young Christians make this their aim in all that they do—to labour to merit the approval of the Lord, to work to please Him who hath

called them to be soldiers (2 Tim. 2. 4), and assuredly such work will not pass unnoticed by Him. Their fellows may take little notice of it, but He will value it.

The great day of review and reward is at hand! The crowning day is coming by-and-by! Then many of earth's faithful, though unknown, toilers will hear the well known voice of the Princely Leader they followed so long below uttering the coveted "Well done." Then the din of warfare will have died away for ever; then the trusty sword will at length be laid up in its scabbard; then the heat and burden of the fight of the faith will be known no more. From the rest and peace of home, in the light of God's presence, we shall review our earthly campaigning. The why and the wherefore of every step will then be known. Maybe we shall see that here we failed to follow the lead of our Lord; that there victory would have been ours had we pressed the assault a little more vigorously; that yonder we went without our Leader's command; and *certainly* we shall find that, despite present appearances, all is victory and only victory so long as we are cleaving to God and the Word of His grace; and that all is sorrowful defeat and loss of life's golden opportunity, however triumphant it may appear to be in the eyes of men, that disregards the revealed will of God in the Holy Scriptures, and dethrones the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of His people.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

I. JANUARY 12.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, LUKE 1. TO 2. 39.

THE opening words of the gospel according to Luke make plain that he was not an eye-witness of the events which he records. He claims, however, to have made himself thoroughly acquainted with the course of all things from authentic information. If it were regarded merely as a human compilation, the narrative of Luke demands credence as an orderly account of well known and uncontrovertible facts. Besides and above which, knowing that in this history we have the work of the Divine Spirit, we shall look therein for manifestation of such eternal wisdom as a mere human writer could never exhibit.

That Luke's account is an orderly narrative is clearly stated.¹ Thus, if we are sure that the order of occurrence is not followed in any passage, we have positive evidence that the changed order has definite significance.

Note from verse 4 the advantage of written testimony as giving certainty to the knowledge of that which has been learnt by word of mouth (see margin of Revised Version).

The angel's appearance to Zacharias and the circumstances attending the conception and birth of his son John (the Baptist) are only recorded by Luke. I think there is no other mention of Zacharias and Elizabeth. It is worth noting the circumstantial detail which is given here in this connexion. The dignity and honour accruing to John the Baptist from these circumstances must not be lost sight of.

¹ The word *καθεξῆς* (*kathēxēs*), in order, used in verse 3, occurs five times in the New Testament, and only in Luke's writings. Its construction and signification in Luke 8. 1 and Acts 3. 24 are somewhat different. But its use in Acts 11. 4 and 18. 23 helps to give a clear idea of its meaning in Luke 1. 3.

No one had ever arisen amongst the sons of men who was greater than he.

Like Samson, he was the son of a woman who had previously been barren; and Elizabeth, like the mother of Isaac, was a woman of advanced years. Judges 13 may be profitably read for comparison and contrast.

But the most notable perhaps of all those things which distinguished John the Baptist are the remarkable words

“He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.”

Let it be observed that all which enhances the worth and dignity of John redounds to the honour of the One Whose forerunner he was, the latchet of Whose shoes even he was not worthy to unloose.

Whilst John was the son of his parents’ old age, the reverse was true of his Divine Cousin. Six months later than his appearance to Zacharias, Gabriel was sent to a young woman who was a virgin, a kinswoman of Elizabeth, to announce to her the unique honour which was to become hers as mother according to the flesh of Him Who was Son of the Most High.

We do not know the relationship that existed between Elizabeth and Mary. The former was a descendant of Aaron, the High Priest, whilst the latter was of the royal line, being probably the daughter of Heli, a descendant of David through his son Nathan. But there will have been some intermarriage between the two families a generation or so previous to the date of the Annunciation.¹

Note here Mary’s faith. Her inquiry, “How shall this be?” is evidently different in its character from the “Whereby shall I know this?” of Zacharias.

Contrast also her believing words, “Be it unto me accord-

¹ Annunciation, the act of announcing, specifically the announcement to Mary by the Angel Gabriel of the Incarnation of Christ.—*Century Dictionary*.

ing to thy word" with the ear our first mother gave to the Serpent's "Hath God said?"

How beautiful the testimony of the unborn babe in the womb of Elizabeth when the mother of her Lord came unto her! Surely many Christians err as greatly in withholding reverence and honour from Mary as some persons do in yielding her idolatrous homage! Note that twice she calls herself bondmaid of the Lord.

Mary's inspired song abounds in praise to God, and aptly summarizes in few words those ways which are not as man's ways.

The prophecy of Zacharias, while full of comely praise, contains also definite teaching as to the mission of his great son.

This lad, though full of the Holy Spirit, grew up in the solitude of the desert ere he commenced his work.

The date of the birth of Mary's Firstborn seems to be clearly fixed by the enrolment that Quirinius made, though we may not have knowledge needful to recognize it.

Can any fail to dwell on the marvellous down-coming of the Son of Man when we see Him laid as an Infant in the manger? How significant the words "No room for Him in the inn." We may ask the question oftentimes, Is there no room for Him here or there—in the heart, in the family, in the assembly?

The shepherds of whom we read in Luke were probably Israelites, as the wise men of Matthew were Gentiles. The faith of the shepherds, their haste and much else form examples well worthy of imitation.

Note the careful attention to the law of Moses. The Lord was circumcised on the eighth day. Then, according to the law (for which see Leviticus 12.), thirty-three days afterwards He was presented to the Lord and atonement was made for her. Note the poverty marked by the pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

But mark the contrast. On the one hand, the two birds to be offered, one for righteousness and one for sin for her atonement; on the other hand, in her feeble arms she carried Him Who said when He came into the world :

“Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not,
But a body didst Thou prepare for Me :
In whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin
Thou hadst no pleasure.
Then said I,

Lo, I am come
(In the roll of the Book it is written of Me)
To do Thy will, O God.”

One man at least perceived this in that notable day. For to him watching there year after year and day after day, whilst sacrifices and offerings that never could take away sin were being offered, it had been revealed that he should not fail ere he was carried to Abraham's bosom to behold the Lord's Christ, His salvation.

And in the feeble little Infant that lay helpless in His mother's arms He beheld the Eternal One Who had come to seek and to save the lost. Receiving the Child into those arms which for many years had known the labour and sorrow of old age and weakness, he willingly took his departure in peace—peace which man can neither give nor take; peace because he had seen the Lord's Christ, His salvation, though many a year was to pass ere the atoning work was done. Salvation, God's salvation, was before his eyes and in his arms. So now, so ever. To see Him, to receive Him, is to see salvation and to enjoy peace.

Anna too, a still older watcher, came up at that very hour. No luck was this nor happy chance, no! worshipping there continually, she was at hand in the hour of opportunity, for which, in sooth, she had cause to give thanks to God. And in her woman's sphere happy was she to tell of Him to all the little remnant that were looking for the redemption.

Then back to Nazareth to obscurity.

II. JANUARY 26.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 1. 1-17;
LUKE 3. 23-38.

THE Gospel according to Matthew opens very differently to that written by Luke. That Matthew was an eye-witness of much which he records follows clearly from the details of his narrative. But probably the fact that he makes no claim in any introduction or preface to having seen or heard what he sets down is meant for one thing to prevent our being unduly occupied with the human instrument through which God has been pleased to give us this book of generation. If human testimony is required it is to be found here, but here is to be found that which is far beyond and above the testimony of man. Note that He Who is spoken of in these gospels is spoken of by an Equal, who fitly calls Him by His name, Jesus or Jesus Christ. It is God Himself speaking of His Son. Contrariwise in the Epistles the Apostles are taught by the Holy Spirit to call Him Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ and the like.

In this "book of the generation of Jesus Christ" He is presented as Son of David and Son of Abraham. The genealogy is therefore traced downwards, from Abraham to David the King, from David to Jechoniah, and from Jechoniah to Joseph the husband of Mary. The royal purple of kingly power is here to be observed. A king

always receives his authority from one above him, from one before him. Hence it is not for us to crown the Lord Jesus as King or Lord of all. His power and His authority come from above. It is God Who crowns Him, it is ours to own Him.

Thus the royal line of descent is seen to reach Joseph, who was however altogether devoid of any actual royal authority or dominion.

The three groups contained in the second, third and fourth paragraphs of Matthew as divided in the Revised Version mark three different aspects of royalty in Abraham's seed.

From Abraham to Jesse and to David in his early days we trace a royal seed—men set apart by God in His purpose, but having no sphere of rule except in their own households and amongst their own associates.

David became a king in very deed. The kingdom reached its zenith in the days of the great and wise Solomon; but continued, though shorn of its magnificence, until the days of Jechoniah.

From Jechoniah onwards there was no independent monarch in Israel, and the royal line which God had elected seems to have become obscure as the time of the promise drew nigh; for Joseph had no such place in Israel as had Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel.

We should contrast this tracing of the descent of Joseph down from Abraham and David with the backward tracing through Heli (perhaps Mary's father) which we find in Luke 3. The latter is up to Adam and to God, and marks the human sonship of the Incarnate One. The two pedigrees will be found to coincide at several points, as we have sought to make evident in the accompanying tabular presentment of them. In this table the left hand column is to be read upwards, and shows the seventy-six steps that we count in tracing back the son of man, the seed of woman, to Adam and to God.

(Read upwards.)

76	the son of God.	...	...	...	...	(see Genesis 1. 26)
75	the son of Adam,	...	...	...	...	Of Eve, younger son
74	the son of Seth,	...	...	...	...	(76-86 Genesis 5)
73	the son of Enos,	...	...	...	...	(75-55 1 Chron. 1)
72	the son of Cainan,	...	...	...	...
71	the son of Mahalaleel,	...	...	...	...
70	the son of Jared,	...	...	...	...
69	the son of Enoch,	...	...	...	...
68	the son of Methuselah,	...	...	...	...
67	the son of Lamech,	...	...	...	...
66	the son of Noah,	...	...	...	...	probably a younger son.
65	the son of Shem,	...	...	...	...	(65-66 Genesis 11. 10-32)
64	the son of Arphaxad,	...	...	...	...
63	the son of Cainan,	...	...	...	...	Cainan's name is omitted in Gen. 11.
62	the son of Shelah,	...	...	...	...	and 1 Chron. 1. of A.V. and
61	the son of Eber,	...	...	...	...	R.V. It is however contained
60	the son of Peleg,	...	...	...	...	in the LXX. Greek version in
59	the son of Reu,	...	...	...	...	Gen. 11.
58	the son of Serug,	...	...	...	...
57	the son of Nahor,	...	...	...	...
56	the son of Terah,	...	...	...	...

(Read downwards.)

55	the son of Abraham,	= 1, 2	Abraham begat Isaac;	...	(Gen. 11. 26-32)	In old age. Of Sarah
54	the son of Isaac,	= 2, 3	and Isaac begat Jacob;	...	...	Rebekah's younger son
53	the son of Jacob,	= 3, 4	and Jacob b. Judah and his breth.;	...	...	Fourth son of Leah
52	the son of Judah,	= 4, 5	and Judah b. Perez & Zerah of Tamar;	...	(Gen. 49. 8-12)	
51	the son of Perez,	= 5, 6	and Perez begat Hezron;	...	(5-14 Ruth 4. 18-22)	
50	the son of Hezron,	= 6, 7	and Hezron begat Ram;	...	...
49	the son of Arin,	= 7, 8	and Ram begat Amminadab;	...	...
48	the son of Amminadab,	= 8, 9	and Amminadab begat Nahshon;	...	(see Num. 7. 12)	
47	the son of Nahshon,	= 9, 10	and Nahshon begat Salmon;	...	...
46	the son of Salmon,	= 10, 11	and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab;	...	(see Josh. 2 and 6. 22-25)	
45	the son of Boaz,	= 11, 12	and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth;	...	(Ruth 4)	
44	the son of Obed,	= 12, 13	and Obed begat Jesse;	...	...
43	the son of Jesse,	= 13, 14	and Jesse begat David the King;	...	(1 Sam. 16)	
42	the son of David,	1	and David begat Solomon of her that	...	(1 Chron. 3. 5)	had been wife of Uriah;
41	the son of Nathan,		had been wife of Uriah;	...	(2 Sam. 11. 12)	
40	the son of Mattatha,	2	and Solomon begat Rehoboam;	...	...	Of Naamah the Ammonitess
39	the son of Menna,	3	and Rehoboam begat Abijah;	...	...	Of Maacah, Absalom's daughter
38	the son of Melea,	4	and Abijah begat Asa;	...	(1-14, see 1, 2 Kings, 2 Chron.)	
37	the son of Eliakim,	5	and Asa begat Jehoshaphat;	...	...	Of Azubah
36	the son of Jonam,	6	and Jehoshaphat begat Joram;	...	...	married Athaliah, Ahab's daughter
35	the son of Joseph,	7	and Joram	...	...	Joram's youngest son was Ahaziah
34	the son of Judas,		begat	...	...	Ahaziah's youngest son was Joash
33	the son of Symeon,		Uzziah;	...	...	Joash's son was Amaziah
32	the son of Levi,		Uzziah;	...	...	Amaziah's son was Uzziah
31	the son of Matthat,	8	and Uzziah begat Jotham;	...	...	(see Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah)
30	the son of Jorim,	9	and Jotham begat Ahaz;	...	...
29	the son of Eliezer,	10	and Ahaz begat Hezekiah;	...	...
28	the son of Jesus,	11	and Hezekiah begat Manasseh;	...	...
27	the son of Er,	12	and Manasseh begat Amon;	...	...
26	the son of Elmadam,	13	and Amon begat Josiah;	...	...	[aniah
25	the son of Cosam,	14	and Josiah begat	...	...	Josiah's son was Jehoiakim
24	the son of Addi,	Jechoniah	and his brethren, at	...	...	Jehoiakim's son was Jechoniah
23	the son of Melchi,		the time of the carrying away to B.	...	...	called also Jechoniah and Coniah
			and after the carrying away to B.	...	...
22	the son of Neri,	1, 2	Jechoniah begat Shealtiel;	...	...	(see Jeremiah, Lamentations, Zeph-
21	the son of Shealtiel,	= 2, 3	and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel;	...	(Ezra 1-6. Haggai, Zechariah)	
20	the son of Zerubbabel,	3, 4	and Zerubbabel begat Abiud;	...	...
19	the son of Rhesa,			...	...	[Old Testament History ceases at
18	the son of Joanan,	4, 5	and Abiud begat Eliakim;	...	...	about this period.]
17	the son of Joda,			...	...
16	the son of Josech,	5, 6	and Eliakim begat Azor;	...	...
15	the son of Semein,			...	...
14	the son of Mattathias,	6, 7	and Azor begat Sadoc;	...	...
13	the son of Maath,	7, 8	and Sadoc begat Achim;	...	...
12	the son of Naggai,			...	...
11	the son of Esli,	8, 9	and Achim begat Eliud;	...	...
10	the son of Nahum,			...	...
9	the son of Amos,	9, 10	and Eliud begat Eleazar;	...	...
8	the son of Mattathias,	10, 11	and Eleazar begat Matthan;	...	...
7	the son of Joseph,			...	...
6	the son of Jannai,	10, 11	and Eleazar begat Matthan;	...	...
5	the son of Melchi,			...	...
4	the son of Levi,	11, 12	and Matthan begat Jacob;	...	...
3	the son of Matthat,			...	...
2	the son of Heli,	12, 13	and Jacob begat Joseph, the	...	...	husband of Mary, of whom was
	was supposed) of Joseph		husband of Mary, of whom was	...	...	Jesus . . . being the son (as 14 born
	Jesus . . . being the son (as 14		born Jesus, who is called Christ.	...	...

(Read upwards.)

The middle column gives the royal pedigree from Abraham, through David and Jechoniah, to Joseph, of whom as Mary's husband the Lord Jesus Christ was heir, though by him He was not begotten.

The numeration of the generations in Matthew offers difficulties which are beyond the ability of the present writer to solve. In the first group if we make Abraham one then David becomes fourteen. If in the second David be made one Jechoniah would become fifteen. If we make Solomon one Jechoniah becomes fourteen. But we must make Jechoniah one in the third series in order to reach fourteen as the number for the Christ. It is clear that we have here that which we cannot understand.

The right hand column contains amongst other notes mention of those in the royal line as given in the Old Testament who are omitted in the Matthew genealogy.

As the Holy Spirit has been pleased to set this genealogy in the forefront of the purple¹ gospel, we have thought well to briefly annotate what may perhaps be regarded as one of the less interesting portions of Scripture (but certainly not unimportant) before passing on to the account in Matthew of the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Flight into Egypt, which will be the subject for next time.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

III. FEBRUARY 9.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 1. 18 TO 2. 23.

DEPARTURE AND RETURNING.

The vine is waste, the fig tree barked and bare,
 The virgins in their sackcloth loud lament ;
 The corn has languished and the shepherds stare
 The children wail for bread and none is sent.

¹ Purple, the royal colour.

The offerings in the house of God fast fail;
 On stranger altars burns false Israel's fire;
 The priests lament, the prophets loudly wail:
 Alas! for we are smitten in Thine ire!

The garner empty, and the wine vat dry;
 The flocks cut off, the heavens as burnished brass;
 Ten thousand voices in their anguish cry—
 We are undone, O God, alas! alas!

The seed lies rotten 'neath the parchèd clod;
 Of joy bereft all men in misery moan;
 Look on our woe, in mercy look, O God,
 Hear nature's wail and creature's hopeless groan.

We have destroyed ourselves, our hope is lost;
 O come, let us unto the Lord return!
 Though we have served false gods—Ah! yes, a host—
 The contrite prayer Jehovah ne'er will spurn.

We've fed on wind, the east wind followed fast,
 We've reaped what we have sowed, far from God's face;
 Rude our awaking—we repent at last,
 Our shame remove, O God, by Thine own grace.

Receive us—our iniquity is great,
 But Thou art great in mercy—Lord fulfil
 The promise of Thy word—on Thee we wait,
 For Thou art God!—Thou art Jehovah still!

Now shall we know, if yet we follow on
 To know the Lord, and keep his counsels all,
 Verdure of soul and blessing still upon
 The fruitful field, and on the fatted stall.

“THAT ALL MAY HONOUR THE SON.”

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY DAVID SMITH.

God's purpose concerning His own while here upon earth is a wide subject. We will look upon one particular part of that purpose; and, as introductory thereto, let us read together in the Gospel according to John, chapter 5, verses 22-23, “For neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him.”

This matter of honouring the Son unfolds to us a purpose that God has for us who are His own; and in this He Himself, as it were, hath taken the lead, for on the principle of “Them that honour Me, I will honour,” God hath of a very truth fulfilled that in connection with His Son. He Who was here upon the earth in the acceptance of the will of God, and for the accomplishment of the will of God, so fully while here upon earth did the will of God, that God hath been honoured thereby: and the language of the 17th chapter of the Gospel according to John, which we oftentimes have upon our lips, hath very full significance indeed: “I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.” He could say that truly. He Who had this purpose ever before Him little thought of Himself, or His own things, or His own glory. He was here on behalf of the Father for the unfolding of His holy character and glory, and for the securing of that which God had been robbed of in the creature.

As we have it stated in the words of Romans 1. 21, “Because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God.” That which belonged to the Creator they gave to the creature; God was robbed of that which was His due. And

that has been so in connection with man, as the summing up of the record given in Romans 3. declares: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." It is not only sin, but there is shortcoming as well. God has been robbed. The blighted hopes and expectations of God in regard to man, and in regard to Israel, and we might say in everything, up to the presence of His blessed Son here upon the earth, are told out in these words of Romans 3.

But in His blessed Son, in all the perfection and infinite worth that was found in Him, and in all the devotedness of that life, in all the obedience of that life, there was never one single expectation of God that ever was blighted. From the opened heavens comes forth the witness, the testimony spoken of Him to others: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." These are words God spake of Him to others. This is the One to Whom God is calling their attention. This is My Son, My beloved in Whom I am delighted.

We pass on in the pathway of the blessed Son of God, and as He is nearing its close, even then we find none of God's hopes in Him blighted. How many have run well for a time and yet have ended in blighted hopes and expectations! It was not so with Him. When everything, we might say, was against Him as far as circumstances were concerned; when the multitudes that had followed Him were getting fewer; when disciples that had followed Him turned back and walked no more with Him, and when He turns to the twelve and says: "Will ye also go away?" we find He did not say, I will go away too. He turned not back. It was in these very circumstances that the purpose of His heart was revealed, and the steadfastness of that purpose was made known. He sets His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem; to go to that cross.

And again, at a later part of His history, when the shadow of the cross is over His pathway, as coming events cast

their shadows before, then, when heart and flesh might faint and fail, we hear the language that came from His lips, "Thy will be done"—"Not My will but Thine be done." "I come to do Thy will, O My God." "A body hast Thou prepared Me." He accepts that will; He accepts that purpose; and He uses that body, and that lifetime's opportunity for the accomplishment of the will of God. He used it for no purpose other than that. And in the accomplishment of the will of God He could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth."

On the earth: the scene of dishonour, the scene of the creature's sin, the scene of man's apostasy from God, and from the will of God. "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work Thou hast given Me to do."

It reached its climax we know on the cross, in the death of the cross. God indeed has fulfilled in His case the truth of the word, "Them that honour Me I will honour."

There is a word I would like to turn to in the Acts of the Apostles, second chapter, 22nd verse: "Hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." It seems to me that we here view the cross in the very solemn light of these words, "A man approved of God." It is, we might say, God's testimony borne to His blessed Son; it is His commendation of Him: "Approved of God."

We might put alongside this what men thought of Him when, in the language of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to John, the words are heard, "Behold the Man." The thoughts of their hearts are revealed, and out of the

abundance of their hearts they speak and say, "Away with Him! Crucify Him! crucify Him!" And the thoughts of their hearts are more expressly revealed in their actions. With lawless hands they took Him and slew Him. They laid hold upon Him, and they led Him away to be crucified. "Ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay."

That death of the cross was to His disciples the death blow to their hopes. But it was the realization of God's hope.

For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. A man approved of God.

In the confidence that He had in His God, He could say, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption." The confidence He had in His God could lead Him on into resurrection; and further still, for the honouring by Him of His God would, He knew, in return be appreciated and acknowledged by God. They have done their worst; and when He is taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb they seek to make the sepulchre sure; they seal the stone and they set their watch. But God raised Him up! His body was laid in that tomb; He was in Hades, yet not left there; and the third day we find the fulfilment of the Word of God. "Whom God hath raised!" Herein indeed we get the expression of God's appreciation of Him. The resurrection declares it. "The God of peace who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."

These are words that make sorrowing ones rejoice, as did they who came to the sepulchre to see the place where the Lord lay. What a wonderful surprise to them, when they saw not the place but the Person, the Lord of whom Mary Magdalene spake and said, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

Those sorrowing ones have the word spoken to them by

the heavenly messenger: "He is not here, He is risen, as He said; and He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him. Lo, I have told you." They sought the Lord, but they sought Him where He was not. "He is not here, He is risen; and He goeth before you into Galilee; *there* shall ye find Him." And when the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, there they saw Him; and there they worshipped Him. Their hopes were blighted in the past; they were not blighted now. In the place where He appointed, He is; and there they saw Him; and there they worshipped Him.

"Whom God hath raised up!" As the One whom God hath raised up they go forth unto Him; and in their going forth unto Him they express their appreciation of Him, and confess that He who is much to God is likewise much to them. And the measure of that "much" is seen in the light of the fact that there was much in Jerusalem as a City; much in that Temple that stood there, and all the associations thereof; there was much in all this that was dear to the heart of Israel; and it needed an understanding of the times to know what they ought to do, and to turn their back upon that; for the hour had come, and now is, according to the words of John 4. 21, "when ye shall neither in Jerusalem nor yet in this mountain worship the Father." The hour is come when it is neither here, nor there. It is not the place now, it is the PERSON.

In going forth unto Him there was an expression of their appreciation of the Person of God's Anointed. That may be dear to them; He is dearer still. That may be much to them: He is more to them. They love Him more than that and these; they go forth therefore unto Him whom God raised up.

(To be concluded.)

“HE LOVETH US.”

Tune—“EZRA.”

Deep in the mire of sin were we
 Till God in mercy found us,
 And great will be our joy to see
 The One Whose death unbound us;
 For oh! the grace of God above
 In changeless glory dwelling,
 And all the riches of His love
 Will not be known by telling.

Oh! sweet it is to suffer here,
 Where God delights to bless us,
 While known to Him is every tear
 For all the foes that bless us;
 Perplexed, we never need despair,
 Pursued, yet not forsaken—
 The Lord can still our burdens bear,
 As He our grief has taken.

O love the Lord, ye saints of His,
 The day is drawing nearer,
 His patience and His tenderness
 Will prove Him all the dearer;
 For soon His mighty voice will raise
 His ransomed ones before Him,
 And then in rapture we shall gaze,
 And with one heart adore Him.

R. G. D.

“HE KNOWETH US.”

Tune—“ZURICH.”

How mighty was Thy grace
 To us, O God, displayed,
 When Jesus in our guilty place
 Upon the cross was laid!

Then waked Thy judgment sword
 And spared not Thy Son:
 Thou sovereign God and only Lord,
 What wonders Thou hast done!

Oh! what is man to Thee,
 That with him Thou couldst dwell?
 Jehovah from eternity—
 Thy love what tongue can tell?

Oh! may we still delight
 To see Thy righteousness!
 Thou God of wisdom, love, and might,
 Thy Holy Name we bless!

Long ere the bounds were made
 For sky, and earth, and sea,
 Thy counsels deep for us were laid
 In mercy, full and free.

All glory to Thy Name,
 Whose saving grace we know;
 From Thine own heart salvation came,
 And from Thee still shall flow.

R. G. D.

NOTES ON PROVERBS.

II.

IN the evil man and the strange woman a twofold aspect of evil is personified and presented to our gaze. Though they have some things in common yet are they decidedly antagonistic the one to the other. They do not work together for one common end as we might expect them to do, but each seeks its own aggrandisement at the expense of the other. They both labour for all they are worth to ensnare the father's son and to lead him to folly and ruin. If he be gained by the one he is lost to the other, and lost irretrievably. They each keep a firm hold of their follower, and tighten that hold from day to day. The evil man causes him to be bound with the cords of his own sins, and the evil woman starves and wounds and ultimately does him to death. There is therefore little or no passing from the one to the other: the choice which the son makes is, generally speaking, a choice for life.

Both are persistently aggressive and are equally bold in the promulgation of their respective doctrines, whereby they seek to beguile the unwary. Their activity never ceases. Now in the house, now without, by night and by day they are ever on the prowl hunting for the precious lives of their dupes. This they have in common, that they are sworn foes of Wisdom, and leave no stone unturned to rob her of those who would seek her gates and incline their hearts unto the path of life.

The evil man shows his colours unhesitatingly. He boldly declares what he believes and what he practises, and offers a share of his booty and spoil to all who will throw in their lot with him. His leading characteristics are—

WICKEDNESS, FROWARDNESS, VIOLENCE.

Here at once is a key to the understanding of the aspect

of evil which is personified in the evil man. He represents undisguised sensual wickedness; in him is to be seen the company of the immoral and the profane and of all who fall under the power of the grosser sins which obtain in the world. He is not ashamed of being what he is; nay, he rather prides himself in it. He is not ashamed because others know that he indulges in iniquity; his own mouth boldly declares in favour of it. He vainly thinks that his gain is worth the cost, and eagerly advocates his cause.

There is not much of deception in the way in which the evil man attracts his followers. Deception is not the bait by which his votaries are caught. They follow him with their eyes open, knowing well the nature of the path they are entering upon—booty and spoil their only proffered reward. This in turn they get in greater measure than they desire, and when in quaking dread they would fain deliver themselves from the pit which yawns to engulf them they find themselves helpless captives firmly bound with the cords of their own sins.

Three times are we specially warned of the evil man and his ways in the first nine chapters of Proverbs; five times are we definitely warned of the strange woman and her ways. Moreover the warnings in the latter case are more particularly enlarged upon, and occupy a much larger portion of this division of the book, than in the former. This is suggestive and surely indicates that there is necessity for this being so.

The tactics of the strange woman are entirely different from those of the evil man. We have already pointed out that the latter shows his colours boldly, but with the former it is otherwise. Therefore the one who refuses the bait of the evil man is often ready to swallow greedily the equally deadly one of the strange woman. The characteristics likewise of the strange woman are very

distinct from those of the evil man. They are also more varied. Among others we may note the following, which are pre-eminent:

FLATTERY, BEAUTY, RELIGIOUSNESS.

Here at a glance the aspect of evil which is personified in her may be seen. Also the apparent gulf which separates the followers of the evil man from those of the strange woman may be discerned. In time those two streams are widely divergent, but on the confines of eternity they converge and pour one volume into the depths of Hell. Separate in time they are together in eternity.

The aspect of evil, then, personified in the strange woman is that which is apparently beautiful. Not the hideous and profane, but the beautiful and religious. By these two the world has ever been divided. The evil man has ever had his followers, but greater by far has been the number of the strange woman's dupes—perhaps never before so numerous as at the beginning of the twentieth century of the reign of the grace of God.

It will readily be seen therefore that the evil man and the strange woman are antagonistic the one to the other. They are both bidding high for power and earnestly desiring the allegiance of the people. It should surprise no one that the religious woman is outbidding the evil man, that her charms are doing what his profanity could never accomplish. That she is making rapid marches on the winning side the opening of the twentieth century distinctly shows, and who can foresee the vastness of the admiring crowd that shall be bound with the bands of death to her blood-stained skirts ere the century closes?

Ever since the time that the Babylonish confederacy under Chedorlaomer waged warfare in the vale of Siddim with the king of Sodom and those in union with him, the perpetual conflict between the two principles of evil

there represented is easily traced in the Scriptures and in the world's history. And as surely as Chedorlaomer was victor on that renowned occasion his triumph has been repeated to the present moment. The Sodom world is being vanquished by the Babylonish. Sodom answers to the evil man, Babylon to the strange woman.

Who is foolish enough to imagine that the nearing reign of Antichrist will be characterized by that aspect of evil which is personified in the evil man? Nay, nay! By that time the strange woman—Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth—will hold universal sway, and, decked in her gorgeous apparel, she will dazzle the gaze of her votaries. It will unquestionably be such an age of outward morality, of religiousness and love of the beautiful as the world had never seen before.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

ONE VIEW OF THINGS; OR, UNDER THE SUN.

I BLAME no man though some frail man would blame,
 Since Time began the record is the same:
 One goes—one comes to fill the vacant place!
 One quits the field, another starts the race!

The poor in rags may beg his daily bread,
 The rich may revel at his table spread,
 Yet both shall reach one level in the end
 And none their carcase from the worms defend.

In spring of life man fresh and fair appears,
 To wither and decay with circling years;
 Soon life is past—its hisses and hurrahs—
 A vapour that is not, though once it was!

The weak fall out upon the march of life;
 The feeble falter in the fearsome strife;
 The strong press on to find their strength outdone—
 The conqueror conquered by the stronger one!

Triumphant hosts become a headlong rout:
The vanquished rise to swell the victor's shout;
Though Fame's proud wreath the hero's brow adorns
Its verdure fades and nought remains but thorns!

When faintest lights suffice to point the way,
In brightest sunshine men in darkness stray;
The blind oft see, the seeing oft are blind;
The toiler poor, whilst they that toil not find.

Earth's greatest lights in darkness disappear,
Eclipsed by others as they shine more clear:
The sun that sets will surely rise again,
The moon in constant course shall wax and wane.

The blasts that beat upon our back to-night
Sweep ever onward in their fury's flight:
Where storms had been gleam pale and peaceful skies,
Where calm had reigned the howling tempest cries.

An endless course of constant rise and fall,
Of verdure and decay, we trace in all:
To-day we tower in glory far on high,
To-morrow humbled with the dust we lie.

Thus time and chance to all men come and go—
We grasp life's pleasure but to gain its woe!
Earth's sweetest cup is mixed with sorrows deep,
And lightest hearts make haste erstwhile to weep.

Who leaves a record without spot or stain?
The goal who reaches that his heart would gain?
Though in our crown resplendent jewels gleam,
We still may mourn for that which might have been!

Then let us fight while strength our arm retains,
And work with vigour whilst the light remains:
When night has come they grope not for the way
Who, strong in faith, have toiled and served their day!

Fear God on high and His commandments keep—
Who sows in righteousness will surely reap!
Love man below, forsake not Wisdom's ways,
And God shall give to each his meed of praise!

For Young Believers.

"As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 *Peter* 2. 2.

"NOTHING."

APART from invidiousness we propose a sevenfold presentation of God's will in connexion with what He denominates "Nothing," and which appears pre-eminently necessary for the Young Believer to know and to hide in his heart. Forewarned, forearmed he should be. Were we attempting more than "crumbs" for His bairns there is much besides what is here collated that we would bring together, unto which we trust the present may guide.

The sore deceiving of one's-self, as set forth in Gal. 6. 3, is warning and awakening enough.

That one may think himself "Something" and yet be verily "Nothing," is there put beyond question.

This reckoning to be "Something" while in truth only "Nothing" may evidence itself in multifarious ways and incidents. We may refer to our published booklet hereon.¹ Supplementing which a little, we add that a man or men may be absolutely "Nothing," though reckoning and acting as if "Something," when there is a presuming to carry into actual issue what is not the province of such to effect.

How very difficult it is, or may be, to recover, deliver or help those is obvious from the fact that they are **DECEIVING THEMSELVES.**

Let none suppose that this is either improbable or uncommon, nor think it is unimportant. Please therefore pause and consider.

SECONDLY, God's will is that "NOTHING be done through strife or vain-glory."² Would He have pointed this out had

¹ "Something, or Nothing: Which?" To be had from all agents for NEEDED TRUTH.

² Phil. 2. 3.

there been no need therefor? Ah! No! with Him there are no idle words, nor yet tautology. "Strife" has ever in it the element of self-seeking, as "vain-glory" has its characteristic in "shewing-off" one's-self.

The preventative and the cure thereof is "Let the mind which was in Christ Jesus be in you." See the Scripture and note its context. Besides, Young Believer, betake thyself to God and His Word, and prove thyself as to whether or not you are doing anything or encouraging another to do anything through strife or vain-glory. Never forget that "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself."

THIRDLY, God also requires that "NOTHING be done by partiality."¹ Oh! if Phil. 2. should be prayed over and be learned with assurance what, what manner of persons ought such to be who are given to hear this lesson! Be entreated, Young Believer, to mark the context here and to let this be clenched by the sore, sore word of 1 Tim. 6. 3-6. Examine yourself and see whether you are directly or even indirectly doing anything by partiality.²

Ah me! the hateful practice is only too possible and actual.

FOURTHLY, what a relief to one's very spirit and soul and body to turn unto His solicitous word, Phil. 4. 6, 7, "In NOTHING be anxious," and so on—see the Scriptures.

"Anxiety," that is, well-meant care, yet lacking true knowledge, is oft that which precipitates "zeal" that after all only evidences how absolutely is forgotten the fact that "The Lord of Hosts hath zeal." His eyes run to and fro throughout all the earth. His eyes are upon the proud and His face upon them that do evil. Mourning can effect His will even where apathy reigns, and the wish to Him bring about what no word of His is given to otherwise deal with.³ But withal forget not that He is the patient One.

¹ 1 Tim. 5. 21.

² Gal. 6. 4, 5.

³ Compare 1 Cor. 5. 2 with Gal. 5. 12.

FIFTHLY, when trials diverse and many befall, seek grace to count it all joy, my brethren, knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience—inducing likeness to Him. Wherefore let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire (whole), lacking NOTHING.

SIXTHLY, in regard to those who, for the sake of the Name, have gone forth taking NOTHING from the Gentiles (Gentilish) let the Young Believer cultivate a heart interest and a conscientious regard for after the manner and measure, yea the order of 3 John 5–8.

To which end and all as is His will, SEVENTHLY, cause thyself to duly heed 1 Thess. 4. 9–12, which is so calculated to produce moral glories akin to those pre-eminently manifested by the Man, Christ Jesus. Thus, as taught of God, great shall be thy peace. Then being ambitious to be quiet and to do your own business (in every sphere), working with your hands, ye may walk honestly (becomingly) toward them that are without and may *in reality* have NEED OF NOTHING; and so be unlike her who maketh even Him sick unto vomiting—see Rev. 3. 14–23.

JOHN BROWN.

BIBLE WOMEN: HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(LEAH AND RACHEL.)

IN the lives of these sisters who became the two wives of Jacob there are lessons to be learned to profit withal. The tender-eyed Leah and the beautiful Rachel were before Jacob (but he must work to obtain them), and naturally he chose the well-favoured daughter of Laban; but this could not be, and Leah was given in disguise. She who was despised by others was highly favoured of the Lord, and her beautiful sister who was also given to Jacob becomes envious of her tender-eyed sister who again and again is able to speak of God's goodness toward her.

As we have said there are lessons here to learn. There may be Leah-like women to-day who also are highly favoured of the Lord; for it is such as are able to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong, who are truly favoured of Him." We are naturally inclined to look with favour on the beautiful and strong and to despise the weak, whether physically or spiritually, but God would have us learn to be helpers one of another instead of envying one another. Then let us remember the exhortation of Rom. 15. 1: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." 1 Thess. 5. 14 also deserves special note. Thus shall we, in some measure, be enabled to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who pleased not Himself, but bore reproach and was crucified through weakness on our behalf.

As Jacob loved Rachel and worked to obtain her, so the Christ of God accomplished the work the Father gave Him to do in order that He might have the Church with Himself in glory. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it; the Son of God . . . loved me and gave Himself for me.

Father, I know that all my life Is portioned out for me;
 And the changes that are sure to come I do not fear to see;
 But I ask Thee for a present mind Intent on pleasing Thee.

I ask Thee for a thoughtful love, Through constant watching wise,
 To meet the glad with joyful smiles, and to wipe the weeping eyes;
 And a heart at leisure from itself To soothe and sympathise.

REVIVAL.

REVIVAL! How the heart thrills at the mention of the word! The face brightens and hope runs high as we contemplate the glorious possibility of again experiencing times of revival from God's presence. Alas! as the years run their weary course, and faithless saints settle down into more pronounced worldliness and coldness of heart, we sigh and wonder if revival times are to continue to be for us but a tale that we have heard of with the hearing of the ear.

Time was when Christians gathered into the Lord's Name were known to the world by the name of "Revivals." A good nickname is something to be proud of! It is an ominous fact that this word has well nigh passed into oblivion; and many of the people who once rejoiced to bear, for their Master's sake, the name of "Revivals" would to-day blush at the very mention of the word. Times have changed; the fine gold has become dim; the love of many has waxed cold. Probably we are living in more enlightened days, but would to God that we could carry with us into the light a greater measure of the zeal, the earnestness and the vitality of what is now supposed to have been darker days! As we contemplate the condition of Christians on all hands to-day we seem like the prophet Ezekiel to have unveiled to our gaze the valley of bones. Gazing around we have to confess that they are "very many" and "very dry." And as we hear the question asked, "Can these bones live"? we have to bow our heads and answer, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." The possibility, we must confess, seems very remote, but well assured are we that the task is not too hard for the Lord.

Revival means a stirring up into life afresh. It means also not merely stirring up into fresh life, but to the activities of life, so that the revived person or thing fulfils

the purpose of his or its existence in a manner and measure far beyond that which obtained at the time of reviving. Thus aged Jacob on the brink of the grave is said to have revived when the tidings that Joseph was really alive reached his ears and was received into his heart. The old man received fresh energy and a new lease of life, and hope burning brightly in his heart, he journeyed on to meet his loved son.

Great was the victory that Samson wrought when with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew a thousand of the Philistines, but he who was strong to do and to dare in the power of the Spirit of the Lord afterward became weak and helpless as the strong one was overcome by thirst. He was ready to die; but God clave a hollow place and water came there-out, which when Samson had drunk his spirit came again and he revived. In the strength of this God-given revival he lived to fight another day.

Nothing is too hard for the Lord. He can not only revive the dying, but He can revive the dead. When the widow of Zarephath's son died he was revived and brought back to life through Elijah crying unto the Lord on his behalf. Further, when the dead body of a certain man touched the bones of Elisha in the sepulchre he is said to have revived and stood upon his feet. Then the returned remnant in Nehemiah's days are said to have revived the stones out of the heaps of rubbish. These stones had once occupied an important place in the wall around Jerusalem, but because of the apostasy of God's people the wall had been thrown down, and the stones lay buried beneath an accumulation of rubbish. They were revived when once again they were dug from their place of hiding and builded into their appointed place. When afresh these stones could fulfil the object for which they had been hewn from nature's quarry they are said to have been revived. God grant such a revival to multitudes of His living stones to-day! He is able!

RETURNING.

TRUE revival must be preceded by a returning in heart to the Lord. Such returning is not accomplished by effort of the human will merely : it is a God-given experience. The Lord alone can enable His people to return to Him. Yet there must be a willingness on their part ere the Lord will grant power to return or make it possible to know this blessed experience. Returning is that which is granted where departure had previously taken place. It supposes a people who were once in fellowship with God, but who had wandered from Him.

The desire to return is often begotten in them through the wretchedness of their condition when distant from God. He allows them to place themselves in circumstances where the reality of their helplessness and nakedness is borne home to their hearts, where their supposed joy and satisfaction vanish, and where heart and soul, dissatisfied with everything else, are forced to cry out for the living God. Thank God when this point is reached ! Thank God when the emptiness of earth's broken cisterns is learned and the soul desires a draught of the living waters ! Thank God when, like some of Israel of old, " Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar " is uttered with heart and gaze uplifted to God for returning grace !

In departure the heart always goes before the feet. So in returning. Any professed returning to God and to the ways which be in Christ that does not begin with the heart is a deception. No glory to God and no good to man can result from it. Indeed the thing is not of God at all. It is alas ! verily possible for His people to draw near to Him with their mouths and to honour Him with their lips when their hearts are far from Him. The results of such a sham returning is a dry formality that is only magnified by its accompanying barrenness.

The awful seriousness of departure from God in connection with personal conduct or in matters of doctrine is enhanced by the solemn fact that they who depart may never know returning even though they may, in measure, seek it with tears. "If God peradventure will give them repentance" is the language of New Testament Scripture. In the old covenant times we find this principle of God's dealings with His people manifested in the oft-repeated cry: "Turn us again, O God"; "Turn Thou me and I shall be turned." Yes, when God turns us we are turned indeed! The means He employs may be very sore for the flesh, but He does His work effectually. Yet He may cause His people to cry out of the anguish of their souls and to cry yet again ere He comes to their rescue. Such dealings are in order to work deeper repentance in them so that their returning may be a real work of the heart.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

III. FEBRUARY 9.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 1. 18-2. 23.

The careful reader will note that while Luke tells of the visit of Gabriel to Mary, Matthew records the appearance of an angel of the Lord to Joseph. This is in keeping with the prominence that Matthew is taught to give to the Lord's claims as Son of David, of whom Joseph was the lineal descendant and rightful heir: whereas Luke is taught rather to present Him as Son of Man and Seed of Woman. These are distinguishing characteristics.

Note however also that which is alike in both. For example, both to Joseph and to Mary, it was commanded that His name should be called Jesus, and notwithstanding important differences the words of the angel of the Lord to Joseph have much in common with that which was spoken to Mary through Gabriel.

Again, Matthew equally with Luke clearly shows that the Christ was distinguished from all mankind as being woman's seed; begotten not by man but of the Holy Spirit. See margin of Revised Version, Matthew 1. 20. The word used in Luke 1. 31 is a different one.

Luke equally with Matthew bears definite testimony that the Lord Jesus was Son of David, and in common also with Mark and John designates Him Son of God.

The marginal reading of Matthew 1. 18: "Now the birth of the Christ was on this wise," rests especially on the testimony of Irenaeus. The word "Jesus" is contained in all the Greek manuscripts of the Scripture that are extant, but it is omitted in the Old Latin and Curetonian Syriac versions, and Irenaeus (who lived about two centuries earlier than the oldest extant Greek manuscripts (A and B) were written), expressly states that the clause reads, "The birth of the Christ." It seems therefore impossible to be positive as to which is the correct reading.

The relation in time between the Adoration of the Magi and the flight into Egypt, and the events recorded in Luke 2. 22-39 must now be considered. We must not let any difficulties that may present themselves hinder our earnest endeavour to learn all we can of the early life of the Divine Child.

Artists commonly represent the Magi as adoring the Infant in the manger at Bethlehem, where the shepherds had found Him. If this were so, and the flight into Egypt followed, where Joseph and Mary and the Young Child remained until Herod was dead, it seems impossible to understand how they could have come up to Jerusalem according to the law of Moses, when the days of purification were fulfilled, namely, when the Infant was about a month old.

On the contrary, the passage in Matthew that we are reading seems to have a different meaning to this.

First, it seems reasonable to suppose that the heavenly apparition, the Star of the King of the Jews was first seen in the East at the time of the Lord's birth. The Magi then would have taken some little time to travel to Jerusalem. When they arrived there they were directed to Bethlehem, which was a place probably of no great size, and only about six miles from Jerusalem (see map, No. 7, in Revised Bible).

Note now that when "they went their way, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the Young Child was." Where was this? It does not say Bethlehem, and it does not seem to the present writer at all clear that it was that village. Why the star should have been needed to lead them to a small place six miles away, and show them a spot to which any inhabitant could probably have directed them is not plain.

Then, again, when Herod in his wrath determined to secure the destruction of One Whom he feared would be a dangerous rival, the cowardly tyrant fixed on two years as the maximum age for the victims of his sinister crime. Doubtless one setting so small a value on human life would have allowed a wide margin. But still he made careful calculations from the time that the star appeared, and therefore we might reasonably suppose that the Infant would have been at any rate nearer a year than a month in age at the time of the flight. Secular history cannot give us much help here—it just testifies that the birth of the Lord and the death of Herod the Great both took place about four years before the commencement of what is called the Christian era or *Anno Domini*.

Now seeing that the journey to Jerusalem for purification could not have been during the sojourn in Egypt, and that afterwards was probably too late, we conclude that it occurred previously.

It remains to compare the references to Nazareth in the two gospels.

It certainly appears as if in Luke 2. 39, they are represented as returning to Nazareth immediately after the journey to Jerusalem. If this were so it would have been in Nazareth that the Magi found the King, and we see nothing in Matthew 2. 1-12, inconsistent with this. There is simply a reason given, or rather two reasons are given in verses 22, 23, why Nazareth became the home of the early youth.

It cannot however be considered beyond doubt that Luke 2. 39 has the meaning we have given. It is clear that Luke has nothing to say as to the Adoration of the Magi or the Flight into Egypt; that all he records from the Purification to the twelfth year is contained in verses 39 and 40; and therefore it seems as reasonable to suppose that the Adoration and the Flight precede the return to Nazareth of verse 39 as that it follows after. Indeed we would be disposed to regard this as the most natural explanation were it not that the word *ὡς*, *hōs*, when, of verse 39 seems to have a definiteness of meaning scarcely consistent with this interpretation.

The three ways in which it may seem possible to arrange the events in Matthew 2. and Luke 2. 1-39, side by side are given in the following tables (we do not think the third however is possible):—

MATTHEW 2.

Birth of the Christ.
Magi see Star, v. 2.

Magi arrive in Jerusalem, v. 1.
Herod sends for them, v. 7.
Magi find the Infant, v. 11.
Flight into Egypt, v. 13.
Return to Nazareth, v. 21.

I.

LUKE 2.

Nazareth to Bethlehem, v. 4.
Birth of the Christ, v. 7.
Angel appears to Shepherds, v. 8.
Shepherds go to Bethlehem, v. 16.
Circumcision on 8th day, v. 21.
Purification after one month, v. 22.

Return to Nazareth, v. 39.

II.

MATTHEW 2.

Birth of the Christ.
Magi see Star, v. 2.

Magi arrive in Jerusalem, v. 1.
Herod sends for them, v. 7.
Magi find the Infant, v. 11
(? in Nazareth?)
Flight into Egypt, v. 13.
Return (again) to Nazareth, v. 21.

LUKE 2.

Nazareth to Bethlehem, v. 4.
Birth of the Christ, v. 7.
Angel appears to Shepherds, v. 16.
Shepherds go to Bethlehem, v. 16.
Circumcision on 8th day v. 21.
Purification after one month, v. 22.
Return to Nazareth, v. 39.

III.

MATTHEW 2.

Magi see Star, v. 2.
Magi arrive in Jerusalem, v. 1.
Herod sends for them, v. 7.
Magi find the Infant, v. 11.
Flight into Egypt, v. 13.
Return to Nazareth, v. 21.

LUKE 2.

Nazareth to Bethlehem, v. 4.
Birth of the Christ, v. 7.
Angel appears to Shepherds, v. 8.
Shepherds go to Bethlehem, v. 16.
Circumcision 8th day, v. 21.

Purification after one month, v. 22.
Return (again) to Nazareth, v. 39.

We note here the frequent references to Old Testament, which form a striking feature in Matthew. These we proceed to enumerate:—

QUOTATION 1.—Matthew 1. 23: This is taken from Isaiah 7. Note that Immanu El is not merely a name. First and chiefly it is a statement of fact; as we find it translated in Isaiah 7. 14 margin, God is with us; the copula “is” being clearly implied in the original not only as the Old Testament Revisers show us in the Hebrew, but as we venture to say in the Greek of Matthew 1. 23, which we think should be similarly translated “which is; being interpreted, God is with us.”

QUOTATION 2.—Matthew 2. 6: See Micah 5. 2.

QUOTATION 3.—Matthew 2. 15. The original application was to the earthly Israel: See Hosea 11. 1.

QUOTATION 4.—Matthew 2. 18: Jeremiah 31. 15.

Of these quotations (1) is said to have been spoken by the Lord through the prophet; (2) it is written through the prophet. The Revisers' use of "by" in the text here is to be understood in the light of the words in their preface. "We have borne in mind the comprehensive character of such [English] prepositions as . . . by . . ." Certainly there is a use of the English "by" which expresses the meaning well enough, but the student of Scripture should understand that the same Greek preposition *διὰ*, *dia*, through, by means of, is used in the four places mentioned; (3) spoken by the Lord through the prophet; (4) spoken through Jeremiah the prophet. So as to the preposition in the next quotation, which however has notable points of difference.

QUOTATION 5.—That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets that He should be called a Nazarene. This is not a verbal quotation as the Authorized Version seems to say. The word "that" indicates that the tenour of the Old Testament prophets and not their words are referred to. Mark also that it is not one prophet but many, or perhaps all. This has been interpreted as meaning thus: The prophets witnessed that He should be despised of men. Inhabitants of Nazareth were so looked down upon. There seems something lacking in this explanation. Be this as it may, it was of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that the youth of the Incarnate One was spent in this humble village, where He was brought up by Joseph the Carpenter, and learnt his trade. Compare Matthew 13. 55 with Mark 6. 3. Good would it have been for many lesser servants of God if they too had lived for a good spell of years in subjection to an earthly master, what time they learnt to earn their bread by the sweat of the brow and

profess honest occupations for necessary uses. The Holy Boy found time to read the Scriptures in the intervals of using the hammer and whetting the axe.

IV. FEBRUARY 23.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, LUKE 2. 40-52.

THE Scriptures that we have previously read present to us the blessed Lord Jesus in His earliest days where He plays but a passive part in the scenes depicted. They teem with deepest interest in many ways and especially to parents. For with what infinite treasure were Joseph and Mary intrusted!

But Luke 2. 40 tells us that "the Child grew and waxed strong, becoming full of wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

A few words may be here said as to certain Greek words that occur in this passage and elsewhere.

1. *παῖς*, *pais*, a boy (or girl) but often correctly translated servant.
2. *παιδίον*, *paidion*, a little boy (or girl), a child; this word is the diminutive of *παῖς*, *pais*.
3. *τέκνον*, *teknon*, a child with the sense of relationship, from *τίκτω*, *tiktō*, I bear or bring forth (children).
4. *τεκνίον*, *teknion*, diminutive of child, a little child (only occurs in John 13. 33, Gal. 4. 19, and in John's first epistle).
5. *υἱός*, *huios*, a son (resembling the father).
6. *βρέφος*, *brephos*, a babe, an infant, unborn or just born.

1. The word *pais* no doubt originally means a boy as used here in Luke 2. 43. It comes however to be used of grown up persons who are servants, as in Matthew 14. 2. So too of the Lord Himself in, for instance, Matthew 12. 18. This usage is somewhat similar to a way in which collo-

quially we often call dependants boys regardless of age (so the French garçon). In some cases it is difficult to tell in which sense the word is used (see Matt. 8. 6).

2. In Matthew 2. young child is the translation of paidion, meaning little boy, and this is the word translated child in Luke 2. 40, whilst the word male children in Matthew 2. 16 is pais, boy.

3. Teknon is the real Greek equivalent of the English word child. It occurs in verse 48 of the chapter before us, where son must be regarded as a mistranslation.

5. The true word huiōs, son, occurs for example in Matthew 2. 15. We subjoin most of the occurrences of these words in the chapters we have been reading, with a few words of context only. There will be no difficulty probably in identifying the words.

Matthew 1. 2.

* * * Jesus Christ Son of David, Son of Abraham
 * * * * * she shall bring forth a Son * * * and shall
 bring forth a Son * * * she had brought forth a Son
 * * * * * search out carefully concerning the Little Boy
 * * * it came and stood over where the Little Boy was
 * * * saw the Little Boy with Mary His mother * * * * *
 take the Little Boy and His mother * * * Herod will seek
 the Little Boy * * * Out of Egypt did I call My Son
 * * * Herod * slew all the boys that were in Bethlehem
 * * from two years old and under * * Rachel weeping for
 her children * * * take the Little Boy and His mother.

Luke 1. 2.

* * * they had no child * * * Elisabeth shall bear thee
 a son * * * many of the sons of Israel shall he turn * * *
 to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children * * * * *
 bring forth a Son * * shall be called Son of the Most High
 * * shall be called Holy, the Son of God * * conceived a
 son in her old age * * * * the babe leaped in her womb
 * * the babe leaped in my womb * * * * He hath holpen

Israel His servant (*παῖς*, *pais*) * * * she brought forth a son * * to circumcise the little boy * * * What then shall this Little Boy be? * * * In the house of His servant (*παῖς*, *pais*) David * * * and thou, Little Boy, shalt be called prophet of the Most High * * * And the Little Boy grew * * * * she brought forth her firstborn Son * * * * Ye shall find a Babe * * the Babe lying in the manger * * * spoken to them about this Little Boy * * * * the parents brought in the Little Boy * * * Now lettest Thou Thy servant (*δούλος*, *dōulos*, slave, not *παῖς*, *pais*) * * And the Little Boy grew * * when He was twelve years old * the Boy Jesus * * * Child (that is my Child) why hast Thou thus dealt with us?

The words of verse 40 are remarkable in truth and may perhaps be read alongside of "Though He was a Son yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5. 8).

That the Little Boy grew may be taken to be a necessity of His being truly man, and that He waxed strong might be taken as meaning nearly the same thing. But the following words show that we have here no ordinary record before us. It is further said, "becoming full of wisdom" (Revised margin).

We must therefore contemplate real growth both mental and physical in Him who was truly a man though very God.

It was He who had appeared to Moses in Mount Sinai. From Him Moses had received what he delivered to the sons of Israel and recorded in the Law. From Him Isaiah and Jeremiah had received their messages, and with Him the son of Jesse had held that close communion which made him to be the Sweet Psalmist of Israel. Yet that which was written in the Law and in the Psalms and in the Prophets was read and read again, and learned as we might learn, by Him whom the heavens cannot contain,

when He spent His childhood days with Joseph and Mary in the despised town of Nazareth. His delight was in the law of Jehovah, and in His law did He meditate day and night.

Year by year He went up with His parents to Jerusalem, and when He was twelve years old the curtain is drawn back and we get a glimpse of a scene in the temple that clearly indicates what manner of boy He was and stands in strong contrast to the unworthy and fabulous tales of His youth in which the Apocryphal gospels abound.

For many years He had been reading and studying the temple Scriptures as no boy before or since has ever done. Reading them again and again, meditating, comparing, studying, with perhaps such help as might be obtained in Nazareth from any students of Scripture who resided in a town from which it was currently reported that no good ever came.

But now we find Him in the midst of the teachers of the law, humbly listening to all they could tell Him and seeking by His questions to obtain all the information they could give.

At a later period, upon such men as these we may hear Him pour forth those scathing denunciations that are so little regarded by men who suppose Him to have been a mere kindly and well-meaning philanthropist.

But there is nothing of this judgment to be seen during His boyhood and youth. The Divine Man was a Learner for thirty years ere He began to teach. How instructive an example!

Whatever was the moral character of the teachers of whom we read in Luke 2. 46, He sat in their midst to hear what they could tell Him. He had not yet begun to teach, as Luke 3. 23 (R.V.) makes plain. He asked questions of those who sat on Moses' seat, for He was not above learning from others. He was in the right place and in that place to learn all that might be taught.

Alas! for those who would be wiser than their Lord and despise the help of God-given teachers who may be heard in the place where God appoints for His people to be.

Note, however, what follows when He is found by Joseph and Mary. First He explains to them His interest in the things of which He had been speaking with the teachers, They were the things of His Father. So His answer reads in the literal translation of the Greek (see R.V. margin). The reading of the text may however convey the more correct sense—He must needs be in His Father's House. The reading of the Authorized Version, also found in R.V. margin, about My Father's business, is certainly not justified—He was transacting no business, but learning the Will of His Father and God.

Then He goes down with them to Nazareth and was subject unto them. He learnt Joseph's trade as any apprentice might, but better and more faithful was He than any boy before or since. His learning of God's law never interfered with what in His humiliation He accounted to be His duty to His earthly parent and master. Unlike some of His followers whose opportunities for Bible study are filched from their masters' time.

The training of this perfect Deacon and Overseer for the work upon which He was to enter seems to be worthy of special attention in three respects, wherein it may well be imitated by all who seek to be themselves deacons of Christ Jesus or to help others to prepare for the ministry.

First and foremost we have earnest and painstaking study of the Scriptures, commenced at a very early age. In this we find another example worthy of imitation (comparing a servant with his master) in the case of Timothy; who, thanks to the unfeigned faith which first dwelt in Lois and then in Eunice her daughter, was taught the temple Scriptures by them from his earliest infancy (from a babe, 2 Tim. 3. 15). Taught by which we venture to say

that the faith of mothers may be measured by the earliness of the date at which their young babes are taught the Scriptures.

Secondly we have willingness and earnestness to learn what can be taught as to the meaning and interpretation of Scripture by others who in the will of God are teachers thereof in His House.

Thirdly we find that part of the training that God gave to His well-beloved Son consisted in putting Him in a place of subjection to an earthly master, under whose instruction He learned an honest trade. His hands and eyes were trained to fashion and to join. Though the forest trees, the Mount of Olives, and the sun which moves in its appointed course, were all His handiwork, yet He in the days of His flesh learned a human art and earned His bread by the sweat of His brow.

In the light of this training of His how egregious the blunder of those who would separate men who are to become ministers of the word of God from the occupations and trades of others or from the society of their fellow-men! (See Titus 3. 8, 14.)

Not less appalling is the too common error of grievously undervaluing the need of study and mental training, above and beyond all of much reading and of earnest meditation on the Holy Scriptures, for those who would be good ministers of Christ Jesus, and must therefore be nourished in the words of the Faith and of the good doctrine.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

V. MARCH 9.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 3., MARK 1. 1-13,
LUKE 3. 1-20.

“JEHOVAH-ROHI.”

Lord, we own Thou art our Shepherd,
 So we know we shall not want ;
 But, to follow where Thou leadest,
 Subject hearts we pray Thee grant ;
 Souls restored by Thine own feeding,
 In the paths of righteousness
 Safely guided by Thy leading
 We would deeper drink Thy grace.

By the blessed Spirit lead us
 Where Thy footsteps, Lord, have been ;
 On the tender pastures feed us,
 For those fields are ever green ;
 By the deep, still waters bidding
 Let us linger, Lord, awhile,
 From the heat of noontide hiding
 'Neath the shelter of Thy smile.

Though we tread a darksome valley,
 Yet no evil would we fear ;
 Though the foes are great and many,
 Mighty Saviour, Thou art near !
 And the table Thou preparest
 In the presence of our foes,
 Tells our hearts for us Thou carest,
 And our cup with joy o'erflows.

Lord, Thy goodness and Thy mercy
 Shall us compass day by day,
 Till the shadows of the valley
 Have for ever passed away ;
 Then the pilgrim's constant story
 Of Thy grace and wondrous love,
 Shall be crowned with endless glory
 In the Father's house above.

NOTES ON PROVERBS.

III.

IN view of the matters we considered in a former paper the repeated warning of the wise father to his loved son against the beguiling character of evil as represented in the strange woman is seen to be both timely and vitally necessary. If she hath cast down many wounded and many strong men have been slain by her, an inexperienced son may well be put on his guard!

Flattery, beauty and religiousness are, we have pointed out, her chief characteristics. These all are fascinating and are donned as an outward garb for the definite object of deceiving. Beautiful in person she appears, and her coverings are of tapestry and fine linen of Egypt, perfumed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Her lips are full of flattery, they drop honey also, and her words are smoother than oil. Few who bend their ears to her flattering voice ever fail to find themselves in her deadly embrace. Beauty, fair speech and flattering lips form a gaudy bait. The hook of course is hidden!

Nor are peace offerings and vows awanting. An assumed sanctity must cover the awful depths of her iniquity. Without this the spell would be broken and her success in the art of deception would cease. Therefore she plays upon the religious propensities which are natural to the heart of man. Moreover she knows nothing of what is termed "bigotry." In the sphere of religiousness her ways are movable. She is not possessed of the grain of consistency which is to be found in the evil man, for he has but one way—evil, only evil, ever evil. But the strange woman has a way for every man according to the liking of his heart. Her fold is large enough to embrace all; her ways are numerous enough to permit all to walk beneath her shadow. Could a more

seducing woman lay herself to the task of ensnaring the simple? Could a more deadly bait be presented to the hungry lips of the unwary? Well might a wise father labour with all earnestness and pleading to have the eyes of his loved son opened to discern her deception.

The movableness of the strange woman's ways has had ample verification in the last year of the past century in the union of two Scottish denominations. Slowly, but surely, the old land-marks of so-called Protestantism, for which many of our fathers sacrificed their earthly prospects, are being removed. Of Protestantism it may now be said with every confidence,

Her days are in the yellow leaf,
The fruit and flower of life are gone!

The embankment which for a time kept the waters apart has been leaking for long, but now it is manifestly broken, and the stream has set with irresistible force to seek its own level. The union of every sect in Christendom is well assured, and is but a matter of time. The triumph of the strange woman will then be complete. Then will she say in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow."

The strange woman then depicts the religious organizations of men, which aim at delivering the people from the grosser evils depicted in the evil man, and decking them with an outward appearance of beauty and morality and sanctity like unto the strange woman herself. Here flattery is the surest bait. Whence have issued the deadly doctrines of "the brotherhood of Christ," and "the fatherhood of God," but from the flattering lips of the strange woman! Are not the unregenerate flattered into believing that they come not far short of either? Are they not led to suppose that by nature they merit a right to the favour of God and a sure claim to an abode in heaven? Beauty is perhaps the second attraction. What gigantic strides in this direction the past few years have witnessed! The

strange woman is a born parasite. Her luxury is provided at the expense of her votaries. Shame enters not into her being. She is an adept at the art of begging, and her perpetual bazaar is a fruitful source of income. All to increase her outward *beauty* and thus to tighten her bands around her deluded followers. Gorgeous shrines, voluptuous music, fashionable crowds—anything, everything calculated to dazzle the gaze of onlookers, and to captivate their hearts is quickly secured.

The strange woman is so far beautiful, but he is a deceived man who never tries to consider the end of the path he treads. In spite of all her flattery and beauty God has declared that her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on Sheol. Her nakedness and desolation will yet be made manifest, and in the measure in which she hath glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so will her torment and sorrow be meted out, for strong is the Lord God which judged her.¹

Thus the two features of evil personified in the evil man and the strange woman include all that would lead the heart astray from Wisdom's ways, even from the path of life. The gate which leads to life is narrow and few go in thereat, whilst the path which leads to destruction is broad and many tread it.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

¹ And this He did long ago.

“THAT ALL MAY HONOUR THE SON.”

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY DAVID SMITH.

(Concluded from page 29.)

A FURTHER link in the chain we find in the thirty-third verse of Acts 2: “Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.” He was raised up, and up, and up.

Just as in His experience it was a coming down, and down, and down; from that glory to that cross; He Who thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be on an equality with God; Who took upon Him the form of a servant, made Himself of no reputation, became in fashion as a man, and humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea the death of the cross. That was the coming down.

This is the going up: “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted.” Him God hath raised up. God in the exaltation of His Son, has in a more definite and a fuller measure expressed His appreciation of His Son; Him hath God exalted.

“He that exalteth himself shall be abased.” We know that to be true in the fullest measure in connection with the false Christ. He exalteth himself, he saith, I will ascend, I will ascend! He sitteth in the Temple of God; he claims that he is God; he seeks God’s name as well as His place. And we know how fully it shall be true in his experience: “He that exalteth himself shall be abased.”

It is likewise true in principle in regard to each and all of us: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due season.” We feel perhaps that we would like God to do the exalting, but we will not do the humbling.

He desires to exalt us; we hinder Him. Humble your-

selves that He may exalt you in due season. He hath highly exalted Him.

As a further link still in the chain read verse 36: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."

"A man approved of God;" "raised up;" "exalted;" "made both Lord and Christ." What an expression of the honouring of the One who first of all honoured God! And God has not stopped honouring Him yet.

What shall be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honour? What shall be done to this One, "the Man Christ Jesus"? God will yet heap upon Him honours untold; He will yet lavish upon Him expressions of His appreciation in a future day; and the scene of His rejection and of His shame shall become the scene of His glorious reign. He will not sit on that throne only, He will sit on another throne besides. Thus and thus shall it be to the Man Whom God delights to honour.

We would like to trace matters still further if you will read with us a verse or two in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapter 1. 1-9.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is that which presents to us in comparison with other ones and other things, the GREATER ONE—the Person, and the worth, and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels are great, but He is greater. Moses was great, but He is greater. Melchizedek was great, but He is greater. All that are presented to us in this epistle to the Hebrews, are in their use by God but intended to bring out the greater glories of the Person of His Son; and in comparison with the shadow, to bring out the greater worth of the Person and the work of His Son,—the Substance.

He spake in time past to the fathers through the prophets; and God's speakings in times past to the fathers

through the prophets were solemn indeed, and not to be trifled with, nor to be heard indifferently; "for every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." If that was so in regard to God's speakings through the prophets, what shall it be of God's speakings in His Son? "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time they run out." "And, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

That Person, again, is presented not only in the light of what God speaks through Him, but also what He speaks to Him: "For unto the Son He saith." He says something to Him now, He said something about His Son when He spoke from heaven to earth: He saith now something to the Son; hear what he says:—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He holds Him as His equal: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He acknowledges Him as the enthroned One at His own right hand, "Thy throne." In the light of that cross we see that throne. And the expression of God's appreciation of the cross is that throne. He filled the cross; He fills the throne. The honour and the reward of that cross is that throne. And it is "Thy throne." He fills it. It is an undivided glory that has been given Him, for He does not share it with another. None shall share that throne. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Yea, indeed, He fills it as the very expression of God's appreciation of Him. He fills the throne. God's word hath put Him there.

"Sit Thou on My right hand,
Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet."

I will take the matter in hand now, says the mighty God: Sit at My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool.

But there is more than a throne, there is also a sceptre.

"And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom."

His foes put into His hand a reed, and they put a crown of thorns upon His brow, and they clothed Him with purple, and they bowed the knee and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" But they did it in mockery. They will yet own Him in reality.

A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom. A Throne, a Sceptre, a Kingdom. And just as that throne is the expression of God's appreciation of Him; in that Kingdom there are opportunities given to us who are His to express our appreciation of Him, for the Kingdom of God is righteousness, and that sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. The Kingdom answers to the sceptre, as the Kingdom answers to the throne. And why all this honour that has been given to Him? What is the reason of it? What is the cause of it?

We find God yet speaking, and speaking in language so wondrous concerning Him, as well as speaking in words just as wondrous to Him, "Thou hast loved righteousness." Oh, that such words could be said of you and me. And the One Who loved righteousness was the One Who fulfilled righteousness; Whose hands wrought righteous acts; Whose feet were found treading the paths of righteousness. That was the expression of His love of righteousness. It was very visible, it was very tangible, it was very real. God thus honours the One Who loved righteousness.

He did more, of which God also speaks, for He says, "Thou hast hated lawlessness." And his hate is as real as His love. His hate of lawlessness God appreciates equally with His love of righteousness.

"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore"—that is the reason then of all the honour that is His—"Therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

Here we find another expression of the honour that has been given to Him, namely: that He has got fellows, companions, those who are with Him; with Him as we found them with Him who went forth into Galilee unto Him. There they were with Him in the acknowledgment of Him and the appreciation of Him, for the one was the expression of the other.

They are with Him as those were with David who came to him and separated themselves unto him, and were found together with him in their appreciation of him, and in their acknowledgment of him as God's anointed. They were with him, and they owned him in the understanding of the times, knowing what they ought to do. The purpose of God for that time they had appreciated, and for that purpose they came to David, not to visit him and return again; oh! no, they came to David to turn the kingdom from Saul unto David, according to the word of the Lord. That word of the Lord declared the purpose of the times.

May we have understanding of the times to know what we ought to do, and be found as it were within the range of the will of God in the opportunity God hath given to us, lest we be before the times, or it may be, behind the times. May we have understanding of the times to know what we ought to do. And when we know what we ought to do, may we have grace to do it.

Thy Throne,

Thy Sceptre,

Thy Kingdom,

Thy Fellows.

And having the fellows there was no difficulty of having the Fellowship, for the expression of the fellows being together is the Fellowship which is of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And being there in the Fellowship, and being therein what we should be, will give us the oppor-

tunity of doing what God has done, and what God seeks that we should do, namely: honour the Son even as we honour the Father.

(Communicated by W. Cox.)

For Young Believers.

“As newborn babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.”—1 Peter 2. 2.

OBEDIENCE.

THE intrinsic worth and meritorious excellencies of Obedience are set forth in the Holy Scriptures under at least two distinctive heads. The one being that of under-listening so as to learn and then to comply. The other being persuaded as being reasoned with to do what is enjoined. Of the latter, Heb. 13. 17 may be taken as an easy to be understood example. Here the together-of-God are entreated to cause themselves to be reasoned with and so be persuaded by those leading them.

How disastrous are the effects, and how fatal the even well-meant zeal that makes those who should always be an example of and to the flock (that is the gathered and kept together of the Shepherd One) to hive off from THEIR FELLOWS: without whom they are the veriest “nothing,” even though the section thus broken off be united itself. At such a point the revealed fact that mere union is not divine unity, may well suffice to awaken to repentance and lead to manifest works meet therefor.

How, indeed, may those look for submission to them when they themselves are divided? If either acts, do they not provoke a despising of the one to the choosing of the other and that by those to whom the Lord does not allow either despising or choice?

Not the less harmful and wrong is the acting of united overseers, who are even as one man in the matter; when

what the church should do, they require to be done without the church as such having reasonable and proper opportunity to be heard in assenting or dissenting to what is proposed as being the Lord Christ's requirements.

It is anything but ancient history that overseers have acted unitedly and afterwards discovered that they were mistaken. As indeed the assembly united with them also.

Of these things overseers in, and the churches of God themselves, can hardly be too jealous. Nor can the young believer too clearly understand.

The present writer has personally observed sorest sorrow where "oversight" was undone. He has lived to fear that well-meant desire to do the BEAUTIFUL work is too frequently evidenced to be well-nigh anything but beautiful in either manner or matter. However that may be, it remains the indisputable responsibility of those leading to persuade those who are expected to obey, as it is no less the bounden duty of those being led to respectfully give attention to what is set before them. This the more carefully since not at their mouth, but of those who lead, will testimony of the matter be taken, and if those leading (NOT MERELY A SECTION OF THEM) give an account with groaning that will be unprofitable for the led ones.

Obedience as listening to learn and then to carry out is what the young believer should cause himself to be well-grounded in.

What a comment on Obedience is the word through Samuel the prophet—

"BEHOLD! TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE."

There, too, is intimated the Lord's pleasure in obedience. See 1 Sam. 15.

This but finds enforcement by the truth that He would have us not only to be His very children, but to be His Obedient children. Do not many appear to misunderstand

this? Is there not a settling down content that one is His? This ought not so to be. Heb. 5. 8, 9 tells us that Christ being made perfect has become the Author (that is Causer) of Eternal Salvation to all them that obey Him. Thus is shewn that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing (cometh) by a saying of Christ, and so is fulfilled the word the Holy Spirit speaketh through the prophet—

“HEAR AND THY SOUL SHALL LIVE.”

This hearing to learn, believe and do, finds happy exemplification in Abraham (Heb. 11.) who, WHEN he was called, listened, learned and went forth, not knowing where he was going, but knowing well Whom he believed, having heard and understood, he was now obeying. Little wonder that when he got to that land he was able to hear.

“The land that I said I will SHEW thee, lo, now, is the land that I will GIVE thee.” This Obedience as “He the Cause of Salvation to them that obey Him,” holds good as a principle of His will and way all the road from the Cross to the Crown.

Hath not God made Him Lord and Christ?

Doth not He command: Set Christ as Lord apart in your hearts?

For what purpose is He thus enthroned? For what purpose we repeat? if not but that

HE SHOULD BE OBEYED.

The sorrowfulness of *Disobedience*, as depicted in Rom. 5. 12-21, should be much pondered by the young believer. As should also the joyousness of *Obedience*, set out in Rom. 6.

The young believer may suffer the exhortation to observe well the antithesis in verse 16. Note it is sin and death. Obedience and righteousness, NOT life! This is highly important.

Meditate much over the principle of "his servant ye are to whom ye obey."

After all, then, whose servant art thou? Whose, whose am I?

Here are rays that make Röntgen rays to pale and search-lights of men to be as mere rush-lights in the blaze of this candle of the Lord.

This candle that distinguisheth human kind from brute kind as spirit doth the animal kingdom from the vegetable kingdom.

Oh! how solemn the matter is, even "Of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Either is possible to thee and to me, dear child of God!

The weightiness (the Lampstand of pure gold had weight, but no measurement) of Obedience when it is that which a church of God should manifest is shown in 2 Cor. 10. 6. How idle must be the disobedient dealing with the disobedient. An illustration may help some.

A company of baptized believers, breaking bread weekly, who declare themselves not a church of God, had occasion sometime ago to deal with one whom they wished to put away from among them. Reading Scriptures to this end, they were answered by the alleged delinquent: "The words you have read are directions to a church of God; you say you are not a church of God, therefore those words are not for you," and there the flagrantly lawless one is to this day. The Confederates of that assembly have no readiness to deal with this and kindred evils.

The beautiful words as to Obedience spoken to children in Eph. 6. 1, Col. 3. 20 may surely be made one's own by every young believer to whom it remains the opportunity to be such a child. No less should servants regard the like beautiful words (much needed to be put in remembrance of) as to this reward-full obedience given in Eph. 6. 5, Col. 3. 22.

And all find enlivening encouragement from Phil. 2. 14.
Thus again, in closing we may ring out--

“Behold to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Wherefore forget not, neither neglect 1 Pet. 1. 14-25.

JOHN BROWN.

BIBLE WOMEN: HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(MIRIAM.)

As we pass on to the book of Exodus we have one brought before us in her youth, a tender, loving, watchful sister caring for her baby brother. As he lay in the place of death how anxiously she watched, although she stood afar off, to see what would become of him. Her watching was not in vain, and soon we find her drawing near to Pharaoh's daughter with all the courage that a loving sister's heart can command. She suggests a nurse of the Hebrew women to care for the boy upon whom the princess had taken compassion, and soon she receives the royal command to go and find one. With what light feet and with what a joyful heart would that sister run, and who could be better to fetch than his mother. Her service of anxious watching was rewarded. The babe is handed over to more than a nurse's care, and the little home circle is made to rejoice as the babe grows on his mother's knees.

Do we not learn from this that all should seek in their early days to be faithful in that which is least? The little daily duties of the household done as unto the Lord will not lose their reward. Even now we may know the blessedness of

BEING A HELP TO THOSE AROUND US

and thus bring joy and gladness into our home circle.

Forty years have passed away and great changes have

taken place when we next see the loving sister of Moses. The terrible plagues of Jehovah have fallen upon Egypt, Israel has escaped out of the hands of their oppressors, the Red Sea has been crossed as on dry land, and Pharaoh's host has been overthrown in the sea. The Song of Moses is heard ascending in joyful strains to Jehovah their God. Miriam, who is now spoken of as a prophetess, is heard to respond, and she leads the women in the joyful refrain :—

“Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ;
“The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

And such is the privilege of women to-day, to lead others to sing unto the Lord, seeing they have known the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Happy, joyous privilege this! May Christian women, through grace, be enabled to delight in it more and more and sing of their Redeemer and encourage one another to rejoice in the Lord always.

As we follow Miriam in the wilderness journey we come to a sad failure in her life's history. She who commenced the journey with a song of praise is now heard to murmur against the brother she had so loved. What is her complaint? Moses had married a Cushite woman and jealousy and envy sprang up in the hearts of Miriam and Aaron ; and they said : “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not also spoken by us?” And the Lord heard it, and Moses, Aaron, and Miriam are called to stand forth alone in the presence of the Lord to hear the testimony of Jehovah concerning His servant Moses. When the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, behold

MIRIAM WAS LEPROUS, WHITE AS SNOW ;

and as Aaron looked upon her and beheld the evidence of God's sore displeasure, he, the high priest, was led in all humility to confess,

“WE HAVE DONE FOOLISHLY . . . WE HAVE SINNED.”

Then Moses is heard to cry unto the Lord on her behalf, saying, “Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee.”

But Miriam must be made to feel her own guiltiness, not only before the Holy One of Israel, but also before all the people, and she has to be shut out from the camp seven days. What a deeply solemn lesson is brought before us in all this. May it lead us to consider our ways! Though we have entered upon the wilderness journey, begun with praise to God for our redemption through the precious blood of Christ, we also, as Miriam, may fall into Satan’s snare and allow envy and jealousy to spring up in our hearts, causing us to raise our voice against those whom God has set over us and through whom He has been pleased to make known His will, and concerning whom He has expressly taught us to esteem them exceedingly highly in love for their work’s sake (1 Thess. 5. 12, 13).

We need to remember, in view of such things, that we must all be manifested before the Judgment Seat of Christ. There each individual will be dealt with by the One Who now takes account of all our thoughts and words and deeds.

We may also learn a lesson from the meek Moses as he cried to God for his sinning sister who had spoken so grievously against him. Let us seek grace to act in the same way so that sinning ones may be healed by God. Yet let us remember that no progress can be made by an assembly unless sin is righteously dealt with.

In Micah 6. Miriam is again referred to. Here she is said to have been

SENT BY GOD

with Moses and Aaron when the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. Thus we see that one who had in early days learned to be faithful in little things was afterward sent by God to a more important sphere of service.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

V. MARCH 9.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING,

MATTHEW 3.; MARK 1. 1-13; LUKE 3. 1-20.

THE Gospel according to Mark gives no account of the early life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes into view as a full grown man, coming from Nazareth to Galilee.

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” are the opening words; and we may well keep this word “beginning” in view, remembering that Luke speaks in his treatise of what “Jesus began both to do and to teach.”

As a beginning then of this beginning we are introduced to the messenger (angel) sent before the face of Jehovah to prepare His way—“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord (or perhaps rather the voice of one crying, Make ye ready in the wilderness the way of the Lord), make His paths straight.”

As to this word “straight” (*εὐθύς*, *euthus*), from it is derived the well-known word “straightway” (*εὐθεῶς*, *euthēōs*) which occurs so frequently in Mark; somewhere about forty times out of about eighty occurrences in the whole of the New Testament (about fifteen times in Matthew, seventeen times in Luke and Acts, six times in John’s writings). One thing therefore especially noticeable in Mark being the directness with which the Lord goes from item to item of His work.

We can throw no light on the difficulty offered by the mention of Isaiah’s name in Mark 1. 2, R.V., the first quotation being from Malachi 3. 1. The second quotation is from Isaiah 40. 3. Perhaps the words from Malachi should be regarded in the light of a parenthesis. This is probably one of the passages where the higher critics would seek to explain how the writer came to make such a mistake.

But as we seek to rather get behind the human penman to the Holy and Divine Author, who cannot err, we would rather seek in humble faith to ask what is meant by the seeming discrepancy.

All three gospels concur in showing that to make the path straight for the coming Saviour, it behoved the forerunner to preach repentance. Note particularly here the words quoted in Luke 3. 7-14.

By comparison of this scripture (verse 7) with the parallel portion in Matthew (verse 7), it becomes clear that what was said to the multitudes generally was provoked by the presence of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, but who, as we elsewhere learn, were not baptized, probably on account of what would be called by some his ungracious, and uncourtly, and even rude speaking.

Thus early the mountains and valleys began to change places, according to that which is written.

But if Pharisees and Sadducees rejected his baptism, not so the One Who was higher than all, Who did no sin, Who had no sin, Who knew no sin.

He comes away from His home at Nazareth to Galilee to be baptized. The thirty years now draw to a close; the quiet life in the carpenter's shop has been lived, oh, how beautifully! But beyond this now looms before Him the path of duty and of love. Toil and trouble unknown to Him by experience as yet; and beyond, in the not far distance, the shadow of an awful woe, the darkness of the blackest hour that man has ever known lie at the distance of but a few years hence. With purpose of heart to do the will of His Father and God, be the cost what it may, He comes away from the quiet and tranquil life that notwithstanding its lowliness and hardships was not, methinks, without enjoyment to the perfect man, to face the harder path, to take up the heavier burden, to hate His life and

lay it down, for thus in the volume of the book it was written of Him.

And first in deepest lowliness He will be dipped in Jordan's waters by John. John indeed seeks to hinder, but with firmness and decision, and yet in gentle words, He insists. At the outset of His path these waters of Jordan roll, and under their depths He will now be submerged ere He starts on the work which His Father had given Him to do; leading to deeper waters, when

... all the billows passed o'er Him,
Our sins they bore Him down;
For us He met the o'erwhelming flood,
He met the Almighty's frown.

But if this action of the Son tells clearly of His obedience and submission, it is in a voice which finds an echo in the very heavens above. The heavens were rent asunder, and from the opened vault descended, in bodily form as a dove, the Holy Spirit and came upon Him. The Father also speaks—

“Thou art My Son, My beloved, in Thee I am well pleased.”
“This is My Son, My beloved, in Whom I am well pleased.”

Straight from this scene the Holy One who had come upon Him drives Him into the wilderness to meet with one who had so successfully assailed the first man in a garden. Here for forty days Satan tempted Him. The wild beasts were there, but neither these nor the Devil could harm, for His trust was in God, and in God was all His delight.

VI. MARCH 23.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 4. 1-11;

LUKE 4. 1-14.

STRAIGHT from the token of the Father's approbation the Lord is hurried by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tried and tempted there. There He was proved as gold tried in the fire, and the trial of His faith and virtue far more precious than ought else was to praise and honour and glory.

The account of this important time is very short, but though there are some points of difficulty, the salient facts stand out in bold relief.

Corresponding to the forty years during which the earthly Israel wandered in the wilderness, the period of the Lord's temptation was forty days—a day for a year (see Numbers 14. 34). During this period He fasted, and at the end He hungered. Then we are told of three definite temptations to evil by the Devil. Whether these three took place at the end of the time, and constituted the whole temptation, or whether the temptation was more or less spread over the whole period, and the three things mentioned are simply chosen for record on account of their intrinsic importance, is not quite clear to the present writer.

The actual order in which the three attacks were made seems to be given in Matthew. For there only (see R.V.) when the temptation to worship the Devil is offered, the Lord is recorded to have said, "Get thee hence, Satan." Then saith the Scripture, "Then the Devil leaveth Him, and behold angels came and ministered to Him." So that this seems to mark the close of the period. The first temptation is recorded in almost identical words by Matthew and Luke.

"If Thou be Son of God,

"Command that these stones become loaves" (Matthew).

"Command this stone that it become a loaf" (Luke).

The variation however is enough to show that all the tempter's words are not given in either gospel. Picture the scene—the hungry Man, the Son of God, there in dependence on His Heavenly Father to give Him what the body needed as pleased Him. To Him comes the tempter—"If Thou art God's Son Thou hast no need to wait on another; here is a stone, command it to become a loaf—it is easy for Thee—here are stones in plenty, make them to be loaves and feast on plenty." The reply of the Lord is instructive indeed,—

“It is written—

‘Not by bread alone shall man live,

But by every word (saying) proceeding out of the mouth of God.’”

The Devil then, in his next essay, also quotes that which is written. The omission by him of the words,

“To keep Thee in all Thy ways”

has been noted as though it were a Satanic device to deceive by misquotation. In the light of the freedom with which betimes the Lord and His Apostles quote the Old Testament this seems to us without justification. Especially as we gather from Luke that he quoted as from two portions (see in R.V. how the quotation of Psalm 91. 11 in Luke 4. 10 is disjoined from that of Psalm 91. 12 in Luke 4. 11 by the word “and”).

The Lord makes no comment on any misquotation.

“Again it is written,” said He—

“‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’”

The Lord may tempt us as He tempted Abraham; not indeed to evil, James 1. 13 makes that plain; but He tempts us with what is good, as a nurse will tempt a patient with nourishing delicacies. But to tempt the Lord is forbidden absolutely. In the path of duty He will care for His own. To step out of that path is to tempt the Lord (see Psalm 95. and its quotation in Hebrews 3.).

The third temptation, which Luke puts second, was to accept from Satan’s hands the authority and glory of the kingdoms of the earth without suffering or woe, simply by owning allegiance to him. This, I suppose, was the greatest temptation that Satan could offer. It failed, as did the others, ignominiously. For the Prince of this world when he came found nothing in Him—nothing within to respond to the temptation without.

So Hebrews 4. 15 is correctly rendered:—“In all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin”; not “yet with-

out sin." He was not tempted on all points as we are, for in Him there was no sin (John 3. 5)—nothing to respond to temptation without. ✓

He was as the near kinsman. Howbeit there were kinsmen nearer than He. But the nearer kinsman could not redeem. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother."

We conclude by a continuation of our enumeration of quotations.

QUOTATION 6 from Isaiah 40. 3.

„ 7 from Deut. 8. 3.

„ 8 from Psa. 91. 11.

„ 9 from Deut. 6. 16.

„ 10 from Deut. 6. 13 and 10. 20.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

VII. APRIL 6.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 1.

We solicit Correspondence from Readers of these Notes on any points of difficulty or interest that may arise. We are thankful to be able to commence publication of such by inserting the following

Correspondence.

BIBLE READING II.

WITH much interest and help have I read and considered the notes for systematic study of the Gospels, more especially the second paper for Lord's Day, January 26, appearing in this month's issue of NEEDED TRUTH.

Matthew 1. 1-17. This portion, which many of us regarded as one of the less interesting portions of Scripture, you have thought well to point out to us its great importance in such a manner as encourages us younger ones to give more heed thereto. A manner which not only causes us to think, but invites us to speak. I refer specially now to page 23, where, after your annotation on page 22, you tell us that "the numeration of the genera-

tions in Matthew offers difficulties which are beyond the ability of the present writer to solve," and again, "It is clear that we have here that which we cannot understand."

This spirit leads us to cry with the Psalmist, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord. Teach me Thy paths, lead me in Thy truth, and teach me." God gives nothing to him who wants nothing. For is our strength not made perfect in weakness?

Being thus minded I take the liberty to forward a few thoughts upon the difficulty which this portion offers, feeling confident that you will not consider my spirit or manner of expression presumptuous. I merely submit my thoughts for further consideration, and as one willing to sit at the feet of others and learn. I write as follows—

The difficulty seems to be to arrange the generations into three series of fourteen each, according to verse 17.

Now it occurs to me that but for verse 17 we possibly never would have thought of making any arrangement; we simply would have followed the line from Abraham unto the Christ. If so, why not adhere strictly to the three divisions *as given therein*, viz.:

From Abraham unto David (1),

From David unto the removal to Babylon (2),

From the removal to Babylon unto the Christ (3).

A difficulty certainly does arise by counting the second division from David unto Jechoniah, but verse 17 distinctly states from David unto the carrying away to Babylon—from a person to a period.

In other words, as the first division begins *from* Abraham, so the second also begins *from* David. The first extends to David and includes him, the second extends to the carrying away to Babylon, that is, to an epoch, and not a person; and therefore the persons who are mentioned as coeval with this epoch (about the time of carrying away—verse 11), are not reckoned before it; after the epoch the enumerations begin again with Jechoniah and end with the Christ,

In this way the three divisions are made out thus :

From Abraham unto David, 14 generations.

From David unto Josiah, 14 generations.

From Josiah unto the Christ, 14 generations.

Kindly bear with me adding a few words of comment. The special design of these verses is to establish by proofs of an incontestable kind that the Jesus born in Bethlehem was no usurper, but the long promised and divinely predicted Messiah, that as Son of Abraham all blessings for man and the earth were centred in Him, and as Son of David He was the legal heir to the throne of Judah.

Thus His genealogy is traced up to *two persons*, David and Abraham, the roots and sources of royalty and blessing to Jew and Gentile. This, I am sure, is clear to all. But if God desires to teach us by counting *from* Abraham and *from* David, surely His counting *from* the carrying away to Babylon is not without meaning.

The primary teaching of the portion, as we have said, undoubtedly is to establish the Messiahship of Christ and His legal title to Judah's throne ; but does God not desire to stir up the minds of His people by calling to remembrance former days ? Surely this is so.

Let us look at the divisions in their order—

(1) Why count from Abraham ?

Because the Lord had sworn by Himself unto Abraham —“ In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ” (Genesis 22. 18).

(2) Why count from David ?

Because of the fact that David was the first king of God's choice, and unto him the promise was given : “ I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever ” (2 Samuel 7. 12, 13). All this speaks of the abiding faithfulness of Him who promised.

(3) Why count from the removal to Babylon ?

Is it not to remind His people (by way of warning), of a time when (because of their disobedience through unbelief in Him Who is great in might and strong in battle) they were given unto the hand of the heathen, and they who hated them ruled over them? But for their unfaithfulness never would the willows of Babylon have been adorned with the harps of Zion, while her daughter sat and wept as she remembered her courts.

Thus we see the wondrous grace of God warning His people by reminding them of their unfaithfulness and an oppressor's rule, under which they had groaned, while upon the other hand He proves His faithfulness by announcing that the promised ruler—whose goings forth are of old, from everlasting—*had come forth*.

Did they hear? Alas, no! They rejected God's Ruler, and would not heed His warning, and as a nation their cry still is, "We have no King but Caesar."

Yes, rejected by the nation He was, but as now, so then *the few* were in the mind of God, for this (and only this) Gospel tells us of those who did enquire where is the King of the Jews that is Born? (ch. 2 and 2 R. V.).

When as individuals or companies we become too popular, we may be sure there is something wrong.

As a nation, we have said, they made their choice, but they have yet to taste of the rule which they chose. A rule which shall beget a deeper sorrow than ever Babylon's captives knew, but from under which God (as of old) shall hear their cry, regard their distress, and will deliver.

"Far, far away His people oft have strayed,
Yet His loving kindness never is delayed."

Then shall they know that the Lord is the faithful God, Who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

With greetings in the Lord, I am, sincerely yours in Him,

A. McG,

INTERNAL DISCIPLINE.

WE propose to offer certain suggestions in connection with this important subject for the patient and prayerful consideration of fellow saints. Whilst knowing that there will be nothing new in what is now advanced, we plead that the matters dealt with will not be lightly set aside because of that, under the plea, we know that already. It is often in apparently simple things, and in that which we are supposed to understand clearly that we go astray ourselves and lead others with us.

It may simplify matters if we consider the subject of internal discipline as it affects three well defined circles. These are :

The Individual.

The Assembly.

The Fellowship.

Each of these, if it is of God at all, is in itself a definite unity which is of divine creation ; and in each the presence and power of God may consequently be known, empowering it to deal with everything contrary to God's holiness which comes within its sphere.

The individual is therefore responsible to deal with everything of the nature of sin in his own life. The assembly is responsible to deal with persons in its own midst whose life and walk are contrary to the mind of God. The fellowship is responsible to deal with assemblies in its own circle when a certain stage of failure, disorder or sin is reached. Thus,

The individual deals with acts.

The assembly deals with persons.

The fellowship deals with assemblies.

Our subject, be it noted, is *internal* discipline. With the further and final acts of definitely putting away either

acts, persons or assemblies, we do not at present deal in particular. We shall only occasionally touch on the latter incidentally.

An individual may be found allowing some things to prevail in his life, at a particular point, which are of doubtful quality. He may not have a clear conscience regarding them in the presence of God, and yet he may not be certain that they are positively sinful. When this point is reached by any child of God a halt may well be called, for the situation is extremely critical. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"; and to continue to permit anything to obtain in our lives which we have doubts regarding will almost certainly have direful results. It may embolden a person to further daring, and may even cause him to trifle with known sin.

Therefore it is of the first importance for the spiritual welfare of an individual child of God that he should know how to deal with, it may be, the many doubtful things which cross his pathway in life. Where there is no doubt and where anything is known to be sin, there is no difficulty regarding what ought to be done. Moreover, let us add, that sin is sometimes so deceitful and so pleasing to the flesh that doubts are too frequently harboured where none should be entertained. But where doubts really exist, what course does God hold an individual responsible to adopt? A halt must be called; the thing, whatever it is, must be stopped; not another step must be taken in the doubtful pathway.

Ah! would to God that we knew and practised this more faithfully in connection with our individual pathways in life! What sorrows we might thereby be saved from! The day alone will declare it!

Here then is an aspect of discipline in the individual life of the child of God which is not final; and it answers in great measure to what we have termed internal dis-

cipline. The doubtful thing is not entirely cast away from the life as sin, but it is for the time being rendered inoperative; and there will be a diligent seeking unto God in prayer and to the word of His grace so that He may cause His light to shine upon our ways, and either manifest that the doubtful matter is sin, or is well pleasing in His sight. Thus the doubtful thing finds itself in a place of isolation from our lives, and there it must remain until we know how to deal with it in fellowship with God. This is in perfect harmony with the principle which is so manifestly seen all through the Scriptures that evil, or suspected evil, should be confined within the narrowest possible limits, because it is calculated to lay hold of and affect its surroundings in a defiling manner.

In the wider sphere of the assembly we shall find something very analogous to what we have been pointing out in connection with the individual. Here, however, it is not things that are in question, but persons.

The watchful eyes of the Shepherd-ones in an assembly detect with sorrow the disorderly walk of some person. To the Lord and to one another they speak thereof, and in the fear of God they seek in all humility to correct the erring one and to lead him to forsake his disorderly ways. The healthful teaching of the Word of God is brought to bear on the wrong manner of life, but yet the person remains obstinate and refuses to conform his ways to the will of God. After patient waiting, and faithful and gracious dealing, a point will be reached when the will of God revealed in 2 Thess. 3. will require to be given effect to. The disorderly walker will require to be publicly noted in the assembly.

Here, however, let us pause a moment to warn against the danger of precipitate action in such cases. The wondrous patience of the God of patience, the love and tenderness of the good and great Shepherd may well con-

strain us to be definitely certain that we have exhausted every lawful means of winning the erring one before we seek to exercise the internal discipline which the Scriptures indicate.

But, supposing that everything has been done which God desires, we ask, in what place does the erring person find himself in the assembly? Mark, he is still within, after he has been named to the assembly according to 2 Thess. 3. 14, but to him his fellows cannot extend fellowship. He is shunned, he is isolated, he is shut up by himself. He is not considered as an enemy, but is admonished as a brother, and the assembly's action toward him is with a view to his restoration to God and to full fellowship with his brethren. As with the individual as we have seen, in whose life there is something questionable, so now with the assembly, there will be an earnest seeking unto God in prayer, there will be a real humbling before Him, that the erring one may be delivered from his disorderly ways. Where this is faithfully done the result will either be that the disciplined person will be so melted in heart, that he will confess and forsake his erring ways, or it will sooner or later be clearly manifested that the manner of life for which he was shut up within was but a partial manifestation of sore departure from God in heart and ways, which in the end will either result in his cutting himself off, or the word of God will demand that he be put away from the within to the without.

The assembly's part in such matters is an intensely solemn one. What searching it should cause in every heart when saints are called to discipline their fellow! What mourning before the Lord should be known! What faithful shunning of the erring one in the fear and love of God should be practised! It is to be feared that God's restoring hand is often stayed by saints failing in this, and conniving with the disciplined one. The result is that too often the

discipline fails in its desired effect—restoration to God—and others who may have been secretly departing from God are not stayed in their evil course. At Corinth it would appear that all had not sorrowed as God would have them do because of the assembly's act in putting away the sinning one, and the apostle expresses his fear that when he would come to them some might still be found who had not repented of their own sin, although they had been parties to the putting away of their fellow, 2 Corinthians 12, 20, 21. But here let it be noted that the putting away of the sinning one was the assembly's act, that all participated in that act, whether they benefited thereby according to the mind of God or not.

Let it be noted, that up to a certain point the individual is responsible to judge everything in his life which is contrary to the mind of God. When this is faithfully done, and sin is dealt with according to God's will, the matters are settled between the individual and God alone. Where, however, there is either the lack of desire or the inability to deal with sin in the individual sphere, a stage is almost certain to be reached when it passes beyond the individual's province to deal with it, and the assembly has thrown upon it the solemn responsibility of disciplining the erring one. When this point is reached, however willing the individual may be to try to rectify in private what has been wrong, it may be impossible for the assembly to refrain from taking public notice of the matters in question. The time for individual dealing may have passed away, and the point may be reached when it can alone be put right by the assembly. An assembly in fellowship with God will never be anxious for such dealings, yet it should never be found refusing to exercise the discipline of God when His Word makes manifest the necessity for it.

This matter of internal discipline in an assembly is of

great importance, and it is to be feared that for various reasons it has not been faithfully executed. Had it been, perhaps the necessity for the extreme action of putting away would not have been so common. Doubtless it requires infinitely more grace and faithfulness to God and His saints in the former than in the latter. It may be comparatively easy to excommunicate, and so have little or nothing further to do with the person, but it requires saints to be in abiding fellowship with God to continue for weeks or months to treat their brother becomingly, while he remains shut up by himself in the place of isolation within.

Coming to the wider circle of the Fellowship we shall find what answers very directly to internal discipline in an assembly, but here it is not individuals that are in question, but assemblies. So long as an assembly can correct its own disorders in its own circle, so that the Fellowship of which it forms part is not directly affected thereby, it is alone the responsibility of that assembly to do so. This does not mean, however, that the assembly is an independent unit, and that it may not require to ask help and counsel from others. But as with the individual who cannot deal with his personal sins in private because others have been affected thereby, and it becomes the responsibility of the assembly of which he forms part to deal with it, so a point may be reached by an assembly when its disorders directly affect the Fellowship of which it forms part, and the correcting of these disorders passes beyond the province of the assembly, and becomes the responsibility of the Fellowship. When that point is reached, however anxious the assembly or part of the assembly may be to deal with the disorders, it becomes equally as imperative that the Fellowship, and not alone the assembly in question, should have the opportunity of discharging its obligations in connection with the dealings, as it is necessary that the

assembly and not alone the individual should deal with personal sins.

And this dealing on the part of the Fellowship with the disorderly assembly will proceed on parallel lines to the dealing of the assembly with the individual. In connection with the latter, overseeing men of the assembly take the prominent part in dealing with the person on behalf of the assembly. In connection with the former, the surrounding assemblies which form one little flock will, in the persons of their overseeing men, take the prominent part in dealing with the assembly on behalf of the Fellowship. But neither in the one case nor the other do overseeing men themselves exercise the discipline. This is alone the province of the assembly or the assemblies, as the case may be.

If therefore the behaviour of an assembly is so disorderly that it becomes the responsibility of the Fellowship to deal with it (and we believe this point is reached when the Fellowship is directly affected by those disorders), and provided the disorders cannot be speedily corrected, by an extension of the principle of 2 Thessalonians **3.**, we believe it would be necessary for the assembly to get the same place in the Fellowship as the individual gets in the assembly, namely, to be isolated, to be shut up by itself, so that no one may come out therefrom and no one go in thereto. Here also the law of God with reference to the house which is suspected of being leprous (Lev. **14.**) clearly holds good. The house is shut up, and none but the priest and those working with him under his directions are found coming in contact therewith. It may be found that scraping of the walls alone is required, or a few stones may need to be removed, and if the signs of leprosy are destroyed thereby the house is thrown open, and is declared to be fit for habitation as before; but should it be found by the priest's dealings that the dwelling is a leprous house then it must be entirely removed.

Thus, when disorders have reached a definite point in an assembly and the Fellowship has to shut it up in isolation, awaiting the time when God will manifest His mind concerning it, the assembly finds itself in a similar place in the Fellowship to that in which the disciplined individual finds himself in the assembly. Neither are excommunicated; neither are put without; both are shut up within, and for the time being no company is had with them. In the figure of Leviticus 14. the door is shut, and none go in and none come out thereat save those whose responsibility it is, under the direction of the Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to deal with the matter, namely, the overseeing men of adjacent assemblies who are acting on behalf of the Fellowship.

And as we have to express the fear that this important aspect of discipline has been sadly neglected in connection with individuals, and evil has thus been permitted to grow unchecked, until the person has had to be excommunicated, does not the total absence of anything corresponding to it in the dealings of the fellowship with disorderly assemblies also leave an open door for the spread of evil, which God would have confined within the narrowest possible limits? Here also, alas! excommunication on the one hand, and treating of the assembly or any part of it as if little or nothing had happened on the other, are much easier paths than a godly isolation of the disorderly assembly, and a real humbling and sorrowing before God on the part of the Fellowship, as they seek the restoration of the erring company, to whom in the meantime they are unable to extend full fellowship.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

"MINE."

SWEET is the thought that Thou art mine,
 My Saviour and my Friend:
 Sweeter the thought that I'll be Thine
 When time and life shall end.

Sad is the thought that, though I'm Thine,
 I spurn Thy tender pleadings:
 Still sad the thought that I decline
 To walk beside Thy leadings.

Great is Thy love, great is Thy care,
 Thy mercy, and Thy smile:
 Greater Thy patience to me where
 My path is mix'd with guile.

Bright is the joy of peace through grace,
 Purchased by Thy own self:
 Brighter the hope to meet Thy face,
 And share Thy glorious wealth.

B.

"THE LORD FROM HEAVEN."

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON LUKE 4. 16-22. BY H. ELSON.

THESE verses record a remarkable incident in the life of Christ.—Not that other incidents in that life were not remarkable: quite the reverse. His career was unique, each detail being marked with significance and value. I am impressed that the more closely the life of the Son of God as set forth in the four-fold gospel is examined, the more microscopically it is looked into, the more will its Divine beauty, its peerless worth, be appreciated. We cannot look at it too closely, or in too much detail. There are human things that the more you look into them the more they are found to be not what they appear. But when we

come to Divine revelation, and to Him who is the central object of that revelation we find perfection, and as we are enabled of God, according to the working of His Spirit, to look carefully and reverently into the setting forth of the Christ, the character and value of His wondrous life increasingly appear.

I have been impressed in the last chapter of the Gospel according to John with the notable words with which the book closes, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written."

There are two things that make this statement wonderful, and cause me to marvel at the life and works of Him of whom it speaks. First, the brevity of the life wherein those works were done: and second, the limited area in which the life was lived.

Just think how brief that life upon earth was, especially that part of it lived in public, and it is to this principally that the Divine record refers, the years of His public work, how few they were, computed at seven years by some, at half that period by others. If, however, you take the longest computation, how short! And yet, if everything He did were recorded, says the Apostle, "I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." Is not that enough to speak to us of the marvellous character of the life and the works of the Christ of God? How different with mere men! Not many books would be necessary to chronicle the public deeds of the longest and most eminent life. How insignificant are the most illustrious lives as compared with His life, so brief, but embracing so much! Is not this enough to make us think of that life as we never thought of it before?

Then as to the limited area of His labours; how small it was! Look at others by way of contrast, take for example

the apostle Paul, how vast was the geographical scope of his labours! what a traveller he was! But here was His Divine Master just living out that life, the record of which is so surpassingly full of interest, in a little strip of land less than a fifth part of the extent of England and Wales.

Here then are two points in that unique life, and if we go into its details we simply stand in awe and say as some said when they saw Him still the tempest with a word, "Who then is this?" Blessed be God, we know who He is. And it is because we know Him that we say there is no life like His. Thus we connect the life with the Person, and the character of the time demands that we should give very distinct testimony to the truth as to the Person of the Son of God. The Man who walked this earth was One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt. Here you get the root and essence of that which gives character to His deeds, which causes them to stand alone in their dignity.

Take the best of His servants, they are but men of like passions with ourselves; men indeed, marvellously graced of God, whose names we think upon and speak of with all becoming respect and honour. Yet after all only men; fellow saints and servants of God. But here is a man who is the Lord from heaven. That is the fact that imparts a character to His life which belongs to none other. "He is the true God and the eternal life."

Especially would we witness to this truth in view of the way in which the Lord Jesus is spoken of and written about in the present day. Reference is made from platform and pulpit and in the press to one whom these modern religious leaders speak of as "Jesus," but I notice that they rarely, if ever, speak of Him as "the Lord Jesus Christ." I fully believe there is that in the name "Jesus" which if understood takes us to the deepest depth and to the highest height. But it is evident that they merely use this name of Him as a man among

men; and the fashion to-day is to dilate upon the life of "Jesus" without reference to the Divine majesty of His person, and with scant reference to His death. Even where that death is referred to it just amounts to this (I am speaking now of what is characteristic of the popular religion of the present day), that His death was the crowning act of a martyr life: From this humanitarian standpoint He is "a moral example," "the elder brother of the human race," and so forth. How these men at their best belittle the Person whose greatness is unspeakable. They talk much about the goodness of His life, but they understand nothing of its goodness as the Scriptures speak, and they appear to be equally in the dark as to the character and value of His death and the glory of His Person.

To those who preach the gospel I would say, be most pronounced as to the truth of the Person of Christ: Perfect Man; very God. The life which He lived in the days of His holy flesh shining with the brightness of incarnate Deity, and imparting infinite value to His sacrificial death.

Now look again at Luke 4. 16-22. "There was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah."

I might observe here that throughout the New Testament, the Old Testament writings are Divinely authenticated. "Critics" may tell us that there is no book of "the prophet Isaiah" properly speaking, but a composite document from half a dozen different hands pieced together by an unknown editor; but a Christian who is content to be in the instruction of God the Holy Spirit will have no difficulty about such points; the internal evidences of the Word of God are so complete. And in regard to the book in question the words of Luke 4. 17 are conclusive. "There was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah." And the Lord refers to it as "this scripture."

In verse 17 we read, "He opened the book." Connect that with verse 20, "He closed the book." (But do not over-

look what comes between.) I want to suggest to you from these very simple words, "He opened the book," and "He closed the book," that it is perfectly evident the Lord Jesus knew just where to open the book; and He knew exactly at what point to close the book.

There is a good deal in that. It is no small thing for one who stands up to read the Word of God and to minister, to know how far to read and speak and when to stop. Let us beware of an over-abundant speech, "The talk of the lips" which tendeth "only to penury."

Again in verse 17 we note He "found the place." He did not open the Book at haphazard, and surely we ought not to open the Book at random, but with method and design both in our private reading and in public ministry. Do not think that I am overlooking the value of snatching a word or two from the Book at such times and under such circumstances that nothing else may be possible. Far better that than not to open the Book at all. But if you think to *live* upon that, your living will be a very poor one; we shall never become mighty in the Scriptures if we thus treat them.

Let us rather read the Scriptures prayerfully, methodically, and with application of mind and dependence on God. By these means shall we gain increased understanding of what we read, we shall become impressed deeply with the Divine value of the Word of God, the perfection of its matter and the marvels of its structure, and thus become furnished through the Scriptures unto every good work, those beautiful works that God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

In another way also the Lord Jesus sets us an example here in His perfect manner of handling the Word of God. Turning up Isaiah 61. (the chapter from which He read) we find in verse 2, "The acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God"; these appear so closely

connected that one seems to follow the other in quick uninterrupted succession. Not so, however, in reality, and with perfect knowledge and accuracy, the Lord, after reading the words, "The acceptable year of the Lord," closed the book and gave it back to the attendant. Then addressing His hearers He said, "*To-day* hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." Precisely so; well did He know that "the day of vengeance" was far distant, that grace must first reign throughout this dispensation; and so we see this perfect accuracy and application of the Scriptures. It was a wonderful reading, that reading in the Synagogue at Nazareth, a reading worthy of Him who was the Lord from Heaven.

(Communicated by W. Cox.)

For Young Believers.

"As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 Peter 2. 2.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

VII. APRIL 6.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 1.

As to order of time the Apostle John in this gospel goes back further than any other writer. Genesis 1. 1 takes us back to the first creation of the first heavens and the first earth. At such a beginning time there began to be the first created of all created beings that had a beginning. But in the beginning the Word was; that is, when that came into being which was the first to be created, the Word was, the Word was with God, the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God and by Him all things were made or became. Note the use of the true word "was" here, and distinguish it from the word "became," that is was made or came to be. The A.V. reads—"There was a man sent from God" (verse 6); this

is wrong. There became such a man; he came to be, he was made. But as to the Word "He was God, but He became flesh" (verse 14).

John thus tells us nothing of the immaculate conception, of the human parentage, nothing of the boyhood or youth. The subject of the book is the One sent from God, as again and again and again we are told. He was in the world that He had made and it knew Him not; He came unto His own things and His own folks received Him not.

Note in verse 14 the first use by the writer of the personal pronoun. Those of verses 12, 13 include the beloved disciple who says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us full of grace and truth." Compare 1 John 1. 1.

Now we get a mention of John the forerunner; his first testimony is here recorded in verses 15 to 18.

It may be worth while noticing that John as well as Matthew, Mark, Luke, records the testimony of John the Baptist.

Passing on to the passage verses 29 to 34, we see clearly that this must be subsequent to the temptation of the Lord which was the subject of Matt. 4. 1-11, Mark 1. 12, 13, and Luke 4. 1-13, but it and much else is prior to John's incarceration (Matt. 4. 12, Mark 1. 14, Luke 3. 19). Then as verses 29, 35, 43 each begins "On the morrow," it follows that the whole passage (John 1. 19 to 51) is comprised in the course of a few days. The fact that John 2. records the Lord's beginning of signs shows us moreover that it is here we may find Him at the very commencement of His public ministry.

The commencement of the Lord's work then consists in a private conversation with two disciples of John the Baptist, who as a result thereof spend a day or two with Him, and as we know from other scriptures soon go back to their fishing. One of these was Andrew, who finds Simon his brother; the other was likely enough John

himself, who perhaps fetched his brother James. Two more are found the next day, Philip and Nathaniel. The latter is probably the one called in the other gospels Bartholomew. And so there were perhaps half a dozen disciples with the Lord when He went down to Cana of Galilee. Why they ever went away again we may well marvel. We may also marvel why after the Lord has had us with Him for a precious and fruitful time He has again to come and find us occupied with everything else and again say, "Follow Me."

VIII. APRIL 20.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 1. 29-2. 12.

IF we rightly understand John 2. 11 to state that the Lord Jesus did His first sign in Cana of Galilee at this marriage feast, it may fairly be considered that this passage of Scripture presents to us the opening scenes of the Lord's ministry. Ushered in on Jordan's banks by the one who had a month or so previously immersed Him in its waters, the first few days of His work is here described by one who unquestionably had a share in its soul-stirring events.

The period of time comprised in this passage of Scripture is certainly very short, but for a knowledge of its exact length we require, first, to ascertain positively whether the morrows of verses 29, 35, 43 of chapter 2. are all separate days following one another in uninterrupted succession, as appears to be the case, and secondly to understand whether the third day when the marriage was held was the third counting from what we may call Philip's day (*v.* 43), or from Andrew's day (*vv.* 35, 40). If we were clear on these points we might be able to trace very plainly the Lord's steps in this memorable week in which His public ministry opened, and to be assured if indeed this beginning of signs which He did in Cana of Galilee was done, as the present writer is disposed to believe, on the first day of the week—A

bright and happy foretaste of the glad day of His resurrection from among the dead.

It is impossible in few words to say all one would wish on the pregnant story of the marriage at Cana in Galilee. Truly the Lord was no ascetic. He came eating and drinking, though He well knew they would say, "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber." It is difficult to speak with patience of those children of God for whom the perfect pattern is not good enough, who abjure as evil what He partook of and here miraculously provided. The Lord being no total abstainer, it is a sorry thing for those who profess to be His disciples but think it needful to have a higher (?) standard. Of abstinence at times for rightful purpose we say nothing, the Lord Himself practised this. Of the principles inculcated in Romans 14. and 1 Corinthians 8. we now do not speak. But in all candour and plain language we desire to utter a solemn warning against the cant and hypocrisy of men who think they know better than He who made water into wine, good wine as the ruler of the feast testified, such wine as alas! is often partaken of too freely.

Note that the visit to Cana of Galilee was followed by a journey to Capernaum, whither Mary and His brethren and His disciples accompanied Him. What attracted Him here we cannot say; but though He stayed but a few short days at this time, later on He made it His home and so wrought the works of God therein all freely and faithfully and yet without avail, that around the name of this city He hung in later days a tale of woe and judgment that still echoes and re-echoes from Hades beneath as a warning of lost opportunity.

IX. MAY 4.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 2. 13—3. 21.

THE account of the Lord's doings at the temple here recorded bears many points of resemblance to what we read

in Matthew 21. 12-17, Mark 11. 15-18, and Luke 19. 45, 46. But whereas the temple purgation recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke clearly took place but a few days before the crucifixion, it seems clear that we have here in John one of the earliest of the Lord's public acts. To quote a definite Scripture that seems to evidence this we mention John 3. 24, "John was not yet cast into prison." We understand that in the first four chapters we have events which precede John the Baptist's incarceration. As to the events of chapter 5. we have no light, but while chapter 6. is definitely subsequent so we think chapters 1. to 4. are manifestly precedent to the imprisonment of the Baptist.

This seems to have been the first passover to which the Lord went after His entry into His public ministry, and at this time He performed signs not a few in Jerusalem, so that many believed in His name. Their trust in Him was one thing and good for them, for it was well founded. Not so would have been confidence on the Lord's part in those who believed in Him, for they were untrained, undisciplined and altogether unfitted. Them He knew and what was in them He knew.

"But" as chapter 3. begins—and indeed chapter 3 ought to begin at verse 23 of chapter 2 if we are to have division into chapters at all—the word "now" in (2. 23 and) 3. 1 is the ordinary word "but," and Nicodemus will be better understood if we read it so. "When He was in Jerusalem . . . many believed . . . but there was a man of the Pharisees," and so forth. The sense is that Nicodemus is marked off from the many—He came to Him by night—not in cowardice but for privacy. One would like those who speak of Nicodemus as a coward to show one-tenth part of his courage coupled with one-tenth part of his sense. His words "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God" go quite as far as the believing of the many, but having that much he wanted more. He wanted more intimate

acquaintance with the Person, more real knowledge of the teaching. He wanted it and he got it. He seems, from the questions he asked, to have made some foolish mistakes. But the only man who makes no mistakes is the man who never makes anything, and Nicodemus was not such. He became a child of God and learnt as such. At first the earthly things he found hard to believe, but later he learned them and heavenly things too. At least this too could be said of him, that he did not hate the light but came to it, and subsequent scriptures establish this likewise, that his works became wrought in God. Without commenting on the doctrine the Lord taught him we earnestly direct attention to the blessedness which Nicodemus enjoyed because he came to Him by night. May we do likewise.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

X. MAY 18.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 3. 22-4.

BIBLE WOMEN: HELPS AND HINDERERS.

RAHAB.

Who would have thought that such a person as Rahab the harlot would be found amongst those who through faith obtained promises? By the light of Scripture we may see clearly this was nought else but the work of God by His Spirit in a poor degraded woman, in whom He is pleased to show forth His saving grace.

All Jericho had heard the news of what the Lord had done for Israel, and their hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more spirit in any man; and soon the gates of the city were shut against Israel. Little did the men of Jericho think that these gates and walls were nothing to the mighty God of Israel, and that ere long they would fall down flat.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,” Heb. 11. 30.

What glorious triumph would have been Israel's had they continued their march into the Land of Canaan in the power of the same faith that led them round the walls of Jericho! And what of Rahab when the city in which she dwelt was destroyed? "By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace," Heb. 11. 31. Whence came her faith? By hearing! But all Jericho heard, yet remained in disobedience, save this woman and those that were in her house. Rahab heard and believed and the happy result was, she perished not, but found a place among the redeemed of the Lord.

And this is God's way of salvation for sinners in this day of grace. "Faith cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ," Rom. 10. 17-21. They must hear, believe and receive the gift of God. Blessed be God that we too have obtained precious faith, and that unto us also, He hath granted His precious and exceeding great promises, 2 Pet. 1. 3, 4! What joy it should bring to our hearts to know that we are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, and that we are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God! And all this blessedness has become ours through faith. We were as undeserving as Rahab the harlot.

In the Epistles of Paul, who was a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth, we may learn how much this subject of faith filled his heart. Justification by faith and the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus are matters which occupy most prominent places in the letters to the Romans and the Galatians. So too in the letter to the Corinthians. When in Corinth he was careful that his speech was not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. The Ephesians also are reminded that they were saved by grace through

faith, and in the great conflict against the wiles of the devil they are told to take up

THE SHIELD OF FAITH,

wherewith they would be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. When writing to the Thessalonians, the apostle tells how he gave thanks of God, remembering without ceasing their work of faith, and how he rejoiced that their faith to Godward had gone forth in every place. In the second letter he is still bowing his knees in thanksgiving because their faith grew exceedingly. May we be led by the Spirit to breathe the prayer with deepest yearning to our God

INCREASE OUR FAITH.

The Hebrews are exhorted to draw near to God with a true heart in fulness of faith. They are also reminded of the great cloud of witness who triumphed so gloriously through faith, and are exhorted to look off unto Jesus the Author and Perfecter of faith.

James in his letter teaches plainly that works must accompany faith, and shows how this was exemplified in the case of Rahab the harlot. She believed and her faith was manifested in her treatment of the messengers, Jas. 2. 18-26. Is there not a danger in these days of those who are justified before God by faith, forgetting that faith without works is dead? May Christian women lay this truth to heart, and seek like Rahab to manifest by their good works that they have been truly saved by grace.

PRAYER.

By the letter "P" in our A B C lessons we find ourselves introduced to the holy theme of Prayer.

What marvellous possibilities are here for the young believer! How simple yet sublime is prayer!

Perhaps its greatest virtue lies in the fact that prayer

has been given by God to men, Not to meet need in Him, but to meet, even to supply need in them.

To the child of God the writer knows nothing to equal, and certainly nothing to excel the transcendent declaration of the Lord Jesus on going back to God His Father, from Whom He knew He had come, and to whom He was returning, namely,

“I will not pray the Father for you.
For the Father Himself loveth you.”

We would found our present lessons on the words of 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. Forget not 1 Tim. 3. 14.

The four words used here to represent

Prayer,

Supplications,

Intercessions,

Giving of thanks,

well cover the whole range and character of prayer. The first two words occur in the same order in 1 Tim. 5. 5, but in the reverse order in Eph. 6. 18, and Phil. 4. 6. The latter word, in contra-distinction to the former, is only used in expressing Prayer to God. The former has no such restriction.

Because of the difficulties greatest scholars have found in connexion with those words we shall tread softly. The more so as we remember the pithy warning :—

“There have been many, but not very successful attempts to distinguish between these two words.”

The third word, “Intercession,” is generally agreed as signifying “free familiar speech,” such as boldly draws near to God. Example of which may be found in connexion with Abraham’s intercession, as see Gen. 18. chap. The fourth word, “Thanksgiving,” has been worthily described thus :—

Regarding it as one manner of prayer, manifestly it expresses that which ought never to be absent from

our devotions; namely, a grateful acknowledgment of past mercies, as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future. As such it may and will subsist in Heaven. Rev. 4. 9., 7. 12.

To the present writer the order of the four words intimates

“Prayer,” as being GENERAL in character.

“Supplications,” that which is more specific and particular.

“Intercessions,” more earnest entreaty as communing with God there-aneant.

“Giving of thanks,” a crowning of a three-fold in gratitude that one is given access to God, and has the persons and things to bring thus before Him.

The effects of individual prayer are surely well-recorded for our encouragement in James 5. 17, 18. In connexion herewith read and ponder Heb. 5. 7, Luke 1. 13. No less encouraging and marvellous is the story of prayer by a church of God, as told in Acts 12.

For further example of which see 2 Cor. 1. 11, 9. 14, and Phil. 1. 19.

Doubtless, felt need is the great cause for earnest prayer. As felt indebtedness opens the mouth from a grateful heart, to express unfeigned gratitude in praiseful thanks. Nor should the young believer fail to make his very own the immortal words by James Montgomery, of Irvine, Scotland,

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or express;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

and so forth.

Prayer should be in the Holy Spirit; in the name and through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to God. Yet let none overlook nor misunderstand John 5. 21-23, Matt. 28. 18. Compare, too, Luke 23. 46, with Acts 7.

59, 60. While above all, young believer, learn to "Pray without ceasing."

Regular times for prayer is a most essential habit for the young believer to make matter of conscience with himself and God.

The value hereof may be gleaned by considering

The noble conduct of Daniel (Dan. 6. note well verse 10).

The ready wisdom of Nehemiah (Neh. 2. 1-4).

And the valiant behaviour of Ezra (Ezra 8. 22, 23).

With the pre-eminence of Samuel (Psa. 99. 6), among those who call upon His Name, Who delighteth to manifest Himself, the Faithful One, and protesteth to him who can make his own.

"CALL UPON ME AND I WILL ANSWER THEE."

What a word too is that for the widow and the fatherless, which Exodus 22. 22, 23 reveals!

Perhaps the attitude of prayer should also be regarded. In one's closet to kneel is almost natural. In public when leading in prayer to stand is as natural as when alone it is for one to kneel.

JOHN BROWN.

“BLESSED BE GOD.”

Tune—“RETREAT.”

BLESSED be God Who gave His Son,
His well-beloved and Holy One,
To die for sins upon the tree
That guilty ones to Him might flee.

O God, Thy wrath on Him was laid,
He bore our sorrows undismayed;
And, while deep darkness wrapped Him round,
No Father's pity there He found.

For us He bowed His head in death
And blessed us with His latest breath;
On Calvary our sins He bore
That we might praise Thee evermore.

For oh! Thy praise will never cease,
Thou God of righteousness and peace!
Thou sparedst not Thine only Son,
But gav'st for us Thy Spotless One.

Eternity will not displace
The riches of Thy boundless grace;
Eternity will not declare
The love that laid Him dying there.

But Thou hast raised Him, O our God,
For death itself in death He trod;
And love that knew the deepest woes
Hath triumphed over all its foes.

R. G. D.

THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL.

2 TIMOTHY 2. 25, 26.

NOTES OF ADDRESS BY MR. J. A. BOSWELL.

WHAT we are most familiar with is most likely to be let slip. We should be able to turn to Scripture to give a reason of the hope that is in us, and not merely to say, "We are right and you are wrong." If we can give scripture for what we say it will have greater weight, especially if the questioner is a thinking person. We need a revival among God's saints to-day, for them to awake up and look into God's word for themselves, to see if they are doing the will of God. There is no such thing as revival among the unconverted. There needs to be life before there can be revival.

We do not realize the mighty power that Satan has over the minds of men. He has a purpose in getting them occupied with a false Devil, and if they are they will not be much trouble to the Real One.

Some of Satan's most useful emissaries are men and women of high culture, who have a special attraction about them. A drunkard is not so much a tool for Satan as is a religious man in a pathway of disobedience to God. No doubt he is accountable for the former, who is also drawn away by his sinful lusts, but he can work through the latter to a far greater extent. Satan is a being very different from the imagination of most. He is not hideous in appearance, but the reverse. See the description of him under the figure of Tyrus in Ezekiel 28. 13. In Genesis 1. 2 we find the earth (not as God had created it but) in a state of chaos, a shapeless mass travelling through space, shrouded in darkness, with capabilities in it that only required to be wrought upon by the mighty power of God to bring forth something that would be to His glory. But how came it

to be in this state? I believe that probably it had been the scene of Satan's power before man was placed upon it, but He fell because He was lifted up with pride and brought in ruin with his fall.

Satan's great object to-day is so to hide his workings that people may not be frightened from his snare. So in Genesis we find a man and his wife in innocency, with an unfallen nature, and Satan appearing on the scene. He cannot use Adam and Eve as his tools, for they are outside of his authority, and under the authority of their Creator, so He veils Himself behind the Serpent, a creature under Adam's authority. Eve does not seem to have been startled, as she heard the serpent's voice. Satan does not say something that puts her on her guard. When he is seeking to lead any one into a path of disobedience to God, he will not startle them in the first steps of it, until he has them fairly in his snare.

Christian, there are moments when Satan seems to stand in the background and say, "Hath God said?" Give him your ear, and the next thing is your feet are slipping into the snare he is laying for you, and then he boldly gives the lie to God, suggesting that the Devil is a merciful Devil, whilst God is a hard God.

Ezek. 28. What is said of the King of Tyrus cannot be said simply of a man. I believe Satan is here seen behind this king. In this scripture we have Satan brought before us ere he fell from the place which he occupied in might and wisdom. To-day people speak of him as if he were something they could kick about like a football, but in contrast to the presumption of men we find that when Michael, the Archangel, was contending with Satan about the body of Moses, he durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee." See Jude 9.

This contempt for Satan is part, I believe, of the Devil's plan, and whilst people make light of him, a mass around

us are under his power or snare. God's people Israel were ensnared by Satan and became his great instrument by which he brought about the rejection and murder of God's Christ; and in the age to come part of that nation will help on the purposes of the Antichrist—that one who will sit in the temple of God, and under whose authority and in whose snare the nations will be. In the present age God set up a new thing, and Satan was outside the circle of God's rule in the church of God at Jerusalem, but we see him seeking to bring it into his snare—working through false brethren (Acts 5. 1). In 1 Tim. 3. we see what those were to be who go before the saints. Notice verse 7, "lest he fall into." Yes, if Satan gets the leaders he will probably get many of the led ones to follow, and in the second epistle of Timothy, chapter 2. we have those who lead leading away from the truth; *they* are now in the snare, and as the tools of Satan are leading others into it also. In verses 25, 26, it is not any longer scripture for keeping out of the snare, but scripture for deliverance out of it of those who are already in it; and mark, those are not the unsaved, but living ones ensnared, and God's authority and rule are outside. Repentance and deliverance must be given to such for the doing of God's will afresh.

(Communicated by ALEX. G. SMITH.)

VAIN REGRETS, OR THE STORY OF A. J.

Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me: For blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, And refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, And shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that misseth me wrongeth his own soul: All they that hate me love death. Prov. 8. 32-36, R.V. margin.

I would earnestly desire to press home upon young believers the truths expressed in the above portion of God's word by relating briefly, the story of A. J.

Annie was born again, when about ten years of age, during some tent meetings which were being held. Several of her brothers and sisters had believed and were baptized, and added to the assembly. Annie also told us she was saved, which we were all very glad to hear. But as years passed on we became very doubtful about her salvation, for beyond the assertion that she was saved, there was no further testimony to bear witness to the fact. She shunned our company, and would not listen when we sought to speak to her. Her parents and others sought to reach her conscience, but without avail, for years she seemed unhappy, and ill at ease in our company, and we could not understand or get at the cause of her strange behaviour. She left home and went into business, and we could only pray for her that God in His own way might reach her, and bring her to Himself.

This state of things continued until the early part of the year (1900), when her health began to fail, and she had to give up her situation and come home. She was still apparently indifferent to all our entreaties, and shunned all conversation on spiritual things as much as possible. She gradually got worse in health, and on returning home after being away for three weeks we could see that consumption had laid its hand upon her, and the doctor gave but little hope of her recovery; still she would not converse with us, and we often were constrained to speak to her as one unsaved. This she resented, saying she knew she was saved, but would say nothing further. Thus she went on getting weaker daily until she could do little more than lie down all the day. We continued steadfastly in prayer for her, that she might be brought to fully confess that Worthy Name, by which alone we can be saved.

About this time she was taken very suddenly with palpi-

tation of the heart, this was so severe that she thought she was dying, and she said, "Oh, mother! I am going, but I am not afraid." The attack passed off, and she rallied again in a few hours, but the impression it had made remained, and in a very short time she made a full confession of her past life.

She told how she was saved at the tent meetings when a little girl, but she had a great dread of water. A number were saved and baptized, but she would not witness the act of obedience, and on subsequent occasions she always made some excuse to absent herself when any were being baptized. She thus allowed Satan to use this to keep her back from walking in obedience to the Lord Jesus; and she knowing the truth, and that the second step could not be taken until the first had been obeyed, shut her heart up and would not listen to the voice of God speaking to her in His word or by His people. In speaking of her disobedient past she said, "Oh it was not enough for God to make me ill. He had to make me very ill, and bring me down nearly to death's door before I learned my own wickedness in holding myself back from Him."

But thank God she learnt her lesson at last, and it seemed, after having told us of her past and humbly confessed her guiltiness before God with many tears, her peace and joy began to flow as a river, and she was never happier than when listening to some of us as we read or spoke to her of the Lord Jesus. To all who visited her now she spoke of God's salvation, pressing upon them to hear and obey the Lord, being especially anxious for her two younger brothers, who were still unsaved. One great desire of her heart was if she might recover a little, so that she might be baptized and received into the fellowship, but her prayer was always in such words as these: "Father if it be Thy will spare me for this, if not Thou knowest what is best for me."

A few days before she fell asleep she heard of a young man whom she had known as a boy who was ill with consumption. "Oh!" she said, "do go and see him, tell him about me, I do want to tell others about the Lord Jesus, but I cannot go, you must do it for me."

As the end drew nearer her sufferings increased: spasms of pain which it was awful to witness would pass through her. On the Lord's Day morning we were all expecting the end. As we sat around her bed she said, "I want you to sing 'The glory shines before me, I cannot linger here.'" When we had sung it through she said, "Sing it again," then she asked for the hymn, "Thy will be done," "Now," she said, "I want to go Home, pray for me to go." No one responded for a few moments, and she said again, "Do pray my Heavenly Father to take me Home now." She lingered through the day and night in much pain, but happy in the knowledge that she was going Home. On the Monday morning she entered into rest, a bright smile illumined her face as she passed away from us into the joy of the Master's presence, and the Father's Home. Her only regret at the last was that she had not used the life God had given her for His glory by walking in obedience to His word.

Dear young fellow believer, I write this if perchance it may reach some who are hanging back through doubts or fears or some other cause from walking in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could keep Him back when on His way to Jerusalem, knowing what must be accomplished there, and that He must give His life a ransom for all. He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, going down into the deepest depths of suffering and shame for you and me. And, dear young Christian, shall we hold ourselves back from Him, who has redeemed us by His own blood, and claims us for His own, that He might dwell in our hearts, and manifest Himself through our life? Shall we rob Him of the joy He gets through our obedience?

"I have no greater joy than that my children walk in the truth." I would remind you that in doing so you rob yourselves. For, "He that misseth me wrongeth his own soul." Prov. 8. 36, margin.

A. J. would speak to you through these pages. Do not waste your life, and have cause for those vain regrets when called into the presence of the Master; but now, while you have health and strength, while you have the energy of youth, give yourselves entirely to Him in thought and word and deed, and you shall then have that standing to your account, which shall be to His glory and to your joy throughout eternity.

G. T. REEVE.

NOTES ON PROVERBS.

IV.

"THE proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (Prov. 10. 1). The first note that here is struck in the proverbs of Solomon seems to constantly reverberate through the book. Indeed from first to last the whole book is an enigmatical commentary on these words.

All are aware that an earthly parent has no greater joy or source of gladness than to find his son deporting himself wisely in all things. Further we know what sorrow and shame is the lot of the parent who beholds his son treading in paths of folly. The hopes of earthly parents are often centred in their son. For him they live and toil so that no impediment to his success in life may be placed in his way, but that his path may be open to honour and glory. A wise son, appreciating his parents' goodness and fully availing himself of their counsel and aid, brings a measure of glad-

ness to their hearts, which, perhaps, nothing else on earth could bring. A living calamity is the portion of parents who behold the son in whom their hopes were centered despising their love and goodness and proving himself a fool who hates instruction.

It may be that these lines will be read by young men and women who are the sons and daughters of godly parents. Such need not to be assured of their parents' interest on their behalf, of the love they bear to them, and of their hopes in them. Yet betimes young men and women need to be reminded that they have it in their power to cause a ray of glory and of gladness to gild the declining years of their parents' lives with a brightness above the shining of the sun or to bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. "Give me the portion of substance that falleth to me," was the arrogant demand of the prodigal son—God knows how often repeated in a multitude of ways since then! "Give" "Me"!—these were the prominent words in his utterance. He thought not of his father's rights, of that which he desired to get, which was dearer to him than all earthly substance, namely, the love and honour of his son. He cared not for the wound which like a sword-thrust pierced the father's heart, as he beheld his hopes blighted by his son turning prodigal. Self gratification shut out all consideration of the parent's righteous claims and caused him to ignore the toil and pains by means of which the father had gathered the substance which he inherited, and which he was about to squander so wantonly. Counsel was unheeded and Wisdom's words were disregarded, and in due time the inexorable law of God was fulfilled: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." But at first the prodigal thought not of the reaping time which must surely be reached by every man: he thought only of freedom from the restraint of a father's home, and a happy time in the company of fools enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season,

But the reckoning day surely came and brought its awful meed of anguish.

There is something pathetic beyond description in the wail of the father: "My son be wise and make my heart glad." What a depth of mingled hope and despair is here! He desires to be able to point to his son as an example of wisdom against whom no reproach can be brought. What earthly solace can comfort his heart if this be lacking? A foolish son furnishes a wise father with a continual source of reproach which cannot be wiped away.

Men of the world have many varied ideals before them in life. Without an ideal to strive after they usually wander listlessly in pursuit of something which invariably ends in nothing. But with an ideal before them they brace themselves to determined effort in a definite direction and, consequently, a measure of success must result therefrom. Christians would do well to remember this. By grace they have been made sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Their ideal in life then should be to be wise and to give the pleasure to the heart of their Father and God which He so earnestly desires to find in them. The longings of a parent's heart toward his son are but feeble indications of the yearnings of God's heart toward His children.

Let us make no mistake as to what the indications of wisdom in the children of God are. Let us learn well how we may become wise and thus give pleasure to the heart of our Father. By bending our ear to hear His voice; by prizing the words of wisdom above our necessary food; by having mercy and truth written on the tables of our hearts. Apart from this, instead of making God's heart glad, though we be children of God we shall find our joy in the folly of him who is destitute of wisdom.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

“REJOICE IN THE LORD.”

Tune—“ANTICIPATION.”

ALL ye saints that know the gladness
 Of the Lord our strength and song,
 Rise from earthly grief and sadness,
 Praises to the Lord belong :
 From the mire He gave release,
 Set us with the Prince of peace!

Glory to the God and Father
 Of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
 Whose delight it is to gather
 To the Person of His tryst
 Heirs together of His throne,
 Saved and called by Him alone.

O Thou sovereign God of heaven,
 Praise and glory to Thy Name!
 Thou hast all our sins forgiven
 Through the blood of Him who came
 As a sacrifice to die
 On the cross of Calvary.

Thou art God, and God for ever—
 Yea, eternal is Thy throne,
 And from Thee no foe can sever
 What Thy love has called Thine own ;
 Thine, O blessed God, are we,
 Now, and through eternity!

R. G. D.

For Young Believers,

"As newborn babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 Peter 2. 2.

QUIETNESS.

1 TIMOTHY 2. 1-4, which afford such Rehoboth¹-like room for prayer in its scope and character, is the very setting of God Himself to the not too conspicuous grace of Quietness.

The whole end of such petitioning of God is shown to be with the object that the believer may live a tranquil (peaceable) and quiet life with the enlivening qualification, "in all godliness and gravity." This moreover is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who wishes all men to be saved, and to come to the full and accurate knowledge of the truth.

It is notoriously obvious that too many who name the name of the Lord quite overlook this qualification, and also lack this quietness. The consequence of such neglect is a contented slumbering in the mischievousness of a tranquillity and quietness that may fittingly be compared to what obtains where death reigns. But such quietness is not the sort that God takes pleasure in, nor alas! alas! what men need.

There is a nobility and worthiness about godly quietness that can hardly be over-praised or over-desired. Witness the value that God sets hereon when in the Christian wife He finds this distinctive virtue characterizing her spirit.

It is of great price. Great in price methinks as Mary's pound of ointment is declared as being, "very costly," whereas Nicodemus' hundred pounds of myrrh and aloe get no such panegyric. The former was lavished on the living Lord Jesus, the latter was brought for His dead body.

¹ And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not; and he called the name of it Rehoboth (*that is*, Broad places, or Room); and he said, "For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Gen. 26. 22).

Moreover does not quietness of spirit gain its greatness of price from two causes?

The one cause the struggle, the labour, the disciplining of one's self, and thus the cost to its possessor: the other cause being the rarity of the gem-like beauty. If, then, the young believer would have this virtue in very deed he must needs give earnest attention to the words of 1 Thess. 4. 11:

"Be ambitious to be quiet
and

to do your own business," and so forth.

Nor may he neglect 2 Thess. 3. 12, and context.

How superfluous the injunctions of Scripture seem to be judging by the way Christians appear to heed them. If this be doubted let the Christian of ten or more years in Christ (not to mention in the Lord) be asked: How much of ambition he has had to be quiet—minding his own affairs, working with his own hands to effect the due obligations of what so few know much in reality about, even of life? Then let his answer be justly considered, and see if the very beginnings of Christian conduct are not almost unknown.

Husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, and so forth so commonly presume to exercise themselves as such, and yet God's revealed will for them has received the most scanty attention.

Little wonder that there is barrenness and the like while noise and restlessness are rampant and suffering far different to 1 Peter 4, 16 abounds.

JOHN BROWN.

BIBLE WOMEN: HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(DEBORAH.)

As we pass on to the Book of Judges we read of another woman who was fitted of God for His service. Deborah was a prophetess in Israel.

Joshua, the faithful leader of Israel, having fought the battles of Jehovah and led the people into the promised land and given them their inheritance, gathers them together now that he is well stricken in years, and exhorts them with words to which we would do well to take heed in these last days. See Joshua, chapters 23. and 24. Then we read: "It came to pass after these things that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old."

For a time Israel continued to serve Jehovah until another generation arose which knew not the Lord, nor yet the work which He had wrought for Israel, and they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baalim. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them. Whithersoever they went out the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, and they were sore distressed. Again and again we find it written that they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but when they cried unto Jehovah He raised them up a saviour. Read Judges, chapters 1.-3.

In Judges 4. we find Israel is mightily oppressed by Jabin, King of Canaan, for twenty years. This king had nine hundred chariots of iron; and in their anguish the people cry unto the Lord for deliverance. It is at this point that Deborah, the prophetess, is brought before us as the one raised up by God to be their deliverer. She appears as a mother in Israel, one who feared the Lord, wise and active. She sat under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-El, and the children of Israel came to her for judgment. But she did not always sit there: the time is at hand when she must be up and doing.

Through her the Lord makes known that He is about to deliver Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, and all his multitude and his chariots into the hands of Israel, and

she commands Barak, the son of Abinoam, to gather ten thousand men together. Barak, however, appears to be timid, and pleads that Deborah should accompany him, to which she agrees, at the same time telling him that this would not be to his honour, for the Lord would deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. Then we read that Deborah, who sat beneath the palm tree, arose and went with Barak. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: the time to sit, if well used in fellowship with God, but enhances the fitness of the time to arise and fight the battles of the Lord.

Then Sisera gathers together his nine hundred chariots and all his host, but the Lord discomfited them with the edge of the sword before Barak: there was not a man left. This may well remind us of the words: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God. They are bowed down and fallen: but we are risen and stand upright. Save, Lord: let the King answer us when we call" (Psa. 20. 7-9). Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet, and entered into the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, and there the Lord delivered him into the hand of a woman.

Then sang Deborah and Barak on that day a song unto the Lord. Please turn to Judges 5. and listen to every note in their song of victory. We can only give a few here:

For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,
 For that the people offered themselves willingly,
 Praise ye the Lord . . .
 My heart is toward the governors of Israel,
 That offered themselves willingly among the people:
 Bless ye the Lord . . .
 By the water courses of Reuben
 There were great resolves of heart . . .
 At the water courses of Reuben
 There were great searchings of heart . . .
 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,
 Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;

Because they came not to the help of the Lord,
To the help of the Lord against the mighty.
Blessed above women shall Jael be . . .
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent . . .
She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workman's hammer.

Thus died Sisera, the enemy of the Lord and of His people, by the hand of a woman in the quiet of the tent.

As we look around us to-day we can surely discern the great need in the assemblies of God of wise and holy women worthy of the name of "Mothers": women whose delight is in the law of the Lord, whose walk is in the fear of God, who sit under His shadow with great delight, yet are ever ready to rise up when the Master calls to active service in their appointed sphere. See Isa. 32. 9-20; Jno. 11. 20, 28, 29; Phil. 4. 3.

Jael was an unseen worker at home—her work lay in the tent; and he who had escaped from the hands of Deborah and Barak and the ten thousand men of Israel, met his death at the hand of the quiet worker at home. She had not learned the art of war, but she had learned to use the hammer and the nail; and, knowing by experience the power of these weapons, she crowned the triumph of the day by their use.

All women are not called to go forth to battle with the foe as Deborah was, but do they know how to meet the foe at home? Ah! yes, the adversary will and does enter into the homes, and it is because he is not dealt with there that he works such havoc in the assemblies. The nail and the workman's hammer are often not faithfully used—the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit—and, instead of the song of victory arising to God, there is the wail of defeat.

CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM.

MANY Christians seem to find it easier to trust God in things eternal than to trust Him in things temporal. They can trust Him for their eternal salvation, and enjoy perfect peace regarding that matter. Yet they cannot trust Him with the care of their bodies or the things pertaining to their daily life.

It may be that they have not tried casting all their care upon Him; for it is only by doing this that we learn to what extent "He careth for us."

The writer was staying with an old shepherd and his wife, who had been happy Christians for many years, when one of the two cows they possessed fell ill. They were very much distressed and anxious about it, and by the directions of the veterinary surgeon nursed it night and day with great care. Strange to say, however, they were rather shocked when it was suggested that the cow be made the subject of prayer.

Now we are all apt to be more or less like that. We think that God is very much interested in some things and not in others, and instead of casting all our care upon Him we only cast some of it or certain kinds of it. Yet God is interested in *all*. The Lord said that a sparrow, two of which could be bought for a farthing, occupied the pitying thoughts of the Father if it fell to the ground. So whether our care be of the relative importance of a cow or a sparrow let us believe that our Father is interested. Troubles which may hardly be worth a farthing make a big load when there are many of them—a load we need not bear could we but learn that our Father is as much to be trusted in things temporal as in things spiritual. Most of our troubles are things of to-day or to-morrow; we worry about what is going to happen next week; but a difficulty which looms

faintly a year ahead does not trouble us much in the meantime; and most of us can commit our way unto the Lord if that way is about a twelvemonth off.

Now is this as it should be? We can trust and be at peace in things eternal. We don't trouble much about things temporal which are a good distance ahead of us, but we have no peace where to-morrow and next week are concerned. Is this faith? Have we learned much of the Father "Who careth for us"? Eternity will be our to-morrow one day. Will the faith we live in at present stand the test of that day? Will it face the morrow of Eternity with the peace it seems to bring now.

He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Does that "all things" include food and raiment, rent and taxes—or the work by which we shall be able to procure these things? It means just that. But does our faith lay hold on this part of the verse as it does on the other?

There are not two kinds of faith—one for the things of time and one for the things of eternity. And the God Who has made sure provision for our eternity provides liberally for our daily need—whatever that daily need may be.

The thing is then to learn God in the days that are passing. Prove Him in the need of the hour. Cast all your care upon Him and find out for yourself that the Living God has your temporal welfare in His care. And the evening of life will find us happy in the sure knowledge that joy cometh in the morning.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

X. MAY 18.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 3. 22-36.

THE Lord's sphere of ministry is now rapidly growing, and though but one sign has been done His disciples are becoming numerous. A dispute about some matter of purification gives the Enemy an opportunity of tempting John, the son Zacharias, suggesting to him feelings of jealousy at the success that attended the Lord's efforts. Perhaps even his own disciple, keen for the repute of his master, was concerned to think that he was being supplanted by Another. But John knew well his relationship as a mere man, though sent indeed from God, to the One who came from above and is above all. As friend of the bridegroom his joy was not in himself nor yet in the success of his own labour, but all and only in the Bridegroom's voice.

This passage, from verse 22 to verse 36 of chapter 3. is thus occupied with testimony from John the son of Zacharias. Whilst Luke tells us much more of John's history, we have here in the gospel according to the son of Zebedee, no less than six separate testimonies of the Baptist to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are as follows—

1. John 1. 15. John beareth witness of Him “* * this was He * *”
2. John 1. 19-28. And this is the witness of John “* * * * in the midst of you standeth One *”
3. John 1. 29-31. He seeth Jesus * * and saith, “Behold the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world! This is He * *”
4. John 1. 32-34. John bare witness saying, I have beheld the Spirit * * * It abode upon Him * * I have seen and have borne witness * *

5. John 1. 35. Again on the morrow John * * looked * * and saith, "Behold * *"

6. John 3. 27-36. John answered * * * *

This sixth is, in a sense, a conclusion of John's testimony; for he now refers to the Son of God as a greater witness. Coming down from heaven, He bears witness of what He has seen in heaven, even the face of His Eternal Father; bears witness too of what He has heard, even the voice of that Omnipotent One, Whose name is Love and Light. To receive John's witness would lead a man to the Lord Jesus Christ, but to receive the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is to know the God of Truth. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," were His words to Philip later on.

It is sometimes said or thought (in view, for example, of Acts 19. 1-7) that John the Baptist had but little light. But what could be plainer, more illuminating than these words of his, "The Father loveth the Son"? Where can be found more pregnant and far-reaching words than these? What a true ring there is in the gospel message of verse 36, with its dread antithesis!

The Son of God being all and in all to the Father, it is proclaimed that to believe on (literally, into) Him is to have life eternal.—This is not a promise nor a hope—It is a declared fact. But mark that the faith must be in the person, and this is only possible to those who have been graciously privileged to hear His word and voice, as His own later words show. So of the solemn testimony that the wrath of God abides on unbelievers, let it be well noted that these are not such as have never heard of the Lord Jesus, but such as having heard refuse to be persuaded, and disobey. In goodness of God there are myriads who now possess life eternal, some being still in the body, and some with the Lord; and, alas! there are myriads in this world on whom the wrath of God abides as unbelievers and disobedient ones, and of the many who have thus left this world of opportunity it

is true that they shall not see life. But there are also countless myriads who are outside the scope of this scripture altogether. There are the infant dead, who will certainly be saved; there are the heathen, and others who have never heard of the Son of God, and of these we can neither say that they now have life eternal nor that they will not see life. As to such, other scriptures speak plainly, if not in great detail, and good is the word of one of old, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

XI. JUNE 1.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 4. 1-42.

WE have so far traced the footsteps of the sent One from Jordan's banks into Galilee, to Cana of Galilee, down to Capernaum; then up to Jerusalem for the first passover after His public ministry commenced, and thence into Judæa. Now again going into Galilee He must needs go through Samaria.

The occasion of His departure from Judæa was that the Pharisees had heard how numerous were the disciples He made and baptized. But why must He go through Samaria? Not to make many disciples, not to do what seemed a great work, nor to meet a great man; but because He was hungry—not indeed for the meat which perisheth, but to do the will of Him who sent Him—and He willeth that all men should be saved, and that not even a poor Samaritan adulteress¹ should perish.

It is indeed noteworthy that the gospel which most emphasizes the dignity and greatness of the Christ is the one which gives the longest accounts of His doings with individuals, and especially such lowly persons as this woman of Samaria, and the man born blind.

Whilst we shall say little as to the doctrine of the Lord

¹ See verses 17, 18.

in this passage there are a few points to which we must direct attention.

The conversation commences by the Creator of all things seeking to put Himself under an obligation to the poor woman whom He wished to help, "give me to drink."

Then He seeks to give her a sense of her ignorance "If thou knewest." She knew a great deal of the customs of Jews with Samaritans, but she knew nothing of Him who spoke to her.

We are too apt to think of the expression "living water" as primarily denoting something spiritual. The idea I think is running water—water which is always flowing, not stagnant, but fresh and limpid. She understood the Lord so, for it will be seen by R.V. margin of verse 6 that it was a spring by which the wearied Lord sat.

* * and Jacob's spring was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus by the spring.

Yet though a spring it did not rise to the surface as some springs do; it was a long way down to the water level. Why was this? Because the water came from no great height.

* * The woman saith unto Him, "Lord, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well (*not* spring) is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?"

Observe that the Lord keeps up her interest; He does not say at once that He referred to that which was not literal water at all, but He speaks in praise of that of which He Himself had such keen enjoyment—water that comes from such a height that it springs up in the one who drinks it, and springs up into Eternal life.

"* * the water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water, springing up unto eternal life."

Thus far as to the good things He could give. But when

she would fain have the water, whatever mysterious thing it was she knew not, then it needed that He should plumb the depths of her wicked heart, and work in her conviction of sin.

It is very unlike the ways of modern preachers of the gospel in general, that having thus plainly spoken to her of her sinfulness He should allow and even encourage the conversation to be turned to the subject of worship. Here, to this poor woman of all the persons He ever spoke to, He tells so plainly what is the desire of the Father's heart, even worship in spirit and in truth.

“* * The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The Lord was simply passing through Samaria. He asked for a drink of water, but He allowed Himself to be detained for two days, and not a few of the inhabitants of that city now at rest in His arms can look back and mark those days as the beginning of days to them.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

XII. JUNE 15.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 4. 43-54.

WHEN HOME IS REACHED.

WHEN Home is reached how light will seem
 The trials of earth's rugged way!
 And brighter will the glory gleam
 As we review life's cloudy day!
 We then shall read the reason why
 Our way was rough, and dark our sky.

We then shall learn the love that planned
 Each footstep of our path below,
 And see how faith was often fanned
 When Hope's bright lamp was burning low;
 Yea, we shall see the path was right
 That seemed to us but blackest night!

And mountains that we feared to cross
 We'll see how God had turned to plains;
 And all that now we reckon loss
 Will prove at length eternal gains.
 We then shall hush each sigh and moan,
 And know at last as we are known.

A load of glory we shall bear—
 For earthly loss reward receive—
 When there in light at length we wear
 The garb that now on earth we weave.
 And tear-stains in that garb will shine
 Resplendent gems in light divine.

Then let our faith in God be strong,
 And, though He slay us, trust Him still!
 Well satisfied that He ere long
 His every promise shall fulfil.
 For in the Glory soon we'll find
 That round earth's trials mercy twined.

“ALL IS WELL.”

Tune—“RETREAT.”

O God of love, Thy name we praise,
 Thy perfect wisdom we adore ;
 Thou God from everlasting days,
 Unchangeable for evermore.

A mighty God indeed art Thou,
 A Counsellor to us Thou art ;
 And grace that brings salvation now
 Still captivates our longing heart.

Great mystery of love express'd
 In Jesus Christ Thine only Son ;
 In Him we are belov'd and bless'd,
 With Him for ever we are one.

Yet more and more we fain would see,
 Beyond our fleeting sense of time ;
 The grace that grasped eternity
 And showered on man Thy love sublime.

Thy Son, eternally the same,
 O'er death and hell victorious ;
 Reveals the glory of Thy Name—
 Emmanu-El, Who died for us.

Oh! here in peace may we repose,
 But soon we shall with Him arise ;
 Throw to the winds our thousand woes,
 And see Thee with unclouded eyes.

R. G. D.

NOTES ON PROVERBS.

V.

IN the book of Proverbs wisdom, knowledge and understanding are presented as a threefold cord which is not quickly broken. These words are not synonyms. Indeed, as one has said, "Synonyms are few in Scripture, and a change of words is not to please fastidious ears, but to express a different or fuller meaning."

The separate domains of wisdom, knowledge and understanding may be indicated in Proverbs 24. 2, 3. There we read: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge are the chambers filled with all precious and pleasant riches." The building and proper ordering of the house is not the work of any one of these, but is the combined work of the three, each having its own particular part and definite work to perform.

To wisdom is given the credit of building the house, but ere one stone could be laid upon another understanding must be called into action, for the foundations are her handiwork. It is established by understanding, and the hard calculations which precede the work of wisdom are accomplished by her. Established by understanding and built by wisdom, the house stands a piece of useless work until knowledge is called in to do her part. So into the builded house knowledge enters and orders things aright, setting apart this room for this purpose, and that one for that, and yet another for another, and furnishing them in a pleasant manner, according to the purpose to which they are to be devoted.

The work of understanding is therefore seen to be in the foundations, that of knowledge within, whilst round about, above and uniting all, is the towering work of wisdom.

The outstanding differences between them would therefore seem to be as follows:—

To understanding pertains the keen, penetrating, discerning consideration which precedes decision or action; the weighing of evidences for and against anything; the placing of this over against that, and looking at the matters discerningly in order to come to a righteous decision.

Knowledge is the result of diligent work in the region of understanding, and is possessed when a righteous decision is finally arrived at and a fixed judgment is formed; thereby right and wrong are definitely known, as well as what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.

Wisdom is the heavenly discretion and prudence which enables knowledge to be put to good, practical account in a fit, becoming, commendable fashion.

“Ever learning, and never able to come to a full knowledge of the truth,” is the solemn witness of the Spirit regarding some who, characterized by silliness, ever grovel in the region of understanding, but never reach the boundary line and step across as free men to the domain of knowledge; for knowledge is what enables the possessor thereof to put down his foot with firmness, knowing with certainty that this is the truth and that is not. Knowledge, if worthy of the name, is a commanding height which can only be reached by what often proves to be the laborious pathway of understanding. But when once gained, the key of the position has been won, and what was shrouded in darkness and uncertainty during the weary ascent is now displayed in the clearest light. Thus does knowledge from her bounteous store amply repay those who reach her lofty height, for the toil they expended when forcing their way through the region of understanding.

But though the key of any position be gained, it does not follow that the battle is won, for even then errors may be made that will end in hopeless rout. Thus a Christian

may, by diligence in the domain of understanding, attain unto a measure of knowledge of the mind of God, and still be utterly destitute of the necessary wisdom to enable him to profit by the knowledge he has gained. Failing in wisdom, and sundering what God would have joined together, instead of knowledge being a blessing, it may prove to be what will cause one to make shipwreck of the faith, and to deal with the things of God in an unbecoming manner, ending in disaster to all concerned.

It is recorded of the Corinthians that in everything they were enriched in all utterance and all knowledge; yet, notwithstanding, it is evident that they sadly lacked in wisdom, for instead of their knowledge leading them to glorify God together, it appears to have been in great measure the cause of strifes, envyings and divisions among them. Thus the utterance and knowledge they possessed, and for which the apostle gave thanks to God always, instead of proving a blessing, were being turned by them to a curse, and all because no place was found for wisdom.

We read regarding the men of Issachar that they were men of understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. Their understanding of the times was that which furnished them with knowledge, so that they were not distressed with doubts as to what ought to be done. They knew what ought to be done, and they did it—their wisdom being displayed in the fact that they were found in the place of rejection with David. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, and had sufficient understanding of the mind of God to give him knowledge of the fact that David was destined to sit on Israel's throne; but with him wisdom was lacking, or being possessed was disregarded, for her voice would certainly have said: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them; go forth therefore and strengthen the kingdom to David." But failing to obey the voice of wisdom, despite his knowledge of the purposes

of God, Jonathan never in person identified himself with the man of God's choice: and instead of attaining to the place of honour in David's kingdom which he at one time hoped to reach, he died fighting professedly for God and for the people of God, but God was not with him, nor was he with God. Solemn, solemn truth, written for our learning!

The prayer of the apostle for the Colossians was that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. But how could such a desire be gratified? In the gaining of understanding the exhortation and promise of God are sure: "*Consider what I say, and the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things.*" In the acquiring of knowledge the giving of "all diligence" is absolutely essential (2 Tim. 2. 7; 2 Pet. 1. 5).

It is therefore evident that knowledge of God and His will concerning us cannot possibly be the portion of any Christian save as he gives all diligence to the consideration of what God has been pleased to reveal of Himself and His truth in the Scriptures. In dependence upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit it is our responsibility to increase in the knowledge of God and to attain unto a right knowledge of truth; and no promise is to be found in the Scriptures to warrant any in supposing that knowledge of the will of God can be had apart from diligent study and prayerful consideration of His Word. This being so, Christians may well be commended to God and the word of His grace, and exhorted to more thorough searching of the Scriptures.

Thus we have sought to indicate the sources whence understanding and knowledge flow. Look not for them from any other. But whence cometh wisdom? Where shall it be found? The fowls of heaven know it not: the vulture's eye hath not seen it. The natural man has oft heard the fame thereof, but must own, "It is not with me." "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the

place thereof." Yes, and none but He, for He Himself is its blessed Source. Wisdom cometh from above, and if any lack wisdom they are exhorted to ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given them.

Vain then is the effort to become a possessor of a well-twined strand of wisdom, knowledge and understanding apart from abiding fellowship with the living God. Understanding and knowledge, to a certain extent, may be so gained, but wisdom never. Earthly wisdom and natural shrewdness may work havoc in the things of God; and they who are endowed therewith may well ponder the words: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man thinketh that he is wise among you, let him become a fool that he may become wise."

Wisdom cometh from above: it is alone to be found through communion with God. Alas! is it not too evident that it is here that men of knowledge go astray? How easy for such to lean upon their own understanding, and perhaps unconsciously to get the eye off God. How easy for such to fail in seeking God's face in prayer and in realizing their need of spiritual wisdom, which alone can guide knowledge aright, until in sorrow the question is often pressed from wondering hearts, "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle?" Doubtless the answer would often be, Occupation with themselves and their knowledge causing them to neglect the necessary waiting upon God in the silence of their closets, until they become an easy prey to the watchful Adversary.

We conclude therefore that understanding is gained by consideration of the Scriptures of truth, and leads to the knowledge of God's will, that beyond this wisdom from on high is necessary to enable the possessor of knowledge to put the same to good account in a becoming manner, and not to think more highly of himself than he ought, but

rather to think soberly, remembering that we know nothing yet as we ought to know.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

Questions

TO WHICH ANSWERS FROM APPROVED SERVANTS OF THE LORD ARE INVITED.

Should any brother seek to do oversight work, whose daily labour prevents him visiting saints as frequently as it is needful? Would the desire to care for the saints carried out as far as opportunity is given be sufficient for such to go on in the work?

W. H. B.

Had the baptism in the Holy Spirit and in fire in Matthew 3. 11 its fulfilment in Acts 2. 3, 4? If not what are we to understand is the teaching of the former scripture?

J. M.

In 1 Cor. 7. 14, in what sense is the unbelieving husband sanctified in the wife or the unbelieving wife in the husband? When does this sanctification take place? In what sense are the children holy?

J. R.

IN THE GRAVEYARD.

BLOOM, fair flowers, bloom and wither,
 Tears need not be shed for thee,
 Spring to radiant life and beauty,
 Then for ever pass from me.
 Other flowers in spring shall blossom,
 These shall then forgotten lie;
 And the seasons hastening onward
 Whisper, Flowers bloom to die!
 Heir of glory!
 It is not o'er these I sigh.

Let me wander softly, slowly,
 . Let me view things reverently:
 Ah! the scene is strangely solemn,
 Loud it speaks, though silently.
 Yes, it thrills my inmost being—
 Many graves around I see,
 And the words come floating o'er me—
 Life, death and eternity!
 Heir of glory!
 This, this is reality!

But I'm weary—let me pillow
 On the grass my throbbing head;
 Let soft breezes soothe—caress me
 While I linger with the dead.
 Let mine eyes by faith look upward;
 Let me hear my Father's voice;
 For at this my tremblings vanish,
 While He whispers, Child, rejoice!
 Heir of glory!
 Soon the dead shall hear His voice!

Oh! the blessedness of knowing
 That His eye is o'er this scene:
 Bygone stories—hidden memories,
 Never have forgotten been.
 Tears of sorrow shed in silence
 By the eyes now closed in death—
 All are known, and all were heeded,
 By the God who holds our breath.
 Heir of glory!
 Treasures lie those mounds beneath!

Like the sea when storms are over,
 Like a child when fears are gone,
 So am I in Thy blest presence—
 Nothing in my heart but song.
 Yes, for e'en in these surroundings
 I can joyfully exclaim,
 God shall cast aside the tombstones,
 Raise His saints to life again.
 Heir of glory!
 They shall rise to praise His name!

Praise Him! praise Him! earth shall blossom
 Forth anew in fadeless green;
 Spring shall dawn in living splendour—
 Roses bloom where graves had been.
 Death's reign over, Satan vanquished,
 Loved ones meet to part no more
 On that resurrection morning.
 Oh! the bliss that lies before!
 Heir of glory!
 Death shall sever nevermore!

For Young Believers.

"As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 Peter 2. 2.

TEMPTATION.

SIN is a deceitful thing. Eve was deceived by it and by the Deceiver, and Eve's seed in all generations have likewise been deceived. It has often been pointed out that Eve's failure was reached by first lending her ear to Satan, then by beholding the forbidden fruit with her eyes, and finally by eating thereof. Little by little she was led on to her doom.

God well knows how easily beguiled we are, and He has warned us again and again of the deceitfulness of sin. He has told us on more than one occasion in the Scriptures how to meet the Deceiver's suggestions and how to deal with that which is evil. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and walk not in the way of evil men.

Avoid it,

pass not by it,

turn from it,

and pass on."

Prov. 4. 14, 15.

This is the only safe way of meeting temptation and sin. The Christian stands on slippery ground when he lends an ear to Satan's suggestions and draws near, even in thought, to look at evil. Our effort should never be to see how near we can go to the path of the wicked without entering it. Our desire should ever be to keep as far distant from it as we can. No one is so strong that he can afford to put himself in the way of temptation.

Perhaps failure here is usually the beginning of all departure from God. To trifle with temptation and to tamper with evil are most serious things. They cannot be done

without direful results. None, perhaps, who have failed in their testimony on earth, and have brought dishonour on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by their sin, ever intended to do so. Could we but read their thoughts, we might find them tracing their history backwards to a point when they failed to meet temptation as God has indicated in His Word that it should be met. Instead of fleeing from it, as one would flee for life, they listened to the Deceiver's voice and drew near to look upon sin and gave their minds to the contemplation of it, and before they realized their whereabouts they were deceived and had sinned. Then one sin led to another and the result was shipwreck of their testimony.

Let young Christians lay these things to heart. Let them learn well how God would have them meet temptation in its endless variety, and let it never be forgotten. "Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass on." Happy indeed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.

PONDER THE PATH.

PONDER the path of thy feet. To ponder means to weigh carefully. This points to exercise of soul in God's presence and to seeking of Him

A RIGHT WAY.

The scales of the sanctuary are the only true balance: they alone can enable us to weigh accurately every path that presents itself to us. "A prudent man seeth the evil and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and suffer for it," Prov. 22. 3. A wise man will not enter any path that opens up before his feet without looking at it narrowly. He will

weigh every path prayerfully in the light of God's Word to see whether it be God's way or a bypath of Satan. Moreover, he will not only look at the beginning of the path, but he will scan it all the way along, and

THE END

will affect his decision more than any other step of it.

Perhaps many of us have at some time entered a valley by a beautiful pathway and for some distance have found the scenery most inviting, but presently the path ended at the base of a frowning precipice, compelling us to retrace our steps. What though the beginning of a path may be pleasing, and for a little distance all may seem fair, if the end is disastrous? If the end is not right, all else, however fascinating it may appear, must be wrong. A right path leads to a right end. The prudent man will foresee this by weighing the path in the light of the sanctuary and discerning the evil on before he will hide himself by refusing to enter the inviting pathway. The simple, on the other hand, occupied with, and deceived by, the apparent attractiveness of the beginning of the path, will press on and suffer for their folly.

Young Christians, then, should lay these wise words to heart—"Ponder the path of your feet." In the things of this life none less than in the things of God this injunction is needed. We shall never have the opportunity of living our lives on earth again. How vitally important, then, it becomes that every path we enter should be of God! Yet how often, it is to be feared, paths are entered and associations are formed for life, and God and His Word are scarcely ever consulted in the matter. We err greatly if we expect God to smile upon us and to bless us in these paths if we disregard His counsel before we enter them.

HOME IS NEAR.

THE way will soon be ended,
 The path will soon be trod ;
 Earth's weary pilgrims landed
 To rest at Home with God.
 Soon pain for aye shall vanish ;
 Soon loss shall be no more ;
 And glory's light shall banish
 The gloom we knew before.

Where Christ is all the glory,
 The lamp of that blest place,
 And all rehearse the story
 Of His great love and grace,
 There soon we'll rest in gladness
 And join to swell the song,
 And taste no more of sadness
 Whilst ages roll along.

O Lord, with joy we ponder.
 The treasures of Thy love ;
 And often here we wonder
 What we shall taste above.
 Since now, our cup o'erflowing,
 Well satisfied are we,
 What will it be when knowing
 As we are known of Thee ?

Our hearts are there already ;
 Our eyes are moist with tears ;
 The tread of time is steady ;
 The radiant glory nears.
 Upon the verge of morning
 We watch the dawn-light clear
 The distant sky adorning,
 And know that Home is near.

“REPROBATE.”

OF all that the young believer should fear as sadly possible to him, surely to be become “Reprobate” describes the calamity.

The scripture presentations of such all point to pride as being the latent yet potent cause thereof.

It is not, at any time of life, a far cry from being approved to being disapproved, that is, to be reprobate.

It is always much easier (and alas natural) to lose what one has gained than it ever is to gain. Comp. 2 John 1. 8, R.V.

Sometimes we sing,—

“The guilt of twice ten thousand sins,
One moment takes away.”

As consistently it may be sounded out,—

“The gains of twice ten thousand pains,
One moment takes away.”

What careers have been wrecked, and persons been disapproved by the mis-use of the opportunity of a moment!

It appears that some are reprobate through refusal to obey the will of God concerning them. Others become reprobate through failing to maintain what they began so well to be and to do.

Well it is to never forget the awakening and warning word,—“Happy is he that judges not himself in that which he alloweth (approveth).” When God’s judicial affliction fell on certain who did not approve to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind. Being possessed by this caused them not only to do most wicked things in the knowledge of the serious wrong and sinfulness thereof, but actually to consent with others who practised such evils, withal posing as judges of those, and refusing to judge themselves. How hateful and insidious is sin when viewed thus!

Those thus judging others condemned themselves, yet ceased not from practising those same gross sins.

Is this mind and manner quite extinct to-day?

Certainly, in wrongs that may not be so profane as those of Rom. 1. some of whom worthier things might well be expected, most manifestly show themselves. Remember Eph. 4. 17-19: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Hence is exemplified the beam in the eye that makes the possessor free to magnify the mote in that of another.

Wholesome is the counsel passed on through Corinthians, as see 2 Cor. 13. 5-7, R. V.

How severely did the great pattern apostle discipline himself in the light of the possibility of being reprobate, that is, rejected—castaway or disapproved. Read 1 Cor. 9. 27. Nor let the melancholy tale that follows be unheeded, see chap. 10. 1-12.

But who heeds as feeling, need to-day? Ah who?

JOHN BROWN.

LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK.

THE trial of your faith worketh patience. No wonder then we are told to rejoice when we fall into divers temptations. The trial is worth it if it works patience in us, for patience is the great sweetener of life—our own and that of others; it is the soil in which the fruit of the Spirit flourishes and bears abundantly. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, it suits them all, and alike they

prosper in it, requiring no stimulants, but, growing hardy and well formed, yield constant fragrance and beauty to God and our fellows.

Most of us have to spend our lives in some obscure and monotonous fashion, each day opening for us with the same prospect of weary drudgery. To most of us the lot of our fellow seems better than our own; and weary with the daily monotony of our life we would gladly exchange it for that of another; and what can we do for God in this? There are no opportunities for us. Chances never come our way, and the yield from our life for God seems to be nil, because we are tied up to this, and have to work out our life in these barren surroundings. But patience! Did the Lord not mean it when He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth"? Can that obscure little corner of yours not be salted for God? If patience have her perfect work in you, think you for a moment that God gets nothing and that the world is none the better of your life?

One life lived patiently, one life yielding out of toil and drudgery and monotony the blessed fruits of the Spirit—sweetness instead of bitterness, love instead of envy and malice, gentleness instead of wrath and strife. It may seem very little.

But consider: the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.

If there is one lesson to be learned from the things that are made it is that the agents used in the making are infinitely small compared with the thing made. How very tiny is a drop of rain compared with yon mighty mountain. Yet it was principally the raindrops that moulded into shape that towering height, and hollowed out the valley beside it. And see what a story it has to tell of the eternal power of God!

Your life compared with all that stands for a testimony to God and His Christ may seem an infinitely insignificant thing, but lived with patience and making for sweetness and peace it has a place in the working of the eternal purpose of God that you cannot estimate the value of.

Very little of the future has been revealed to us, but if the heavens and the earth with the things created and made declare the power and glory of God to man and angel to-day, remember also that to principalities and powers which we know nothing of is being or has to be declared the manifold wisdom of God, and your life is one of the things that God is using to that end.

Then let patience have her perfect work. Your life will gain by it; the lives of those around you will gain by it; and God is gaining in His eternal purpose, to an extent that you know nothing about.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XII. JUNE 15.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING. JOHN 4. 43-54.

THE tarrying in the City of the Samaritans lasted two days, and afterwards the Lord went into Galilee. We are invited to connect the reception of the Lord by the Galileans with His doings in Jerusalem at the Feast. Now we are not told of any sign of healing or the like done by Him then and there, and we must therefore regard His purification of the temple as that to which this Scripture chiefly refers. This confirms us in the belief that John 2. 13-22 really does refer to an early period in the Lord's ministry, and is not to be confounded with the purification He effected in the temple just before His death.

He comes down therefore to Cana of Galilee, where, as we understand, He had performed His first sign, and here He

restores to health the sick son of the Capernaum nobleman. This personage was probably, as the R.V. margin gives, a king's officer—the word itself literally means royal, kingly, belonging to a king, and it is used in this adjective sense in Acts 12. 20, 21, and in James 2. 8, where we read of a royal country, royal apparel, royal law. Used as a substantive (of persons) it may mean, according to Liddell and Scott, either the king's friends or his officers.

Note the faith of the nobleman and his affection for his son (perhaps his only son), "Lord come down ere my little boy die." When he met the Lord it was about one o'clock, a time when in the hot East many are taking an afternoon siesta (as Christians nowadays often do after a Sunday dinner). But at this time the nobleman received the words in which power was, "Thy son liveth," and off he went. Meeting his servants on the morrow he was greeted by the news that his son had successfully passed the dread crisis of his disease, and he inquires at what hour the marvellous remedy of the great Physician began its effect, "when he began to amend." But the servants in mentioning the very hour at which the Lord had spoken speak of no commencement of a cure. "Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him." It was no case of a great physician merely administering some potent remedy which after time and patience wrought a cure. He,

whose almighty word Chaos and Darkness heard,
And took their flight,

spake the word and forthwith the disease vanished and himself and his whole house believed.

We now reach a point when it is rather difficult to discern the order of the Gospel narratives. Up to this point everything has been fairly plain, namely, first those incidents which precede the Lord's commencement of His public ministry, and secondly, these early narratives that centre round the first passover after His baptism.

When we come to the sixth chapter of John we get an account of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, the one sign which is recorded in all four Gospels. This may serve, therefore, as an epoch by which the Lord's ministry is divided into an earlier and a later period. The wording of John 5. 1 and John 6. 1 shows clearly the order of these events, namely, that the healing of the Bethesda sick man followed the healing of the nobleman's son, and was followed in its turn by the feeding of the five thousand.

But a vast number of important incidents are recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke as having followed the incarceration of John the Baptist, and therefore as being subsequent to the events of John 1. 2. 3. 4., and as having taken place before the epoch of John 6. which finds its parallel passages in Matthew 14., Mark 6., Luke 9. And as far as is known to the present writer there is no hint either in John 5. or in Matthew, Mark, Luke to indicate where the healing of the Bethesda sick man would come into the narrative of either of these three Gospels.

We shall therefore first study John 5. by itself in the setting in which we find it; and subsequently return to the other Gospels before we read the account which John gives of the multiplication of the loaves.

XIII. JUNE 29.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, JOHN 5.

IN looking at a distant prospect from any particular point of view which is sufficiently elevated, the eye is naturally attracted by those hills or mountains which stand up prominently above the surrounding country; and neglecting for the time the details of the low-lying land between, one perhaps is led unconsciously to suppose that these upstanding eminences have an importance in the configuration of the country which is all their own; and that proportionally

to their height there lies below a breadth and a depth of foundation structure.

So in the passage before us, where is recorded one sign out of the many that certainly were done between the healing of the nobleman's son and the feeding of the five thousand. But these four signs recorded respectively in John 2. 4. 5. 6. tower high in our sight, and especially the latter two, which give rise to teaching of such far-reaching importance as we get for instance in John 5. 19, 20 and 6. 37. As to the details of other deeds and words in this period we must wait till we turn back to Matthew, Mark, Luke. Here and now John 5. may be enough for us.

The words omitted from the text of the Revised Version and stated in the margin thereof to be inserted wholly or in part in many ancient authorities, probably originated in an attempt to explain the text. The genuine words of verse 7 mention a troubling of the pool, and indicate the anxiety of the sick to be the first to step in after the troubling. It is supposed that two, or perhaps three, separate notes explanatory of this were first placed in the margins of various manuscripts and then were incorporated in the text by those who copied the manuscripts (see *Printed Text of the Greek New Testament*, by S. P. Tregelles, pages 243-246). The facts may have been as stated or they may not; it is no matter. All we need is the text. The poor fellow could not help himself, had no one to help him and had not even the sense to ask for healing. The Lord healed him straightway of His own grace and goodness.

But it was the Sabbath, and grievously had the man offended the Jews by carrying his bed on the Sabbath, though they cared nothing how long he lay in his bed on the Sabbath.

(It is remarkable how the word Jews is used in the New Testament—perhaps some of our readers would hunt up

which are the books in which the people of Israel are so called.)

We read elsewhere in this connexion of One who is greater than the Sabbath, but here this theme is elaborated, and the Lord speaks in no uncertain words as to His person and His work.

This commences with the memorable words, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Here in unmistakable language He declares Himself to be the Son of God. But some would say that this is so just as it might be of any man as God's creature—

"We are also His offspring,"

but very especially of any distinguished for goodness and the like, as He was. The question then is, Was that all He meant? First, how was He understood? They sought to kill Him because He called God His own Father (note the words His own Father, and further), making Himself equal with God. Well, then, was this a mistake of theirs? Did they misunderstand Him in supposing that He meant to say He was equal with God? Note His following words, and observe how absolutely He links Himself with the Father in the next and following verses. What things the Father doeth the Son doeth in like manner. All are to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Along with all this and dependent thereon, joined therewith indissolubly, we have the words as to the quickening power of the Son's voice and the insight into futurity with which the paragraph ends (verse 29).

Here, too, with this declaration of the equality of Father and Son we have clearest teaching as to their identity of purpose and of action. The Father quickeneth, so the Son quickeneth, but the Father judgeth no one, having given all judgment to the Son.

And yet we have here no mere enunciation of a formal

doctrine, but all set forth in definite statements, showing as far as it is possible for man to understand it, the relation between these two ineffable Persons who are divinely named as the Father and the Son. Words which we comment on with hesitation, but without hesitation commend to all readers as worthy of perusal and re-perusal again and again and worthy of committing to memory with the utmost assiduity. By making them one's very own they may serve as a true prophylactic against the epidemic of modern scepticism under its lying name of higher criticism.

But as it was then, so, alas! it is to-day. Then men professed to believe Moses, but believed not the Greater than Moses of whom Moses spake. So to-day, men who take the name of Christ and profess to reverence His word, count it of no more value than a myth or a folk-story, because they have not the love of God in themselves.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

XIV. JULY 13.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING,

MATTHEW 4. 12-22; MARK 1. 14-20; LUKE 4. 16-5. 11.

Correspondence.

We solicit correspondence from readers of these notes, and especially from young men, on any points of difficulty or interest that may arise.

BIBLE READING V.

MAY not the remarkable quotation in Mark 1. 2, R.V., be classed with those in Matthew 27. 9, 10 and Jude 14. 15?

Might not all three quotations have existed previously in true records, once well known, but now unknown? D.

[We should like to hear the thoughts of our readers on this suggestion, and therefore forbear for the present to make any comment.—C. M. L.]

“ALIVE FOR EVERMORE!”

Tune—“JESUS, LOVER OF MY SOUL.”

IN the depths of pain and woe
 Jesus hung upon the tree,
 Suffered more than mind can know,
 Gave His life to ransom me.
 There they pierced His hands and feet—
 There He bowed His head and died:
 Truth and mercy yonder meet,
 Where the Lord was crucified.

Hear His sorrow-laden cry,
 From the cross on Calvary,
 To His Father, God on high—
 “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”
 Oh! what wondrous love was His!
 Subject to the Father’s will
 ’Midst His dying agonies,
 Yet in death a Victor still.

From the terrors of the grave—
 From the endless doom of sin—
 Jesus stooped my soul to save,
 Came to seek, and came to win.
 Now His anguish all is o’er:
 Now He waits, His work complete,
 Soon to tread for evermore
 All His foes beneath His feet.

R. G. D.

“LET US ARISE!”

Tune—“ST. KILDA.”

O GOD, what wonders love has done,
 How great Thy heart of grace ;
 That sparèd not Thine only Son
 To take our guilty place.

A ransom price for sinners paid
 Was found on Calvary's hill ;
 Where mercy looked in vain for aid,
 While judgement had its will.

The curse of earth, the wrath of Heaven,
 Jesus alone sustained ;
 Through Him our sins are all forgiven,
 In Him our peace is gained.

The Lord of glory crucified !
 His kingly title see ;—
 They pierced His hands, and feet, and side,
 His blood has made us free.

A willing Sacrifice for sin
 Which we could ne'er confess ;
 The Christ of God alone could win
 Our claim to righteousness.

O God, Thy Holy Name we praise,
 Fain would we rise to Thee ;
 And bless Thee for Thy wondrous ways
 Through all eternity.

R. G. D.

"THE TWO SHOUTS."

ISRAEL in Egypt under the blood were a redeemed people, and in the purposes of God they were also a delivered people, but their actual deliverance came afterwards; they rested under the blood of the Lamb first, then God brought them out in grace and in power. They are bidden to stand still and see the salvation of their God (Exod. 14. 13). How marvellous is the history of this perverse people: they, of all the nations, and they alone, had the Lord with them and God for them. When Moses began to work in his own way for the deliverance of his people, he began with an Egyptian and slew him. At this point of his history, Moses was mighty in word and in deed (Acts 7. 22). But he was mighty in his own way and in his own thoughts. When God began to work for His people's deliverance, He began with the throne, and the word was with authority and with power, "Thus saith the Lord, Let My people go that they may serve Me." To enjoy their liberty? No, that they might serve the Lord. It was to be deliverance from the servitude of Pharaoh, but it was deliverance to the doing of the will of God and the being under His authority.

This was His purpose with the people, and it was as the purposes of God were made known to Israel that their rebellion of heart was brought to light, and the sadly little ability or desire to walk in the path of obedience that they had was manifested. Had we gone into Egypt before the deliverance of Israel, we should have heard groans and lamentations on all sides. Was all this state of matters to be left behind them in Egypt? It should have been so, but, alas! we soon find the delivered people complaining and murmuring. God is with and for them, but they in heart are not for God. Beloved fellow-saints, let us remember as we read the history of this people the words

of Scripture, "These things happened unto them for ensamples" (1 Cor. 10. 11).

Yes, our hearts are as far from God by nature as the hearts of His people Israel were, and it is only as the grace of God triumphs over our evil heart of unbelief that we shall be not only where God would have us, but what He would have us to be. God had a definite purpose with His people Israel, in them and through them He desired to work out His purposes among the nations of the earth. Would they but leave themselves in His hands to be used in accordance with His will, what mighty results would have followed, but, alas! instead of this, what disgrace, what weakness! When told to enter the land, they would not, and when told not to go up to possess it, then they would go. First they would not trust in God's strength, then they would trust in their own (Num. 14. 44).

No doubt the early education of Israel was a bad one, and all those who had been educated in Egypt (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb—men of faith) had to be cut off before God brought in a prepared people to the land of promise, there to work out His purposes in obedience to Him. These, beloved brethren, are solemn lessons for each and all of us. Our early education may have been a bad one, and may be the greatest hindrance to God's using us now as He desires to do; our wills unbroken, it may be mighty in word and deed, yet both the one and the other little more than the energy of the flesh. While we may rejoice in our deliverance, and that we have been brought to the place where the will of God can be done, there may be, and often is, little power to walk with God and in the things of God as He would have us. How many of the brief moments at our disposal are taken up with contending for our own way and our own thoughts? We may try to persuade ourselves and others that all is right, yet in the secret depths of our own hearts we know that

much, yea, very much, is wrong. We have failed to do God's will at His time and in His way, and then we have tried to do it in our own time and way, and what results have followed? Failure and sorrow upon sorrow, and thus Israel went up to fight with their enemies, but God went not with them.

Not at this time do we find the ark of the Lord being taken to the battle: it remains in the camp (Num. 14. 44). We shall find further on in the history of Israel, that as they have departed from God and He has departed from them, increased confidence is placed in externals. So to-day men and women are taken up with their religious forms, whilst the God of heaven is to them the wellnigh unknown God. What is the secret of all this? Is it not that we are not abiding in Him, and our condition may be described in 1 Cor. 13.—a chapter we need to ponder much if we would be what God desires we should be.

And now, after forty years of wilderness wandering, Israel is again about to go up to take possession of the land of promise. God had been training them, the rebels were dead, and a prepared people are about to see the power of God displayed in the destruction of Jericho. The way in which Israel is told to act seems remarkable, and it was no doubt to teach them obedience and faith in God. The priestly part of the congregation takes a very prominent place, and ample room is left for God to show that the work is His: "Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit" (Zech. 4. 6). The greater part of our difficulties arise either from our backwardness to do God's will in His way and time, or by our determination to do His will and work in our own way and time; but it should be God working in us, both to will and to do . . . (Phil. 2. 13). Let us see that we do not hinder His working.

We have said it was the priests that took the prominent place in the overthrow of Jericho. Let us see, beloved

brethren, that it is our priestly nature that acts for God, and not our restless flesh. Better to do nothing than to do the right thing wrongly, for if we do thus our act will bring neither glory to God nor blessing to ourselves. We find in Josh. 6. 16, the people shouted, and it was a shout in obedience to Joshua's command, it was a shout in fellowship with God—a shout of victory, even before that victory was won. Were we abiding in the power of our God, what should we not see of His mighty workings? Are you satisfied, beloved brother, with your life, is there not oftentimes a sad lack of power for God? How little we see of the results we desire to see, and alas! sometimes we see the reverse.

And Israel shouted and the walls fell. It was manifest to all that the work was of God: there was room left for God to work. Oftentimes in our hurry and anxiety to be doing, we leave little room for God.

Many years have now passed away, and Israel has departed from God, and He is leaving them to learn the bitter lesson of what departure from Him entails, a lesson that may cost us much of our lifetime to learn, "for what a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6. 7). We may be conscious of our weakness and find ourselves beaten before our enemies, yet there may be no humbling before our God; there may be the determination to put forth more of our own strength to accomplish our object, and this object may be a right one in itself, yet the effort to accomplish it in our own way and strength will result in failure and sorrow.

In 1 Sam. 4. 2 we find Israel smitten by their enemies, and in verse 3 the elders are found asking, "Why hath the Lord smitten us to-day before our enemies?" How much there may be of correct phraseology, yet how far the heart may be from God. They attribute their defeat to God and seem to recognize His hand in it, yet the next thing we find the elders doing is a wrong one. Instead of going

before the Lord and humbling themselves that He might teach them the reason of their failure, we find the elders sending to fetch the ark of God from Shiloh, and this shows us the condition of the elders and of the people. If the elders are right with God, they will lead rightly and bring blessing to the people; but if they are wrong, they will lead others into sorrow. Some may say, Better have no elders than have elders that may lead wrongly—nay, we might as well say there should have been no ark, because it was used to lead the people to their destruction. The remedy is to let the elders get right with God, not to set up a democracy. Let those that are spiritual act for God (Gal. 6. 1).

As we said before, there was no taking of the ark when Israel went up to fight without the word of the Lord in Deut. 14., but now we find an advanced state of apostasy: there is a trust in externals and there is a foolish confidence in the outward emblems. How characteristic this of human nature. As God is lost sight of symbols are put in His place, until that which once pointed to God becomes the object of worship itself. This, we believe, is the origin of idolatry.

And now again we have a great shout as the ark came into the camp—a shout that brought fear into the hearts of Israel's enemies, for they heard that God had come into the camp of Israel. Alas! alas! if this report emanated from Israel they have the bitter lesson to learn that their God is not at their beck and bidding, and that they may have the emblem without His presence. It would almost seem that the enemies of Israel had more intelligence than the people of God, for while Israel seemed taken up with the ark, their enemies seemed taken up more with the God of the ark, and speak of His mighty doings of the past (1 Sam. 4. 7, 8). And so the people shouted, as we are told in verse 5. It was in the ark they

trusted, "it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (verse 3). They shouted, but it was not the shout of faith in God nor a shout in fellowship with Him, and at His bidding. They had departed from their God and had now to learn the bitterness of that departure and the sorrows of their backslidings. Israel is smitten and the ark is taken.

God will take care of His own things if we are careful to walk with Him, but if we depart from Him He may suffer us to fall and bring dishonour on the things of His House. How solemn these lessons: confidence may be simply of the flesh, and we may be trying to do in our own strength what we once did in the power of God. Beloved fellow-saints, these are humbling thoughts, and they should make those who think they stand to take heed lest they fall. As children of the light may we have wisdom to walk in the light, thus seeing the way for our own feet and so walking with God that those who follow us may be found in the pathway of power and blessing, being used of God in His own way, to work out His purposes, He working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

J. A. BOSWELL.

NOTES ON PROVERBS

VI.

TRUE friends, and true friendship, are perhaps the most valuable and sacred possessions that man as man can have on earth.

The qualities and characteristics of a true friend are to be found in the book of Proverbs. "A friend loveth at all times" (Prov. 17. 17). In prosperity and in adversity, in failure and in triumph, at all times and in all circumstances the love of a true friend fails not. "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18. 24). A brother,

it is true, is born for adversity, and who can or who does weep with us more really than one who is worthy of the name of a brother? But even such a brother may be outstripped by the manner in which a friend sticks to us in the performance of all friendly offices. Not only in days of adversity is he near but also in days of prosperity. Not only can he weep with us in reality but he can rejoice with us in truth. It is infinitely more difficult to rejoice with them that do rejoice than it is to weep with those who weep. Many may reach the latter who are unable to rise to the former. There is nothing in adversity to cause us to envy one another's lot, consequently we freely mingle our tears; but there is much in prosperity on which that rankest vice, even envy, may feed, and thus forbid us to rise to the glorious height of heartily rejoicing in another's exaltation, even though that one may be raised high above ourselves. This latter a friend may do even when a brother fails. Thus one of the marks of a true friend is

CONSTANCY.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27. 6). A friend who loves at all times is faithful. His faithfulness and his love cause him to wound. One who cannot wound when necessity demands it is not worthy of the name of a friend. He is no friend who looks lightly on our sins and shortcomings. Perhaps this is one of the most valuable offices that a friend may discharge. Out of an upright, a faithful and loving heart he reproveth and rebuketh when he beholds anything amiss. But such reproof, though oftentimes deep and sore as a wound, proceeds from love: hence its value, as also its good results. Too often those who seek to reprove the erring do it not in the spirit of a friend, that is, it is not prompted by love, and though in truth they wound it is usually a wound that never heals and results in pain and anguish, in hatred and estrangement. Oh to learn the value of a friend who can wound! Oh to prize

such wounds! Thus another distinguishing mark of a friend is

FAITHFULNESS.

“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Prov. 27. 9). A friend does not delight in wounding: he is not always rebuking; good and faithful counsel he delights to give. There is a sweetness about him that is sorely needed in this world, where so much bitterness is experienced. Many have had to bless God that often their Marahs have been made sweet by the hearty counsel of a friend. Such counsel comes from the heart and goes to the heart. It touches the spring of the bitter waters and, lo! they are sweet ever after. Hearty counsel comes from the inward parts: it is the expression of serious thought; it is “soul” counsel. One’s own interests are not considered more diligently or minutely than those of one’s friend. Seasonable rebukes and good and hearty counsel then are to be had from a true friend. Thus another characteristic mark of a friend is

SINCERITY.

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Prov. 27. 17). Here is an invaluable good that a friend may do. How blessed to come in contact with such a friend! As the sharpening iron coming in contact with the blade causes it to shine and sharpen it, so intercourse with a friend brightens the countenance of man, thus indicating the inward joy that such friendly intercourse supplies. The company and conversation of a friend therefore is refreshing and reviving to one who, when alone, may be sad and dull and inactive. Conversation with such a friend, in the things of God, often lifts us out of our own narrow thoughts, broadening our vision and turning our minds into new fields of thought, there to revel in green pastures which otherwise we should have missed. May such friends and such friendships be multiplied! He

is a strange man who has no friends. He had better look to himself and ask the reason. It is vain to throw the blame on the big world he is moving in: there must be something vitally wrong with himself.

Friendship is not a one-sided affair; if it is to exist and if its blissfulness is to be enjoyed it must be reciprocal. If we were each possessed of more sterling worth we should not find ourselves friendless. Our superiority of character, our devoutness of life, our refinement of feeling should act as a sort of magnetic influence to attract to us friends such as we should desire. If we are what we ought to be our difficulty will not be to get friends, for the number that will seek our friendship, because of our own personal worth, will be so great that our difficulty shall be to make a wise selection. This also will be true whether we are rich or poor.

It is one thing to find friends, it is quite another thing to maintain their friendship after it is got. If we prize a true friend according to his worth we shall leave no stone unturned to continue in his friendship. Proverbs 18. 24 should be heard here: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Thus we see that friendship entails reciprocal obligations. It won't do to expect the evidences of friendship to be all manifested by others toward us. No; we must show ourselves friendly, and in this region we must act toward others as we desire others to act toward us. To do this perhaps requires on our part healthy exertions to be made. It may require us to seek by God's grace to curb our temper, to make ourselves less repulsive than we often are in a multitude of ways, to covet to be amiable, meek and Christlike in spirit. We must show ourselves friendly. In how many directions this may be done we do not wait to inquire, for their name is Legion. It is a sorrowful fact that sometimes the common courtesies and kindnesses of life are often neglected by Christians toward

their friends. Instead of their conversion to God making them more Christlike and increasing their love for their friends, yea, for all men, they become straitened in themselves, and consequently instead of finding themselves respected and loved they are shunned and despised. Let those who find themselves without friends bend their energies to trying to be more worthy of friendship; and instead of blaming others for their friendless condition let them try what the results will be of laying the blame at their own door.

“Thine own friend and thy father’s friend forsake not” (Prov. 27. 10). Constancy is an important requirement in friendship. If we would have a friend to stand by us in the hour of our need we must not forsake him in the time of his need. If to day he has need of our friendship and cheer, to-morrow we may have need of his. Thus by mutual help in time of need a neighbour that is near may prove to be better than a brother that is far off in the day of our calamity. No discredit to our brother because he is afar off; circumstances have so ordered it that he is dwelling at a distance; nevertheless if we are what we ought to be we shall not lack a neighbour at our door to succour us in the hour of our extremity. If we have not such a neighbour the fault is almost certain to be our own.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

HYMN.

O God, to Thee our voice we lift
 In praise for ev’ry perfect gift
 Thou sendest from above.
 In daily boons bestowed by Thee
 Thou hast declared Thyself to be
 A God of grace and love:

But, oh! Thy Son, from heaven sent,
Has love's unlimited extent,
Its shoreless ocean, shown.
For Him, our songs to Thee we raise
In thankful gratitude, and praise
The Gift that makes Thee known.

What love it was, that Thou shouldst give
Thy Son to death that we might live,
Who bore no love to Thee!
No thanks we gave for aught bestowed,
But by our ev'ry action showed
What enemies were we.

But now we love, for love expressed
In giving us Thy very best—
Thy well-beloved Son.
We praise Thee, worship and adore,
Who opened thus love's boundless store
And gave that Blessed One.

Oh, wondrous Gift! in Whom we find
Thine ev'ry heav'nly gift combined;
Our All-in-all is He.
Our Life, our Peace, our Righteousness;
All that we have and shall possess,
We have in Him, from Thee.

To Thee is highest glory due,
And ages shall its weight accrue,
For this that Thou hast done.
So now we'd join that mighty song
That age on age shall echo on,
Praise for Thy Gift—Thy Son.

For Young Believers.

"As newborn babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 *Peter* 2. 2.

THE FRIEND OF GOD.

THE unique name of "The Friend of God" is held by Abraham alone, yet the blissful intimacy and friendship which it was his to enjoy with God may be the portion of every born-again soul. Three times in the Scriptures Abraham is honoured by being mentioned by the name of the Friend of God.

Let us remember that constancy, faithfulness and sincerity are amongst the more prominent marks of a friend. These are clearly exemplified in the life of Abraham. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" tells of the near place he occupied to the heart of his God. Hearty counsel between them as to the doom or deliverance of Sodom speaks of the sweetness of true friendship. "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," bears witness to the unlimited confidence which God placed in his friend.

In choosing friends men usually test their fellows in various ways to see whether they merit their confidence or not, and whether it is desirable and safe to admit them to close friendship. Not until such testing is accomplished in some way or other do we usually speak of any one as our friend. Friendships misplaced may prove a most disastrous thing. It would appear that God also acts upon this principle. James 2. 23, proves that this is so. It is there declared that Abraham was called the friend of God because of his faithfulness to God and his obedience to His command in that memorable test of offering his son, Isaac, on the altar. His obedience in that supreme testing moment was such that with confidence God could admit him to the near place

of friendship, and could publicly proclaim him as His friend. There was no reserve on Abraham's part in rising to the very highest requirements of friendship with God, and there was no restraint on God's part in admitting him to the honoured place of being peculiarly His friend. Moreover at that time God renewed His covenant with him and confirmed it by an oath as a result of what Abraham had done.

In John 15. the disciples are called by the Lord Jesus His friends. Servants they were, but not servants merely, for between the servant and the master there must needs be a distance; but as friends he admits them to a nearer place than servants and withholds no secrets from them: He makes known to them all that He had heard from the Father. Thus into the secret chamber they are brought with Him to know the intimacy and intercourse of friends. Oh what words are spoken there! Oh what wondrous secret counsels are there divulged! Shall he hide from His friends to-day any more than God hid not from His friend Abraham in the past? Nay, my soul, the secret of the Lord is still with them that fear Him, and in the secret chamber things are told to His friends which are hidden from those who only know a servant's nearness!

But friendship carries great obligations with it. A price has to be paid for everything of worth. "Ye are My friends," says He, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." Are we prepared to pay the price? When He tests us shall we be found wanting and consequently be denied the place of friends? Is there in us the readiness of Abraham to go at the Lord's bidding to where He calls, to do at His bidding what He asks of us? Thus still are we tested, and incalculable loss is ours if we miss our opportunity of proving ourselves worthy of the name of His friends. Constancy, faithfulness and sincerity are still indispensable requirements in friendship.

STEWARDSHIP.

FAITHFULNESS and wisdom are the pre-eminent qualities for a Steward of God to have. Comp. Luke 12. 42. These are not weeds. No, nor such as grow or may be found on untilled land ; although

“Many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Where faithfulness is, there shall be due exercise of heart and conscience to make the best use of what one is, as well as of what one has: whether that be time, talents, opportunities or other such like preciousnesses.

Where wisdom is, the mind shall seek with earnest care to do this in the proper manner. Thus shall ensue—“The right thing in the right way.”

Luke 16. 1-13 records a most interesting story as to the principles that obtain in connexion with stewardship.

The young believer should seek grace of God to hold fast the lessons taught therein; since “As the twig is bent, so the tree is grown.”

Humiliating is the fact that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

This arises in chief and commonly because of well-meant, but mistaken, refusal to conduct one's-self as becomes ordinary common sense.

It is perfectly amazing the extent to which Christians allow themselves to imagine that “real life” is carnality, worldliness or the like. The words

“FOR THEN MUST YE NEEDS GO OUT OF THE WORLD” are quite lost upon many that would but do well for themselves and no ill to others did they duly regard the meaning thereof unto day by day living.

The sphere and time of stewardship are solemnly insisted on in 1 Cor. 4. 2, R.V. Even :—

HERE

moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

Since "here" is the province of duty, is there nothing in the words

BE FOUND FAITHFUL?

One is impelled to press the truth, "found faithful here," and to ask, but found

BY WHOM?

Ah! there are amenablenesses here that are scarcely known; and, where known, it is all too evident how few are prepared to brook them, although professions are loud enough and pretensions great enough.

It appears to the present writer that a good deal may be gleaned from the use of the fact of "Stewards and their work" towards the young that are not their own but are the children of others who are pleased to entrust them to such persons. See carefully Gal. 4. 2, R.V.

Will workers unto the young please note this for themselves. Seeking withal both ability to dig and the avoidance of pride that would make them ashamed to beg in connexion with their far-reaching labour of love.

How unique is the word (1 Pet. 4. 10) "As every man hath received gift, even so minister the same one to another AS good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Ennobling and nerving is the truth that He accepteth all according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. "That which is more feeble is necessary." Therefore let none be tempted to bury their one talent, nor to despair as being of no use.

Neither let any neglect to unloose the tied colt that is yet to be found where

TWO WAYS MEET.

Even, a way to fruitfulness,
a way to barrenness.

But having found and freed, leave not such to run wild;
rather bring him to Him, Who as Lord:

hath need of him.¹

With Him to learn and show, as another has worthily
expressed, this grace and truth:

“No service in itself is small,
None great, though earth it fill;
But that is small, that seeks its own;
And great that does God’s will.”

JOHN BROWN.

¹ Compare diligently Mark 2. 1, etc.; Luke 19. 29.

GALILEE.

The waters gleam in the golden sun,
 The wind is hushed to rest,
 Treading the beautiful shores is One—
 A weary Heavenly Guest.

O nature fair! did you know Him there?
 The One who gave you birth!
 As only man did you welcome Him,
 Or Lord of all the earth?

Oh! say, did the green grass greener grow,
 Bending beneath His feet?
 Did the crystal wavelets softer flow
 As they the Lord did greet?

In peaceful night, when all other light
 Had faded—died away—
 Fair moon! for Him did you shine less dim
 Till the midnight merged to day?

The tale of those wondrous bygone years,
 Those shores of Galilee—
 They loosen the founts of smiles and tears,
 They thrill so wondrously.

Our hearts are glad, and yet strangely sad,
 Ah! Mount of Olives fair!
 How oft His feet sought on thee retreat
 Thy solitude to share!

But o'er these scenes a veil I shall fling—
 Veil of forgetfulness,
 And in happy rapture let me sing
 Of coming cloudlessness.

All gain, no loss, from the seeming dross
 Is His reward at last!
 And fadeless flowers for His Heavenly bowers
 He reaps from sorrows past!

He shall see of the travail of His soul—
 For ever satisfied!
 O Time! would you fleeter onward roll
 To haste that morningtide!

My heart, be still! for His Father's will
 He waits with joy serene!
 Yet oh! how sweet, when in bliss we meet
 Without a cloud between!

M. M. C.

BIBLE WOMEN : HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(NAOMI AND RUTH.)

THE little book of Ruth is full of precious truth, and its opening page has solemn lessons to teach in the experience of Naomi. Her lot was cast in the time when the judges ruled in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Not only was it a time of warfare, but there was also a famine in the land; and Naomi, her husband, and two sons betake themselves to the land of Moab, thus seeking a way out of their trouble instead of looking to Jehovah to sustain them in the time of famine. See Psalm **33**. 18, 19.

Naomi soon had to learn by bitter experience that it is better to trust in the Lord than to depend upon human resources, for, in course of time, she finds herself bereft of all that naturally she could lean upon. Her husband and her two sons die, and she is left in her helplessness.

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard there how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. But on the way she halts and beseeches her daughters-in-law to return to their own people, and would thus become a hinderer to those who had set their faces

toward the land where the living God was known. To her all hope seemed gone, and she felt the hand of the Lord had gone forth against her; she considered her own lot far more bitter than that of her daughters-in-law, and so she pled with them to return. Then they lifted up their voice and wept again, and Orpah kissed Naomi and returned, but Ruth clave unto her. Naomi pleads once more with Ruth to return to her people and her god, but it was of no avail, for Ruth had made her blessed choice—"thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Then when Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with her, she ceased speaking to her, and they journeyed together until they came to Bethlehem. On their arrival all the city was moved about them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" And she replied: "Call me not Naomi (Pleasant), call me Mara (Bitter): for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." What a confession—full in the time of famine, empty in the time of plenty! Yet this fulness was only such as nature supplies and death could remove, and this emptiness but made room for the fulness of God which could never be exhausted. But bitter tears had to be shed ere the emptiness of her supposed fulness was realized, and the depths of her need must be exposed before the fulness of God could be revealed. Naomi had yet to learn that, although she thought the Lord had dealt very bitterly with her, in faithfulness He had dealt very graciously with her.

Hers was the experience of the backslider in heart who is filled with the fruit of his own ways (Prov. 14. 14). Hers also was it to experience the truth of the words: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved" (Isa. 30. 15).

We next see the steadfastly-minded Ruth, with willing hands and feet, going forth to glean in the field so that her own and her mother-in-law's need might be met. What a

prosperous day she had the second chapter declares, and every detail of that young woman's day's work should be carefully pondered. It would be well if all Christian women remembered that God still takes account of all the details of their daily life and that He will reward accordingly.

Now, wherein lay the secret of Ruth's success? May it not be learned by considering

Where she gleaned;

With whom she wrought that day's work?

It is stated that her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech, a mighty man of wealth, a near kinsman, one of them that had the right to redeem. Some might think that this was mere chance, but the Scriptures clearly show that the Lord, under whose wings Ruth had come to take refuge, guided her feet to the one who was able to meet her every need, and in whose sight she would find grace.

It is with joy that Christians look back to the happy day that fixed their choice for eternity, the day that found them at the feet of the Lord Jesus, the One mighty to save, the One who in grace became their near kinsman and was therefore able to redeem. Then like Ruth they might exclaim: "Why have I found grace in Thy sight, that Thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" And, like Ruth also, they may well delight to make known to others *where* they have gleaned, and *with whom* they have wrought.

Chapter 3. tells us that at length Naomi's heart is exercised about Ruth, who had so willingly toiled each day during the time of harvest, and her yearning finds expression in the words: "My daughter, shall I not seek

A RESTING PLACE FOR THEE?"

But where can such a place be found, where it would indeed be well with Ruth? In none other than Boaz the

near kinsman! Washed, anointed, and clothed Ruth is found in his presence, and lays herself at his feet, whilst she listens to his voice to know what he would have her do. How graciously he received her, and with what words of comfort he spake unto her! He assures her of his willingness to do for her a kinsman's part, and blesses her by the Lord, bidding her fear not. All night long she lay at his feet, and in the early morning she is up and away, and none knew but herself of that midnight communion. Laden with six measures of barley she returns unto Naomi, for Boaz said: "Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law." Then said Naomi: "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter fall, for the man will not rest until he have finished the thing this day."

That day the act of redeeming was accomplished by Boaz, and he purchased Ruth for his wife. Thus we find the diligent toiler at rest and brought into the closest possible relationship with Boaz, whilst Naomi's heart is made to rejoice in her old age.

Do we not discern the way of God in all this? For the Christian toiler in life's harvest field has He not provided a resting place? Is it not alone to be found in Him with Whom we found grace when as aliens and strangers we came to Him? Washed, anointed, and clothed, it is ours to come into His presence and hold communion with Him, listening to His words of comfort and cheer as He assures our hearts of what He will do for us. It may be we must needs tarry all night and lie at His feet until the morning, but none go from such times of communion empty handed. Even then we must "sit still" in patience until He has accomplished that which He has pledged Himself to do, even to come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Then, surely, shall His rest and ours be glory.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XIV. JULY 13.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 4. 12-22.

MARK 1. 14-20.

LUKE 4. 16-5. 11.

THE passages from Matthew and Mark commence:

“Now when He heard that John was delivered up He withdrew into Galilee.”

“Now after that John was delivered up Jesus came into Galilee.”

These words demand our very earnest attention.

First, by comparing them with what we have read in John, we may mark an important subdivision of the period of the Lord's ministry. For whilst chapters 1. to 5. of John agree with chapters 1. to 5. of Mark and 3. to 13. of Matthew in belonging to that period of the Life which preceded the feeding of the five thousand, yet at any rate the first four chapters of John deal with the time when John the Baptizer was at liberty, whilst from Matthew 4. 12 and from Mark 1. 14 onwards we have that ministry of the Lord Jesus which followed the betrayal and incarceration of John the Baptizer.

Thus, at least for convenience and help to the memory, we first divide the Life into two periods: one being before, and the other following after, the sign of the feeding of the five thousand, whilst the earlier of these periods is subdivided into two, the former being that during which the forerunner of the Lord was at liberty, and the latter that of his imprisonment.

The verses before us clearly show that the delivering up of John the Baptist had an important effect on the course of the Lord's action.

At this stage it might be well to look rather closely at the significance of the word translated "delivered up." This word *παράδιδωμι* *paradidōmi*, is from *παρά* *para*, beside, near; and *δίδωμι* *didōmi*, I give. Its root meaning is very simple, namely to place with, to put into the charge of, to deliver unto.

Its usage corresponds with that of the English word "deliver," in the sense in which a letter is delivered unto a messenger or delivered by a postman, not of course at all in the sense in which we speak of delivering from prison or from trouble. But the word has the most varied usage in its occurrences in over one hundred passages in the New Testament. Its general meaning may be illustrated by such scriptures as "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father"; "The Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"; "He bowed His head and delivered up His Spirit."

The word comes to have a special meaning in connexion with prisoners; for which firstly compare Matthew 5. 25, "lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison," with Luke 12. 58, "lest haply he hale thee" (a different word, "drag thee" or "drag thee away" according to the American Revisers) "unto the judge, and the judge shall deliver thee to the officer, and the officer shall cast thee into prison." See also for example Matthew 10. 16-23, where the word is uniformly translated "deliver up."

It will be perhaps most helpful to note the various "deliverings up" of the Lord Himself.

Judas delivered up the Son of Man with a kiss (Luke 22. 48).

The chief priests and the elders of the people delivered Him up to Pilate the Governor (Matthew 27. 1, 2).

Pilate delivered Jesus up that he might be crucified (Mark 15. 15).

Jesus our Lord . . . was delivered up for our trespasses . . . He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all (Romans 4. 25 ; 8. 32).

The Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me (Galatians 2. 20).

Christ also loved you and delivered Himself up for us (Ephesians 5. 2).

Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her (Ephesians 5. 25).

It does not seem as if the word itself carried any of that hateful meaning that belongs to our word "betray." The Authorized Version, however, uses this word as a translation of *παράδιδωμι*, *paradidōmi*, but only in reference to Judas, and in this the Revised Version follows them, but with manifest hesitation; see the marginal note of Matthew 10. 4.

(The word translated betrayers in Acts 7. 52 is different ; it occurs also in Luke 6. 16 and 2 Timothy 3. 4, where it is translated traitor.)

It seems to us that whatever odium there may be lies in the circumstances of the act. There is of course nothing but duty in the act of a judge who delivers a criminal up to punishment. On the other hand when a friend or relative takes advantage of his intimacy to secure the imprisonment even of a guilty person the act may be in general deprecated as a breach of faith and as evincing a lack of natural feeling. But when an innocent man is thus delivered up by his intimates the betrayal well deserves severest reproach.

We are disposed to think that John was so betrayed by Jews into the hands of Herod the King; that they delivered him up, and by Herod's command he was seized and put into prison. Compare Matthew 14. 3, Mark 6. 17.

As a result of this betrayal the Lord withdrew into Galilee, as we are told in Matthew. But in Mark it says that He

came into Galilee. Let none think that these two words mean the same thing. The meaning of one is exactly opposite to that of the other. The King withdrew, He departed into another place, away from Jerusalem and Judæa; the act described in Matthew is retiring—the King leaves the royal city and the royal country. But the Servant pursues His work; He passes from one scene to another; He comes into Galilee heralding the gospel. Let it then be well noted that we have here a manifest diversity in these two gospels, both being absolutely true and truthful, and yet describing the same fact in words of quite different, yea, of contrary meaning.

We are next told in Matthew and Mark of the call of Simon and Andrew and James and John. Being fishers, Simon and Andrew were fishing; for John the Baptist, whose disciples they had been, was cast into prison, and they had perhaps forgotten, or almost forgotten, the Lamb of God with whom they had at one time abode a while. Calling them to come after Him, He promises to teach them a more profitable occupation and they follow Him, as James and John do in like manner.

But what about Luke's story? How different it appears, how hard to reconcile! We need not be overmuch concerned, however, to piece these accounts together. It would be interesting to know if the fishermen that Luke says had gone out were Simon and Andrew, or their hired servants, as this might help us to understand the sequence of events. But if we just read the separate passages each for itself, we shall be well fed, and may by receiving the engrafted word with meekness obtain the salvation of our souls.

From Luke we learn that the night's fishing had been unsuccessful; but the Lord, though by trade a carpenter, could bring help to the fishermen. And such a catch they had likely never caught before. The power of the

Lord was brought into the circumstances of their daily life. As fishermen they learnt to know Him by the Lake of Gennesaret as they had not known Him in Bethany beyond Jordan.

It is profitable and interesting indeed to contemplate this draught of fishes which followed the discourse which verse 3 mentions. What did the Lord teach from out this fishing boat? We are not told; but we are told of what He did; of the fish that came at His bidding and the promise to Simon that not fish henceforth he should catch, but men he should take alive.

XV. JULY 27.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 5., 6., 7.

SPEAKING generally it would appear that Matthew 4. 12 to 13. 58, Mark 1. 14 to 6. 13, Luke 5. 1 to 9. 6 contain the narrative of events that occurred during the imprisonment of John the Baptist; that is between his betrayal and his murder.

These are arranged in very different order in the three gospels, and the present writer has been up to the present so unsuccessful in his attempts to determine their chronological sequence that he is beginning to think that perhaps this is purposely veiled from discovery.

At any rate we shall be able to see clearly that it is a mistake to suppose that the order in which the principal incidents of this period occurred is strictly adhered to in any one of the gospels.

Firstly, suppose we inquire whether Matthew follows the historical order strictly. See Matthew 8. 18: "Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side."

Then follows the storm that was miraculously quelled.

From Mark 4. 35 we know that this crossing of the water was on the same day as that on which He had spoken the parable of the mustard seed recorded in Matthew 13.

Thus Matthew does not always follow the order in which the events took place.

The cure of the man sick of the palsy borne of four seems according to Matthew 9. 12 to follow immediately, or almost immediately, after the Lord's return from the country of the Gadarenes, where He had healed two demoniacs—this sign according to all three gospels being subsequent to the stilling of the storm.

The healing of the demoniacs (one only is named in Mark and Luke) is recorded in Matthew 8. 28-34, Mark 5. 1-20, Luke 8. 26-39, whilst the cure of the palsied man is recorded in Mark 2. 1-12, Luke 5. 17-26; that is before the healing of the demoniac.

Thus Mark and Luke do not follow in this case the order in which the events occurred. Other illustrations might be given, but these may suffice. It is necessary to say, however, that, generally speaking, Mark appears to adhere closest to the historical order, whilst Matthew, and in a greater degree Luke, are guided in their arrangement by other considerations.

In these remarks we especially refer to the period of John's imprisonment. In the later period of the Life which follows the Great Desert Meal there is much more evidence of the order in which the incidents succeeded one another, and more uniformity in the arrangement of the different gospels.

We shall not at present say much therefore of the order of events, but simply offer comments on the scriptures in passing.

The words spoken by the Lord on the mountain have been very much neglected by those whom we may name ultra-protestant Christians. A sad production of recent

years has been a Marked Testament, which has given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme—passages of the Scriptures telling of justification by faith and the like being distinguished by a red line, and the many precious and priceless words of the Lord speaking of righteousness and holiness and so forth being left unmarked as if of inferior value. In her worst days of Bible-burning and bigoted intolerance Rome never did worse than this. The Marked Testament might be put by the side of the Romanist's version of the Scriptures as a monument of error and deceit.

We need hardly say of course that our objection does not apply to the general practice of students of Scripture in marking their own Bibles as they may believe helpful to themselves in the way of assistance to the memory and the like. But when we find a definite plan of marking a certain class of passages, which by implication suggests the inferiority or minor importance of other scriptures equally God breathed and profitable, yea, necessary, words are not strong enough to express what we would fain say.

The subject of the Lord's discourse seems to be briefly outlined in the words, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." Perhaps this word translated "fulfil" here is used in the sense of "to complete," "to make perfect," as in some other places, rather than in the sense of "to accomplish," or both meanings may be implied.

Of course there is much in this discourse which is specifically related to the law and to those to whom the law had been given. But it may be worth while to examine in some little detail how far this discourse is of general application, or whether it really is only applicable to Israel and to be regarded as now superseded and obsolete as some, we fear believe. Compare, too, Luke 6. 20-49.

First come the benedictions for the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Which of these are not now blessed? That poverty of spirit and purity of heart are rare; that mourners and peacemakers are few; that the meek and the merciful may often be sought in vain; and that hunger and thirst for righteousness are almost as scarce as is persecution for the same—these facts are patent to all. Nevertheless, though heaven and earth pass away, His words abide: the kingdom of heaven and the sight of God for the poor and the pure; comfort for mourners and a good name for peacemakers; and all other good things here promised. In Him is the Yea.

It is well to peruse with attention, too, the Lord's words as to murder and anger, adultery and lust, perjury and vain oaths, vengeance and generosity, love and hatred; lest these words being neglected we become barren and unfruitful, instead of perfect as our heavenly Father is.

The warnings against hypocrisy seem also to be of very present value. The practice of trumpet blowing is not extinct yet.

Note also particularly as of very general application the soul-stirring prayer:—

Our Father Who art in the heavens,
 Hallowed be Thy name,
 Thy kingdom come,
 Thy Will be done as in Heaven so on Earth;
 Our bread for the coming day give us this day,
 And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our
 debtors,
 And bring us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from the Evil One.

A prayer for to-day in very truth ; every petition so aptly fitting our needs and what should be our aspirations.

Passing on to the bird and lily verses, how much they are needed to-day ! How hopelessly little is our faith in God for food and raiment ! What hours of anxiety and worry we spend, most certainly seeming to think that God either cares nothing for us or is quite unable to supply our need !

Really a country walk might do some of us town-bred Christians good ; to see that God really does make the grass to grow in the country He has made ; though in the man-made town there is such a weary desert of bricks and mortar. But even in the towns we can see sparrows, unless we shut our eyes, and our heavenly Father feeds them though they neither sow nor gather into barns. But I think sometimes rather than take comfort from this, we are almost willing to reckon ourselves as worth less than half a farthing in God's sight, though so valuable in our own.

. But it is no good being anxious, and it certainly is much harm. Why can we not mind our own business ? Our business is to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

Then passing on to the end let us note the words : " Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens."

Then comes the parable of two houses, and woe, woe is us if we reject the warning and exhortation that these words contain. Who will be wise, let him observe and consider.

Finally note that the Lord Jesus Christ was not as the scribes had been from Ezra onwards, a mere expositor of Holy Scripture. He spake with authority ; what He said we know to be true and valid, not because it commends itself to our judgment, but because it is His word.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

XVI. AUGUST 10.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 8.

Correspondence.

We solicit correspondence from readers of these notes and especially from young men, on any points of difficulty or interest that may arise.

BIBLE READING VIII.

We have received a communication in reference to our remarks in Bible Reading VIII., page 97, in which we warned our readers against those who profess to know better than the Lord Jesus Christ, and make a virtue of abstaining from wine; though He, the perfect One, both made and drank it.

Our correspondent (for whom we entertain a sincere regard as the grandson of a much-esteemed brother now with the Lord) writes to accuse us of putting "a cause of stumbling in the way of young people," and encouraging "young people to take of the cup which has been and is such a terrible snare to so many," and so forth. He goes on to ask, "Do you think the way of the drunkard is God-honouring? The drunkard springs from those who take a little," and so on.

In common with the great number of Christian people who make a shibboleth of total abstinence, our friend seems totally oblivious of the fact that it is against God and not us that he is fighting. He can never have seriously considered the significance of the Lord's action at Cana of Galilee, nor of such other words as we get in Matthew 11. 19, Luke 7. 34; and he is therefore in danger of being found in accord and sympathy with those who said of the Holy One—
"Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber."

In company with Him we are willing to bear a like reproach whilst we are careful to give no cause to any to say

that we have aught but condemnation for drunkenness and its progeny.

As to drunkenness arising from the partaking of God's gifts in moderation, let the words of the Lord be an answer—

“There is nothing from without the man that, going into him, can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. . . . Are ye so without understanding also?”

C. M. L.

MIGHTY MEN.

By the recent decease of much beloved and esteemed Robert Chapman there has been removed from this earthly scene the last of a group of worthy men, who have greatly endeared themselves to us, and to many of our readers.

They are now with the Lord Who loveth them, Whom they loved and served, and it is not needful, nor would it be becoming on our part, to refer to the deeply important issues on which we have differed from them, and which to our great regret raised a barrier between us and them, whilst they were yet in mortal body. We have to thank the Lord for the path He has led us, notwithstanding the deep sorrows of separation that have been involved; but at the moment we seek to pay a tribute of deserved praise to the beloved departed ones and to express our thankfulness to God for the grace given to them, and for the help we have received from them in the days gone by.

ROBERT CHAPMAN was a man who endeared himself to all who knew him. Coupled with sturdy and uncompromising adherence to principle, there was a splendid simplicity of manner that could not be too much admired. I think his preaching was by no means his strong point; but his kindness, his utter unselfishness, his readiness to do anything, to take any trouble for persons who had no claim on him whatever but the great claim, these were the things that made the man the beloved friend that he was.

HENRY DYER, who has also gone Home, was a man of most interesting personality. The charm of his speaking was great indeed. There was a certain eccentricity of manner it is true, but the vivid way in which he brought before his hearers the reality of days long gone by was wonderful. We remember an occasion when he was speaking of Acts 20., when we could have almost thought that we were in the upper room, and saw the brethren crowding

around Paul, and thirsting to gather all they could from his words.

HENRY GROVES was a man of a different type. Perhaps one would most readily recall the emphasis and certainty and earnestness with which he always spoke. To the present writer it is very pleasant to associate with this his great readiness to publicly correct any mistake he had made, when once this was made clear to him. This he would do in the plainest language—caring nothing for his own reputation, but only anxious for what he believed to be the truth.

HENRY HEATH was one of the most perfect speakers that we have ever heard. His addresses were models of what exposition should be. They were well balanced, carefully expressed and carried home. "In demonstration" perhaps best expresses their peculiar excellency. This was coupled too (as with the other brethren of whom we are making these brief memorial notes) with a graciousness of manner and a loveliness of life which gave weight to what was said.

THOMAS NEWBERRY is perhaps best known by the Englishman's Bible which he edited. This is not the time and place for a criticism or an encomium on that monumental work; but this we may say, that, great as it is, it is far from being the only claim he has on the gratitude of the children of God. He was a man whose acquaintance made one prize the Scriptures—higher praise than this can be given to no one.

These men are passed away; their works follow them. If young men are arrested to look on the swiftly vanishing figures that are receding from our sight, how many seek themselves to be and to do what is pleasing to our good and gracious God?

Perhaps the lesson most to be learnt is that of character. What these servants of the Lord were was what in large measure gave force to what they did.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

THE PROSPERITY OF FOOLS.

THE peculiar expression, "the prosperity of fools," is to be found in Proverbs 1. 32. At first sight we may think it strange that prosperity should be the lot of fools, but a little thought given to the matter may lead to the conclusion that there are few things more common than the prosperity of fools. Moreover it is vitally important that the child of God should be able to discern such prosperity when it is manifested, lest he should be destroyed thereby.

In common language the word fool usually signifies a person who is to some extent deficient in intellect, if not altogether an idiot, but the scriptural meaning of the word is quite different. "A self-confident one" appears to be the true signification of the word in Scripture. Thus a person who is possessed of great intellectual powers and is endowed with more than ordinary abilities may, alas! be a fool in the estimation of God. The one who refuses to listen to God, the one who closes his ears to Wisdom's voice in the Scriptures, the one who in his self-confidence thinks he can dispense with divine guidance and aid, and who leans not upon the arm of the living God, though wise in his generation as to this life, earns the uncoveted name of a fool. When therefore we have gathered what God means by a fool we can readily understand how such are often prosperous—indeed we may discern that this prosperity is the rule rather than the exception.

And this prosperity does not view so much the accumulation of earthly gains which have been gathered as it does the sense of ease, of security, of independence of God with which the natural heart regards worldly possessions. A striking instance of such prosperity as well as of a fool is furnished by the parable which the Lord spake concerning the rich man as recorded in Luke 12. 16-21. His fields brought forth

plentifully; he had no place to bestow his possessions. In his reasonings small barns were to be replaced by large ones, and when his goods were safely gathered together he was to flatter his soul with the thought that he had much goods laid up for many years and was to take his ease, eat, drink and be merry. What a pleasing prospect! How independent of God he was! Let coming years be parched and barren, let famine devastate the land—he was independent! “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee,” exposes his folly and the vanity of his prosperity.

There are two psalms which deserve special consideration in connexion with this matter. These are the **37th** and the **73rd**. The former, which should be carefully read at length, offers healthy counsel in view of the prosperity of the wicked, and exposes in a sobering manner the end to which they haste. Standing in the light of God’s presence the psalmist views things in His light, and bids us not to fret ourselves or to be envious against the wicked who prosper in their way. He sees that their day is quickly coming and that soon they will finish and be no more. The little that the righteous possess is better than all their accumulated riches, for that little rests upon a stable foundation and the righteous will never be ashamed. Well then may David bid us cease from fretting and being envious as we view the prosperity of fools, and counsel us rather to trust in the Lord, to delight ourselves in the Lord, to commit our way unto the Lord, and, crowning all, to rest in the Lord. When the soul is thus finding its portion in the Lord earthly things are estimated at their true value. Having nothing we possess all.

Turning now to Psalm **73**, we find the psalmist writing in a very different strain. Read this psalm also with care. We are probably right in assuming that Psalm **37**. was written before Psalm **73**., and that the psalmist knew the truths set forth in the former before he passed through the

experience of the latter. If so, these facts when kept in mind clothe both psalms with increased and peculiar interest. The man who in Psalm 37. stands upon the vantage ground of fellowship with God is able to view things around him in the light of God. He may behold the wicked prospering and spreading himself like a green bay tree in its native soil, but he is unaffected thereby. His own portion may be poverty and trials, but trusting in the Lord his heart is kept from fretting and from being envious. He drinks from the Fountain of Life, and he is abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his portion in God. Perforce he exclaims: "How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wing." No room for fretting and envy here! His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Psalm 73. shows us the same man no longer standing in the light of God. He views things around him as he did before, but how differently he is affected by what he sees! Here is his confession: "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Then he tells of the conflict which raged within him, of the reasonings which perplexed his mind. He sees that the wicked have all that their hearts can desire, and that they are exempted from the troubles and trials that others have to pass through, and he thinks that surely all his efforts to please God are futile. In vain appear to be his attempts to wash his hands and cleanse his heart. The wicked seem to get along far better than he does. He is almost

DESTROYED BY THE PROSPERITY OF FOOLS.

Is it possible, we may ask, that this is the same man who speaks in Psalm 37., bidding others not to fret, not to be envious at the prosperity of the wicked? Now he frets himself; now he envies himself. Where is now his clear-

ness of vision? where is now his understanding of the portion of the righteous and of the wicked? Yes, it is

THE SAME MAN, YET NOT THE SAME.

In Psalm 37. he is in fellowship with God, in Psalm 73. he is not. In the former he views things in God's light, in the latter he regards them as the natural man can only do. There his heart finds its satisfying portion in God, here it is otherwise, and his yearning heart longs for an earthly portion.

Thank God this condition did not last long. The inward conflict was too painful for him to bear: his heart was pained and he was pricked in his reins. As the doves fly to their windows so his troubled soul turns in its perplexity to God. He gets into the sanctuary. Once more the light of God streams upon him. Once more he is able to view things in fellowship with God. What a change is here wrought! Fretting and envy are now withered up, and thanksgiving deep and real livens his spirit. Once more he understands the end of the wicked and the vanity of their prosperity. He sees the dark pall of divine judgment brooding over all their splendour, and his soul emerges from its darkness and perplexity to shout its triumph song as again it enters into its abiding portion in the living God. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," is now the language of the one who in weariness exclaimed a little before: "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." The light of the sanctuary made the difference!

Well was it for David that he listened to Wisdom's voice when she cried, and that he was led by her into the sanctuary; well was it for him that he chose the fear of the Lord. Had it been otherwise he would never have known

himself holden by his right hand by God in the moments of his darkness and doubts, and he would assuredly have been destroyed by the prosperity of fools.

These thoughts suggest a healthy subject for the contemplation of God's people to-day. The prosperity of fools is still a reality, as, alas! is also the destruction that often results from viewing such prosperity apart from fellowship with God. Remembering the experience of David we may well recall the exhortation: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." To-day, in fellowship with God, we may find our joy in the Lord, our satisfying portion in Christ. To-day, with the apostle, we may be able truthfully to say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." To-morrow, out of fellowship with God, our souls may seek their satisfaction in the passing things of time, and count as gain what before they esteemed but loss.

And here let us call for a pause and turn the searchlight of God's Word upon our hearts. Do we to-day regard the prosperity of the world in the same light in which we did in days gone by? Is the Lord Jesus Christ as precious to our hearts now as when we first tasted of His love? Then our noblest boast was expressed in the words,

"Take the world, but give me Jesus."

Is it so still? Let none brush the question aside or treat it with indifference. No one is so strong that he may not fail. Safety is alone to be found in abiding fellowship with the living God. One hour of darkness, one hour when the light of God's presence is lost and things around us are viewed in nature's light may blight the fairest life.

He is a happy Christian who never knows moments of darkness and doubt. Perhaps the great majority usually pass through times of perplexity and conflict. Happy it is for us when in these circumstances if instead of leaning

to our own understanding we get us into the calm of the sanctuary and there view things in God's light. Multitudes have been saved from destruction thus. It is the one who refuses to listen to Wisdom's voice and does not choose the fear of the Lord who is destroyed by the prosperity of fools.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

Question and Answer.

[WE append a selection only of the answers we have received to questions published in the June number.]

QUESTION 151.—*Should any brother seek to do oversight work, whose daily labour prevents him visiting saints as frequently as it is needful? Would the desire to care for the saints carried out as far as opportunity is given be sufficient for such to go on in the work?*

“As we have opportunity let us work that which is good” (Gal. 6. 10). He does well that does what he can; angels can do no more. What better thing can the Master Himself say of His servant, than, “He did what he could”? Visiting saints, especially to care for the poor and sick, the silent and the unassuming, is certainly a necessary and honourable part of oversight work, and twice happy is he into whose heart the Holy Spirit has put the desire and is able to devote a portion of his time and strength thereto. Still, it should not be lost sight of that visiting saints is, after all, only one of the many departments of oversight work, and but a small part of the whole. Of the other numerous departments may be mentioned, for example, labour in the Word and teaching, the distinguishing feature of which is to unfold the treasure of the Divine Word for the instruction and edification of the Church, and the exercise of the gift of knowledge and discernment upon the many important matters which, for the most part, pass unobserved by the

saints as a whole, but which are, nevertheless, indispensable, not only to preserve purity of doctrine, but likewise for the proper administration of the government and discipline of the assembly. Surely, he that lacks opportunity in one department of oversight work, may, in fellowship with his God and his brethren, do what he can in another. We should not throw away the cluster because some of the grapes are missing, but should help those doing oversight work when they are unable to visit us as frequently as it is needful by sometimes paying them a visit. W. S.

Overseers are required of the Lord equally with any saint to regard the scripture:—"Profess honest occupations for necessary uses." If a brother graced of God to care for the saints is unable because of such occupation to devote that time he would desire to "visitation," it would surely be foolish to conclude therefrom that he should desist from doing such work as he is able. W. H. B.'s second question transposed as follows well answers his first: "The desire to care for the saints carried out as far as opportunity is given, would be sufficient," etc. J. P. A. T.

In connexion with the matter of giving of our substance to the Lord it is written: If the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not (2 Corinthians 8. 12). This is an important principle, and it holds good with reference to all we endeavour to do for the Lord. He asks no more from us than what He enables us and gives us opportunity to perform. This, moreover, He demands from us, and He can be satisfied with nothing less.

A brother, therefore, in whose heart God has put a care for the saints, is required of Him to exercise that care according to his ability and opportunity. If God has so ordered his calling in life that his opportunities of visiting are few, then little will be required of him; if otherwise,

much will be required of him. To visit saints as frequently as is needful may be impossible for any individual overseer, especially in large assemblies, and consequently the burden of such work must be shared by many. Some brethren would require to do nothing else if the saints were visited by them as frequently as is needful; indeed their entire time and strength would be insufficient to overtake this great work adequately.

The writer therefore concludes that any brother manifestly fitted by God for this work does well, and does all that God requires of him, if he assiduously embraces every opportunity given him to visit and otherwise care for the saints; but at the same time, let him beware lest his manifold labours in other legitimate directions are permitted to encroach on the time he otherwise could spend for God.

Moreover, it may be that some overseers do little or no visitation at all, except in very important cases. Their special work may not be visitation. Probably the burden of ministry of the Word or some other particular service may rest upon one overseer, and he may require well nigh all his leisure time for prayer and study. Thus, waiting on his ministry he is well pleasing to God, though he may seldom enter the houses of the saints. Others who may not be called to publicly minister the Word may be specially fitted for visitation, and their reading of the Word and praying with the saints in their homes may be greatly blessed of God. Thus by overseers working together, each in his appointed place and doing his God-given work, the little flock can alone be shepherded according to the will of God.

To raise a standard and demand that each brother must undertake a certain measure of visitation or other duties before he can be acknowledged as an overseer, would be dangerous in the extreme and direful in its results. It should also be remembered that brethren who are not directly associated with the circle of overseeing men in an assembly

often visit the saints as opportunity affords and minister to their needs with much acceptance and blessing. By these men in time the number of acknowledged overseers is usually augmented.

L. W. G. A.

QUESTION 152.—*Had the baptism in the Holy Spirit and in fire in Matthew 3. 11 its fulfilment in Acts 2. 3, 4? If not, what are we to understand is the teaching of the former scripture?*

The event in Acts 2. 3, 4, was but a part fulfilment of Matthew 3. 11. That occurrence presents us with a parenthesis of the whole prophecy similar to that of Luke 4. 18-21, which gives only a part fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 61. 1, 2, the completion of which is in the future. Acts 2. does not give us the *fire* which John indicated, and which was the fire of judgement. That likewise is in the future. The apparition therein mentioned was cloven tongues *like* as of fire.

H. W. D.

It is significant that the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire is referred to in the Gospel according to Matthew. Moreover it should be noted that the words are used in connexion with John's preaching of repentance to the nation of Israel. However far the wondrous outpouring of the Spirit spoken of in Acts 2. may appear to answer to this baptism, we look in vain for a perfect fulfilment of John's prediction there.

It should be noted that Matthew 3. 12 in great measure explains the preceding verse. It refers to a time when the Lord Himself will manifestly put His hand to the work of purifying Israel. When His mighty hand grasps the winnowing fan half measures will be unknown and His work will be thoroughly done. The wheat, answering to those of Israel who are baptized in the Holy Spirit, will be gathered into His granary; the chaff, answering to those

who are baptized in fire, will be burned up. The time is yet future, a time spoken of frequently by the Prophets. See in particular Joel, chapter 2.; Isaiah 66. 5-24.

The verses in Matthew 3. 11, 12 are to be understood literally. The baptism in the Holy Spirit will be a blessed reality to all who are the subjects thereof—the all Israel of Rom. 11. 26. The baptism in fire will also be a dread reality to all who are overtaken thereby. L. W. G. A.

QUESTION 153.—*In 1 Corinthians 7. 14, in what sense is the unbelieving husband sanctified in the wife or the unbelieving wife in the husband? When does this sanctification take place? In what sense are the children holy?*

1 Timothy 4. 4, I think, suggests the principle on which the direction of 1 Corinthians 7. 14 is based. Under the dispensation of Law the Jews were compelled to put away their Gentile wives—Ezra, chapters 9. and 10.—failing which, as in the case there recorded, there could be no restoration to communion, because such marriages were an infraction of the law, which was the basis of the covenant between God and them. See Exodus 34. 15, 16, Deuteronomy 7. 3, Joshua 23. 12 and elsewhere. The question naturally suggests itself, is not the Christian also, as one having become separated to God from the world and its associations under a like obligation? The enactments and ordinances of the Law, although essentially for the sanctification of God's people the Jews, had also a symbolic aspect in reference to the dispensation of the Spirit, under which believers now are come, and the analogy of the separation thus symbolized is not in the *personal* or literal conformity to that law, but in its spiritual counterpart, the which is a matter between God and the believer alone. It does not therefore touch earthly relationships as such. He or she has the liberty of 1 Timothy 4. 4, 1 Corinthians 10. 23-30, and the husband or wife can on this principle

dwell together, their children being to them held holy or sanctified to their use.

H. W. D.

To sanctify means "to set apart," and does not necessarily imply that the act of sanctification changes the character or nature of the person or thing in any sense whatever. Certain vessels were sanctified and were the same after sanctification as they were before it. The food we eat is sanctified, though it is in no way changed thereby. The Lord Jesus Himself was sanctified by the Father, though He was as intrinsically holy before as after His sanctification. The prominent thought, therefore, in sanctification is not that there is any change in the subject sanctified, but rather that he is set apart for a holy or God-appointed use or purpose.

If this is clearly apprehended the difficulty which at first sight connects itself with 1 Corinthians 7. 14 disappears. That the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the believing wife does not imply that there is any change in him, but that he is set apart in a God-appointed way to live with his believing wife.

When either husband or wife is converted after marriage it is the will of God that they should remain together as husband and wife, and it is not His will that they should live apart because one is a child of God and the other is not. Thus in the will of God the unbeliever is set apart (or sanctified) to dwell with the believer; their continuing to dwell together as husband and wife is a holy union, approved of God. Were it otherwise, the fruit of such union—their children—would be unholy, in the sense that such children would result from an unholy union, disapproved by God. But their union being holy, that is, in perfect accord with the mind of God, their children are in the same sense holy.

Clearly the sanctification referred to in 1 Corinthians 7. 14 took place in and by the sacred bond of marriage.

L. W. G. A.

For Young Believers.

“As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.”—1 *Peter* 2. 2.

TRUTH.

SOMEWHERE in the great city of London there are kept several articles of standard measures and quantities. By these, at stated times, all such are tested. These may be taken to illustrate what we suggest is the root thought in the word “Truth” as presenting a rather different thought from “True,” although “true,” as expressing the ideas of two words related to “truth” as a word, is deserving of the closest and most reverent consideration and assimilation by the young believer. As to the one word ἀληθής = alēthēs, and the other ἀληθινός = alēthinōs, the learned generally agree in saying that the former is like the Latin “verax,” and the latter that of “verus”; which again are explained to signify that he who answers to true in the former sense fulfils the promise of his lips, but he that is true in the latter meaning implements the wider promise of his name. All which is delightfully instructive when, for example, one reflects upon the attributes, et cetera, these set out in connexion with God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints.

See John 3. 33 in contrast to 1 Thess. 1. 9.

John 8. 14 ,, Rev. 3. 7, 14.

2 Cor. 6. 8 ,, John 4. 23.

Truth then is that by which all may be measured, weighed and tested.

It is no ordinary mercy that, although when Pilate asked the blessed Lord Jesus Christ “What is truth?” and went out before getting an answer, He has caused the reply to be written in the Scriptures which cannot be broken, even—

“Thy Word is truth.”

Coupling therewith the most fervent prayer—

“Sanctify them in the truth.”

God has been pleased to give truth a varied setting.
Hence there is—

Truth in the Law. Rom. 2. 20.

Truth in Jesus. Eph. 4. 21.

Truth in Christ. Rom. 9. 1.

Holiness and goodness are the characteristics of the first.

Salvation in its fulnesses the glory of the second.

Enrichment the element and operation of the last.

The embodiment and manifestation of all being He, who Himself is: “*The way, THE TRUTH and THE LIFE.*”

If then the young believer has in him operative, and is also himself enswathed by, “truth,” after such a sort, these shall suffice to make his progress manifest to all (See 1 Tim. 4. 15, 16) and he know and show salvation as blessedly as may be. These presentations of truth as being “IN” are different from the same when expressed in connexion with “OF.” This too whether, as is often the case, that “OF” precedes or follows the noun.

Further, “the word of truth” we understand to be in itself a complete segment of truth.

Hence—

He begat us with the word of truth. Jas. 1. 18.

The word of the truth of the Gospel. Col. 1. 5.

A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Tim. 2. 15.

Wherefore those who have known the effects of the word of truth are expected by God to come unto the full, and right or accurate, knowledge of the truth.

In the light of such blessedness the young believer shall still do well if he carefully watches and guards himself against the desperate possibility of which James warns. (See chap. 3. 14.)

“If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.”

These words need far more careful attention than the young believer is apt to give them.

A worthy understanding of this whole matter will cause one to greatly rejoice, as are found or are heard of children of God walking in the truth.

Nay, more; so fully is this the will of God that now, as with John in early days, “no greater joy” shall be possible.

It might serve some usefully godly purpose if writer and reader would prove their own selves as to this reason for such gladness. Whether, in fact, one has or has not any concern in this respect.

Timothys and Epaphras’ do not seem to abound. See Phil. 2. 19–21 and Col. 4. 12, 13. JOHN BROWN.

A SUGGESTION

AS TO THE EXTENSION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF MATTHEW 18. 16, 17.

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Individual Saint | 2. | 3. |
| Thee and him. | Take one or two more. | Tell it to the Church. |
| 3. Church | 4. | 5. |
| Church and Church. | Contiguous Churches. | Tell it to the County. |
| 5. County | 6. | 7. |
| County and County. | Contiguous Counties. | Tell it to the Country. |
| 7. Country | 8. | 9. |
| Country and Country. | Contiguous Countries. | Tell it to the Commun-
[ity.] |

1. The Individual is amenable to 3, the Church.
3. The Church is amenable to 5, the County.
5. The County is amenable to 7, the Country.
7. The Country is amenable to 9, the Community.

1, 3, 5, 7, 9 are Divine units.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 2. Other Individuals | } are varying quantities
available for help. |
| 4. Contiguous Churches | |
| 6. Contiguous Counties | |
| 8. Contiguous Countries | |

J. P. A. TAYLOR.

BIBLE WOMEN: HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(PENINNAH AND HANNAH.)

As we pass on to the first Book of Samuel we have brought before us Peninnah and Hannah. In the former are displayed characteristics of which Christian women may well be warned lest they fall into her evil ways in provoking a godly soul to fret, and thus become hinderers instead of helps. The exhortation of Hebrews 10. 24 may well be laid to heart: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." Indeed the absence of such godly provocation is sadly marked in these last days.

In Hannah a beautiful character is displayed, which all Christian women should seek to imitate. The Lord had withheld from her the desire of her heart, and in tears and in bitterness of soul she is found at the temple in prayer to God. She has come to the right place to unburden her soul, but even there she could be misunderstood and misjudged by man. Eli, the priest, as he watched the moving lips, passed judgement upon her as being a wicked woman, but Hannah answered and said: "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before the Lord . . . for out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken hitherto." Then answered Eli, having perceived his error in misjudging Hannah, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thy petition." So she went her way, apparently satisfied that God had heard and would answer her prayer, and she did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Perhaps we have often sung the words of the hymn:—

"Ah, whither could we flee for aid,
When tempted, desolate, dismayed,
Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
Had suffering saints no mercy-seat?"

Yet have we fully known the blessedness of giving ourselves unto prayer (Ps. 109. 4), and of pouring out our soul before the Lord (Ps. 142.)? It is thus alone—by unburdening our hearts in the presence of the Lord, by casting all our cares upon Him who careth for us, and leaving our trials and disappointments and perplexities with Him—that we shall be enabled to hear and heed the thrice repeated

“FRET NOT”

of Ps. 37. 1, 7, 8. Thus also, like Hannah, shall our faces be no more sad; and we shall be enabled to trust and praise Him who is the health of our countenance and our God. Yea, though others, at the instigation of Satan, should try to provoke our spirit and lead us to fret, we shall

Take it to the Lord in prayer;

and, cheerful and happy, we shall press on our way assured that the Lord has heard our petition and will grant the desire of our heart.

Soon after Hannah is again found at the temple of the Lord, no longer bowed down with a sorrowful spirit, but filled with praise and thanksgiving to Him who had satisfied the yearning of her heart. The prayer of thanksgiving which came from her lips, prompted by the Spirit of God, is preserved for our learning in 1 Sam. 2. The precious truths contained therein may well fill our hearts with joy, so that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Has it ever been the burden of our hearts to be the means under God of one being born again, and leading that one to the house of God, so that with gratitude we might be able to say,

FOR THIS CHILD I PRAYED?

Blessed privilege this! Let us make use of it while we may. It may cost us many tears, and much waiting upon

God, and others may misjudge our actions, but the promise is sure: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126. 5). Yes, and who shall tell what may result from

ONE SOUL BROUGHT TO THE LORD?

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XVI. AUGUST 10.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 8. 1-18.

THE account given in Matthew 5., 6., 7. of our Lord's words on the Mountain is followed immediately by a record of His deeds, and firstly by an account of three signs of healing performed on—

A leper,

A centurion's servant,

Peter's mother-in-law.

It is instructive to compare the different acts of healing done by the Lord Jesus as illustrative of His ways in salvation work. For there is not that studied uniformity of method that might be supposed if we were to judge by the traditional presentation of the Gospel of God's grace in the present day.

The leper comes and worships Him, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst." Not so with the centurion's servant, for it is the centurion who comes, and his faith is exercised on behalf of another; whilst in the case of Peter's mother-in-law the act is here presented as originating entirely in the grace and goodness in the Lord's heart.

The faith of the leper in the Lord's power receives its reward, and his hesitation as to the Lord's willingness is presently removed. Compare and contrast the account given by Mark of the possessed child, "If Thou canst do anything," said the father. "If Thou canst!" said the Lord, "all things are possible to him that believeth.

The faith of the centurion is noteworthy. He knew the source of his own ability to control his subordinates, namely, that he was under authority himself. Applying this principle which he knew in temporal things to that which pertains to the unseen, he obtained an insight into the secret of the Lord's ability. "I also," said he, "am a man under authority." Concerning this the Lord said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

We may note that Peter's mother-in-law, whose restoration, as we have said, is not connected in the narrative with any act of faith, but was a spontaneous act of grace, was the one of the three who at once commenced to minister to Him who had shown her His goodness.

Thereafter we have the expulsion of many demons and the cure of many sick folk. This was in fulfilment of a prophecy of Isaiah which is here quoted. In previous Bible Readings we enumerated ten Old Testament quotations contained in this Gospel.

QUOTATION 11, in Matthew 4. 15, 16 is from Isaiah 9. 1, 2.

QUOTATIONS 12 to 17 are contained in the Lord's discourse on the Mount. These six are taken from the law, from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. So that the present, as we count, is QUOTATION 18, from Isaiah 53. 14.

XVII. AUGUST 24.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 8. 19, 9. 34.

MULTITUDES being gathered round the Lord Jesus, He now puts them to a test by giving commandment to cross the lake. One of them, a scribe, proposing to follow Him, He says, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The Lord seems to have had a dwelling-place in Capernaum, but whether this had ceased to be His or whether He was referring to the place to which He was going only, does not seem quite certain. Anyhow He

made it clear that in following Him the scribe must expect hardships and trials, and had better be prepared for such. Another disciple was not ready to go, for he had home ties. "Follow me," said the Lord, "and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

So then He entered a boat and His disciples followed Him, not knowing where they were going or what would befall them, and having but poor ideas of who He was.

And then comes the storm, and they are frightened while He sleeps. He wakes to work, and works however weary He may be. But in what seems a time of danger He sleeps; according as it is written, "He giveth His Beloved sleep." He is perfectly safe, and never for Himself needed to rebuke the winds and waves; for He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and abode under the shadow of the Almighty (see the whole of the 91st Psalm). But for their sakes He arose and bade the winds and sea be calm, and the men marvelled.

On the other side He meets two demoniacs; that is, men in whom there dwelt demons, evil spirits who had possession of the men and made them act as they willed. The words they spoke, it will be noted, are words of the demons, not of the men. Many details are not given here, but there were demons enough to enter into a whole herd of swine and cause their destruction. And the loss of the swine was a serious thing; much more mischief was done by the demons in drowning the swine than they had ever done when they indwelt the two poor men. This at least was the public opinion, and they besought the powerful Stranger, who had allowed His kindness to a couple of demoniacs to injure their property, to depart from their borders and do His signs elsewhere. Alas for them in the day of remembrance! For He complied with their request; He crossed over and returned to Capernaum.

To Him thus returned a palsied man is brought who could not of himself come. But faith, of which we read nothing as to Peter's mother-in-law, or the two demoniacs—faith which made the leper pray for himself, and the centurion for his boy—faith was here shown by no less than five persons, namely, the sick man and his bearers.

The Lord here first deals with the greater need and grants the man who was a child (see margin) the forgiveness of sins. For this He had and has authority to grant. But the forgiveness of sins is not a thing to be seen, and His words were regarded as blasphemy by scribes who were present. The cure of the paralysis was an evident thing, and therefore it seemed a harder thing to say, "Arise and walk." But this was said and done, and the scribes were silenced and the multitudes astonished. Let us well note it; men cannot see that our sins are forgiven; we know it because He has said it. But they can see us walk before them, and from this know what God has wrought.

Passing by from thence, Matthew is seen sitting at the place of toll, and being called he entertains the Lord and a great company (see the other Gospels, for Matthew himself makes little or nothing of the fact).

There seem to have been—besides the Heavenly Guest and His host, Matthew, called also Levi—four classes of persons present. First in their own importance were the Pharisees, who reckoned themselves righteous and despised others. But the Lord being a teacher and having disciples they expected that some little care would be taken to avoid contact with those whom they regarded as the offscouring of the earth. But they were scandalized to see that the Lord allowed publicans, that is tax collectors; and sinners, that is notorious sinners, to eat with Himself and His disciples. Why? Because He was a physician, and therefore it was right that sick persons should come to Him. He

came not to call the righteous; the Pharisees, whilst they so thought themselves, might go; He came to call sinners; and glad was He when they came. And well did Matthew serve his Lord by feasting them at his table.

We note further in this passage the inquiry of John's disciples as to fasting and the healing of the sleeping daughter of Jairus and of the woman with an issue, to which we hope to refer more particularly in connexion with its mention in the other Gospels.

We specially observe also the sight given to two blind men, and the cure of a dumb demoniac, making altogether nine signs of healing particularly described in chapters 8. and 9. of Matthew; namely, leper, centurion's boy, Peter's mother-in-law, two demoniacs, palsied man, ruler's daughter, woman with issue, two blind men, dumb demoniac.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

Correspondence.

BIBLE READINGS, XII., XIII.

IN concluding our notes on John 4. (page 147), we spoke of the absence of any hint in John 5. to indicate the period of the Lord's ministry when the healing of the sick man at Bethesda pool took place. In making this statement we overlooked a sentence in the last paragraph of this chapter which seems to give some very definite help in the matter. We invite our younger readers to search the last eighteen verses of John 5. for an indication of a very important event which must have occurred between the healing of the nobleman's son at Cana and that of the sick man at Bethesda's pool, and to send in the result of their search.

I AM THEIR INHERITANCE.

CAST not a wistful envious eye upon those wide domains,
Which wear in radiant loveliness their sweet well-watered plains ;
Green are the leaves and fair the fruits and flowers that brightly
bloom,

But they are not thine, child of light, glad victor o'er the tomb.

True, loving hands shall pluck for thee the richest of the fruits,
The first of all the best is thine, and thou shalt bless the roots,
Then from each plant so blessed shall spring again the blossoms
fair :

Oh, sunny land of truest bliss with plenty and to spare !

Through never-fading fields of green the river gently flows,
Healing and blessing bringing as it ever onward goes ;
Bloom on the grassy vernal banks unwithering trees and flowers,
Yet thou hast something better far than those created bowers.

Thine is a sweeter portion, happy child of Levi race,
Thine is a glad possession and a blessed resting place ;
Gaze if thou wilt upon those lands exceeding broad and fair,
But lift thine eyes above, for thine inheritance is there !

The Lord Jehovah ! He is thine, and thou His portion art,
His praises rise through thee as sweetest incense to His heart ;
His people all are very dear, but thou art dearer still,
And to be thine inheritance is His glad blessed will.

Break into joy, together sing, the Lord is satisfied !
His heart of love has found a rest there ever to abide !
In glorious majesty He reigns o'er His creation fair,
Blest city, never name so sweet as thine—The Lord is there.

M. M. C.

THE PROSPERITY OF FOOLS.

II.

IN a former paper we called attention to this subject in connexion with its bearing on earthly prosperity. We pointed out from the Scriptures that the wicked who live in assumed independence of God—though verily they are dependent upon Him for life and breath and all things—often prosper in greater measure than the righteous do. This fact may lead to the destruction of God's own children unless such prosperity be viewed in the light of God. We cannot therefore urge too earnestly that the nearing end of the wicked and their everlasting loss be constantly kept in view by fellow saints; and that the eternally abiding portion and bliss of the righteous should have in every heart the place that God intends it to have. Thus shall we be saved from fretting and envy, which are but stepping stones to destruction, and thus shall we know the peace of God which passeth all understanding, guarding our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

But this matter has an important bearing in things ecclesiastical as well as in earthly prosperity, and should have due weight with all who in the midst of the increasing apostasy of these last days still desire to contend earnestly for the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

It is impossible to read the book of Malachi carefully without noting a marked analogy between Israel's condition as there depicted and some things which obtain around us to-day. In the days of Malachi it was believed and boldly stated that every one who wrought evil was good in the sight of the Lord, and this because God allowed the evil to prosper and did not judge those who wrought it. "If not," cried the perplexed beholders, "where is the God of judgment?" Some there were who in the

light of these things came to the conclusion that the proud were happy, for they beheld the works of wickedness set up, and those who tempted God delivered. This had the effect with some of causing their hand to hang down, and their knees to wax feeble, and we hear them weariedly exclaiming, "It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?"

Is not this but an echo of the language of the man of Psalm 73., who viewed things around him apart from fellowship with God, and came to the conclusion that he had washed his hands and cleansed his heart in vain? What profit indeed! Absolutely none so far as appearances went, but the very opposite! Those who turned their back on the law of Moses in Malachi's days, and did their own pleasure instead of the will of God, seemed to be the happy and prosperous people who were even delivered from the perplexities that the faithful had to face. And what meant the silence of God in that day? Why did He not come to the aid of those who feared Him and thought upon His name? Had He ceased to be the God of judgment? Why did He not smite the wilful wicked, and manifestly set on high those who still cleaved to His law? Yet still the question stands, Why? and the fact remains that He did not! Moreover, without attempting to answer the question we may well recall the fact that God acted very differently when He first took up His dwelling-place in the tabernacle amongst men. Then every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, as witness the stick-gatherer on the sabbath day. Now, in Malachi's day, His people may tread His law under foot and do their own pleasure instead of the will of God, and yet He did not seem to heed. Further, the few who did fear Him, and who loved His law, He seemed to outward appearances to heed as little.

But was it really so that He heeded not the faithful in these dark days? No, blessed be His name! He hearkened and heard their words, and in His presence a book of remembrance was written in which their faithfulness was recorded. Though on earth He did not lead them in triumph to manifest prosperity, in heaven they were honoured by having their names recorded in that sacred book. Further, like Psalms **37.** and **73.**, the fourth chapter of Malachi proclaims with sobering clearness the end of the prosperity of fools. The day cometh that shall burn as an oven, then the fire shall try it all. The wicked shall be as stubble, and the day shall burn them up. "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings . . . and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do make, saith the Lord of hosts."

Then the tables were to be turned, but not now. Then were they to return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that served God and him that served Him not; but not now. Things were to be allowed by God to go on as they were doing until the arrival of the solemn testing day, when the fire of God's judgment would settle all questions and put an end to all perplexity.

Beloved of God, in view of these things may we be granted from on high the priceless treasure of eyes to see and hearts to understand! May we be enabled by Him to view the prosperity of fools around us in the religious world with unmoved hearts! Alas! how often with God's people it is otherwise. The standard by which the many test the measure in which any community is well pleasing to God is its manifest prosperity and not its conformity to the Scriptures. No standard could be more misleading. With the lessons of Malachi-times before us, and the

teaching of the New Testament which deals with the last times having due weight upon our hearts, we may arrive, without any measure of doubt, at the conclusion that never will the path of God's truth be popular, even with His blood-bought children, and never can those who are faithful to an absent Lord know what the natural heart names prosperity. But prosperity to some extent is almost certain to be the lot of any community that trims its sails to catch the ever-changing breezes of popular fancy, and is prepared to make the Word of God of none effect through its traditions in order to swell its numbers and be able to boast of its prosperity.

And as with the faithful of Israel in Malachi's day, the law of Moses commanded for all Israel was to be their only guide in the midst of the increasing apostasy, and by that law they were to walk in spite of appearances, so for all who fear the Lord to-day and think upon His name, the Faith once for all delivered to the saints abides. Let apparent results be what they may, let outward appearances be this or that, the Faith in all its purity and all its entirety must be held fast if the "Well done" of the Master is to be merited in that nearing day. Then again the tables will be turned. Then again the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is. Then shall all discern between them that serve God and them that serve Him not. In the fear of the Lord we may well cry aloud, "What, O reader, will be the Master's verdict in that day of thy service and of mine?" Mark well, there is no middle course. We either serve Him or serve Him not. We either gather with Him or scatter abroad. The day will settle the question for every one, but the Word of God may settle it now for whosoever will!

But the Word of God is not now the criterion with the many. Apparent results form the popular test. How false these may be the book of Malachi abundantly

declares, as also how far removed from the truth the judgment may now be that takes results only into consideration.

It is worthy of note that Proverbs 1. declares that it is those

WHO DO NOT CHOOSE THE FEAR OF THE LORD

who are destroyed by the prosperity of fools; and it is also instructive to observe that it was those

WHO FEARED THE LORD

who were not destroyed by this prosperity in the days of which Malachi speaks. So it is to-day. A fair show in the flesh—the prosperity of fools in the ecclesiastical sphere will assuredly lead to the destruction, so far as this life is concerned, of every Christian in whose heart the fear of the Lord is not constantly abiding. That fear keeps the ear open to the voice of God, and the eye fixed upon the Lord Christ, and can alone enable us to view things around us in the light of God.

L. W. G. ALEXANDER.

"REMNANT TIMES"—THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND PURPOSE.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES BY DAVID SMITH.

READ 1 Chron. 12. 32. We find here a characteristic of the men of Issachar. "They had understanding of the times to know what they ought to do." It was a time in the history of God's people when they needed to have an understanding heart and enlightenment from God, because if they judged what they ought to do by the surrounding circumstances they might mistake the times, and do what they ought not to do. We connect with that verse 23, where we learn the purpose of this time.

In Eccles. 3. we read that "there is a time to every purpose under the heaven"; compare also verse 17, "a time here

for every purpose." The present is to be looked at in the light of the future, and to be used and lived in the light of the future; and present times, present purposes, have issues that affect our future—both the man who is a sinner in his sins, and the man who is saved by the grace of God.

We learn from 1 Tim. 2. 4 that God desires all men to be saved—that is the purpose of these times; while we read further that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1. 16); also that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6. 2). A person may know what is God's wish; also how he may be saved, and yet he may, as another has done, say, "Go thy way for this time" (Acts 24. 25), and allow God's opportunity to slip past, and have to weep and wail, and join in that bitter cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Why? Because there was no salvation? Oh, no. But because they missed God's opportunity, the time for the purpose they allowed to go by, doubtless intending at some more convenient season, some other opportunity than God's, to consider the matter.

That opportunity passed in the case of the man in Luke 16. of whom those solemn words were spoken, "Thou in thy lifetime," etc. (that lifetime with its opportunities and possibilities), the "now" of the lifetime past and gone, and how that opportunity was used is expressed in the "Now" that will never end, that eternal "Now"—"Now thou art tormented." It is solemn indeed; lost for ever, brought about by the misuse of God's opportunity and purpose in the lifetime.

Again in connexion with the man and woman saved by grace we have a lifetime—a time with a purpose in association therewith. God has a purpose for us who are saved. In 2 Tim. 1. 9 we learn that "God hath saved us . . . according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Saved according to a purpose truly; but saved also for a purpose. "To this end was I born," says the Son of God in the presence of Pilate (see John 18. 37), "and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." We do not think we are straining the scriptures (other scriptures bear it out) when we say for this end have we been born again, for this cause are we in the world, that we might bear witness unto the truth (see 2 Tim. 4. 1-5).

1 Tim. 2. 4 tells us the wish of God concerning those who have been saved, "that they should come to the knowledge of the truth," and unto that being brought about there must be in the first instance the hearing of the truth, for in order to know it we need to hear it, and that more so as the characteristic of the time is what "the Spirit speaking expressly saith" in 2 Tim. 4. 4: "The time will come when they will not endure sound teaching, but, after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth."

How do they expect to come to the knowledge of the truth if they turn their ears from the truth? Then there is a purpose to every time, and we are responsible, not only to understand the times, but also to understand the purpose, for if there be misunderstanding in either the one or the other, the result will be, as far as the saint is concerned, a lost life, a missed or misused opportunity. Is it that nothing has been done? or because it has not been a busy life? Nay! It may have been a life, we may say, busy and beautiful in many respects, but has it answered to the purpose? and has it expressed in that life's opportunity the purpose of the times? Then you say it makes it very solemn to live. It does indeed. I sometimes tremble at the thought, it is far easier for the Christian to die than to live. If God had left it an open question just to live the best way we can,

and get on the best way we can, it would have been easy, but He has not. There is "the way of salvation," and "the way of the truth," and we are as responsible as saints to accept the one, as we were as sinners to accept the other.

(To be continued.)

For Young Believers.

"As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 Peter 2. 2.

UNSPOTTED.

"Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself UNSPOTTED from the world." The word *Unspotted* adapts itself to our alphabetical lessons, we having reached the letter U. In this very searching word it is no matter of even the broad vital difference that obtains between a ship being in the water, and the water being in the ship: this latter making her but a water-logged hulk. This is wholesale destruction of one's self.

Here it is a matter of SPOTS.

We note that the world can spot.

Further, if the young believer or any child of God is to be clean therefrom. Oh! let it be seriously observed, he must take care to keep himself unspotted from the world. Thus though the world can spot, he who would be unspotted may keep himself so. Mayhap, the Spirit through James intends to teach that an unbridled tongue, with a deceiving of one's own heart, withal affecting to be religious, is the root cause from whence those spots come. See James 1. 26, 27.

Wherefore worldliness that one would flee from, and perhaps feel content to be separate from such flagrancy, may nevertheless be that which proves a salve to soothe

the conscience and dull the heart that complacently indulge.

SPOTS FROM THE WORLD.

In olden time God taught His priests and people not to disregard spots. This for the trenchant reason that a spot might eventuate in veriest leprosy. The former might be cleansed and healed within God's dwelling, but recovery from the latter could only be as separated therefrom.

In the one, yet not in the other, the unclean must needs be heard confessing his condition in the ears of men, and this with a cover upon his upper lip as he cried "Unclean! Unclean!"

James elsewhere declares that the tongue defileth (that is, filleth with spots) the whole body, and is in itself a world, and this of iniquity. Little wonder that no man can tame it. Marvellous mercy that God can and cares to tame the tongue of man.

He who would have this deliverance has but to give due heed to God's will thereanent as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Then shall there be escape from what eclipses the pen that assuredly is mightier than the sword.

The sword may pierce and wound, the pen yet more, but ah me! how much more an untamed tongue. This alas! alas! from none more bitterly or poignantly than those from whom very different issues should come.

The demand of God's will through James is even surpassed by what He calls for through Jude.

Here He requireth an hating

EVEN THE GARMENT

spotted from the flesh.

This is not an unspotted body, but an unspotted habit in manifestation that is called for.

Surely, indeed, if the razor is brought over the whole of one's flesh (will) and if the washing of one's clothes (habits)

be really done, there shall not fail to be a very Gilgal resting, while the ribband of blue shall find due place and effect on the four quarters of one's vesture.

What these mean the young believer may learn by contemplating Joshua 5. and Numbers 15. 37-41.

There is also the Spirit's desire that in giving heed to the Commandment of the Lord, even this should be done unspottedly until He comes again. The excellencies of the grace of Christ, the virtue of the manifold wisdom of God, and the greatness of the power that worketh in us that believe, shall all find happiest and fullest expression in that the Man Christ Jesus, Boaz-like, will not rest until as Christ the Lord He has presented to Himself (the Body He preserveth) the Church glorious,

WITHOUT SPOT (that is, *Unspotted*)

or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Thus and then the holiness and faultlessness thereof shall be manifested and abide for ever. This too, moreover, because and besides God's having chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world: in order that we should be holy and without blemish before Him.

Above all such, our lesson shall be incomplete indeed if we neglect to consider and to imitate Him who was manifested in these last days for us, and this as being not only without blemish, but

UNSPOTTED.

Hallelu Jah! What a Saviour!

JOHN BROWN.

CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL.

LORD Jesus Christ, in Thee we joy!
 This daily He our blest employ
 Till we behold Thy face:
 Till in the glory as Thou art,
 We love Thee, Lord, with perfect heart,
 And deeper drink Thy grace.

'Tis sweet to look away to Thee,
 Perfection only there to see,
 And joy the soul possess;
 For should we mark our chequered way,
 Our hearts are filled with dire dismay,
 As failure there we trace.

But Thou art all in all to us!
 The fountain Thou of perfect bliss—
 Lord Jesus, we rejoice!
 Our souls are glad when Thee we view,
 And as we taste Thy love anew
 We praise with cheerful voice.

For we in Thy perfection stand:
 Complete in Thee, a holy band;
 Thy blood has brought us nigh.
 From self we turn our gaze to Thee,
 Our righteousness, our perfect plea,
 And "Abba, Father" cry.

O Lord, in Thee we triumph still,
 And joy and peace our bosoms fill,
 Whilst here we wait Thy call
 To take us Home to glory bright,
 To walk with Thee in cloudless light,
 Where Thou art all in all.

PROSPERITY OF SOUL.

THE Apostle John, when writing to Gaius the beloved, declares that he prayed that in all things Gaius might prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered. It is refreshing to read of one of whom it could be written that he prospered in soul. This is a kind of prosperity that may well be coveted by every Christian in greater measure. Indeed if this prosperity be missed no other prosperity can be gain. A weak body and a prosperous soul—as evidently was the case with Gaius—may prove to be of great service to God and His people, but a strong body and a soul that is not prosperous is of little value to either. Therefore let prosperity of soul have the first attention.

Proverbs 28. 13 tells us of those who need not expect to prosper: "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy. Here perhaps is indicated the greatest hindrance to prosperity of soul. This matter is so vital that we tarry to call special attention to it. It is because many of us have learned so little of the holy character of our God that we appreciate so little the holiness that He demands. Our souls can only prosper in the atmosphere of holiness, in the light of God's holy presence, and if instead of living there they are surrounded by the chilling breath of unconfessed sin, prosperity and growth in grace are impossible. Therefore we urge young Christians in particular to see to this matter. Nothing but sorrow and loss can possibly result from covering up sin and trying to heal the hurt of our souls slightly. We may say "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," but let us be sure that our sins will find us out. Following the words of Proverbs 28. 13 come these: "Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Yes, it is true that the man is happy who fears alway, for

the fear of the Lord will lead him to confess and forsake his sin, and will save him from hardening his heart and going on in his sin. That fear will teach him somewhat of the holy character of the God with whom he has to do, and when he has sinned he will seek no rest till he has confessed it and has obtained mercy from the Lord.

God knows our weaknesses and how prone we are to fall, and in grace He has provided means whereby we can be constantly maintained in a condition answerable to His holiness. Therefore when conscious of having sinned it is worse than folly to try to cover it up and to pass lightly over it, when it may be dealt with in accordance with God's will. We may depend upon it that if we are careless in connexion with this matter of confession God will make us feel that all is not well, and that His smile can never be known causing our souls to prosper so long as we are in a defiled condition.

Then, again, we sometimes come readily into God's presence in confession when conscious of having sinned in some serious form as we think, but little things in thought and word and deed—equally sin in the sight of a thrice holy God—we treat in a different way and think there is no need for being particular regarding them. But these assuredly mar fellowship with God and strip our souls of their verdure, and are often but the beginnings that lead to further departure from God. Well for us it is if in the presence of God our hearts condemn us not, yet even then we should remember that God is greater than our hearts; and, fearing always before Him, we should seek mercy for sins which may be known only to Him. Oh that the fear of God might possess our hearts more and more, so that we might become increasingly careful lest by means of unconfessed sin the prosperity of our souls, which He so earnestly desires, should be hindered, and lest His hand, which He longs to stretch toward us in fulness of blessing, should

require to be laid upon us in the judgment of love and discipline!

In this connexion the 32nd Psalm merits careful study. This Psalm seems to give the experience of one who was conscious of having sinned, but who refused to acknowledge it and confess it to God. The result was that day and night God's hand was heavy upon him, and his moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Still he kept silence, while his very bones waxed old; prosperity of soul was far from him and barrenness was his portion.

At length, however, the disciplining hand of God has done its work and the rebellious one lays down his arms, saying, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Then out of the bitterness of his past experience he utters words of counsel and warning to others, saying, "For this let every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." Thus confession having taken place, the cloud which intervened between his soul and God passes away, and he is able once more to rejoice in the Lord, whilst his groaning gives place to songs of deliverance. Who has not known the same experience in some degree?

Joshua 1. should be carefully read in connexion with the matter of prosperity of soul. Joshua was a man with a great past behind him and a still greater future before him, and God here instructs him how he can continue to be prosperous. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Prosperity and good success, then, in the estimation of God are secured through constant meditation in the Scriptures.

It was so in Joshua's day: it is so still. Without this prosperity is impossible. The sincere milk of the word the bread of the soul, is alone to be found in the Word of God; and if daily meditation therein is neglected the soul must suffer. Let young Christians note this well.

But further: not only is meditation in the Scriptures necessary, but to be strong and very courageous *to do* all that we find written therein is absolutely essential if prosperity of soul is not to be hindered. Few things will blight the soul's prosperity quicker than a refusal to obey any of the commands of the Lord. Christians may imagine that it matters little whether they do this or that which the Scriptures enjoin or not, but the truth is very far otherwise. The verdure and perfume of a prosperous soul soon pass away when the strength and courage to do all that the Lord commands are lacking. To obey is still better than to sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Little did Saul understand how far-reaching the results of his disobedience were to be when

He feared the people and obeyed their voice,
and in so doing manifested that he lacked the strength and courage to do the command of the Lord at all costs. Time was when he was little in his own eyes, and God caused him to prosper and made him Israel's king, but now he has turned back from following the Lord, and in turn God rejects him. His downward course from that fatal day should be noted by God's people with fear and trembling.

We therefore conclude that in order to know and enjoy the blessedness of prosperity of soul the following are absolute essentials—

Daily meditation in the Scriptures.

Strength and courage to do all that therein is commanded.

Prayer and confession to God.

Let us in all earnestness beg for the special attention of young Christians to these points. Their importance, we are well assured, cannot be overestimated. Prosperity of soul is of such vital moment, not only for the present but also for the future, that Christians may well make the possession and maintenance thereof the first aim in their lives; for surely happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is Jehovah.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XVIII. SEPTEMBER 7.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 9. 35-11. 1.

IMMEDIATELY after the account in Matthew 9. 32-34 of the ninth sign of healing recorded in this gospel, we are told that the Lord Jesus went about all the cities and the villages teaching in their synagogues and preaching (that is, heralding) the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

Eight of the nine miracles to which we refer appear to have been performed within a very small area on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, but the Lord's work now seems to broaden in its range, and He is found surveying a wider field. His words in Matthew 9. 37, 38, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth labourers into His harvest," may be compared with the much earlier words of John 4. 35-38, "Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For

herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured: others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."

And now He calls the twelve unto Him and sends them forth with authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

There is something very interesting about the enumeration of the names of the apostles in the different Gospels and in Acts.

MATTHEW 10.	MARK 3.	LUKE 6.	ACTS 1.
Simon . . . Peter and Andrew . . . James the s. of Z. and John his b.	Simon . . . Peter James the s. of Z. and John the b. of J. and Andrew	Simon . . . Peter and Andrew his b. and James and John	Peter and John and James and Andrew
Philip and Bartholomew Thomas and Matthew the p.	and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas	and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas	Philip and Thomas Bartholomew and Matthew
James the s. of A. and Thaddæus Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscar.	and James the s. of A. and Thaddæus and Simon the Z. and Judas Iscariot	and James the s. of A. and Simon . . . the Z. and Judas . . . of J. and Judas Iscariot	James . . of A. Simon the Z. and Judas of J.

Peter is always named first, and then follow the other three who had been his partners in fishing days, but in different order, namely Andrew, James and John in Matthew and Luke, but Andrew last in Mark and Acts.

The second four are always given in the Gospels with Philip and Bartholomew first, followed by Thomas and Matthew or Matthew and Thomas, but in Acts Luke puts Thomas before Bartholomew. Bartholomew is almost certainly to be identified with the Nathanael of John 1. Thus the first six apostles are given something in the order in which they came to know the Lord.

James the son of Alphæus heads the last four. Since James the son of Zebedee was slain in comparatively early days, this is doubtless the James of the latter part of Acts

and of Galatians. Thaddæus and Judas (not Iscariot) appear to be two names of the same apostle, brother or son of James, with whom he is linked in Matthew and Mark. In Luke and Acts he is put after Simon the Cananæan or Zealot. Why Judas Iscariot is put last is hard to say. It is noticeable that in each enumeration his name is accompanied with the words, "who also delivered Him up," "who became the traitor." Solomon has said—

"The name of the wicked shall rot."

These twelve were sent forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to preach, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse lepers, to cast out demons; and much of instruction may be found in the charge given to them, on which we cannot now comment.

It is worthy of note, however, that there is much in the charge given them that seems to have gone far beyond their need for the moment—at least, so we understand.

Moreover, of this much is for His servants at all times, as, for example, the injunction to fear not those who can kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. What can be more fortifying to the Lord's servants than the fear of God? For He alone is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna, and yet counts and preserves the very hairs of His children's heads.

XIX. SEPTEMBER 21.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 11. 2-12. 8.

THE eleventh chapter of Matthew commences with an account of the enquiry sent by John the Baptist from prison, and of the attendant circumstances; and this is followed by the Lord's upbraiding of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Then the twelfth chapter records the Sabbath day plucking of the ears of corn as occurring at this season, and the cure of a man with a withered hand,

and of a blind and dumb demoniac that immediately followed, with attendant circumstances. "On that day," the thirteenth chapter commences, and goes on to record the kingdom of heaven parables. Now these parables are also recorded in part in Mark 4. and Luke 8., and Mark 4. 35 says that on that day, when even was come, He said unto them, "Let us go over unto the other side," and then follows the stilling of the storm, and in the fifth chapter (of Mark) the cure of the demoniac beyond the sea, as also recorded in Luke 8. and in Matthew 8.

If these occurrences recorded in Matthew 11., 12., 13. are therefore to be regarded as closely following one another in the order in which they are set down, it follows that they preceded in order of time that which Matthew 8. 18 and following passages relate. If this be so, it gives additional importance to the record of the nine signs that we have counted in Matthew 8. 9. For these, if thus taken out of the order of time and so grouped together, must have special significance in regard to the Matthew presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King of Israel.

As in Matthew 4. 12, His withdrawal into Galilee when He heard of John's betrayal marked a special period in His work (and it almost seemed as if this disaster only more clearly marked out His path); so here the very wavering of John himself is but the occasion for Him to speak highly of His servant. So that here we have in QUOTATION 19, from Malachi, that which sets John in a position of the greatest pre-eminence amongst those born of women. It is possible certainly to be greater than he, but only by being less. Words of the Apostle of the Gentiles in his letter to Ephesus may here be brought to mind.

How sad and hopeless it is to please men with that which is good! The Spirit who filled John from his mother's womb caused him to abstain from eating and drinking in order that he might carry out the purpose of

God entrusted to him, and men say of him, "He hath a demon." The Son of Man who ever did that which pleased the Father, came eating and drinking, and they say, "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." But wisdom was manifest in both. The forerunner was aloof from all; in solitude on locusts and wild honey he partook of the little that was needful for his body's sustenance. This was needful for him that he might fitly do his life work. As truly was wisdom to be seen in the kindness and condescension of the Almighty One who sat at Matthew's table and ate and drank with the sons of men, in whom His delight was from everlasting from the beginning, or ever the earth was. See Proverbs 8.

Then He began to upbraid the cities round about the north coast of the Sea of Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, wherein most of His mighty works were done.

But at that very season He thanked the Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that these things were hidden from wise and understanding ones and revealed unto babes.

"Come," said He, "unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And at that season as they went through the cornfields the hungry disciples began to eat. It was the Sabbath, and the Pharisees murmured "It is not lawful." But He had promised rest to the heavy laden and He gave it. The Lord of heaven and earth had delivered all things unto Him, so that He was Lord of the Sabbath, and not only permitted the hungry to eat, but showed that in doing so He was but carrying out what had aforetime been done by the man after God's own heart.

XX. OCTOBER 5.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 12. 9-45.

“AND He departed thence and went into their synagogue.” As we know from Luke that the healing of the man with a withered hand was on another sabbath, we may be sure that its close connexion in Matthew and Mark with His announcement of Himself as Lord of the sabbath must have a profound moral significance.

He had justified His disciples for satisfying their hunger on the sabbath day, and their hunger was for meat that perisheth. Should not He satisfy His hunger? For His meat was to do His Father's will.

Had the poor self-deluded Pharisees had any conception of the One for whom they laid in wait, they need have been in no doubt. His hunger was too keen, his zeal for God too great to let the poor man go unblessed.

They ask Him, however, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?” that they might accuse Him. Yet any of them would have rescued one of his own sheep from a pit! When the Lord asked whether a man was of more value than a sheep they were silenced. But their whole lives were witness that to them a man was of far less value than a sheep. They were covetous, and they in their hearts derided him who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor. How good and wise of the Lord to be a poor man and not a rich man!

The Pharisees would now have destroyed Him, but His hour was not yet come, and He withdrew Himself, and healing many He charged them not to make Him known (Isa. 21. 13, 14, 15; Ps. 22. 35), for self-advertisement was no part of His policy, according as it was written by Isaiah (chapter 42.), which we count as QUOTATION 20.

The Pharisees, however, heard where He was, for when a

blind and dumb demoniac was healed they were there ready to scoff and revile.

This leads to the memorable parable of the divided kingdom and the solemn denunciation of those who blaspheme the Spirit of God.

He who had in His boyhood sat in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, as they sat in Moses' seat and publicly taught the law of God, had in His youth and early manhood never walked in the counsel of the wicked, never had He stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful. During the years of youth and of manhood that elapsed ere, being about thirty years of age, He began to teach, His delight was always in Jehovah's law. In His law day and night He meditated. Thus He had been as a tree planted by the stream of water, and now in due season He brings forth His fruit.

What words of power, what withering denunciation, are now the portion of these hoary-headed wicked men!

Alas for those when even yet were neither shamed nor silenced, and sought now from Him a sign from heaven! Hereupon follow first the examples of Jonah and the men of Nineveh, of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba—records of those who in a day of less opportunity showed greater wisdom, in that they repented; and then the intensely solemn forecast of Israel's history, of the evil generation of which the last state is far worse than the first.

We may here note the two further quotations from the Old Testament which occur in the first part of the Gospel according to Matthew.

QUOTATION 21 in Matthew **13**. 14, 15 from Isaiah **6**. 9, 10.

QUOTATION 22 in Matthew **13**. 35 from Psalm **78**. 2.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

“TEACH US, O LORD.”

God's arm is strong All night and day long,
To guard His own and save from every ill ;
If by His powèr Through danger's hour
We meekly bow unto our Father's will.

God, give from high To us the seeing eye,
That we Thy Saints may thus Thy mind discern ;
Give us Thy grace, That we may thus retrace
Our steps if wrong. Disciples, we would learn.

Lead Thou us on Till clear of every wrong,
Give us Thy wisdom, O Lord our God ;
Grant us to know, E'en while here below,
Thy precious truth, as spoken in Thy word.

For oft far away We would wander and stray
Like sheep from the shepherd, thus turning aside ;
We know we are weak, Lord, therefore we seek
Thy hand still to guide us, in Christ to abide.

And then shall we be More like unto Thee,
While seeing and knowing, with wisdom to do ;
Thus learning of God The right path to be trod,
We shall walk in the light and the truth still pursue.

D. R.

PLEASURE AND TREASURE.

God's Word has said That he is dead,
Who gives himself to pleasure ;
No present cross Means future loss
And lack of heav'nly treasure.

But he is wise, Who daily dies
To self, and sin and pleasure ;
For present pain A crown he'll gain
And everlasting treasure.

To God he lives, Who truly gives
His life to do *His* pleasure ;
'Twill to the Lord More joy afford
Than greatest gifts of treasure.

C. B.

TROUBLOUS TIMES.

WITH grief we come before Thy throne,
 Because to stray we are so prone;
 And now we see a gathering cloud,
 The storm is breaking fierce and loud.

Before the gale we shall be swept,
 If by Thy power we are not kept;
 We know that we can only stand,
 Abiding in Thy powerful hand.

Here, at Thy feet, we now would learn;
 Thy mind and will in this discern,
 Would'st Thou, O Lord, Thy people free
 From all who are opposed to Thee?

Is it, O Lord, that we are cold?
 Thou doest this our lives to mould;
 May we both humbly bow and fear,
 Till Thine own glory doth appear.

I put my puny hand in Thine,
 To lead me through this troublous time;
 Leaning on Thee and Thy great power,
 To guide and guard in danger's hour.

And when this wintry storm is past
 The sun will shine again at last,
 Its welcome rays once more appear,
 Peace from above our hearts to cheer.

Then, with full hearts, our voice we'll raise
 In songs of grateful, thankful praise;
 From roaring storms and ills set free,
 That drew us closer, Lord, to Thee.

“REMNANT TIMES,”

THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND PURPOSE.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES BY MR. DAVID SMITH.

(Continued from page 237.)

THE characteristic of the men of Issachar was not only an understanding of the times, but an understanding of the purpose of the times. They came to David! Why to David, and not Saul? Was not Saul the more popular man reigning as king in Israel? True, but they had understanding of the times, and likewise of the purpose of the times. Thus they acted as they did, and did what they ought to do, and “came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom from Saul to David, and that according to the Word of the Lord.” Yes! they had the Word of the Lord for what they were doing, and it is very important to have the Word of the Lord for what we are doing. It was a time of difficulty and perplexity. Two claiming the throne; two voices speaking; some saying they were right, and others they were right. How are we to know? If it goes by appearances it must be Saul. He has the better appearance and the greater numbers, but it does not follow. Having understanding of the times they had learned to distrust appearances, and as enlightened by God to know that he who was reigning as king had been rejected of the Lord for refusing to obey the word of the Lord, for which Saul lost his kingdom and his crown.

Look now at yonder stripling, keeping his few sheep, we believe, as under the eye of God; learning his lessons and undergoing his training on those Bethlehem hills; of him it was said, “I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will.” He was God’s chosen and God’s anointed, and therefore others had, in their understanding of the times, learned to

know and own him; to come unto him, to separate themselves unto him, to be received by him. All these words we have in 1 Chron. **12**. Herein then are revealed the motives of the actions, for it is good sometimes to test the motives as well as the actions. They came to David to make him king. It is with an understanding of the times, and the purpose of the times, they get to know what they ought to do according to the Word of the Lord. They then use the opportunity for that purpose, and come to David to Hebron to turn the kingdom from Saul to David, according to the Word of the Lord.

Turn back still further to Exodus **25**. 1, 2, 8, 9. This scripture has often been referred to, and we wish to refer to it now for one single point. We know the history of those to whom this message came. We find in the previous chapters the dealings of Jehovah with this people, but we never find such a message coming to them while in Egypt. No! the message that came to them there was one suited to their circumstances and need; a message concerning a deliverance and a deliverer, suited to them at that time, for it was then the time for bringing them out.

But now that He has them out, and around Himself, in the wilderness, as we find in Exodus **19**. 4, He can, as He desires, speak to them the secrets of His heart and the purpose of His heart concerning them as a redeemed, separated and brought together people—the church in the wilderness.

That He has a purpose for them now, as and where they are, Exodus **25**. 1-8 reveals. What that purpose is, His message through Moses declares. "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering," and as the expression of having learned and understood Jehovah's purpose they bring the material from which Jehovah's sanctuary should be formed.

Yet, "there is a time to every purpose," and that time

comes to a close. Read Exodus **36. 6, 7**. There is something very solemn here. The opportunity for "bringing" has ended, brief or long as it may have been. Have they used that opportunity? How have they used it? Have they all used it? These are solemn questions.

An opportunity from Jehovah to express their appreciation of Himself and of His purpose has come and gone, and the word of Exodus **36. 6** is "Do not bring."

Perhaps there were some who intended to bring, but they allowed the opportunity to pass, and it is gone never to return. The purpose of bringing is realized, for there is material sufficient and abundant for Jehovah's sanctuary.

Again, "Let them make Me a sanctuary" is the further message of Jehovah, expressing a further purpose He has. There is also a time for this purpose. Do they understand the times? Have they apprehended His purpose for them? Do they seek to do what they ought in that God-given opportunity, or do they allow it to pass away unheeded or unused? If some allowed it thus to pass away, they would have to look back and see a sanctuary for Jehovah, built and finished, in which they might have had part, but which, alas, is a standing witness to their neglect of the God-given opportunity.

This sanctuary which Jehovah owned, into which He came, and which He filled with His presence and glory, did not drop from the clouds. It was made and built by those who understood His purpose and the times; wise-hearted ones indeed. In Exodus **40**, we read "the children of Israel did all that the Lord commanded Moses, and finished the work." The purpose and opportunity for making have passed away. Some doubtless intended making something, as before some may have intended bringing something, but it is too late now. All is done. It is finished. And as we point out to the unsaved,

you cannot add to a finished work, so here. The opportunity for making has passed away just as the opportunity for bringing had done, and however much some may now wish to do something, it cannot be. They have lost their opportunity. It has gone for ever. Perhaps it was not much they could have done, or could have brought, but even pins and cords would have been accepted. Some who meant to do a great deal may have done nothing. They have to look at the house as it stands in their midst and behold, to their sorrow surely, how they had misused God's opportunities. Read Ephesians 5. 14-17. Verse 14 is to the saint, not to the unbeliever. Your life's opportunity, child of God, is passing fast away; an opportunity God has given to be held as a sacred trust, wherein His purpose might be known and His will might be done. Oh, how are you using that opportunity?

In Luke 16. we read of one who, having a trust, has been unfaithful and has to consider the prospect of dismissal. He wonders within himself, "What can I do?" "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed"; and as the moment comes when he is about to be cast upon the cold world, his mind, with all the energy of his being, is concentrated upon one object—to make the most of his opportunity.

It is a question that affects his future, and he uses the present moment in the light of the future, whereby, not only is his own comfort secured, but he gains the commendation of his lord.

Why did the Lord Jesus speak thus to His disciples? Is it not to teach how Ephesians 5. 16 may be fulfilled? "Buying up the opportunity." Making the most of it and the best of it for Him. We might each put the question to ourselves—"How much do I owe my Lord?" Surely "All to Him we owe." The life's opportunity we have is to be used for Him. We are not our own but His

own, in the world, therefore let us glorify God in our body. Soon we shall be out of the body and we shall not be able then to do what now we may. How important then it is to have understanding of the times and understanding what the will of the Lord is, and to do that alone.

(To be continued.)

WORSHIP.

“God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4. 24). In these words of weight and wisdom, coming from our blessed Lord, we have what seems to us the highest point attainable by mortal being, saved by the grace of God, for the acceptable rendering of that most beautiful of all service, namely the worship of God. This being so, this service demands our best attention and most diligent research, so that all may be according to the mind of Him whom we so serve.

The greatest privileges are accompanied by the most solemn responsibilities, so that we have in worship both joined together.

The oft repeated injunction to an earthly people (Exod. 25. 9-40), “See that thou make them after their pattern,” should loudly appeal to saints in this dispensation, that all things may be examined in the light of the Word of the Lord before being accepted or approved by us, so that we may not be spending our time offering to Jehovah that which He cannot accept because of its being contrary to His Word, either in the construction of the house (see Heb. 3. 6, 10, 21) in which He is served, or in that which is offered, or in the condition of those offering.

When God delivered Israel by redemption from Egypt and “brought them out” it was that He might bring them in; it was the beginning of days to them, their first

journey for God was through the Red Sea into the wilderness; and in the wilderness God teaches them how to worship Him. They got no lessons on this important service in Egypt, neither do His people to-day get any lessons in that position. In Exodus we have them redeemed and brought out; in Leviticus they are brought in, and in this brought-in place He instructs them in the service connected therewith in its order as pleasing to Him. The Lord takes Moses to Himself on the mount to show him all things concerning the Tabernacle and its service.

In the absence of Moses the people defile themselves, and in this defiled condition they dare to worship God according to the dictates of their own mind, with the result that the whole performance is one great crime before God, of such a serious nature that it ends in the slaughter of 3,000 of the people and the expression of Jehovah's hot displeasure, as see Exodus 33. 5. Moses the man of God (in whose stead the Golden Calf was erected: through it the people were going to worship God) disapproved of all, and destroyed as abominable to God the entire works that they had done and many of themselves also; so no place should be given to-day for any such things in the service of God.

Say some: "What a slaughter would be to-day if that were so!" It must be so if there are any going to render acceptable service in this matter to God; and we find rich blessing flowed to those who were "on the Lord's side" on that eventful day (Exod. 32.). They were all redeemed people, and, oh! what a breach made upon them, how solemn and how sad, all brought about by their own sin in making a method of their own to worship God! See also the solemn warning given to the faithful ones afterwards in Exodus 34. 12, 13, 14.

After all this comes the building of the Sanctuary of God—carefully attended to by the faithful Moses—all done according to the pattern, the splendid proof thereof being

the filling of the place with the glory of the Lord (Exod. 40. 34).

But what has all this to do with us in our day and dispensation? We read of the copies of the things in the heavens (Heb. 9. 23). So in those things we have copies by which we are to be guided.

And now, to come to the opening of the present dispensation after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father, in ten days the Holy Spirit comes, finding 120 believers in the attitude of waiting, and the place is filled with His power and presence, also each person; and now they go forth, and "Peter standing up with the Eleven" speaks forth the gospel message in power, and 3,000 are saved, separated, baptized and added, just as many as were destroyed in Exodus 32. Thus we find in Acts 2. a new order of things consequent upon the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, which order of things goes on to-day because Christ is yet on high, and the Holy Spirit yet with us, so that the doctrine which brought them together in the mind of the Lord is that alone which can guide us in being together and pleasing Him to-day.

In the record of the Apostle's address and what followed on that occasion we have a declaration of such doctrine as must necessarily be believed by each one to-day who would enter into that fellowship which is formed by that doctrine. Some of its leading points are: Salvation, verses 37, 38; Separation, verse 40; Baptism, 41; Breaking of bread; Prayers, verse 42. So that in order to enter into that fellowship, and continue therein, it is necessary to believe and hold these things as doctrine, and show faith in them by practice.

Upon examination of the tabernacle which stood in the wilderness we find that at the door of entrance there stood five pillars of acacia-wood in sockets of brass. All these

together supported and held up the screen of the door. The screen in our judgment is typical of the fellowship which is supported and held up by the Apostles' teaching as shown above, so that those who would in any wise interfere with the teaching cannot be received into this fellowship to the glory of God. Inside this fellowship is the breaking of bread, so that only those who are inside the fellowship so formed are allowed the privilege of breaking the bread. The breaking of the bread is the antitype of that table of shewbread, and the lamp-stand in there typifies the Holy Spirit now in the fellowship for the giving of light to all those therein. That sanctuary is a pattern of that which now is; and if the entrance to that was divine and no human order allowed to interfere with it, neither should any human order or arrangement be permitted in the house of God to-day.

Let us now come to Hebrews **10.**, where we have the veil spoken of, which was rent from top to bottom, inside of which is the cherubim of glory upon the mercy-seat, which is in our day the place of worship, into which place we bring our spiritual sacrifices and offer them up to God in the consciousness that they are acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ, the great Priest over the House of God (1 Pet. **2.**).

It matters not how people, Christian or otherwise, constitute themselves into this church or that denomination, there is no changing with God. It must be according to the pattern to be acceptable to Him. No amount of repairs or alterations could ever make Jeroboam's altars the altar of God; there was only one way to deal with them in the mind of God, and that was to throw them down. God's people coming to those altars were in their wrong place, and the service rendered was not acceptable to God. It is just so to-day concerning all altars which are set up contrary to the Word of the Lord. May God speed His

truth on these lines to His glory, as Satan's chief work in our day is to keep saints in the dark as to their greatest privilege and most holy service in life.

A few words as to the condition of the worshipper, the foregoing being chiefly concerned with the acceptable position which comes first in the order of God. In Hebrews 10. 19-22, we get the acceptable state of a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2. 5), entering into the holiest to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The spiritual house is composed of living stones coming together to the Living Stone (not for salvation; that is all settled in the previous chapter) as God's foundation for the edifice—a spiritual house to be built in this aspect of His person and work. He is disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. He is great Priest over the House of God (Heb. 10. 21), and those who so own and obey Him are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Him. In Exodus the sanctuary was made; then the priesthood was established and the priests consecrated for the service connected thereto. Although they were sons of Aaron, and redeemed by blood, constituting them the people of God previously, their cleansing in Exodus 29. began with the washing with water, which does not set forth conversion to God, but consecration to God of the redeemed one, so the cleansing of Hebrews 10. 22, 23, is the antitype of this, which condition must be attained for the acceptable worship of the living God.

S. MILLAR.

Questions.

TO WHICH ANSWERS ARE INVITED FROM APPROVED
SERVANTS OF THE LORD.

In an assembly where there are several brethren who take part in gospel work, what is the scriptural way to arrange who should take the meeting?

Is it scriptural for the brethren taking oversight, or for one or two of their number to arrange for all gospel meetings?

Should an opportunity of speaking be granted to gifted and ungifted brethren alike?

Have the overseers of an assembly of God the power to set aside the application of one seeking to have fellowship with them in oversight work, simply because of a difference of opinion on points of doctrine, and without seeing him in reference to the matter?

For Young Believers.

“As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.”—1 *Peter* 2. 2.

VANITY.

VANITY of vanities, all is vanity, said the preacher of old. Wherefore, well for himself does the young believer who lays to heart the weighty words of Ecclesiastes.

Than vanity there are few of the maladies common to man more prevalent.

How humiliating and bitter, yet perhaps converting, is the declaration that

“Every man walketh in a vain show.”

Happily the child of God is expected not to walk according to man.

He is, nevertheless, required to quit himself like a man.

This apparent paradox is worthy of most serious consideration. Of a truth the negative and positive thereof entail great attainment.

There are two totally different ideas in the words translated Vanity and Vain in the New Testament.

The one is to be understood as exemplified in the English word cenotaph—that is, an EMPTY tomb.

The other expresses idleness as implying unprofitableness. Exhortations are neither few nor feeble to meet the clamant need of every believer in connexion with vanity.

A careful perusal of each set with the context may well afford ABC lessons of which expository words might readily darken the counsel, thus hindering rather than helping.

For the former see—

Gal. 5. 26. Let us not be *vain*-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

Phil. 2. 3. Doing nothing through faction or through *vain*-glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself.

2 Cor. 6. 1. We intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in *vain*.

Gal. 2. 2. Lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in *vain*.

Eph. 5. 6. Let no man deceive you with *empty* (i.e. *vain*) words.

1 Tim. 6. 20. Turn away from profane *vain* babblings.

2 Tim. 2. 16. Shun profane *vain* babblings.

For the latter see—

1 Cor. 3. 20. The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are *vain*.

1 Cor. 15. 16, 17. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is *vain*; ye are yet in your sins.

1 Tim. 1. 6. From which things some having swerved have turned aside unto *vain* talking.

Titus 1. 10. There are many unruly men, *vain* talkers.

Eph. 4. 17. Walk not as the Gentiles also walk, in the *vanity* of their mind.

James 1. 26. This man's religion is *vain*.

1 Pet. 1. 17, 18. And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear; knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold from your *vain* manner of life.

Set your heart, young believer, unto all these words, for it is no vain thing for you. As compare Deut. 32. 45-47.

JOHN BROWN.

SANCTIFICATION.

I.

To sanctify means to set apart. In the Scriptures sanctification always implies that the person or thing sanctified is set apart for a holy or God-appointed use or purpose. It does not follow, however, that any change is of necessity effected in the state or condition of the subject sanctified. Sanctification may result in such a change, but it may not.

The tabernacle, the laver, and various vessels in connexion with the tabernacle were sanctified and were the same after sanctification as they were before (Exod. 40. 9, 10). The Lord Jesus Christ was sanctified by the Father, but He was as intrinsically holy before His sanctification as after it (John 10. 36; 17. 19). The food we eat is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer, but the food is in no sense changed thereby (1 Tim. 4. 5). An unbelieving husband is sanctified in a believing wife, but all the same he may live and die a child of wrath (1 Cor. 7. 14). Thus the person or thing sanctified is always set apart from other or common uses to some holy, because God-appointed, purpose; but the subject of sanctification may be totally incapable of the moral quality of holiness.

The person or thing may or may not be holy, but the object for which sanctification is effected is always holy, for all God's appointments are holy.

Holiness and sanctification do not mean exactly the same thing; though very closely allied they are not identical. Sanctification may be described as the state in which holiness as a moral quality is produced: as the root from which the precious fruit of holiness springs. Apart from sanctification holiness is impossible to any of the sons of men; and the holiness of any is measured by the degree in which he is practically sanctified.

The Scriptures speak of the believer's sanctification as an eternally perfect and completed thing in Christ Jesus. Among other portions of the Word, 1 Cor. 1. 2, 30; Heb. 10. 10, may be cited in this connexion. Unto all who are in Christ (1 Cor. 12. 13), He has been made from God wisdom, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Through the offering of His body on the Cross in the will of God this has been effected. We were unholy in our Adam standing, both by nature and by practice, but since grace has put us in Christ, we are eternally holy, we are sanctified or set apart in Christ Jesus. Oh, the blessedness of such a standing! Oh, the glories of such grace!

We cannot too strongly emphasize the perfection of our sanctification thus, as viewed in Christ, nor can we too clearly perceive that no holy living after conversion can add thereto. Our only claim to the presence and favour of God both in time and eternity is the precious blood of Christ by which we have been sanctified. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, he is eternally sanctified, and holy because of this; if any man is not in Christ he is still in his Adam standing and is absolutely unholy whatever his pretensions may be. In this aspect of the truth there are no degrees of sanctification nor of

holiness: one is either absolutely and eternally sanctified and holy, or absolutely unholy.

Whilst every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is thus eternally sanctified and holy by the grace of God alone, and whilst this sanctification and holiness can never be added to, nor forfeited, because he is for ever perfect and complete in Christ, practical sanctification and consequent holiness are entirely different matters, both of which are progressive and admit of degrees. It is very necessary to clearly distinguish between these two aspects of truth, for failure to do so may easily lead to underestimating the value of the work of Christ and to failure in grasping by faith our perfection in Him on the one hand, or to carelessness as to the far-reaching and vital matters of practical day-by-day sanctification and holiness on the other.

We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; by that one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; we are therefore by grace saints, holy ones (Heb. 10. 10; 1 Cor. 1. 2; Rom. 1. 7). These facts form the basis of, and make possible to us, practical sanctification and holiness. It is because these things are eternally true of us in Christ that we are called upon to walk day by day in the midst of the corruption and defilement of earth in sanctification, thus perfecting holiness in the fear of God. In our earthly walk we should manifest the sanctification and holiness which are true of us in Christ.

SATAN.

I.

WHEN one has decided for Christ, and realizes that the most momentous question of his life is settled, peace and joy fill the heart, and a feeling of restful relief inspires the soul with elevated thoughts and desires.

This condition, however, does not generally last long. Soon the anxious thoughts, which seemed to have vanished for ever, crowd into the mind again, and often beget most unhappy doubts and fears. At this point it is needful for the young believer to learn that, having been delivered from the authority of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, his new standing in Christ has removed him from the place of a helpless slave

BORN OF THE FLESH,

IN AND OF THE WORLD,

UNDER THE DOMINION OF SATAN,

to be the lifelong object of attack by these three evil forces: that these are now arrayed against him as a threefold relentless enemy. With this formidable foe the worthy Christian must wage war in the power of God.

In view of this important fact every young believer may well be exercised to learn from God through His Word the power of these three evil agencies.

In the Scriptures we learn that Satan is a mighty person who has sought to exalt himself in defiance of God; and if we know something of the awful being behind the scene we shall not be easily allured by the beguiling vanities of the world, nor give place to fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

As to Satan's origin little is revealed to us, but Ezekiel 28. 11-20 makes plain that he was created by God and endowed with glories and honours far excelling any other being of God's creation. His wisdom and beauty, his wealthy adornments and perfect ways tell of the dignity associated with his person as he came from the hand of God. Verse 17 shows the cause of his fall and the beginning of his career of unmitigated enmity to God.

Let us look then, firstly, at his names and characters as revealed in the Scriptures.

In Revelation 12. 9 we find three names by which he is designated, namely,

The old Serpent,
The Devil,
The Satan.

In Revelation 9. 11 we get another name,
Apollyon.

The old Serpent shows him as the experienced deceiver. The Devil presents him as a malicious accuser.

The Satan is simply the Hebrew word for "adversary," as seen in Numbers 22. 32, where the same word is used of the Angel of Jehovah.

Apollyon means "a destroyer."

How aptly then these names express his character, and how easy to trace these four traits in all his works with men as revealed by the God of light. When he entered the garden in Eden he was at once seen as the Adversary of God, and also of man, God's creature. His object was destruction, his way was deception, whilst his fatal lie was a malicious accusation against the faithfulness of God. In John 8. 44 the Lord declares him to be the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning; all of which proclaim that there is not one redeeming feature in his character, that he is the very embodiment of evil. In view of the fact then that such a being lives in the universe of God we may well inquire as to

THE SPHERE IN WHICH HE MOVES AND OPERATES.

In Ephesians 2. 2 Satan is referred to as "The prince of the power of the air," and in chapter 6. 12 the curtain is drawn aside and a glimpse is given of his dark domain. Here also we learn that he is not alone, but that he has arrayed under him a mighty host of wicked spirits, designated as "The world rulers of this darkness," and "Spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies." Thus

we see that the special sphere in which Satan moves is the heavenlies.

In Job 1. 7 we hear his own reply to God's question, "Whence comest thou?" "From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it." These scriptures show that whilst he has access to the heavenlies he is also actively engaged upon the earth. Moreover the Word of God reveals the fact that the extent of his power over man on the earth is by no means small.

In 1 John 5. 19 God declares that the whole world lies in the wicked one; and although the youngest student of Scripture may be familiar with these words, who, that has learned in any measure the character of him who is thus described as "The wicked one," is sufficiently impressed with the astounding thought that the whole world lies in his awful grasp? Every unregenerate soul of the human family, of every kindred, tongue and nation, high and low, rich and poor is alike under Satan's mighty power. Oh, how appalling the thought! As we look on the world around us with all its boasted religion and good intentions, with all its attractive pleasures and fascinating ways, all declare in solemn tones how hopelessly deceived the world is by Satan, and how firmly men are held by his powerful grasp.

Ephesians 2. 2 declares that the course of this world is according to the prince of the power of the air, and of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience. Moreover his workings are varied in different men, albeit he has ever one end in view, namely, their final and eternal loss.

Although every one who believes in the existence of Satan may readily perceive his workings in the openly ungodly, it is only those whose understandings have been enlightened by God who can see the same spirit energizing the moral and religious, and causing them so to live and

act that they gain the respect and esteem of their fellows ; and thus they so deceive themselves that they pass on with their ears closed to the voice that still cries

“ YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.”

Even the Apostle Paul, when looking back on his past life which, humanly speaking, had been an exemplary one, had to say, “ Among whom we all once lived, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.” Thus we learn that all who are of the world are the unconscious slaves of the ruthless tyrant, Satan.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XXI. OCTOBER 19.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING,

MATTHEW 12. 46-50 ; **MARK 3.** 30-35 ; **LUKE 8.** 19-21.

FOR thirty years the perfect Man had lived His life amongst His kinsfolk, He had spent His days in their company, faithful and faultless in His relationship to them and to their neighbours. How much they had benefited by this we cannot tell very definitely ; but indications are not wanting in the gospels that even His mother understood Him but little. When in the pursuance of His life-work He went forth into His wider field of service, it passed the wits of His friends to know what it all meant, and they said, “ He is beside Himself.” So they went to lay hold on Him just at the time the Scribes and Pharisees were railing at Him as one whose power was derived from Beelzebub ; His mother too was present, perhaps to remonstrate with Him and warn Him of the danger of incurring the enmity of the Pharisees and Scribes. His friends sent and called Him to come and speak to them. But why, now, did they wish His company ? This they had had for many a long year, for He had been brought up and spent His days in their

midst. These dwellers in Nazareth might have asked why they of all men should have been so favoured for thirty years, rather than have sought to interfere with Him now He had gone forth to others.

Let us note well His reply. "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" He first asks; then, looking round, He points to His disciples and says, "Behold My mother and My brethren." The eternal and sure prophetic word given through Solomon told of His desire for the companionship of the sons of men:—

Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was.

When there were no depths I was brought forth;
When there were no fountains abounding with water.
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, was I brought forth.

While as yet He had not made the earth
Nor the fields

Nor the beginning of the dust of the world.

When He established the heavens I was there:
When He set a circle upon the face of the deep:
When He made firm the skies above:
When the fountains of the deep became strong:
When He gave to the sea its bound,

That the waters should not transgress His commandment:
When He marked out the foundations of the earth:

Then I was by Him as a Master Workman

And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in His habitable earth,

And My delight was with the sons of men.

But this human companionship for which He yearned must ever be

BEFORE HIM,

not away from God or in paths that might be displeasing to Him. The two desires, the two causes of rejoicing are inseparably united:

Rejoicing always before Him,
 Rejoicing in His habitable earth,
 And My delight was with the sons of men.

Herein is somewhat of that God's wisdom concerning which it has been written :

Things which eye saw not and ear heard not,
 And which entered not into the heart of man,
 Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.

Let Matthew be taken as one of those that loved Him, that is that loved the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh. Matthew had joy and happiness in His companionship, such as neither eye could see nor ear hear. He knew a brother's love, a brother's friendship as none could know who knew not the Lord of glory.

But as empowered by the Holy Spirit sent from the Father and the Son, Matthew wrote the Gospel bearing his name, wherein are revealed unto us these very things which entered not into the heart of man, even the things prepared by God for those that love the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 2.).

Ere we pass from this incident, let us note once more in this perfect example the twofold source of His rejoicing and delight. Much is often said, and perhaps too much cannot be said, against the worldliness of God's people, yet the behaviour of a recluse or a hermit is not that which God desires in a child of His, nor that which was manifested by the Son of the Father.

Herein is the keynote of His conduct in this respect. His rejoicing in the habitable earth was ever a rejoicing before God. His delight with the sons of men never for a moment made Him forget that the habitable earth was God's, but rather was a delight in which He knew the Father's presence and His smile.

If children of God in doubt as to this or that of relaxation or of pleasure would but honestly consider whether it

may be enjoyed in God's presence, whether His smile would be in any measure lost by going here or there, it would save from much, from very much that is displeasing to Him in the thoughts and words and ways of His people, and would ensure their enjoyment with a good conscience of such simple and unaffected pleasures as the Lord of Glory shared in His youth and in His riper age.

XXII. NOVEMBER 2.

PASSAGE FOR HOME READING, MATTHEW 13.

THIS chapter contains an account of certain parables which were spoken by the Lord Jesus in part at the seaside and in part in the house. They have been the subject of much comment and of much interpretation, and of this not a little has been of a kind that darkens counsel by words without knowledge.

We are minded to content ourselves for the present with some consideration of what is actually said, and not to add thereto any attempt at elucidating what is meant.

The chapter may naturally be divided as follows :

BY THE SEA SIDE.

Parable 1.	The sower went forth to sow.	Verses	3 to 9.
„	2. A man sowed good seed.. . . enemy sowed tares ... „		24 to 30.
„	3. A grain of mustard seed which a man took... „		31, 32.
„	4. Leaven, which a woman took	„	33.

IN THE HOUSE.

	Interpretation of Parable 1	„	10 to 23.
	„ „ „ 2	„	36 to 43.
„	5. Treasure hidden in the field	„	44.
„	6. A man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls „		45, 46.

Parable 7. A net that was cast into the

sea ,, 47 to 50.

Conclusion ,, 51 to 53.

Parable 2 tells us to what the Kingdom of the Heavens is likened, and parables 3 to 7 tell us what it is like. The first four parables, spoken to the multitudes, are distinctly called parables. Perhaps the last three should not be called parables in the strict sense. That is to say what was spoken to the multitude was more or less hidden from them as verses 10 to 15 make plain, but the interpretation was given to the disciples that they might understand, and so these similitudes 5, 6, 7, as we have numbered them, were spoken privately in the house.

There may be some doubt as to the correctness of putting verses 10 to 23 after parable 4. But at any rate it is clear, even from Matthew, and certainly from Mark 4. 10 that this was spoken privately to the disciples.

If we further compare with Mark 4. we find first there the parable of the sower and the interpretation thereof, but here the application is to the Kingdom of God rather than to the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Instead of a parable telling of an enemy sowing tares we find in Mark one speaking of the way in which the seed grows, the sower not knowing how. So is the Kingdom of God.

Then comes the parable of a mustard seed, in application to the Kingdom of God.

In Luke 8. also is given the parable of the sower and its interpretation, and here as in Mark the application is to the Kingdom of God.

This is followed by the parable of the lampstand, as given also by Mark. The way in which these words are given may be carefully noted. That is, because "nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest," "therefore take heed what ye hear" (Mark); also "how ye hear" (Luke), and "for

he that hath to him shall be given " and so forth. These last words occurring also in Matthew 13. 11, it seems as if this illustration of the lamp was given as part of the private interpretation of the first parable, Matthew 13. 10-23; Mark 4. 10-29; Luke 8. 9-18.

All these eight or nine parables seem to be closely linked together, and there are many instances in them of parallel phrases that deserve attention.

Note how much use is made of seeds: good seed (wheat), tares, mustard seed. These seeds are sown in a field. The field is the world. In the field treasure is hidden. While a man took seed and sowed in his field a woman took leaven and hid in meal.

We are convinced that whilst there is much of what we may call moral teaching lying on the very surface of this chapter, yet for a true grasp of its breadth and general scope the parables of the Kingdom of the Heavens will need to be looked at more closely than they have been hitherto.

The Lord having finished these parables returns to Capernaum, where all His wisdom and all the manifestations of His power are derided, because of His lowly origin. Compare 1 Cor. 1. 18-2. 5. With this closes Matthew's account of this period of the Lord's life. Before we pass on to the murder of John and that which followed, we will give some time to the parts of the other gospels which are contemporaneous with Matthew 4. 12.—13. 58.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

Correspondence.

WE await with interest comments from our readers on these and previous Bible Readings; and in particular we desire to call attention to the fact that up to the present we have only received one communication in response to the question we raised as to John 5. in the August number.

THY WILL BE DONE.

I know not what the future has in store,
 What woes and sorrows and what trials sore,
 But well I know the God who rules o'er all—
 He guides my lot, He marks the sparrow's fall.

Whate'er befalls His hand in mercy sends :
 He wounds in love and yet to bind He bends ;
 No thing so small but there His way I trace,
 In darkest night more clear I see His face.

His way is perfect, and His will is good :
 In admiration oft o'erwhelmed I've stood
 And marked with subject and approving mind
 His works so wise, and all His care so kind.

He strips, 'tis true—like buds in Springtide's hour
 Ere yet the blossoms burst into full flower—
 My earthly hopes, and gives instead the Cross
 With tears bedewed, and turns earth's gains to loss.

But loss is gain since such is His blest will :
 His hand must empty ere His heart can fill !
 Oft tears unnumbered are the dews whence rise
 The soul's rich verdure 'neath His watching eyes.

I'm slow to learn, and oft my sight is dim :
 But He is patient—Who can teach like Him ?
 He knows to-day what grace can make me bear,
 He adds no more, yet love no stroke can spare.

O God ! my will with Thine in concord blend,
 To prize yet more whate'er Thy love may send !
 One deep desire consumes my soul within—
 From lips unfeigned to breathe "Thy will be done."

Then joy and sorrow both alike shall be,
 In storm and calm Thy hand alone I'll see ;
 Thus, guided by Thy staff and faithful rod,
 I cease from man and find my all in God.

REJOICE IN THE LORD.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY C. M. LUXMOORE.

NEHEMIAH 8. speaks of a people who were in the place of the Name, hearing and understanding the word of God which had been long neglected. There are two things noticeable, prior to the verse to which I wish to direct your attention in particular. There was a coming to the place of the Name ; and there was a place on earth where the Name of the Lord was placed. There were other places where the Name of the Lord was not, in this special sense, to be found. They had come to the place of the Name. Read the eighth verse: "And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly ; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading." In the next verse we read that all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. And good reason they had, for the law is holy, and just, and good ; and the ways of the people had been contrary to the law. They had cause to weep. But Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites that taught the people, said unto them, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God, mourn not nor weep." Then he said unto them, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared : for this day is holy unto our Lord : neither be ye grieved ; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength (or your stronghold)."

With these verses might be connected such words as, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say unto you, Rejoice." It is not by looking inwards that joy can be produced, and it is not in looking around, whether the look be near or far, for this often gives cause for sorrow. But there is one eternal, increasing, constant cause for joy ; whatever there may be calling for mourning or for sorrow,

there is no such thing as being strong in the Lord apart from rejoicing in the Lord; because whatever may be, and whatever is, and whatever has been, there is always cause for rejoicing in Him. We may look backward over our lives and grieve at their being mis-spent; we may grieve over sins that we have committed; but what cause for rejoicing when we remember that He has put all our sins away, that He has put them behind His back, and whilst we see them, they are where He cannot see them! He has removed our transgressions as far from us, and from Himself, as the east is from the west. We may grieve at the poorness, the weakness, the feebleness of our service, but we have to remember that whatever has been done pleasingly to Him, He takes it and presents it to His God and Father, He presents it in the perfectness that belongs to Himself.

And then again, there is cause to rejoice in Himself. We may have cause to sorrow and grieve as we think of beloved friends and fellow labourers, from whom we may now be parted more or less distinctly, more or less clearly; though at one time we walked in happy company with them. But we still have the Lord for our own. We may have got away from the Lord ourselves in heart or ways, but He is always there waiting for us to return to Him. We can always rejoice in Him, even though it be a rejoicing with trembling, even though the very tears can hardly be restrained, the tears of contrition, yet the very fact that those tears are known to Him, and that He cares for each one of His own, is a cause for rejoicing. The veriest backslider afar from God, if he will only fall low enough, if he will only go down enough, if he will only begin to weep and to mourn, will indeed find cause to rejoice in the Lord.

This rejoicing in the Lord is our strength, because if in Himself there is joy, and no such joy elsewhere, what is there like that to keep us near to Himself? It is the

greatest interest, it is the truest self-interest on the part of every born again one, to keep as near to the Lord Jesus Christ as possible, to get as much of Him as may be, to be as completely as possible under the shadow and the shelter of His eagle wings. It is the very weakness, it is the very poverty that the child of God may know, and feel, and realize that will give him strength, or the contrary according as it drives him nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ or otherwise.

But here in particular it is the joy of Jehovah, the Eternal One, who never changes, however much we may change; Jehovah, who (I make bold to say) was in Jerusalem all the time of the Captivity; for it is written that it was to "the House of Jehovah who is in Jerusalem," Whose dwelling place was there, that they came back: to the place of the Name of Jehovah, the Eternal One, who never changes.

We change; He changes not.

Further, here they are together. The joy of Jehovah is their strength as they are together at the place of the Name. The same is true to-day, as we are together at the place of the Name.

Is there not a foreshadowing of the time when God shall wipe away every tear from every face? What are our needs? what are our sins? what are our troubles? what are our woes? He knows how to deal with them all, forgiving our sins, comforting us in our troubles, guiding us in our perplexities. Is He not sufficient for all these things? To know that He is sufficient for us as thus gathered to His Name is a very cause for joy in Himself and all that He is to God for us? There He sits at the right hand of the throne on high. God looks upon Him, and God is pleased with Him; and there in Him we are found in all His perfection. But down here below,

have we not His own Holy Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and from the Son; the One who in glory there hears the whispers of the Father to the Son, and the answers that the Son gives to the Father upon the Throne of God, and wafts those whispers down and speaks them into our ears?

(Communicated by W. COX.)

“BEHOLD YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN.”

THE great truth brought out in Peter's First Epistle is the government and calling of God in relation to His own people. That which is especially noticeable in chapter one is the way the grace of God works now towards us, to sustain us in our pathway down here in temptations and in trials of various kinds, and it brings before us a few trials.

Notice to whom Peter is writing. He is writing to the strangers scattered through the places named in verse 1. We might mention here that Peter takes up the charge committed unto him by the Lord Himself in John 21.—“Feed My sheep, feed My lambs.”

When Peter writes I would gather that everything Jewish was under the sentence of judgment, and he unfolds to those who had been linked up with Judaism the heavenly calling of the believer, in place of the earthly calling which had been set aside.

It is good to see how God, by the pen of Peter, writes to cheer the hearts of the scattered ones. He begins by assuring them that they are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. It is a wonderful thing for our souls to get the sense of being elect, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and to get hold of what we are to God, and where God has placed us (see John 1. 12, and Eph. 2.

5, 6). It well becomes us, therefore, not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but to suffer hardship with the Gospel, according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal (2 Tim. 1. 8, 9).

It is surely ours to fall in with the words of 1 Peter 1. 3. We have a living hope, and it is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is undefiled and that fadeth not away. The inheritance God brought His people into in olden days they corrupted; their own sins defiled it and it faded away before their eyes. Is it not sweet in a world like this, where everything fades away and is corrupted and defiled, to know that we are called to a scene which is incorruptible, which nothing can defile, and which lasts for ever? Yes, the inheritance is kept for us, and we are kept for it by the power of God through faith.

I am inclined to think that Peter, knowing his own weakness, encourages us much by telling of the power of God. He reminds us that we are not only kept for a time, but we are guarded through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein, he says, you greatly rejoice. Yes, if we are thinking of the scene where Christ is, and where we shall be with Him, if our hearts are dwelling on the thought of that for which He is keeping us, where all is unfading brightness, we shall indeed be rejoicing, and that, with joy unspeakable.

But this 6th verse speaks of grief through various trials (see margin), but the Lord says, "if need be." The Lord knows what He is doing; He makes no mistakes. Whatever comes to us, then, let our hearts revert to the Father with this thought, that there is a needs-be. It is a great thing for our souls always to find the bright side of

every trial ; you and I, beloved, may not always see the need-be ; but as the trial is only for a season and is not to last for ever, this sustains the heart.

Look at Paul and Silas at Philippi ; thrust into the inner prison ; what could be more dismal ? And what do we find them doing ? They prayed and sang praises unto God. It is a charming picture. They are as full of joy as they can be, and they get that jailor converted. That was the outcome of their bleeding, wounded backs.

The pathway of trial has a very bright end : " that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried (or proved) by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ " (verse 7). Faith's sphere is on earth, and God tries it. He never gives faith that He does not prove, and this brings forth the fruit that will appear by-and-by, when everything will be made manifest at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The three Hebrew servants were tried by fire. What is the effect of the fire ? It only burnt off their bonds and set them free. So the Lord lets us get into the fire, and the intention is to burn off the cords that bind us. Let us pray that this may take place with many of us to-day, so that, after we are set free, we may be found walking as the three Hebrew servants were walking, with One, and the form of that One like unto the Son of God : whom not having seen we love, on whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Oh ! think of it ! We shall see His face, and we shall be like Him, and we shall be where He is. What will it be to gaze on that face ? no tongue can tell the deep and boundless joy of that moment. " Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind " (verse 13). The loins are the seat of strength, therefore we must constantly apply these things, Peter

says. And Paul says, "Set your mind on things above, where Christ sitteth" (Col. 3. 1, 2). Think of the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; what grace is this, the grace of being taken straight into His presence, to be with the Lord, and like Him for ever.

Jude says, "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." And what mercy could be greater than to be taken out of this scene of sorrow, and trial and distress, and placed in His own presence for ever and ever? This is what is to take place; but meantime, Peter says, as obedient children; as He that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of living, not doing what we like, but what God demands of us, and that is, practical holiness.

A. JAMIESON.

For Young Believers.

"As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation."—1 Peter 2. 2.

SANCTIFICATION.

II.

THE will of God for us, as expressed in 1 Thessalonians 4. 3, is our sanctification. If this is not accomplished His gracious purpose is frustrated, although we are eternally sanctified in Christ. This practical sanctification is effected by means of the word of God: "Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17. 17-19). The truth of God applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit sets us apart for God and holiness characterizes us. In this aspect of the truth it will be seen that many degrees of attainment are possible. Some are more truly sanctified than others, and in them holiness has been more fully perfected; but all are required by God to aim at the one perfect standard, even the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12. 14).

In this matter the words of 1 Peter **3. 15** are of vital importance: "Sanctify in your hearts

CHRIST AS LORD."

Sanctification must begin within: the throne of the heart must be occupied by Christ the Lord. When this is so His word is listened to with reverence and His commands are readily obeyed. Thus by obedience to His word we are daily set apart to God. Sanctification and consequent holiness are possible in no other way. No amount of spurious sentimentality can be accepted by God as true sanctification and vital holiness; unless Christ as Lord rules in the heart and His commands are obeyed in everything, the will of God, even our sanctification, is not being effected.

The vessels in connexion with the tabernacle were sanctified, were set apart to a holy use: they were henceforth to be used for no common purpose. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is also sanctified; he is set apart to a holy use in spirit, and soul, and body. The prayer of the apostle for the Thessalonians was that the God of peace might sanctify them wholly, so that in spirit, and soul, and body they might be preserved without blame in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. **5. 23**). Would to God that we might better learn His desires concerning us, and His expectations in us, in connexion with this holy matter of practical sanctification! The members of our bodies, once yielded as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, should now be presented as servants to righteousness unto sanctification. Thus as servants to God our fruit is unto sanctification and the end eternal life, whilst aforetime, when sowing to the flesh, we reaped but corruption, and the end of these things is death. Alas! how unspeakably solemn is the thought that the believer, who is sanctified in Christ Jesus and eternally holy in Him, may still sow to his own flesh whilst here

below and reap but corruption and death. In view of such an awful possibility truly godly fear and awe become us as we remember that our God is a consuming fire. Let us know then that we have been set apart to God to walk in holiness, to yield our members as servants of righteousness unto sanctification, and if in anything we fail to do so we are taking what God has set apart for His own holy use and using it as a servant of iniquity unto iniquity.

Too little have any of us realized the importance and vital nature of the solemn and precious truth of sanctification. It lies at the root of all we are or can be for God whilst here below. Apart from practical sanctification we cannot be vessels unto honour, we cannot be used by the Sovereign Master. Without it, despite our profession, we are but whited sepulchres from which the stench of corruption arises to God instead of the sweet savour of Christ which springs from a truly sanctified life.

“W” AND “X.”

WALK.

THE letter “W” suggests many desirable lessons for the young believer to be encouraged to learn.

Being at present confined to one of these we essay to speak of “Walk.” The very mention of this awakens memories that are at once both cheering and sorrowful: gladdening, because God has shown it is possible to walk with Him; sorrowful, that in the light thereof one has known and prized so feebly the holy reality.

Still “nil desperandum” must be our motto and our aim, since His compassions fail not and His pity is great towards them that fear Him.

Therefore those who Enoch-like would walk with Him shall find Him pleased to have such company.

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good:
and what doth the Lord require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God.”

The various presentations of “Walk,” as given in the epistle to the Ephesians, afford a very complete set of lessons for the young believer to make his own, and to be assured of, while still young.

THE OLD WALK.

- (1) Eph. 2. 2. What riches of mercy, yea, what grace, that we who are in Christ Jesus are able to look back to a walk that is past. This, too, though then, even as others, we were by nature the children of wrath, yet now we are by faith in Christ Jesus the sons of God.

THE NEW WALK.

- (2) Eph. 2. 10. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them. Alas! that, despite such kindness, so many of His loved and own walk in a way not good, even according to their own thoughts.

THE MANNER OF WALK.

- (3) Eph. 4. 1, etc., gives a very touching entreaty that the believer would be exercised to walk WORTHY of the vocation wherewith he has been called, but this as having regard to do so WITH all lowliness AND meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing others in love: withal being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit IN the binding-bond of peace.

HOW NOT TO WALK.

- (4) Lovingly kind is the testimony in the Lord, to walk not as Gentiles walk. To attain this it is necessary to learn Christ. This learning is acquired by hearing Him, and being taught by Him the truth as in Jesus—see verse 17.

THE MEASURE OF WALK.

- (5) Walk in love AS Christ also hath loved us, and— see chapter 5. verses 1-6. O young believer, young believer, be persuaded to learn thoroughly what it is to walk in love according to the measure thereof.

HOW TO WALK.

- (6) Walk as children of light.

The young believer may readily know for himself whether or not he thus walks by seeing whether he bears the fruit of the light. This is in all

goodness
and righteousness
and truth.

That also involves a proving of what is pleasing to the Lord . . . and a reproof of what is not.

Consider carefully verses 7-12.

THE CLIMAX OF ALL.

- (7) Since Christ shall shine upon him that awakes and arises from among the dead, let one and all see that they walk circumspectly (that is, carefully and accurately), NOT as unwise, but as wise, buying up opportunity, because the days are evil.

X.

While there are few words altogether in the English tongue which begin with the letter "X," there is at least one that in the Scriptures also has a use and place of no ordinary import.

The word "Xenodochy,"¹ meaning reception of strangers, hospitality, is precisely the word of 1 Timothy 5. 10. . . . "have lodged strangers": a work that in a by-and-by day may be of the utmost value to the Christian woman, as also to those privileged and called of God to be and to do

¹ Pronounced ze-nod'-o-ky.

unto her as He would, even He who saith, "If the widow cry at all to Me, I will hear."

That word has its relation to such interesting matter as Acts 28. 23. Many came unto him unto his *lodging*, to whom, and so forth. Also with the Apostle's wish that tested Philemon's love:—

"PREPARE ME ALSO A LODGING."

It adds pertinence to the exhortation of Hebrews 13. 2 ". . . for thereby some HAVE ENTERTAINED angels un-awares."

It adorns with pre-eminent excellency the faithfulness and love of Gaius (3 John) . . . brethren, and STRANGERS withal.

Contemplation on these holy virtues is calculated to stimulate the young believer to well use passing opportunities, which, because passing and incidental, are probably in the truest of all senses, if lost, lost in all the severity of opportunity that never returns.

This caring for the stranger was very early and pathetically laid by God upon His delivered from Egypt people. This He wishes us to know and appropriate (Rom. 15. 4).

Thou shalt not vex the stranger (Exod. 22. 21).

Thou shalt not oppress the stranger (Exod. 23. 9.)

The Lord loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment, therefore love the stranger, for ye were strangers (Deut. 10. 18, 19).

Without reproaching any, or publishing in any wise the shame of the daughter of Zion, the present writer can hardly refrain from saying that this thoughtfulness for, this caring about, this loving of and entertaining the stranger seems to-day vastly different to what, when a young believer himself, he remembers as beautifully prevalent, whereas now it appears to be as rare as then it was common. And this though neither God nor His word has changed; nor, methinks, are opportunities or need less.

Finally, as "*x*" in algebra symbolizes the unknown quantity, so "*x*" might be placed by way of warning on the four quarters of the vesture and as frontlets between the eyes of the young believer who desires and seeks to strengthen the things that remain, yet are ready to die; but which nevertheless the Lord wants and wishes to live and thrive in all the vigour of the healthful tree that bears buds, blossom and fruit, worthy of all the range of Xenodochy according to God.

JOHN BROWN.

BIBLE WOMEN: HELPS AND HINDERERS.

(THE WIDOW IN ZAREPHATH.)

THE God of every grace has ever shown His unceasing care for the fatherless and widow. The children of Israel were taught to remember such (Deut. 10. 18, 14. 29, 24. 17-22; 2 Kings 4. 1-7; Isa. 1. 17). Saints in the present day in like manner are exhorted to honour widows that are widows indeed (1 Tim. 5. 3); are taught that such should be relieved (Acts 6. 1-6); that they should be cared for by their own children or grandchildren, whom God expects to show piety toward their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in His sight (1 Tim. 5. 4). In James 1. 27 we learn that widows should be visited in their affliction.

There is a precious word concerning such in Jeremiah 49. 11: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me." In keeping with this is the New Testament scripture: "Now, she that is a widow indeed and desolate, hath her hope set on God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day" (1 Tim. 5. 5). See also Luke 2. 36-39.

The widow should so live that she may be well reported of for good works: "If she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the

afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work" (1 Tim 5. 10).

Turning now to 1 Kings 17. we see what honour the God of Israel conferred on one widow woman in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. True there were many widows in Israel at that time, yet God passed them all by—for He had been despised and forsaken by Israel—and He commanded the widow woman in Zarephath to sustain His servant Elijah. The circumstances of this widow when Elijah met her are worthy of note. He found her at the gate of the city gathering sticks to bake her last handful of meal, so that she and her son might eat it and die. She knew not that the God of Israel was about to meet her need in her deep extremity. Elijah said unto her: "Fear not, go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake *first* and bring it forth unto me, and *afterwards* make for thee and thy son. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

How this takes our thoughts to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 6. 25-34, and particularly that exhortation and promise: "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Alas! how apt we all are to put self first, and His kingdom and His righteousness last. May it be ours to become imitators of the churches of Macedonia who first gave their own selves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8. 5).

But this widow has yet to be further tried, so that she may know the God of Israel as the Life-giver as well as the Life-sustainer. "It came to pass after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him." Death is before her, and it brings her sins to her remembrance, for death is the wages of sin. She says to

Elijah: "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Thou art come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance and to slay my son." Here her conscience is reached and she learns the truth that her sin merited death, and gets to know the God of Israel as the Giver of Life. Through faith in God the dead child is brought to life, and as the widow takes that precious resurrection life to her bosom she could exclaim: "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

Thus a poor widow of Zarephath was blessed by the God of Israel in the past, and got to know Him as the One who supplied her with life and the daily necessities thereof. Famine raged around, but the faithful God fulfilled His promise and comforted and sustained the widow. He is the same God still, and His compassion towards widows is unchanged.

SATAN.

II.

IN a former paper we looked briefly at the characteristics of Satan as displayed in the names by which he is called in the Scriptures. We also traced the sphere in which he moves and operates. Further, we learned from the Word of God a little of the mighty power he wields over mankind.

Truly the Scriptures present a dark view of the state and standing of man by nature, and show how hopeless and resourceless in itself the world is. The almighty power of God alone is able to deliver from Satan's grasp, and yet God has declared that man is so deceived that the words are true: "There is none that seeketh after God." Yet had the world, realizing its awful peril, blended its voice in one plaintive prayer to God for salvation He might nevertheless have refused to hear and left it to its hapless doom.

But how expressive of the infinite love of God are the

well-known words: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son!" How causeless and undeserved, yet how full and free is the love that prompted Him to part with His only begotten Son that such a world might be saved! And to earth the eternal Son of God came in a body of blood and flesh that He might meet him that had the power of death, that is the Devil, and through death bring him to nought.

Who can enter into the mysteries of that conflict, or understand how real and terrible was the struggle of the Son of God in that dark hour on Calvary? Well might the sun refuse to shine and envelope the earth in darkness as angels and demons drew near to witness that awful sight. What eternal issues were at stake as they witnessed that struggle! What must have been their thoughts as they beheld the Son of God expire on the tree! Yet, blessed be God! His apparent defeat in death was His crowning victory over him that had the power of death; and now on the throne of God He sits the triumphant Conqueror. Hallelu-Jah!

It is evident from New Testament Scriptures that even since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, Satan's presence and power in the world are still real, and judging from appearances one might think that his work was unhindered. It is well therefore to inquire how far his power has been affected in the present age through the Cross of Christ. We know that the Lord Jesus is, by virtue of His death, the Sovereign Lord of the universe, that He is exalted far above every name that is named, all authority in heaven and on earth having been given to Him by God. This fact alone may enable us to perceive that Satan's power is limited perhaps beyond what any of us imagine. When the apostle is relating the story of his memorable conversion as recorded in Acts 26. 17, 18, he declares that the Lord said he was to be instrumental in turning the Gentiles

FROM THE POWER OF SATAN UNTO GOD;

thus showing how absolutely superior in power the Lord Whom he was called to serve was to Satan. The apostle was sent with the gospel amongst the benighted Gentiles in the dark parts of Satan's domain, and that gospel which told of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ proved to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed; delivering them for ever from the power of darkness and translating them into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Truly herein the weakness of Satan's efforts to hold his captives is manifested, and the mighty power and triumphs of the Cross of Christ are displayed.

Let us grasp the glorious fact that we have been set free by the omnipotent hand of God and actually translated from being subjects of Satan to be eternally sons of God, and that we are now free to serve a living God in reaching the slaves of sin and Satan with the precious message of liberty. Oh for a deeper consciousness of the Victor's power! Oh for a greater desire to see men and women emancipated from Satan's thralldom!

We may be well assured that if such desires are in our hearts they will be bitterly opposed by Satan. The Word of God makes plain that

HIS POWER WITH THE CHRISTIAN IS VERY REAL; and though one has been delivered from the authority of darkness by the power of God, yet Satan has not done with him. 1 Peter 5. 8 presents the Devil in the attitude of a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The loss to him of any one whom God's grace reaches is manifestly real, and he must know that once his prey has been rescued by God he can never reclaim it. Thus he is seen in all the jealous activity expressed in the figure of a roaring lion. Being robbed of his prey he sets himself in relentless rage

TO MAR THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT LIFE.

That is the only thing he can now touch, and, alas! how many are his snares, and how crafty his devices to allure the child of God until he is all that is conveyed in the word "devoured." That means that he is so wholly swallowed up that there is nothing in his life for God, and perhaps so hopelessly deceived that he is unconscious of the fact. It surely becomes us therefore to give earnest heed to the plain and practical injunctions, Be sober, Be watchful.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XXIII. NOVEMBER 16.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MARK 4. 1-5. 20 ;
LUKE 7. 36-8. 39.

THE eighth chapter of Luke tells plainly that on His journeys of love and mercy the Lord was accompanied not only by the twelve apostles, but also by certain women who had been healed and forgiven much and who loved much. There was Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She it was whose tears at His empty grave arrested Him to give her a word of comfort ere He ascended to the Father. Joanna, also, was there, the wife of Herod's steward, who was another that went to the empty grave. These with Susanna and many others ministered unto them of their substance. They may not all have been so rich as Chuza's wife probably was; but what they had they used, and that freely.

Doubtless it was one of these who, as the previous chapter tells us, had brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, when she knew that He reclined at meat in the Pharisee's house, and standing behind at His feet weeping, this woman, a sinner, began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. Such was the value

she set on Him. His feet were soiled doubtless with the journey, and never had they been bathed with more precious water. Better indeed for her to use her tears thus, than even to have them put into God's bottle, or set down in God's book (compare Psalm 56. 8 with 126. 5). When, in the present day, saints desire to wash one another's feet, let them remember that tears give the only water good enough for His feet (compare Acts 9. 4, 5 and 1 Cor. 12. 12-13. 13).

Well then, we note that such women were around Him with the twelve, when a great multitude came together to hear Him. Then He spake the parable of the sower and the seed which fell by the wayside, on the rock, among thorns, into the good ground; and some had ears to hear, and some, alas! had not.

Now it was on one of these days that He entered into a boat, as Luke tells us in verse 22, after recording in verses 19-21 the visit of the Lord's mother and brethren. But Mark, whose record of this visit comes before the account of the parables, distinctly says that it was on the day when He had taught by the seaside, by the parable of the sower and many other parables, that when even was come He saith, "Let us go over unto the other side." We conclude that Mark gives us the order in which the incidents occurred that are recorded in Mark 3. 31-5. 20.

If this is so, it makes it more remarkable that Luke should insert the visit of the Lord's mother and brethren where he does. "Take heed, therefore," said the Lord, "how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have (or thinketh that he hath)." Then, ere He goes to the other side, whither some follow Him and some do not, His kinsfolk are brought on the scene, out of the order of time, to emphasize the solemn responsibility of those who come under the

sound of His voice, that they be of the number of those who hear the word of God and do it. The crossing to the other side, which Mark records as taking place on that day, was accompanied by the Lord's stilling of a great storm of wind, and followed by the expulsion of many demons from a man who dwelt among the tombs. We thus identify the series of incidents with those recorded in Matthew 8. 18-30 as well as those in Luke 8. 22-39.

Of course there are differences in the details recorded. Matthew tells of there being two demoniacs, but gives the shortest account of the incident. Mark's account is in some respects more like Matthew's than like Luke's, but, like Luke, he gives a longer account than Matthew. Mark tells us that the demoniac saw Jesus from afar and ran and worshipped, and crying out with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not." This was because the Lord had said, "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man." So that these words were evidently spoken by the man as the mouthpiece of the demon. Whether the running of the man to Jesus and his worshipping of Him were under the influence of the demon we cannot say—we think not. The Lord's reply to the demon was the question, What is thy name? The answer shows that though one demon in particular had possession of the man to make him speak what it pleased, he was yet but the spokesman of a numerous company, a legion of evil ones who inhabited the poor demoniac. So in verse 10, he besought Him much that He would not send them away, and in verse 12, "they besought Him." That they entered into about two thousand (2,000) swine shows that there were at least that number of them. The account in Matthew fully confirms this, though it is expressed in other words, whilst Luke's narrative makes it still more plain that one demon was the leader in this

fearful tyranny that they exercised over their victim. This unclean spirit is mentioned thus in verse 29: "He was driven by the demon."

The man himself now comes on the scene clothed and in his right mind at the feet of Jesus. This is the only place for a person clothed and in his right mind to be. They who are far from Him have no clothing but rags; and as young men in Titus 2. 6, and all elect sojourners in 1 Peter 4. 7 are exhorted to be sober-minded, it may be worth mentioning that the word used is the same in all these passages, namely, Mark 5. 15, Luke 8. 35, Titus 2. 6, 1 Peter 4. 7 (also Rom. 12. 3, 2 Cor. 5. 13). *Σωφρονέω* (*sōphrōnēō*), *to be sane*, from *σωφρων* (*sōphrōn*), *sane*, from *σαός* (*saōs*), *sound*, and *φρήν* (*phrēn*), *the mind*. So that perhaps we may learn that the entrance of His words will give sanity, and the evidence of sanity is found in sitting at His feet.

We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that this demoniac was no mere lunatic, as we now understand the term. That he really was indwelt by a multitude of these malignant beings is clearly and plainly taught in these scriptures. So that if any would seek to throw doubts on the reality of unclean spirits or demons indwelling men and bending them to their foul purposes, it follows of necessity that they must give up all faith in the truthfulness and reliability of the Gospel narratives and in the person of Him of whom the Evangelists speak.

XXIV. NOVEMBER 30.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MARK 5. 21-43;

LUKE 8. 40-56.

THE Lord's return from the cure of the demoniac to the other side of the water is connected in Matthew with the incident of the palsied man, but in Mark and Luke with that of the daughter of Jairus and the woman who had an

issue. It seems pretty clear for the reasons given in the previous Bible Reading (page 275) that the Matthew 13. teachings preceded in order of time the events recorded in Matthew 8. 18-34. But we think that there is little or no doubt that the cure of the palsied man, that of the daughter of Jairus, and that of the woman with an issue, were very quickly after his return from the country of the Gaderenes (or Gergesenes). Which took place first, however, is a more difficult question.

Both Mark and Luke appear to indicate that Jairus met the Lord immediately, or almost immediately, on His return, but Matthew explicitly says that, when this ruler came, Jesus was saying those things recorded in Matthew 9. 14-17. These words were elicited by questions of John's disciples. Tracing backward still further, we find verse 14, "Then come to Him." When was this? And the reply is, While He sat in Matthew's house, just after the healing of the palsied man. On looking up this incident in Mark and Luke, we find it in Mark 2. 1 and Luke 5. 17, but with a manifest indication of indefiniteness as to time in both cases. "After some days"—"On one of those days." These accounts, Mark 2. 1-22 and Luke 5. 17-39, agree well with one another, and with Matthew 9. 1-17, as to the general order of the events recorded therein, and it therefore reduces itself to the single question. Can we, without straining the words, suppose that these incidents took place between verses 21 and 22 of Mark 5. and between verses 40 and 41 of Luke 8.?

We now turn to the story of Jairus and his daughter. Jairus tells the Lord, "My daughter is even now dead" (Matthew), "is at the point of death" (Mark), whilst Luke says, "She lay a dying." The Lord Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples and a great multitude. We pass for the moment over the incident of the woman with an issue, but note that during the delay

connected therewith they come from the ruler's house to say that his daughter was dead. "Fear not," said the Lord, "only believe."

He takes with Him only Peter and James and John, and enters the room with them and Jairus and the mother, and He puts the crowd out of the room. He then is in a room with these five persons and a girl supposed to be dead; believed to be dead by all. But was she dead? He said distinctly, not:—

"The damsel is not dead but sleepeth" (Matthew).

"The child is not dead but sleepeth" (Mark).

"She is not dead but sleepeth" (Luke).

Yet, marvellous to relate, hundreds of Christians believe that she was dead, notwithstanding the Lord's words!

These are quite different to what He said about Lazarus in John, "Lazarus is fallen asleep." Jesus had spoken of his death. Jesus therefore said plainly, "Lazarus is dead." But of the girl He said, "She is not dead."

Moreover, the word *sleepeth* used in reference to the girl is never in the New Testament used of death. *Καθεύδω* (*kathēudō*), I sleep, occurs in the following passages—Matthew 8. 24, Mark 4. 38, as to the Lord's sleep during the storm; Matthew 9. 24, Mark 5. 39, Luke 8. 52, as to the daughter of Jairus; Matthew 13. 25, Mark 4. 27, in the parables of the tares and the sprouting seed; Matthew 25. 5, as to the foolish virgins; Matthew 26. 40, 43, 45; Mark 14. 37, 40, 41; Luke 22. 46, the disciples in Gethsemane; Mark 13. 35, 36, gives a warning to watch and not to sleep, and this we also find in 1 Thessalonians 5. in verses 6 and 7, but verse 10 says that whether we watch (same word as verse 6) or sleep we shall live together with Him, He having died for us. Ephesians 5. 14 finally tells us that light saith to the sleeping saint, "Awake, and arise from among the dead."

Thus this word is never used of death. It is clear that the child was in what we might call a trance or swoon,

which Jairus and the mother and every one else took to be really death. One in the Lord's place anything less than Himself had here a great opportunity to get credit for raising a dead one to life. And this whole narrative which so clearly shows how far He was above any attempt at manufacturing a reputation is as to all its vital points given by the three Evangelists in just the same form. The statement of the many that the girl was dead, the privacy in which the miracle was performed, the Lord's clear words that the damsel was not dead but sleeping, all these facts are told by the three narrators in accounts which have many points of difference as to wording.

It is remarkable that each also tells of the cure of her who only touched the hem of His garment as He was going to the ruler's house. There must be great importance here—perhaps the lack of hurry is one thing to which attention is meant to be directed. Here again we note how much detail Mark gives, and Luke too, in a less degree, compared with Matthew. As to the verities of both these signs, it should be remembered that Luke speaks with the greater weight, if we deal with the question as a matter of human evidence, because as a physician He knew more than others of the matters in hand. He, then, definitely records that this issue of blood had lasted twelve years, and no physician had been able to cure it, but that on her merely touching the border of the Lord's garment it had immediately been stanch'd. But more than that, the man who knew something, not a little, of what medical skill could effect, and who cannot be regarded as an ignorant man or a fanatic, sets down in plain words the source of the healing in the Lord's own words, "Some one did touch Me, for I perceived that power had gone forth from Me."

C. M. LUXMOORE.

“ REMNANT TIMES,”

THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND PURPOSE.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES BY MR. DAVID SMITH.

(Continued from page 237.)

2 CHRONICLES **36**, 14-21. This scripture brings us to our subject proper, which we cannot fail to learn and discern in the very reading of the words.

Hitherto we have looked at scriptures that bring before us very different characteristics from those we have here, characteristics of the *first* days as distinguished from characteristics of the *last* days.

The book of Exodus presents to us the “goings out,” the book of Ezra the “goings up.” In Exodus we have a people sighing and crying by reason of their bondage. The purpose for this time is “deliverance,” and Jehovah presents Himself to them as “Deliverer.” What a wonderful deliverance became theirs! As they stood on the wilderness shore of the Red Sea, they saw His work and sang His praise. The groan in Egypt reached His ear and brought Him to them in their need. He proved what He was to them and what He could do for them, and now they do not sing of what they had done, but of what He had done.

The time for “singing” passes away and is followed by the time for “bringing.” Exodus **25**, 2, “Let them bring Me an offering.” Here is now an opportunity for that delivered people to express, in a fuller measure and a more definite form, their appreciation of their deliverance and of their Deliverer. Surely this would bring not only songs from their lips, but actions from their hands, and opportunity for this is given; an opportunity from Jehovah to bring material from which His sanctuary should be made, a

habitation into which He might come, as He desired to do, and dwell in their midst. You will never find the presence of Jehovah in midst of His people disassociated from the sanctuary.

The time for the purpose of "bringing" and of "making" passed away, and the solemn responsibility rested with the people how they had used such opportunities.

We might trace the matter further, and see the sanctuary in the land. It was not by chance that the Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh, but surely a partial fulfilment of the prophetic word by Jacob, "A sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be"; for whether it be Shiloh as a place or as a person, there we have God's centre of gathering for His people. It was in relation to Shiloh that Israel had their places in the land, just as in the wilderness they had them in relation to the sanctuary.

To a later date in their history we now come. In Psalm **132**. David becomes burdened about Jehovah having no resting-place; so much so that he declares,

I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids;
Until I find out a place for the Lord.

The time came when he said, "This is the house of the Lord God" (1 Chron. **22**. 1); "The Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation" (Psalm **132**. 13), and this is followed by the language of Psalm **133**.,

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!

—dwelling together with God in the place of His rest.

Turn now to 2 Chronicles **36**. 10-21. Here the characteristics are dark indeed. It presents the closing days of God's testimony in the past, and a condition of things dishonouring in the extreme to the name and character of Jehovah.

"They burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem." With what feelings, might we ask, speaking reverently, does Jehovah behold this desolation and ruin; this expression of blighted hopes, thwarted purposes and lost glory? And why has all this come about? Has God failed His people, or has He given up His purpose to have a house? Neither the one nor the other.

The failure, as failure there is, both dire and deep, is not with Jehovah, but with His people, and that through rejection of His word. His presence, power and blessing were all conditional (Lev. 26. 3-12), and the conditions having been given up it is now theirs to reap, in their bitter experience, the fulfilment of the solemn words of Leviticus 26. 31-35.

The time for the purpose of Jehovah speaking has passed away. His oft speakings through His messengers in His message have all been in vain, and now He enforces His speakings by His actings, and takes up and uses Nebuchadnezzar as His rod for the chastening of His people.

The seventy long years of their captivity is the time for this purpose, in which He seeks to effect the humbling and bringing to repentance of such as He may. In the remembrance of what had been and is not now, in the remembrance of what they had lost, there are sighs and cries from hearts and lips. In Babylon now as in Egypt of yore, were many such, telling of heartaches and longings after Jehovah and after Jerusalem, the place He had chosen to put His name, and these longings are not unheeded. Jehovah heeds them and grants to His people opportunity to evidence the reality of their repentance, in leaving Babylon and going up to Jerusalem.

Ezra 1. 2, 3, 5. The seventy years have passed,—the time for the purpose of Jehovah in humbling His people; and the question is, Has this purpose been effected? Are

there repentant ones—those to whom His name, His house, and His honour are so near and dear, that when the opportunity comes they will embrace it, and be found where He would have them be, and doing what He would have them do?

In such an opportunity God tested the reality of His people's repentance. It is one thing to express sorrow for the past, but another thing to prove this; and their sorrow was proved when they heeded the word from Jehovah: "Let him go up to Jerusalem, and build the house of the Lord." On the other hand what could we say of the reality of the repentance of any who might say they were sorry for the past, and longed to be where God would have them, yet when the opportunity comes, make no attempt to be there, but when God says, "Go up," prefer to stay down for some reason or other, amidst Babylonish comfort and ease, worship and ways, to being in the place of His name, where His presence and His house are?

Some there were who, like the men of Issachar, had understanding of the times, and used the opportunity God gave them, to do what they ought to do, learned in the light of Jehovah's call, "Let him go up." Many and much, doubtless, that nature holds dear, they may have had to leave, but if they wished to be where God would have them, they have to consider these but loss. It cost them something to do God's will.

Many allowed the opportunity to pass who never got it again, yea even although some went up at a later date they missed the opportunity of building the house, for others had fulfilled God's purpose and built the house. How solemn! How sad!

Haggai 1. 1-5, 7, 8. These words are associated with the book of Ezra. The same house, the same time, and the same circumstances are viewed. Zerubbabel and Joshua, with all whose spirits God had raised, are in Jerusalem. They have

answered to Jehovah's purpose so far; they are in the right place and begin to do the right thing. Adversaries hear thereof and begin to oppose. They came saying, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye" (Ezra 4. 2). The character of the opposition was in keeping with the characteristics of the times; i.e. deception and imitation, for in such times

"things are not what they seem,"

and we need to be very clear and sure of persons and things, and to "try the spirits whether they are of God."

The characteristics of the times have been understood by Zerubbabel and those with him, and they do not just take for granted all these would-be helpers say, these professing sympathizers and helpers who are in reality hinderers. In Zechariah 3. 1 we read of Satan standing over to be an adversary, and these are his instruments to effect his purpose, which, alas! he accomplishes only too successfully, even to the stopping of the work for a time.

The words of Haggai 1. 2 come in at this point: "This people say, 'The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.'" They evidently think they have made a mistake and have begun too soon; perhaps others thought, "We are too late." This reveals a judging of Jehovah's purpose in the light of circumstances, and doubtless if these had been favourable it would have been the time, but because they are not, they say "The time is not come." So do many to-day judge and speak of Jehovah's purpose and ways, forgetting that God often allows circumstances to arise to prove whether His people seek Him and His ways with all their heart.

The test often reveals the true condition of things; the work hindered and stopped is the excuse they make for not building the Lord's house, but there is another reason.

Nothing can be hid from Jehovah: "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"; and the heart-searching and way-trying words, "Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled houses," reveal that the God-given opportunity is being used for a purpose of their own.

Surely our chief object and ambition should be to effect God's purpose in the opportunity of our lifetime, so that the Lord, the righteous Judge, may be able to say to us in the coming day, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Are we using God's opportunity for our own interest and pleasure? His house is that wherein His pleasure is, and if there be no house, His pleasure in this respect is lost.

Jehovah's message through Haggai, "Consider your ways," etc., has the effect of setting their hearts right, and then their hands and feet; and they go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house. As a result of their obedience to the voice of the Lord, there is seen that upon which His eye can look with pleasure, and through which He can be glorified.

Comforting and encouraging are His words, "Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all ye people of the land, and work, for I am with you, according as I covenanted with you when I brought you out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not" (Hag. 2. 4, 5). Likewise also in His promise, "I will fill this house with glory," was there more than compensated for the lack of the greatness and grandeur of the former house; yea further, "In this place will I give peace" (Hag. 2. 7, 9). Alas! how many missed all this through misunderstanding the times, and the purpose of the times.

(To be continued.)

AMBITION.

IN the things of this life most people have an ambition. And when one is born again and becomes a child of God there should always be an ambition. The child of God should never be content to be a baby in arms, but should look forward to progressing in the knowledge of God, by means of those exceeding great and precious promises that have been given to us. What is the ambition that may rightly be in the heart of a child of God? Is there anything that God Himself—that the Lord Jesus Christ sets before us? You will remember the words of the Lord Jesus, which He spake: “If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.” There is an ambition for every one of us! What a proud day that was for that young bugler boy when his Queen sent for him to her own presence, and with her own hands gave him a new bugle, for the one that he had lost on that day when he showed his mettle on the South African battlefield! What a day that will be for him to look back to, all his days on earth!

Do we, beloved, think of the time that is coming, when we shall be before the Majesty of Heaven, when God shall call us into His presence, and there will be honour for those who have served the Lord Jesus Christ; honour in the presence of the angels, honour before all the Cherubim and Seraphim; honour which shall never be forgotten, world without end?

But there is something besides honour. Many people say we should never speak of the honours; but whatever the Lord Jesus spoke about, is good enough for you and me. If He held it up as a glorious, a worthy ambition, for us to serve Him and to be honoured, it is a worthy ambition for young men; concerning whom Paul says: “If any serve well as a deacon he earns to himself a good degree.” That surely is an ambition worth striving for.

Oftentimes, there is prematurely an ambition on the part of young men, to take the place of overseers and rulers, forgetting that there is abundant honour waiting to be meted out by the hands of God, to those who are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. And whenever one takes of the Bread of Life, as from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, and passes it on to another, we have an instance and an illustration of the work of a deacon of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You remember the miracle of the five thousand who were fed. You remember how the Lord Jesus took those loaves, and blessed, and brake, and so brake that they multiplied in His hands; how He handed the pieces to His disciples—not now that they might eat—but that they might give to the multitude. Not one piece of the bread went to those five thousand hungry men but it passed through the hands of a disciple. There are those five thousand men seated by fifties on the grass. I see the waiters handing the bread to those hungry multitudes. What an honour! an honour which those who sat never had; an honour that belonged to those that served; an honour that belonged to those that took the bread from His hands. They were serving the Lord Jesus Christ as deacons; they were ministering of the things that came from Him; the things that were His they were passing on to those who were hungry. Such, indeed, are deacons of Christ Jesus. They who are good deacons of Christ Jesus, they who serve Him well, as Paul speaks, earn to themselves a good degree.

There is an ambition worthy of any; by the side of which, the proudest glories of this world fail and fade away. The honour and glories that can be seen are only for a time. These unseen glories for which we may look, which the eye of faith alone can see—these things are eternal.

For Young Believers.

“As new-born babes, desire the milk of the Word, which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.”—1 *Peter* 2. 2.

SATAN.

III.

SATAN'S interest in, and knowledge of, each individual is vividly set forth in Job 1. His reply to God's question, “Hast thou considered my servant Job”? tells how fully that God-fearing man had been considered by him. He had watched with eager anxiety that life so blessed of God, and had been restrained by God from laying his hand upon it. Here is surely a comforting thought as we consider the evil power of that awful being. With the man of God his power is clearly limited by Jehovah; He that is for us is greater than the one who is against us: albeit the experience of the protecting hand of God is in great measure dependent on our submission to the will of God, and our desire to be vessels sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

In this connexion the Scriptures abound with instructions as to

WHAT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD SATAN SHOULD BE.

Ephesians 4. 27 declares the will of the Lord for us, even that

WE GIVE NO PLACE TO THE DEVIL.

Surely it becomes every young Christian to have a purpose of heart that this might be true of him; and to be ever on the watch against Satan's subtle ways, knowing that the only safeguard is to give the Lord every place in his heart and life. Where there is room for the flesh and the world there is also a big place for Satan!

Ephesians 6. 10 makes plain that our strength to resist Satan is alone in the Lord and the power of His might.

The following verses further show how absolutely conditional this experience is. Armour is provided for us by God, but the wearing of it is our responsibility, and without it defeat is sure. It may be the easiest way at times to surrender to Satan's will, but it is not the noblest. More honourable it is to stand in the Lord's strength with our face to the foe, though it costs us much, than to give place to an unworthy cowardice which prompts us to be unlike Him who fought the fight alone.

It is therefore needful to know and use the seven indispensable parts of the panoply of God if we would be adequately equipped for a contest so fierce as the one we are called to wage. These are set forth in Ephesians 6. 14-18.

TRUTH, RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE GOSPEL OF PEACE,
THE FAITH,
SALVATION, THE WORD OF GOD, PRAYER.

We may be fully assured that without any of these, weakness and defeat must be the result. Perhaps the Christian who desires to be valiant for the Lord, yet has continually to deplore a lack of strength when he most needs it, may find by close examination of his own heart that one or more of these virtuous things are lacking in his life, and may therein discover the true cause of febleness and failure. What responsibility then is thrown upon each child of God, who would be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, to take up

THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD!

and how encouraging it is to think of the effectiveness of that panoply as manifested so perfectly in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan's doom is decreed by God and declared in His Word; and though to-day he is permitted to work havoc among the sons of men, and has ensnared many of the

children of God by his deceptive ways, his judgment slumbereth not. Although nineteen centuries have elapsed since he received his death-blow at the cross, and since our victorious Lord rose from the domain of death and claimed the keys of death and Hades, it is indeed comforting to know that Satan's final and eternal doom at the hand of the Lord is sure.

Revelation 20. makes plain that ere the age of millennial glory is established on earth Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss that he may not deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished. Afterward he will be loosed from his confinement and a little while of liberty will be given him, during which he will gather the nations together from the four corners of the earth to make one great and final assault upon the camp of the saints and the beloved city. His purpose however will be frustrated by God and fire from Heaven will devour the peoples he had deceived and led to war. Then Satan himself will be hurled into the Lake of Fire, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Thus shall Satan and his dread power be for ever removed from God's creation ; thus shall the triumphs of the Cross be eternally declared. Never more will anything intervene to mar God's purposes of love and grace, and a boundless eternity of glory will declare how absolutely every foe was defeated through the death of the Son of God. Then shall every eye and heart of the new creation admire and adore the Lamb in the midst of the throne—the One Who fought the fight alone amid the darkness and woe of Calvary—and God shall be all in all.

DAVID WILSON,

“Y” AND “Z.”

YOKE.

THESE closing letters of our ABC lessons offer very practical exercise for the young believer's heart and mind. There is “Yoke.” His yoke, which the Lord invites the one to whom He has GIVEN rest to take upon him. But this coupled with learning from Him who is meek and lowly of heart, and hence to FIND rest to one's soul.

It is invaluable to meditate upon the word “take” here. It is not to receive as having something offered, but rather to lay hold of with resolution and energy and so to possess. This being yoked is at once individual and possible; and it only becomes actual as one takes the same: just as, having taken the yoke, it is essentially necessary to learn from Him if rest to the soul is to be found.

The idea in the word “easy” is that of being kind, good, gracious. While everything possible should be done to incite the young believer to take this yoke upon him, nothing should be left undone to dissuade him being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

It is rather notorious that in religious sects this is generally narrowed to that to which it certainly does not apply, namely, the marriage bond; whereas with others, from whom worthier understanding and practice might be expected, it is mistakenly confined to religious association.

This, however, abides notwithstanding, and deserves far more thinking and attention than it yet has had, that the Lord demands that those who are His shall not be

UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS.

Given the unbeliever, then this is the one with whom the believer (young or old) is NOT to be unequally yoked. Terse and searching is God's picture of this heterodox yoke:¹ “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass

¹ Deut. 22, 10.

together.” The word “unequal” signifies—another and of a different sort.

The pertinent questions that follow this injunction in 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15 should be sincerely regarded and answered by every young believer between himself and his God.

This will give stamina to his heart-purpose, and impart vigour to his singleness of eye.

Doubtless the most effective manner of salvation from the embittering unequal yoke is to be abidingly yoked with the Lord Jesus Himself according to the spirit of Matt. 11. 28-30. Whether one is thus yoked or not (prove your own selves) may be determined by seeing if kindness, goodness, graciousness are the characteristics of one’s whole spirit and soul and body. It is also worthy of note that, within the precincts of that House over which Christ as Son is, one may find a

TRUE YOKE-FELLOW.¹

ZEAL.

If our A B C lessons have in anywise been worthy of their title, surely “Z” introduces to what should dominate the young believer in his learning and doing of all that these entail—even zeal. How zealous in things temporal most are!

The writer has long observed that a true indication of spirituality is to be found in the correspondence or otherwise that there is between the zeal one has in his own things and what he has in the things that are Jesus Christ’s. Who would not escape the blameableness of Phil. 2. 21? Wherefore let none forget that as is the sowing so will the harvest be. The young believer’s Great Exemplar had zeal for God’s house that consumed Him. That is to say, all of Himself was so on God’s altar that promptly He did whatever God might wish.

The apostle Paul encourages to earnest application by asserting that it is good to be

¹ See Phil. 4. 3.

ZEALOUSLY AFFECTED ALWAYS

in good, and not only in special circumstances.

From the epistle to Titus we know that Christ Jesus gave Himself for us that He might effect our being zealous of good works. Art thou, O young believer, ZEALOUS of good works?

Alas! alas! that apathy, rather than zeal, abounds. Where it is otherwise, there yet remains need for the ninefold prayer of Psalm 119., "Quicken Thou me," which shall best fit for uttering the prayer of "The Wrestler," as see the whole of the book of Habakkuk the prophet.

We remark further, that it is BEAUTIFUL works that are required. Everything is beautiful in its season. To everything there is a season.

Good it is that a man bear the yoke in his youth, plaintively pleads Jeremiah in Lamentations.

How worthy of imitation is Epaphras, who had a GREAT ZEAL for the saints of the church of which he was one, and also for those contiguous thereto, always agonizing for them in prayer that they might stand complete and filled up

IN ALL THE WILL OF GOD.

Was not their being in and of churches of God but the very occasion of all that ceaseless care in prayer for them of Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea? We trow it was. Who would not wish to be an Epaphras?

The assembly of God in Corinth had a *zealous* mind about Paul, which cheered him much, as see 2 Cor. 7. 7. It is well to be zealous about the greater gifts, but there is a more excellent way of conduct, as see 1 Cor. 13. Make it all your own, young believer, nor stay until chapter 14. is also yours.

There is godly zeal, 2 Cor. 11. 2. There is also bitter zeal, James 3. 14. The former is to be cultivated, the latter to be eschewed. Both are possible. Which is actual?

Above and besides all let the young believer never forget that the Lord of Hosts Himself also hath zeal. This will save from dangers not a few, as also from despondency and despair amid much that would otherwise quite discourage. This forgotten has made some who ran well to turn aside, protesting that the course is not worth the prize. And many such things which flourish in unquestionable zeal of God, that because not according to knowledge, only call for prayer to God that they who practise such may be saved.

Which prayer may God indeed accept, and grant unto the hearing and heeding of what the Spirit saith to the churches, even be zealous, therefore, and repent, and do the first works in the devotedness of first love, and then shall He have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth Him, and thus shall 2 Thess. 1. 11, 12 obtain, and Jer. 2. 1-3 be repeated. For the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this. Amen, O God, amen! JOHN BROWN.

SANCTIFICATION.

III.

How patient and gracious are all God's dealings with us in connexion with this matter! His will is our sanctification and He ever works toward this end. He speaks to us and admonishes us by the Spirit through the word of truth. He deals with us as with sons, and chastises and disciplines us so that all that is contrary to His will in us may be forsaken, and so that we may become partakers of His holiness. The precious metal loses nothing that is of worth in the crucible; it may come out smaller in bulk but its worth is rather enhanced than diminished thereby. Such is the end that God has in view in all His disciplinary dealings with His people: it is that holiness may be more perfected in them, that the peaceable fruit, even the fruit of righteousness, may be more abundantly yielded by them,

that the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord may be more diligently pursued from day to day.

Let us learn then that the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord is the perfect goal which God has placed before us. To this standard we must ever seek to attain if we would be found well pleasing to Him, and preserved without blame in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But is the desire to be found thus as deeply impressed on our hearts as it ought to be? Is every nerve being strained to this end, and is sanctification being diligently pursued? What is the verdict of Him before whose eyes everything is naked and bare?

We have already remarked that sanctification must begin within. God desires that we should be sanctified wholly, and that our spirit and soul and body should be preserved entire, without blame in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and He who is able to divide between soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, knows how far this is being accomplished in His saints. Is there not an increasing danger in these days of paying more attention to outward appearances than to inward condition? May not the form of outward sanctification be zealously pursued whilst inward sanctification is well-nigh totally lacking?

Alas! what of sanctification of spirit, what of sanctification of soul, what of sanctification of body? Where are the living embodiments of such sanctification in our midst? Where are they whose spirits are set apart to God and controlled by Him, whose souls are with them as a weaned child, and whose bodies are instruments through which the holiness of God is manifested in a sinful age? Must it not be confessed that such men of God are sadly lacking? Is there not solid ground for fearing that with all our light in these days of privilege, and with all our profession of occupying a divine position ecclesiastically, the inward

sanctification so vital in the estimation of God is being sorrowfully neglected? And what is there to God in an outward position, however scriptural, if the inward condition be lacking? The inward condition is the first requirement with God and if this is absent He can find no pleasure in attempted outward conformity to His will. Indeed these truths need increasingly to be laid to heart if we are to be saved from reaching an analogous state to that in which Israel was found when they complacently said: "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," when God was finding no pleasure in them. See the solemn words of Jer. 7.

These, beloved, are humbling thoughts, and as we compare ourselves with what God would have us be, we may well be found in the dust before Him. Even in the midst of failure the humble and contrite heart will still find mercy with the Lord and obtain favour in His sight, but should a wrong condition be found in association with a haughty, boastful spirit and a stubborn heart, it can only call for the judgment of God.

BIBLE READINGS ON THE GOSPELS.

XXV. DECEMBER 14.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, MARK 1. 21-3. 30,
Luke 5. 12-6. 19.

THE expulsion of an unclean spirit from a man in the synagogue in Capernaum is the first incident recorded in Mark after the call of the four fishermen disciples, and straightway He goes into the house of Simon and Andrew. This seems now to have been in Capernaum, though they had been brought up in Bethsaida; at least Bethsaida is said to have been their city in John 1. 44. Simon's mother-in-law having fever, they tell Him and He cures her. They had no need to beseech Him, though, as Luke

tells us, they did so. Surely Matthew, Mark, Luke give us here three characteristic accounts. Matthew tells of the sovereign act of grace done by the King. He needed not to be besought, nor even to be told. Mark tells of the Servant of God who, hearing that she was sick, healed her. Luke tells of the Son of man, whose human heart is reached by those who besought Him on her behalf. The King touches her hand, and the fever flees. The Servant takes her by the hand and raises her up, and she is able to do service. The Son of man stands over her and grieves for the inroads that disease has made. But had He been Son of man only, His pity had been in vain. Luke tells us that He was also Son of God, and as Son of God He rebuked the fever as He had rebuked the unclean spirit just before; and great though the fever was, as the Physician tells us, it left her; and Luke is alone in telling us that she rose up, though, like Mark, he tells that she ministered unto them.

On that evening, at sunset, many were brought unto Him, sick ones and demoniacs, and the sick were healed and the demons cast out. After such a day of work He might well be weary and take extra rest on the morrow. But in the morning, a great while before day, the Servant goes to commune with the Master. And then He goes on to preach in other places throughout Galilee. This passage (Mark 1. 21-34) clearly gives us one day's work, of which we get a similar, though not an identical account in Luke 4. 31-41.

Mark then gives an account of the healing of a leper who came beseeching Him and kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean"; and He stretched forth His hand and touched him, and saith unto him, "I will; be thou clean." It is clear from Matthew 8. 1-5, read in connexion with Luke 7. 1, that the leper was healed just outside Capernaum. For though Luke

gives an account of this cleansing of the leper in chapter 5. verses 12-16, with no indication whatever of time and place, yet in Luke 7. 1 (following 6.) we find that, coming down from the mount, He went into Capernaum, and, as Matthew 8. 1-5 makes plain, the leper met Him on the way. Mark goes on, in chapter 2., to tell us of another Capernaum incident which we have already given reason for thinking took place somewhat later. On this occasion he goes from Capernaum to the seaside, and it was at this time that Levi, the son of Alphaeus, was called and made Him a great feast in his house, which was probably in Capernaum also. These incidents may be collected here, perhaps, partly because of their connexion with Capernaum. At any rate, it is notable how many signs were done in Capernaum and the immediate vicinity.

At the feast in Matthew's house we have in addition to the Lord's words, telling of His errand to sinners, a conversation as to fasting. For Luke makes it plain that this took place in Levi's house. Indeed, Matthew 9. 2-17, Mark 2. 1-22, Luke 5. 17-39, record this series of events in identical order, and thus seem to mark their intimate connexion very plainly. Strange it seemed to them that good folks like the Pharisees should fast, and His disciples should eat and drink at their pleasure, considering what manner of sinners and base persons they were. But though sinners in very deed, they had a cause of joy, for they knew Him who had power to forgive sins, and He was with them. It was good for the Pharisees to fast, for they knew no Saviour and no salvation; and as for those of John's disciples who had not profited enough from John's teaching to become disciples of the Lord Jesus, their teacher was in prison, and they, too, had cause to fast.

In addition to all this He spake a parable to them, and perhaps some of John's disciples heard and understood, and if so they got new garments instead of trying to patch their

old ones, and fresh wine-skins enabled them to keep a store of new wine.

Next we have in Mark 2. 23-3. 7 a passage parallel to that in Matthew 12. 1-21 and Luke 6. 1-11. Here it seems to be Matthew who gives (though only in general terms) an indication of when these events transpired, and this order is different from that in Mark. We must, perhaps, look for some special reason for Mark's connecting the eating of the ears of corn on the Sabbath with the teaching given in Levi's house. This particular sequence is also found in Luke, so that it may be the order of time that is given here, but both Mark 2. 23 and Luke 6. 1 commence with the words, "It came to pass."

Certainly there is much in the cornfield teaching that harmonizes in a marked manner with that of the previous chapter. There is the same disregard of the traditional ideas of the Pharisees, the same indication that His care for His disciples and His goodness to them were not to be trammelled by unauthorized ritual. But still more He appears to be inaugurating the new order of things that was to take the place of that which, waxing old, was ready to vanish away. The old wine-skins had served their day and could certainly not contain such generous new wine as this. The Pharisees were indignant, for they made it their business to bind heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, whereas His yoke is easy and His burden light.

It would have seemed from Matthew and Mark to have been the same day, but Luke says it was on another Sabbath, that He healed the man with a withered hand. His question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or do harm, to save a life or to kill?" silenced them, for they were not minded to confess themselves wrong. Note His anger and His grief at the hardening of their heart. They, poor deluded men, took counsel how they might destroy Him!

The verses 13-19 of Mark 3. tell of His appointing the Twelve after His withdrawal to the sea, and Luke gives this appointment immediately after the healing of the man with a withered hand, whilst Matthew only names the Twelve in connexion with their sending forth, in Matthew 10. It will be observed, however, that Mark 3. 19-30 is the parallel passage to Matthew 12. 22-37.

Some comments on Mark 3. 31-5. 43 will be found in "Bible Readings" XXI., XXIII., XXIV.

XXVI. DECEMBER 28.

PASSAGES FOR HOME READING, LUKE 6. 20-7. 35.

IT should be clearly understood that whilst we are desirous in these notes of, as far as possible, fairly facing any difficulty that a comparison of the independent records of the Evangelists may seem to introduce, we by no means attempt to solve all the questions that arise as to the order of events, or to construct a single story in which the incidents shall follow in their temporal sequence. But we think that the consideration of these various points of difficulty may be very profitable if carried out in a humble spirit of credence, and we are not without a thought that this has already been manifested in these notes. The first thing we have before us on this occasion is to glance through those parts of Luke's gospel that have not been touched on hitherto.

The story of the Lord's visit to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, that is recorded in Luke 4. 16-30, might seem at first to be an account of very early days of His ministry, but verse 23 will correct this impression to some extent, though we can hardly say that there is any definite indication of when this visit took place.

We have already commented on Luke 4. 31-6. 19, in Bible Readings XIV., XVII., XX., XXIV., XXV., and some notes on Luke 7. 36-8. 56 will be found in Bible Readings XV., XIX., XXI., XXII., XXIII., XXIV.

The Lord's words recorded in Luke 6. 20-49 have much in common with those in Matthew 5., 6., 7., but they are given in a different connexion; we might think, and perhaps correctly, that this address was really given just after the appointment of the twelve apostles, yet if we trace this further back, as previously noted in our comments on Luke 6. 1-19, we soon land ourselves in difficulties much more considerable than any we have hitherto dealt with, and therefore we, for the present, forbear to go further.

The events given by Luke immediately after this discourse are, firstly, the healing of the centurion's servant, which Matthew also places almost immediately after (see also page 203). We only need to suppose that the healing of the leper, recorded at an indefinite time in Luke 5. 12-16, really occurred, as Matthew seems to say, just before that of the centurion's boy. If the healing of Peter's mother-in-law followed quickly after, then the account of this and of the expulsion of the demon, which both Mark and Luke tell us immediately preceded, must have occurred between verses 17 and 18 of Luke 7. This offers no difficulties in itself.

We naturally however look with interest for any indications there may be of the date of the mission that John sent. We note that Matthew, who records it in chapter 11., says that John heard in the prison the works of Christ, but Luke says that he was told these things; this clearly includes the raising of the widow of Nain's son, which occurred soon after that of the centurion's servant.

Of course the careful reader will observe the gospel according to Luke to be that which records that the Lord had compassion on the bereaved mother who was a widow. It was the Son of man whose pity stopped the bier; it was the Son of God whose voice gave life to the dead.

We shall conclude our notes for this present year of grace by some observations on Mark 6. 7-31, Luke 9. 1-10 and parallel passages.

Mark and Luke give us here their brief account of the sending forth of the apostles, which answers to the fuller passage in Matthew 10. We then read in Mark, "And King Herod heard (*thereof*), for His name had become known." In Luke, "Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done." In Matthew 14. we read, "At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus."

Then in all three gospels follows an account of John's murder, and following:—

Matthew says, "They went and told Jesus. Now when Jesus heard (*it*) He withdrew . . . into a desert place apart."

Mark says, "The apostles . . . told Him all things, whatsoever they had done . . . He saith unto them, 'Come ye yourselves into a desert place.'"

Luke says, "The apostles, when they were returned, declared unto Him what things they had done. And He took them . . . apart."

John says, "Jesus went away to the other side of the sea."

Then every one tells the wondrous sign of the Desert Meal, when five thousand were fed.

Here then we have a marked and unmistakable epoch in the Lord's ministry—this particular journey which He took to a desert place on the other side of the sea of Tiberias.

It is clear that it followed the murder of John the Baptist, and that it followed the return of the twelve from their first sending forth.

The order of these matters offers some difficulty. The story of John the Baptist is of course retrospective in character in all three gospels; that is, we are told that Herod said, "This is John the Baptist," and then we have the explanation. How that Herod himself was not altogether hardened, lawless though he was; but the strength of a

woman's hate took advantage of a man in his hour of weakness. The poor man had a birthday—better for him perhaps if he had never been born—and there was a feast,—eating and drinking, and worse. For the daughter of his brother's wife danced and pleased him well, and he rashly swore to give her what she pleased. He was sorry, but his tears could not save him. He dared not make light of his oath in the presence of his courtiers, and John was beheaded. It seemed a small thing for Herod to marry his brother's wife, but it was the first step in that course which led him to imbrue his hands in the blood of John the Baptist, to take the life of one who was far, far greater and better than he!

Mark and Luke seem to connect the Lord's withdrawal with the return of the apostles; Mark does so very explicitly.

Matthew says, "When Jesus heard." Now what this means is not quite clear to the present writer. Does it mean when He heard of John the Baptist's murder or when He heard what Herod the tetrarch said? We cannot say. Of course it might make a little difference in time, but perhaps not much.

The mention of Bethsaida in Luke 9. 10 seems to suggest that the journey was in two stages, unless there were a second Bethsaida on the other side of the sea of Galilee.

These various difficulties to which we have alluded will, we hope, give rise to much searching of the Scriptures, especially by younger believers, whom we may once more remind of the profit that comes of earnest study of the Word.

Next year we propose to commence with the story of the great Desert Meal.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

Correspondence.

THE MAN AT BETHESDA'S POOL.

IN response to our invitation contained on page 207, several of our readers have communicated with us in reference to the period of the Lord's ministry when He healed the sick man at Bethesda's pool.

J. W. writes of a little book entitled a Harmony of the Gospels, which a friend has lent him, and gives a list of many of the Lord's signs recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke as occurring between the healing of the nobleman's son, John 4., and that of the Bethesda impotent man. But as no reason for this arrangement is given from Scripture, we pass it over, although it may be quite correct, because our desire is that our readers may search out the indications of order as contained in the divine record.

Another friend, who omits to sign his name, directs attention to verse 36: "The very works that I do, bear witness of me," and suggests that this reads very like what He spake in the temple, when He went up in secret as recorded in John 7. 10, and he therefore is disposed to think that this happened between the two miracles. But the similarity of language used by the Lord is scarcely sufficient to justify us in supposing that the order in John is not that in which the events occurred. John, we think, generally follows the order of time, and we hope to show in January or February that John 7. must refer to rather a late period in the Lord's life.

A. A. directs attention to the very important 33rd verse of John 5.: "Ye have sent unto John, and he hath borne witness to the Truth, and connects this quite rightly, we believe, with John 2. 19-38, showing that John 5. comes after John 2. 19-38.

C. B. D. writes: "The Lord, in reproving the Jews for their unbelief, says, 'He (John) was a burning and a shining

light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. . . . They had been willing enough to listen to his teaching for a season, but had soon tired of his doctrine." So far we think our correspondent is right, but she adds that she thinks the Lord healed the sick man at Bethesda after John was beheaded, and with this view A. G. S. and G. E. H. are in agreement.

Our own thought was that the words "Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" clearly indicated that the time was after the ~~be~~ betrayal of the Baptist. We think, however, that it was probably during his imprisonment and before his murder. The great Desert Meal which Matthew, Mark, Luke connect rather closely with John's beheading is recorded in John 6. as occurring after these things.

We put on record these brief notes of what our correspondents have written, and make these comments thereupon, and then commend the subject back for reconsideration.

IMMANU-EL.

J. W. has a little difficulty in connexion with the word Immanu-El, meaning "God is with us." He points out that El is at the end of the word, and compares Beth-El, which means "House of God." Seeing that El is not the beginning but the end of the word, he asks why must we not interpret Immanu-El: "With us He is God."

Our reply to this is that the different tongues which men have spoken since the Babel dispersion differ amongst other things, much in the significance which is given to the order of the words. Our native tongue, English, is practically devoid of those inflexions which in many other languages are used to distinguish, for example, the subject from the object of the verb. Thus John beats James, and James beats John are two sentences which in English have quite different meanings—the place of John and James in the sentence indicating which beats and which is beaten respectively. But in many, not to say most other lan-

guages, this would be rather indicated by the termination of the words standing for John and James, or by the form of articles prefixed thereto.

We quote this extreme instance to explain why an English reader is apt to lay a stress on the order of words which in many other languages would have no such significance. Thus Tregelles' Hebrew Reading Lessons will show the most illiterate reader that in Genesis 1. 1, 3, 4, for example, the order of the Hebrew words is, "In beginning created God," "And said God," "and saw God," "and separated God."

The Greek of Matthew 1. 23 reads *Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός*. *Méth' hēmōn hō Thēōs*, "With us *is* the God." We understand the copula "is" to be clearly implied. "The God" is marked by the article as the subject of the sentence, whilst "is with us" is the predicate or assertion concerning the subject.

SIMPLE AND UNAFFECTED PLEASURES.

R. G. D. asks whether the simple and unaffected pleasures mentioned on page 253 mean mere bodily relaxation and physical enjoyments; and if so, what authority exists for the assumption that the Lord Jesus had any enjoyment of such.

We might write pages in answer to this inquiry, for it goes to the whole root of that which is comely in the behaviour of Christians, and especially of those who are young in years; and at the same time touches a more vital question of what the incarnation really meant.

In a desire to be brief we will chiefly refer to physical and bodily enjoyment, but it must be remembered that this cannot be sundered from pleasures which belong more particularly to the mind.

When Jehovah returns to Zion and dwells in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is called the city of Truth and the mountain of Jehovah of Hosts the Holy Mountain,

then the streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Who made these boys and girls? Who gave them their love of play, of healthful exercise? Who is it that prepares man for his life work, as He prepares the higher animals, the horse, the dog, the lion for their life work, by play in early days? He himself was once a little boy, who played at His mother's knee. Can it be denied? Can it be doubted? Else it were the nature of angels which He took and not the nature of men.

Whether in reference to the Holy One Himself, or to that which follows as to comeliness of behaviour in His disciples, let there be the clearest distinction between what we have called simple and unaffected pleasures and those corrupt enjoyments which take their place as sinful man develop with his debased taste.

No sane Christian fathers or mothers but would enjoy the sight of their children running races together, but they might well weep if their boys took part in many of the athletic contests that are in vogue.

Who would forbid Christian boys from playing cricket or football? but who would not warn them with all earnestness against the evil influences of the public football ground or the county cricket match?

The mother seeing her girls dancing for glee on the garden grass may thank Him who has given childhood such lightness of heart; but the mother who permits or encourages that love of dress and of display, that frivolity of conduct and worse that may lead to the ball-room or the dancing saloon, where they will find a congenial soil, has but herself to blame if in later years she weeps over women daughters who give themselves to pleasure and are dead while they live.

In all the range of human behaviour that may be pleasing to God, we believe the Lord of Glory was the Perfect Example and Pattern.

C. M. L.