Seventy Other Best Bible Stories

RETOLD FOR
PREACHERS
TEACHERS
LEADERS

GEORGE GOODMAN



THE RUINS OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF MEMPHIS

Where Moses was brought up

SEVENTY OTHER BEST BIBLE STORIES

BEING MORE OF THE BEST-KNOWN
OR FAVOURITE BIBLE STORIES
FOR PREACHERS SPEAKERS
TEACHERS AND WORKERS

BY
GEORGE GOODMAN
Author of "Seventy Best Bible Stories," "What to Teach and How to Reach the Young," etc.



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ADORATION AND DESIRE.

TUNE : " I hunger and I thirst " (Hymns of Consecration and Faith, 11).

JESUS, Thou art to me
More than these lips can say,
With holy radiancy
Illumining my way.

Thy precious sprinkled blood
Redeemed and reconciled ;
Once " far off," now " made nigh,"
With conscience undefiled.

Thy words of grace and power,
" Spirit and life " are they—
Moved by constraining love,
I only would obey.

On Thee my soul may feed,
Thou Bread of Life most high ;
The manna that came down,
Eating, I never die.

Surely to come again
In yet a little space,
Longing I lift my eyes,
And wait the coming grace.

Then shall my hope be seen,
That yet is hidden quite ;
And glorious noonday sun
Burst through the long midnight. G.G.

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Contents

THE SEVENTY STORIES.

		PAGE
1.	The Two Trees in the Gardon. Gen. 2. 8-17 ; 3. 1-24, ..	13
2.	The Rainbow in the Cloud. Gen. 8. 20-9. 17, ...	17
3.	The City and Tower of Babel. Gen. 11. 1-9, ...	21
4.	Just Lot in Filthy Sodom. Gen. 13. 5-8, ...	26
5.	The Egyptian Slave Girl. Gen. 16. 1-15 ; 21. 1-20, ..	31
6.	A Bride for Isaac. Gen. 24. 1-67, ...	37
7.	The Ark of Bulrushes. Exod. 2. 1-10, ...	42
8.	Moses' Great Renunciation. Exod. 2. 11-15, ...	46
9.	Moses and His Excuses. Exod. 3. 11-4. 17, ...	51
10.	Pharaoh and His Compromises. Exod. 8. 8-32 ; 10. 7-11, 24-26, ...	55
11.	By the Red Sea ; or, The First Song. Exod. 15. 1-19, ..	59
12.	The Waters of Marah. Exod. 15. 22-27, ...	63
13.	The Golden Calf. Exod. 32. 1-28, ...	66
14.	Two Slave Stories. Exod. 21. 1-6 ; Deut. 23. 5-16, ..	71
15.	Moses Veils His Shining Face. Exod. 34. 29-35, ...	75
16.	The Scape Goat. Lev. 16, ...	79
17.	The Rebellion of Korah. Num. 16. 1-15, ...	83
18.	Miriam's Leprosy. Num. 12. 1-15, ...	88
19.	Balaam and His Ass. Num. 22. 22-35, ...	92
20.	The Capture of Jericho. Josh. 6. 1-27, ...	98
21.	Achan and Ai. Josh. 7. 1-26, ...	101
22.	Joshua Cheated by the Gibeonites. Josh. 9. 1-27, ..	105
23.	The Sun Stands Still. Josh. 10. 1-27, ...	109
24.	Thumbs and Toes Cut Off. Judges 1. 5-7, ...	113
25.	Deborah, Prophetess and Poet. Judges 4. 5, ...	116
26.	Gideon's Great Victory. Judges 7. 1-25, ...	120
27.	Jephthah's Rash Vow. Judges 11. 1-40, ...	124
28.	Samson, the Strong Man. Judges 16. 1-31, ...	128
29.	Jonathan and his Armour-Bearer. 1 Sam. 14. 1-52, ..	132
30.	The Witch of Endor. 1 Sam. 28. 7-25, ...	136
31.	Absalom's Sad Fate. 2 Sam. 18. 9-17, ...	140
32.	Solomon in All his Glory. 1 Kings 4. 20-34, ...	143
33.	The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon. 1 Kings 10. 1-13, ..	147
34.	The Still Small Voice. 1 Kings 19. 1-18, ...	151
35.	Four Starving Lopers. 2 Kings 7. 1-20, ...	155
36.	The King Who Burnt the Word of God. Jer. 36. 20-32,	158

PAGE

37. A Black Man to the Rescue. Jer. 28. 6-13; 39. 15-18, .. 162
38. A Valley of Dry Bones. Ezek. 37. 1-10, ... 165
39. Water Turned to Wine. John 2. 1-11, ... 169
40. The Nobleman's Son. John 4. 46-54, ... 172
41. Crumbs from the Master's Table. Matt. 15. 21-28, .. 176
42. A Roman Officer's Faith. Matt. 8. 5-13, ... 179
43. Peter's Wife's Mother. Matt. 8. 14, 15, ... 182
44. The Withered Hand, Matt. 12. 9-13, ... 184
45. The Two Sons. Matt. 21. 28-32, ... 187
46. The Elder Brother's Refusal. Luke 15. 25-32, ... 190
47. The Growing Seed. Mark 4. 26-29, ... 194
48. The Wicked Servant. Matt. 18. 23-35, ... 197
49. The Feast at Bethany. John 12. 1-11, ... 200
50. In the Upper Room. Luke 22. 7-14, ... 204
51. Peter's Denial of Christ. Matt. 26. 69-75, ... 207
52. In the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke 22. 39-53, ... 210
53. Judas the Traitor. Luke 22. 48, ... 213
54. Caiphas the High Priest. John 11. 49-57, ... 216
55. Pontius Pilate. John 18. 29-19. 22, ... 220
56. Herod Antipas. Matt. 14. 1-12; Luke 23. 7-12, ... 224
57. Thomas the Doubter. John 20. 24-29, ... 228
58. The Ascension. Mark 16. 19-20; Luke 24. 50-51; Acts 1. 9-11, ... 231
59. The Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate. Acts 3. 1-9, .. 233
60. Peter Brought Out of Prison. Acts 12. 1-19, ... 236
61. Cornelius the Centurion. Acts 10. 1-48, ... 239
62. Paul's First Reported Sermon. Acts 13. 14-43, ... 242
63. On Mars' Hill, at Athens. Acts 17. 16-34, ... 245
64. Felix, Who Trembled. Acts 24. 22-27, ... 249
65. King Agrippa. Acts 25. 13-16. 32, ... 252
66. The Shipwreck. Acts 27. 1-44, ... 256
67. Paul at Rome. Acts 28. 14-31, ... 259
68. Onesimus, the Runaway Slave. Philemon 1. 25, .. 263
69. The Lord Amid the Golden Candlesticks. Rev. 1. 12-20, 266
70. One Standing at the Door. Rev. 3. 14-32, ... 270

INTRODUCTION

THE welcome accorded to "The 70 Best Bible Stories" and the testimonies that have reached me as to its usefulness have led me to add this volume also.

The same style and plan have been adopted as before, since they have proved very simple in working, and I can think of none more profitable.

The inclusion of the photographs of the Holy Land is explained in the article entitled "The Land of the Stories." It will not hinder their usefulness nor add to the cost of the volume, and may assist the teacher and preacher to visualize the scenes and enable him to describe them more graphically and usefully.

It has been a satisfaction to learn that several Sunday Schools have taken the Stories in the previous volume as a Series of Lessons, and it is suggested that the present Stories may be treated in the same way

I must not repeat what I wrote in the other book as to the best method of using the Stories. I must refer the present reader to the article therein on "Giving the Address," but I have added a chapter on "The Master Story Teller," in which I seek to set before the reader the matchless wisdom and grace of the Lord in speaking, so that each may learn of Him and seek to follow His steps.

Again I invoke the blessing of the Lord on this volume and on all who are seeking to teach and preach Christ and minister the Word of God.

GEORGE GOODMAN.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

The Ruins of Memphis,	*Frontispiece*
	Facing Page
Eastern Gypsies or Bedouins,	32
Mud Village in Egypt,	33
Wedding Procession in Egypt,	48
Water Carriers by the River Nile,	49
The Dome of the Rock,	136
The Valley of Jehoshaphat,	137
Jerusalem from the South,	160
Temple Area at Jerusalem,	161
Tiberius and the Lake of Galilee,	176
Fishermen on the Lake of Galilee,	177
The River Jordan,	192
The Via Doloroso,	193
Gordon's Calvary,	208
The Garden Tomb,	209
The Mount of Olives,	224
The City Wall of Damascus,	225
Athens and Mars' Hill,	240
The Jewish Wailing Place,	241

THE MASTER STORY-TELLER.

IN all things the Lord Jesus has the pre-eminence. This is true in the matter of story-telling as in all else. The world has no stories to put beside those He told

Search all the literature that the earth holds, look into the books of the great masters of the art of story-telling and see if any can be found that for simplicity, beauty, and directness of appeal and truth can be put beside " The Prodigal Son," " The Good Samaritan," " The Lost Sheep," " The Wedding Feast," " The Ten Virgins," " The Pharisee and the Publican," or the " Parable of the Sower."

To have written any of these would have placed the author in the first rank of the world's writers. One has only to make the attempt to find anything to put beside them to realise how far they outshine all the world's masterpieces. We cannot do better than seek to learn of Him in this matter in order that we may perfect ourselves in the art. Let us note the things that are outstanding in His manner of speaking.

1. " **He taught them as One having authority** " (Matt. 7. 29). In contrast with the Scribes and Pharisees, who had turned aside to the traditions of their Elders and even made the Word of God of none effect in this way (Matt. 15. 3 and 6). All such teaching is " in vain " (Mark 7. 7). In vain, because unauthoritative and ineffective. He spoke simple, sincere, and unaffected truth, unadorned with any of the arts of the schools, but based upon the Scriptures—" It is written " being always His only authority.

In this we are bidden to follow Him. " *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God* " (1 Peter 4. 11). That is, as having the authority of the Word of God behind him. No preacher has any authority to do other than this, " Preach the Word." In so far as he departs from this he is unauthorised

2. **He Spake with Grace.** " All wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth " (Luke 4. 22). Kindness moved His sacred tongue. Love toward His hearers gave appeal to all His words, and softened hard minds and opened the fast-closed doors of many hearts. In this we are bidden to follow Him. " *Let your speech be always with grace* " (Col. 4. 6). Kindness wins every time. Love never faileth. If grace is in the heart it will flow out of the lips.

3. **He Told Them the Truth.** How often He says, " He bore witness to the truth " (John 8. 40 and 18. 37). This often angered men. " Ye seek to kill Me, a Man that hath told you the truth " (John 8. 40). All down the ages the prophets who have been " since the world began " (Acts 3. 2) have had to suffer for speaking the truth. But the true and faithful witness must speak, thus " whether they will hear or whether they will forbear " (Ezek. 2. 5 and 7; 3. 11). Truth is salt, and we are bidden to let our speech be always with grace " *seasoned with salt.*" If we suffer for it, let us rejoice as we are bidden (Matt. 5. 12) and count it an honour.

4. **He Spoke Simply so that the Common People heard Him Gladly** (Matt. 12. 37). There was no oratorical decoration, no exaggerated metaphors or studied periods. He needed no preparation except that of communion with His Father, meditation in the Word of God, and the prayer of love for His hearers. We cannot imagine Him " making up an address," nor writing down grandiose and fine-sounding phrases for repetition. His heart overflowed and it found expression in " great plainness of speech " and " words easy to be understood." These two things are commended to us. " *We use great plainness of speech* " (2 Cor. 3. 12), and " *Utter by the tongue words easy to be understood* " (1 Cor. 14. 9).

5. **He Spoke as One who had Received a Message from God.** He said : " I have not spoken from Myself, but the

Father . . . gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak " (John 12. 49).

This is known as *utterance*. It was for this that Paul besought the prayers of the saints (Eph. 6. 19). It was for this he avoided all " excellency of speech " and " enticing words of man's wisdom," and desired " a demonstration of the Spirit and of power " (1 Cor. 2. 1-4).

A man with a message is a power for God. How great indeed is the difference between " having to say something," and " having something from God to say."

On the Reformation Memorial at Geneva are inscribed these words of R. A. Cecil's, A.D. 1561 (in French), which translate as follows : " The voice of one man is capable in one hour of infusing more life into us than the clash of five hundred trumpets sounding without meaning in our ears." How many trumpets there are giving an uncertain sound (1 Cor. 14. 8). Let us see that we have a message from God.

6. **His Words, like Himself, were Holy, Harmless and Undefiled.** They never offended against good manners, nor turned the mind to dishonourable things.

In this He rebukes the world's greatest writers. The obscenity which utterly defiles the classics and mars the pages of such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Burns, and the majority of leading authors (to say nothing of the shamelessness, the wallowing in filth, of the moderns) was entirely absent from His noble language. The wisdom that was from above was "*first pure*" (James 3. 17). No frivolity, trifling, joking, foolish stories told to raise a laugh, no " playing to the gallery," as it has been aptly called, ever proceeded from His lips.

It should not from ours. May any such words die on our tongues, should our evil hearts conceive them, before they are uttered and thus allowed to dishonour our Lord and degrade His message.

7. **His Words Remained in the Hearts of the Hearers.** In this they were " as nails, fastened by the Master of

Assemblies," for indeed they were "given from One Shepherd" (Eccles. 12. 11).

Men went away saying: "We have seen strange things to-day" (Luke 5. 26). "Never man spake like this Man" (John 7. 46), and it is recorded, "They remembered the words that Jesus spoke."

Some speakers are like music to listen to, but what they have said it is difficult to recall, no definite impression having been made. May we so speak that men are "pricked to the heart," "moved to obedience," and remember.

"O Master of the art of speech Divine,
Teach me, and purge these lips of mine,
That they may speak with grace like Thine,
And never from Thy truth decline;
But from all dross of sin refine,
And ever to Thy Word incline—
Precept on precept, line on line,
To teach men all Thy will."

THE LAND OF THE STORIES.

ON a recent visit to Egypt and the Holy Land, I took my camera and brought back a large number of photographs of the places so often referred to in the Stories included in this volume.

It was suggested to me that the publication of a selection of them in this book might assist in giving an idea of the correct setting for the Stories. As the publishers assured me that it would not add to the sale price of the book and thus hinder its usefulness, I have done so, with the result of which the reader can judge for himself.

The Land of Palestine has some distinctive features that are not sufficiently realised by the casual reader of the Bible. Some of these, which I confess rather surprised me when I visited the Land, I would call attention to.

1. **The Land is a Mountainous Country.** Jerusalem itself is 2500 feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea, and on the east of it the land falls away down to the Dead Sea

and the Valley of the Jordan, which is 1300 feet below sea level. Thus when the Lord ascended from Jericho, which lies in the Valley of the Jordan, to Jerusalem, He toiled up this steep and rugged way, a climb of 3800 feet.

Until one comes to the Plain of Esdralon, or Valley of Megiddo, or Jezreel, as it is variously called, which cuts across the land from Carmel on the west to the Jordan on the east, all is hill country, the famous hills (3000 feet) Ebal (of the Curses) and Gerizim (of the Blessings) standing like portals at the entrance to Samaria.

The ground ascends steeply after the valley is passed up to Nazareth, and falls away deeply to the Lake of Galilee on the east. The lake itself is 680 feet below the sea, twelve miles in length, and surrounded by hills,—with the snow-capped Hermon seen away to the north. There the mountains of Lebanon reach to a height of 10,000 feet. The Jordan is a mountain torrent in many places. We need then to think of the land as one of mountains and valleys, of steep ascents and decents, along roadless tracts and rough country.

2. **It is Almost Entirely an Agricultural Land**, and except for the few fertile spots, such as the Valley of Megiddo and the sea coast, inhabited by the Philistines on the S.W., one that required hard work to render it fruitful. Only with the blessing of God upon it could it become a land flowing with milk and honey. At present, trodden down as it has been for centuries by the Turks, it is only now recovering from being an almost treeless, sterile land and waterless place. When one sees, for example, the actual Siloam, shadeless, barren, and dirty, of to-day on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, one sighs to sing :

> "By cool Siloam's shady rill,
> How sweet the lily grows."

3. **It has Always been a Land Overrun by Armies.** It is the cockpit of the East, as Belgium has been of the West. With Egypt and Ethiopia to the south, Syria and Assyria to the north and east, it was never long without the sound

of the tramp of armed hosts and the sights of bloodshed and cruelty. Hence so many battle stories in the Sacred Volume.

4. **The Great Cities**, as Jerusalem, Damascus, Tiberius on the Lake of Galilee, are in many respects unchanged. Of course nothing can alter the topography of these places which can be disassociated from the absurd "sacred places" invented for extorting money from travellers. One can still ascend from the valley of Jehosaphat up the hill to where the Beautiful Gate of the Temple stood and pass on to that marvellous area, the Temple site. The "Dome of the Rock" covers the summit of Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac, afterwards the threshing floor of Arauna and the site of the Great Brazen Altar in Solomon's Temple, but the Rock still stands up 20 feet above the area.

One can still see the "Place seen afar off" outside the north gate of the City called Golgotha, the place of a skull, and at its foot a garden in which is a sepulchre, as like as can be to that described in the sacred narrative.

One may still enter Damascus from the south, and as it is approached, can visualize the scene of Saul's conversion.

5. The land is **surrounded on south and east by wide and weary deserts,** where caravans still wend their way, and camels laden with goods, and the humble donkey, bestridden by peasants, make their ways to the next watering hole. These help us to recall the story of Hagar, of the Exodus, and many another wilderness story.

Such are the chief features of the Land of the Stories that are retold in the accompanying pages.

STORY 1.

The Two Trees in the Garden

Read GENESIS 2. 8-17 ; 3. 1-24.

I. **Text.** " The Lord God made to grow . . . the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil " (Gen. 2. 9).

II. **Main Lesson.** The two trees are symbols of the two covenants : *The Covenant of Works* (or Law), which is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and *The Covenant of Grace* (or Life), which is the tree of life.

The Law ministers death (Rom. 7. 8-10). Grace brings eternal life (Rom. 5. 21). All God's dealings with man from the beginning have been upon one or other of these two principles.

Man cannot live by law-keeping because of sin. Salvation and life are the free gift of grace in Jesus Christ our Lord. By the Law was the knowledge of sin. Through Grace is the gift of life.

These two covenants run through the whole Bible, until the tree of life is seen in the last chapter in the New Earth.

III. **The Story Related.**

v. 8. *The Lord God Prepares a Garden for Man.* " The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed."

v. 9. *Of many pleasant trees, two stand out : the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.* " Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food ; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

v. 10. *A river dividing into four heads watered the garden.* "A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became into four heads. First, *Pison*, which compasseth Havilah, where is gold, bdellium, and onyx. Second, *Gihon*, which compasseth Ethiopia.

Third, *Hiddekel*, goeth towards east of Assyria. Fourth, *Euphrates*."

vv. 15, 16. *Man is given leave to eat of all the trees and to dress and keep the garden.* "The Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, and commanded: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat."

v. 17. *The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is expressly forbidden.* "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it."

v. 18. *Under penalty of death.* "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Chap. 3. 1-7. *Under temptation, Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden tree—the result, their eyes opened.* "The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."

IV. **Is this Fact or Allegory?**

It is common to hear this story spoken of as mere allegory. Indeed, many assume it to be so as a matter of course. But why?

Let us presume that God purposed to teach man great principles from this narrative, as undoubtedly He did. Indeed, all admit this.

Then why should He not have done so by using *real* trees in a *real* garden? It is difficult to give any sensible reason why not. Of course unbelief says, "No," but surely faith is more reasonable, when it believes He did. He has taught by similar means since. There is no weighty reason for saying He did not.

The brazen serpent was a real piece of brass shaped thus and put on a real pole. The Tabernacle was a real tent, with all its marvellous teaching from its real furniture. Why not a real garden and actual trees?

The teaching would be thereby made more impressive and the results more lasting and the whole would be more in accordance with what God continued to do in the history of His people, until the shadows (things seen) gave place to the substance (the eternal things which are unseen).

V. **New Testament References to the Tree of Life.**

Rev. 22. 1. "He shewed me a pure river of the water

of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

VI. **Other Lessons** from the story.

1. EATING OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL. The motives that led man to disobey God were, *a desire of independence* (" Ye shall be as gods "), this is the essence of all sin. *A reliance upon oneself* (" to make one wise "), and, *A love of self-gratification* (" good," " pleasant ").

So when man seeks by the works of the law to live independently of God, he only learns his own sin and shame, and ends in death.

2. THE TREE OF LIFE. This is very similar as a type or symbol to the brazen serpent (Num. 21. 9). Each was the medium through which life came. In the one case it was, " look and live," in the other it was " eat and live " (as in John 6. 57). Each taught the great lesson that Eternal Life is the gift of God received by faith when the sinner " looks " or " eats " (believes).

3. THE CROSS OF CHRIST, Each, the tree of life and the brazen serpent lifted up, is a figure of the Cross. The Son of God was " hanged on a tree," it was thus that life came to us. He was " lifted up " (John 3. 14), and thus the believer receives eternal life.

The tree of life is perhaps the first " shadow " of Calvary in the Bible.

4. A FOOLISH CHOICE. Why did man choose the tree of knowledge rather than the tree of life. That tree of life was free—why did he not eat and live for ever ?

Why do men choose independence and seek for life in self-effort and wilfulness, when the blessed God offers life in Christ freely to " whosoever will " (Rev. 22. 17).

5. THE TREE OF LIFE GUARDED (Gen. 3. 24). It would have been a terrible thing for man to live for ever in his fallen state (Gen. 3. 22). So until the fulfilment of the Promise of Grace (Gen. 3. 15) the tree must be guarded.

The Cherubim and the flaming sword kept the tree of life, as the veil afterwards kept the Holy of holies. For two reasons :

(*a*) Lest sinful man should presume after life in his sins, and

(*b*) Lest the way of life should be obscured by the enemy—for the words may be translated, "To keep open the way to the tree of life," that is, until such time as it should be opened again for all men in the Cross of Christ (Heb. 9. 8).

6. ONLY TWO COVENANTS. Only in one of two ways can man have relation with God. *On the ground of merit* (a covenant of works) or *on the principle of grace* (a covenant of grace).

These two principles are first seen in the Garden of Eden, that of works, in the tree of Knowledge, where it was "do and live ;" and that of grace, in the tree of life, where, after the fulfilment of the promise, the word is "eat and live."

All subsequent covenants in the Bible are enlargements of these—until each is summed up finally and perfectly, the covenant of works at Sinai and the covenant of grace in the New Testament ratified in the Blood of Calvary. For the terms of the New Covenant, see Heb. 8. 10-12. For a comparison of the two see Gal. 4. 21-31 ; 2. Cor. 3 ; and Hebrews 8 and 9.

VII. **Application.**

1. "Behold I have set before thee life and death, therefore choose life."

2. What the law could not do, grace does, therefore let us have grace.

OUTLINE.

THE TREE OF Disobedience (6. 1).
Disappointment (6. 4).
Disillusionment (Their eyes were opened).
Death ("Surely die").

THE TREE OF Liberty ("Let him take").
Love (as seen at Calvary).
Life ("Eat and live").

STORY 2.

The Rainbow in the Cloud

Read GENESIS 8. 20-9. 17.

I. **Text.** "I will sing of mercy and judgment" (Psa. 101. 1).

II. **Main Lesson.** The loveliest of all earthly sights—the rainbow—was chosen by God as a token of a covenant of grace made with Noah after the terrible judgment of the Flood.

It is a guarantee to us of the regular order of seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, and that not again will the earth be destroyed with a flood (8. 22; 9. 11). It is a beautiful illustration of the New Covenant of grace in Christ Jesus.

III. **The Story Related.**

Chap. 8. 20. *Noah having come out of the Ark, offers burnt offerings.* "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

v. 21. *The Sacrifice—a sweet savour to God is the ground of promise.* "The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake."

v. 21. *This notwithstanding man's sinfulness.* "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

v. 22. *The promise of regular seasons.* "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Chap. 9. 8-11. *God establishes His covenant with Noah on behalf of all flesh.* "I, behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature: . . . neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood."

v. 13. *God gives a token—the Rainbow.* "I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant, . . . when I bring a cloud over the earth the bow shall be seen in the cloud."

vv. 15, 16. *God promised to look upon the rainbow and to remember the covenant.* "And the bow shall be in the

cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh."

IV. Other References to the Rainbow.

Ezekiel 1. 28. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about (the throne). This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

Revelation 4. 3. "Behold a throne was set in Heaven, and One sat on the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like an emerald."

Revelation 10. 1. "I saw another mighty Angel come down from Heaven clothed with a cloud and a rainbow was upon His head, and His face was as it were the sun."

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE FIRST RAIN UPON THE EARTH. It is possible that rain had not fallen on the earth up to the day of Noah, and that the rainbow was therefore a new sight. How strikingly beautiful and convincing it must have been to those who first saw it. Genesis 2. 5, 6, seems to confirm this. "God had not caused it to rain." "A mist from the earth watered the whole face of the ground."

This would give special value to Noah's faith, who was "warned of things *not seen as yet*" (Heb. 11. 7). In 2 Peter 3. 4 unbelief as to the Coming of Christ is compared with the unbelief in the coming of the flood.

2. THE FEAR THAT RAIN WOULD BRING. If this were so, then every storm would bring with it the dread of another flood. The rainbow promise would allay that fear. When dark threatening clouds gathered men would quiet their hearts by faith in the promise, and when the rainbow appeared welcome it as a token of that promise. So when fear was greatest the promise would be the brightest.

3. THE TEMPORAL BLESSINGS OF WHICH THE RAINBOW SPEAKS. Upon the covenant with Noah rests the promise.

(*a*) *Of a regular harvest.* As the sower casts his precious and costly seed into the ground he can look at the rainbow and say, "There will surely be a harvest."

(*b*) *Of Changing Seasons.* We in the colder climes welcome the promise of summer and heat; those in hotter parts equally welcome the cold and the winter rains.

(*c*) *Of Day and Night.* No day so long but rest will come. No night so weary but day will dawn.

"Be the day never so long,
At last it ringeth to even song."

(*d*) *No More Universal Flood.* Other judgments will come, but these will be after believers have been caught up and gone to be with the Lord. The earth will be burned up with fire, but only those to whom God's promises are nothing will be involved.

"The sin that drowned the old world will burn up this" (*Matthew Henry*).

4. THE COVENANT WITH NOAH HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST. Notice the following points of resemblance.

(*a*) *It emanated from God.* It is because God loves us that He gave freely and without any call on our part the New Covenant ordered in all things and sure. It was because He loved that He gave His only begotten Son to mediate that Covenant by His own Blood, that salvation and life might come to us.

(*b*) *It was based upon Sacrifice.* Noah offered burnt offerings. God smelled a sweet savour and blessed. Christ offered Himself without spot to God, an offering of a sweet smelling savour (Eph. 5. 2).

It is on the ground of the precious Blood of Christ that the promises are given.

The once for all, never to be repeated flood, was a figure of the judgment of God that fell upon Christ (the Ark) when at Calvary he offered the once for all, never to be repeated Sacrifice for sin, by which His saints are "perfected for ever" (Heb. 10. 14).

(*c*) *It was pure grace—unmerited.* Man was evil, every imagination of his heart, from his youth—yet he should be blessed.

Grace does not consider the worthiness of the object. Admittedly sinners, guilty, enemies, yet salvation is offered freely.

"The Christian covenant includes none on account of their superior goodness, nor rejects any on account of their more atrocious sinfulness; but embraces all who will accept its benefits and imparts salvation to them freely, 'without money and without price'" (*Chas. Simeon*).

(*d*) *It includes all.* It was made with all flesh. So the Gospel is preached to all men. "Whosoever will let him come."

(*e*) *It was unconditioned.* It was not a covenant of works conditioned upon the observance of certain laws or regulations, but like the Gospel, it demanded no price.

Faith rejoiced in and enjoyed the blessing, as faith in Christ does the assurance of salvation.

(*f*) *It was everlasting.* "The everlasting covenant" (v. 16) it is called. So while these blessings were temporal in that they were only "while the earth remaineth," our covenant blessings are eternal. "The gift of God is eternal life."

(*g*) *God gave a token in confirmation.* The bow in the cloud. He looked on it and remembered His covenant. So the Cross is the token—for God looks on that scene and promises: "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

5. THE RAINBOW AS A NATURAL FIGURE. The fact that the sun shining upon deep thunder clouds produces the beautiful effects we know as the Iris or rainbow, has always been used as a natural parable of grace.

Wrath is never allowed of God to operate without mercy. In all His dealings with men, in wrath, God has remembered mercy.

The judgment of Calvary effected the rainbow promises of grace. There mercy and truth met, righteousness and peace kissed one another.

On the awful background of wrath appeared the glorious grace of salvation. Hence the rainbow is ever seen about the throne of God. The throne of justice becoming one of mercy.

Application.

1. Let the rainbow remind us of the Gospel promises. Let us embrace them.

2. Let us fear lest a promise being left us we should fail of it.

STORY 3.

The City and Tower of Babel

Read GENESIS 11. 1-9.

I. **Text.** "God hath given Him (JESUS) the Name that is above every name" (Phil. 2. 9, etc.).

II. **Main Lesson.** Man's pride that sought to make himself a name has resulted in confusion. Babylon, a type of the religious world, has become the metropolis of Satan, the centre of confusion. Its end is destruction (Rev. 17. 5).

"Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues" (Rev. 18. 4).

III. **The Story Told.**

Gen. 11. 4. 1. *After the flood one language prevailed.* "The whole earth was of one language and of one speech."

v. 2. *The survivors travel to Shinar* (S. Babylonia). "As they journeyed from the east they found a plain in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there."

v. 3. *They start building on a great scale.* "They said, . . . Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and slime had they for morter."

v. 4. *They determine to build a City and a Tower.* "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto Heaven."

v. 4. *Their motive,* (1) *To make a Name.* "And let us make us a name."

v. 4. *And* (2) *To prevent dispersion.* "Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

v. 5. *Jehovah looks upon their work.* "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded."

v. 6. *He sees their defiance and evil purpose.* "The Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do."

v. 7. *The Lord confounds their language.* "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

v. 8. *He scatters them.* "So the Lord scattered them from thence upon the face of all the earth."

v. 8. *They leave off building.* "And they left off to build the city."

v. 9. *The Beginning of the great city Babylon.* "Therefore is the name of it called Babel (which means Confusion), because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth, and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth."

IV. **A History and a Parable.** Anyone who studies the Bible knows that it is full of history parable—that is, that the events that happen are allowed and recorded by God as instruction in and illustration of God's ways with men. This is, of course, eminently so in the history of Israel, which is God's great history-parable for all time, specially recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures for our admonition (1 Cor. 10. 11). The story of Babel is also such.

1. It records the foundation of the great city and empire of Babylon.

2. It is used throughout the Bible as a parable of man's defiance of God and his attempt to live and prevail by his own efforts in independence of God.

3. Babylon thus becomes the centre of opposition to God, the persecuter of God's people, the metropolis of Satan.

4. Under the figure of Babylon this world, both political (Rev. 18) and religious (Rev. 17), is judged (Rev. 14. 8).

V. **The Aim of the Builders.** Of whom Nimrod was the leader (Gen. 10. 10).

(*a*) FIRST TO FOUND A CITY. A community that should be self-contained and self-centred, and which could be a centre of influence. An earthly city as contrasted to the Heavenly City, to which the patriarchs looked forward, whose builder and maker is God. Thus the two cities are set before us in striking contrast. The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Earthly Babylon (see Heb. 11. 10 and 12. 22).

(*b*) IT WAS TO MAKE A NAME. "Let us make a name." Again man's effort to make himself a name, to become great and renowned in the earth, independently of God, is

in bold and striking contrast to the Name that is above every name—the Name of God's dear Son Jesus, in which the saints rejoice, in which alone salvation is (Acts 4. 10), and to which they gather (Matt. 18. 20. Man would exalt himself ; God has exalted Christ, and given Him the Name.

(*c*) IT WAS TO BUILD A TOWER. That is, a refuge. Towers (" high towers ") were built as a defence, and man would have a defence and a refuge of his own. " The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe," but man refuses this.

He relies upon himself for salvation. He misapplies Scripture and boasts that he can " work out his own salvation." He will not submit to righteousness (Rom. 10. 2).

(*d*). IT WAS TO REACH TO HEAVEN. " Whose top may reach unto Heaven." Possibly fearing another flood, they thought to build their earthly refuge so high that it would save them from even God Himself should He again judge the earth. Here was *pride*. Yet man still thinks he can escape the judgment of God (Rom. 2. 3). Here was *folly*, for is God so puny that He cannot judge the sinner, are His judgments exhausted ? Here was *unbelief*, for the rainbow was a token that God would not again destroy the earth with a flood.

(*e*) IT WAS TO PREVENT DISPERSION. " Lest we be scattered abroad." Man foolishly thinks that there is safety in numbers. Lot did not find the safety in Sodom that Abraham found as a pilgrim and tent dweller. Cities are the centres of the greatest sins and gathering places of the vilest sinners.

Moreover, God has bidden man be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (9. 7). So that this was a further disobedience.

VI. **Confusion in History and Parable.**

The miraculous confounding of the language recorded in verse 7 is difficult to understand, but not more difficult than the remarkable gift of tongues at Pentecost, when all nations heard " every man in his own tongue wherein he was born " (Acts 2. 8).

Each must, however, be received not only as authentic history, but also as divinely inspired parable.

Departure from God means the confounding of tongues

and confusion of ideas. Witness the Modernism of to-day, which has no cohesion, no point of agreement, every stage and variety of idea, and no stable basis of authority or truth. Truly the modern departure from the Holy Scriptures has resulted in confusion.

The same is true of departure from God's ways of worship and simplicity. Priestcraft of every kind has wrought untold sorrow and confounding of man's mind. All these false religions have their historical origin in Babylon as well as their spiritual representation in the modern Babylon. As one has said: "A tonsored and celibate priesthood which originated in Babylon, and which passed with the worship of Bacchus into Rome, and so into the Papacy, entered Tibet by way of China, and now on 'the roof of the world' is to be seen in all its ideal horror."

On the other hand, "in Christ" is harmony. The nearer we draw to Him the nearer we draw to one another, as the spokes of a wheel draw nearer to each other as they draw nearer to the centre.

VII. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. CHRIST THE TRUE CENTRE. Only as men yield to the obedience of Christ do they find peace. Creeds, sects, and systems tend to disunion and strife. As men make Christ, and Him alone, their gathering centre do they find union and harmony.

2. MAKING A NAME. Let not the desire for your name to be great affect you. "Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not" (Jer. 4. 45. 5). Only restlessness and disappointment can follow. If God puts you in an exalted position He will keep you in peace in it. But whoso exalteth *himself* shall be abased.

3. THE TRUE REFUGE. Let Christ suffice thee as the refuge of your soul. Let His Name be your strong tower, and know no other. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

4. "COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE." The Spiritual Babylon—man-made religion—is confusion, the only safe and happy course is to come out, touch not the unclean thing, that you may be a vessel unto honour, sanctified

and meet for the Master's use. Her plagues will be terrible. See that you are not partakers of them.

5. THE BLESSING OF PENTECOST. The Spirit of God poured out from Heaven on the day of Pentecost and received by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3. 2 and 5) unites all believers into one body there, and as they walk by the Spirit they will be of one mind in the Lord.

Application. "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues."

"Let us speak the same thing that there be no division among you" (1 Cor. 1. 16).

OUTLINES.

The Present Confusion.

BELIEFS, ..	Many	instead of	One Revelation.
AUTHORITIES,	,,	,,	One Holy Spirit.
BOOKS, ..	,,	,,	One Sufficient Bible.
EARS ITCHING,	,,	,,	Open to Hear God.
LICENSE, ..	,,	,,	Liberty in the obedience to Christ.

The True Centre.

One SON of the Father confessed as Lord.
One SACRIFICE for Sins, perfecting for ever.
One SHEPHERD of the Sheep, to whom all gather.
One SOURCE of Power and Guidance, the Holy Spirit.
One SCRIPTURE of Truth, the Bible.
One SONG, the New Song.

STORY 4.

"Just Lot" in "Filthy" Sodom

Read GENESIS 13. 5-18.

I. **Text.** "Just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Peter 2. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** Lot is an illustration of a believer involved in the world. Choosing the plain of Jordan because of worldly advantage, he at length is drawn into Sodom.

The sorrows that he brought on himself and his children warn us not to love the world nor the things that are in the world. It is a terrible lesson in the folly of worldliness.

III. **The Story Told.** It had best be told in chapters.

Chap. 1. Lot goes out from Ur of the Chaldees with Abram, to whom the God of Glory appeared (Gen. 11. 31-12. 5).

Chap. 2. Lot separates from Abram because their flocks were too many and their herdsman strove together (Gen. 13. 1-6).

Chap. 3. Being given his choice, Lot chooses the plain of Jordan and pitches his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13. 7-13).

Chap. 4. He is involved in the defeat of Sodom by the four kings and carried away prisoner. Abram rescues him (Gen. 14. 1-16).

Chap. 5. Lot now became a magistrate in Sodom, learns something of its "filthy conversation." He is rescued by angels before the city is destroyed with fire from Heaven. His wife perishes in the overthrow. His children show that they have learned the wickedness of Sodom (Gen. 15. 1-33).

IV. **The New Testament References to Lot.**

2 *Peter* 2. 4-9. "God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemning them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that should live ungodly and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous

soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds). The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Luke 7. 32. "Remember Lot's wife."

Luke 17. 28. "As it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, the bought, they sold, they planted they builded, but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

V. **What is Meant by "The World" and "Worldliness."** There are two words translated "world."

1. ONE IS MORE CORRECTLY RENDERED "AGE," and means the present state of society, the generation in which we live. As to this we are told :

(*a*) *That Satan is its god* (2 Cor. 4. 4), that is, that he directs and guides it in its godless fashions and lawlessness. In it his will, and not God's, is done by its votaries.

(*b*) *That it is "evil"* (Gal. 1. 4), and that Christ died to deliver us from it.

(*c*) *That all unregenerate men walk according to its course* (Eph. 2. 2), that is, hating to be peculiar and singular, they conform to its ways.

(*d*) *Its wisdom is folly* (1 Cor. 2. 6). Its riches are deceitful (Matt. 13. 22). Its honours are dangerous (John 5. 44).

(*e*) *To love it and be conformed to it is ruin* (2 Tim. 4. 10 ; Rom. 12. 2).

2. THE OTHER WORD (*kosmos*) REFERS TO THE WORLD AS AT PRESENT ORDERED, AND ALL THE THINGS IN IT. Of this it is said :

(*a*) That God so loved it (John 3. 16).

(*b*) That Christ came into it (John 18. 37).

(*c*) It is never said to be "evil," but it has come under the dominion of Satan (who is called its prince) (John 12. 31 ; 14. 30 ; 16. 11), and it therefore "lieth in the wicked one" (1 John 5. 19).

(*d*) That it hates Christ and His people (John 15. 18, 19).

(*e*) To be its friend is to be God's enemy (James 4. 4).

(*f*) It will all pass away with its pleasures (1 John 2. 17).

(*g*) Its kingdoms will become the kingdoms of Christ (Rev. 11. 15).

3. WORLDLINESS then means :

(*a*) Conformity to the evil age.

(*b*) Living for the things that are passing, and loving and spending our days in the indulgence of what is transitory. As Rutherford described it : "Building our nest in a tree that is doomed to be cut down."

Thus, while much in the world is good, the believer will not sell his soul for it. For what profit is there if he gain the whole world (that passes away) and lose his own soul.

In the case of Lot we see that conforming to his age and living in the enjoyment of what was to be soon burnt up, he lost all in the overthrow.

VI. **Lot's Progress in Worldliness.**

1. HE CHOSE "THE PLAIN OF JORDAN" (13. 11). It was well watered, but he never sought the guidance of God. He forgot his pilgrim character—he took no note of the dangers of Sodom. Earthly advantage is not always God's will.

2. HE PITCHED HIS TENT TOWARD SODOM, and the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly (13. 13). This fact should have kept him away. It is wise to give sin a wide berth, to be separated from sinners.

3. HE NEXT DWELT IN SODOM (14. 12). It is easy to be drawn into the swim. This world is like a whirlpool, it sucks in the swimmers, and so Lot settled down in the evil city. His tent was given up, he confessed himself no more a pilgrim and stranger on the earth (Heb. 11. 13).

4. AFTER THE SACK OF SODOM by the four kings, and his being taken prisoner, *Lot still resolves to continue in the wicked city* (14. 16). This discipline should have been sufficient to open his eyes, but in spite of Abram's example he settled down again in his bad surroundings.

5. LOT PROSPERS IN SODOM and becomes a judge, sitting in the gate (19. 1 and 9). As the evil men said : "He came in to sojourn and must needs be a judge."

Prosperity in the world is no mark of God's approval (Psa. 37. 35).

6. WHEN WARNED TO FLEE HE LINGERS and pleads: "O not so, my Lord" (19. 16-22). So his heart clings to the world that once had escaped it.

VII. **The Sorrows of Worldliness.** Let us look at Lot's suffering as the result of his folly.

1. He became ENTANGLED, and the end was worse than the beginning. "*If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning*" (2 Peter 2. 20). A good soldier, we are told *entangleth* not himself with this life's affairs (2 Tim. 2. 4). Therefore, stand in liberty and be not *entangled* again (Gal. 5. 1).

2. HE LOST HIS PILGRIM CHARACTER. Both tent and altar disappear from his life. God never visits him as He did Abram.

3. HE LOOSES ALL HIS HARDLY ACQUIRED GOODS AND HIS HOME IS BURNT UP WITH FIRE. All his labour has resulted in nothing.

4. HE IS OVERCOME OF STRONG DRINK (19. 32), having learned thus much of the ways of Sodom. One cannot go on hot coals and not be burned. Some of the defilement of the evil associations is bound to cling to him.

5. HE VEXED HIS SOUL. We should not have known he was "just" or had a "righteous" soul had the N.T. not told us so; but a good man in bad company is never a happy man. He got himself only vexation.

6. HE LOST HIS WIFE. Often a man is strong enough to stand against the evil of the world, while his life companion is not.

7. HIS CHILDREN BECAME VILE. How often is this so. The worldly Christian has no Christian home.

VII. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. GREED OF GAIN that led Lot to make his evil choice has been the ruin of many. "*Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful*

lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6. 9).

2. COMPROMISE WITH THE WORLD BEGINS WITH A SMALL BEGINNING. Some worldly advantage becomes the snare. All the rest follows. Only heart satisfaction with Christ will keep us from its allurements.

3. THE THINGS OF THE WORLD may be used, but not abused. All things are lawful, but there is an unlawful use of lawful things. As soon as the world is *loved*, the love of God ceases to rule (1 John 2. 15).

4. THE "FILTHINESS" OF THE WORLD is all around us. Newspapers, magazines, theatres, and cinemas are so largely permeated with immodesty and uncleanness that only the strictest watch over the eyes and ears and heart can keep us from being defiled. Nevertheless, "His grace is sufficient," therefore "keep thyself pure," for "Blessed are the pure in heart."

5. THE PATH OF SEPARATION that Abram took saved him from the sorrows of Lot. The Word of God makes it quite clear that this is the only safe path. Though in practice it is difficult, yet the command is clear, "Come out and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing," and, "If any man purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

VIII. **Application.**

TO THE UNSAVED. "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee." Get away to Christ the only Saviour.

TO THE BELIEVER. Take heed that you become not entangled. Keep heart-whole with Christ.

OUTLINE.

Seven Men who Loved the World,

and what they lost by it.

LOT, ...	Lost Home, Wife, and all.
ESAU, ...	Forfeited the Blessing.
BALAAM, ...	Lost his Life.
SOLOMON, ...	Turned Aside.
JUDAS, ...	Hanged himself.
DEMAS, ...	Forsook the Apostle.
SIMON, ...	No Part or Lot.

STORY 5.

The Egyptian Slave Girl

Read GENESIS 16. 1-15 ; 21. 1-20.

I. **Text.** "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Gal. 4. 30).

II. **Main Lesson.** Hagar the Egyptian slave girl is used by the Spirit of God to teach us the privileges of sonship. She was a slave, therefore her son could not inherit Abraham's promises, these were only for the free, therefore Isaac, and not Ishmael, must be the heir.

Faith in Christ makes us spiritually "Children of Abraham," and, being free, we inherit the promises in Him.

Simpler lessons can be taught from God's gracious treatment of this Egyptian maid.

III. **The Story Told.**

PART I.

Gen. 16. 1-6. *Sarai, Abram's wife, having no children, proposes to him that he should take her Egyptian maid, Hagar, to wife. He does so, but when Sarai learned that she was to have a child she dealt hardly with her.* "Sarai, Abram's wife, bare no children. She had an handmaid an Egyptian whose name was Hagar. Sarai took Hagar and gave her to Abram to be his wife. When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. Sarai said unto Abram : My wrong be upon thee. . . . The Lord judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai; Behold thy maid is in thy hand ; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And . . . Sarai dealt hardly with her."

v. 6. *Hagar runs away.* "She fled from her face."

v. 7. *The angel of the Lord finds her in the wilderness.* "The angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, in the way to Shur."

vv. 8-12. *He bids her return, and promises her a son.* "Hagar, Sarai's maid, . . . Whither wilt thou go ? She said, I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarai." He said, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself. . . . I will multiply thy seed exceedingly. . . . Behold thou shalt bear

a son, . . . Ishmael. . . . And he will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man."

v. 13. *Hagar calls the Lord* "LAHAI-ROI." She called the name of the Lord, "Thou God seest me." Wherefore the well was called "Beer-lahai-roi." It is between Kadesh and Bered.

v. 14. *Hagar begets Ishmael.* Hagar bare Abram a son called Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old.

PART II.

Gen. 21. 1-8. *Sarah bears a son in her old age, Isaac (Laughter), he is circumcised. The child is weaned and a great feast held.* "The Lord visited Sarah, and she bare Abraham a son in his old age, and Abraham called his name Isaac and circumcised him, being eight days old, as God had commanded. Abraham was an hundred years old. Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh. All that hear me will laugh with me. The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast the same day."

v. 9. *Ishmael mocks at Sarah and her child.* "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian mocking."

v. 10. *She asks Abraham to cast Hagar and Ishmael out.* "Wherefore she said, Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

vv. 11, 12. *Abraham is grieved, but God bids him do as Sarah had said.* "The thing was grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son, and God said to Abraham, Let it not be grievous; hearken to her voice, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

v. 13. *The seed is "in Isaac," but Ishmael, too, is to be a great nation.* "In Isaac shall thy seed be called, and also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."

PART III.

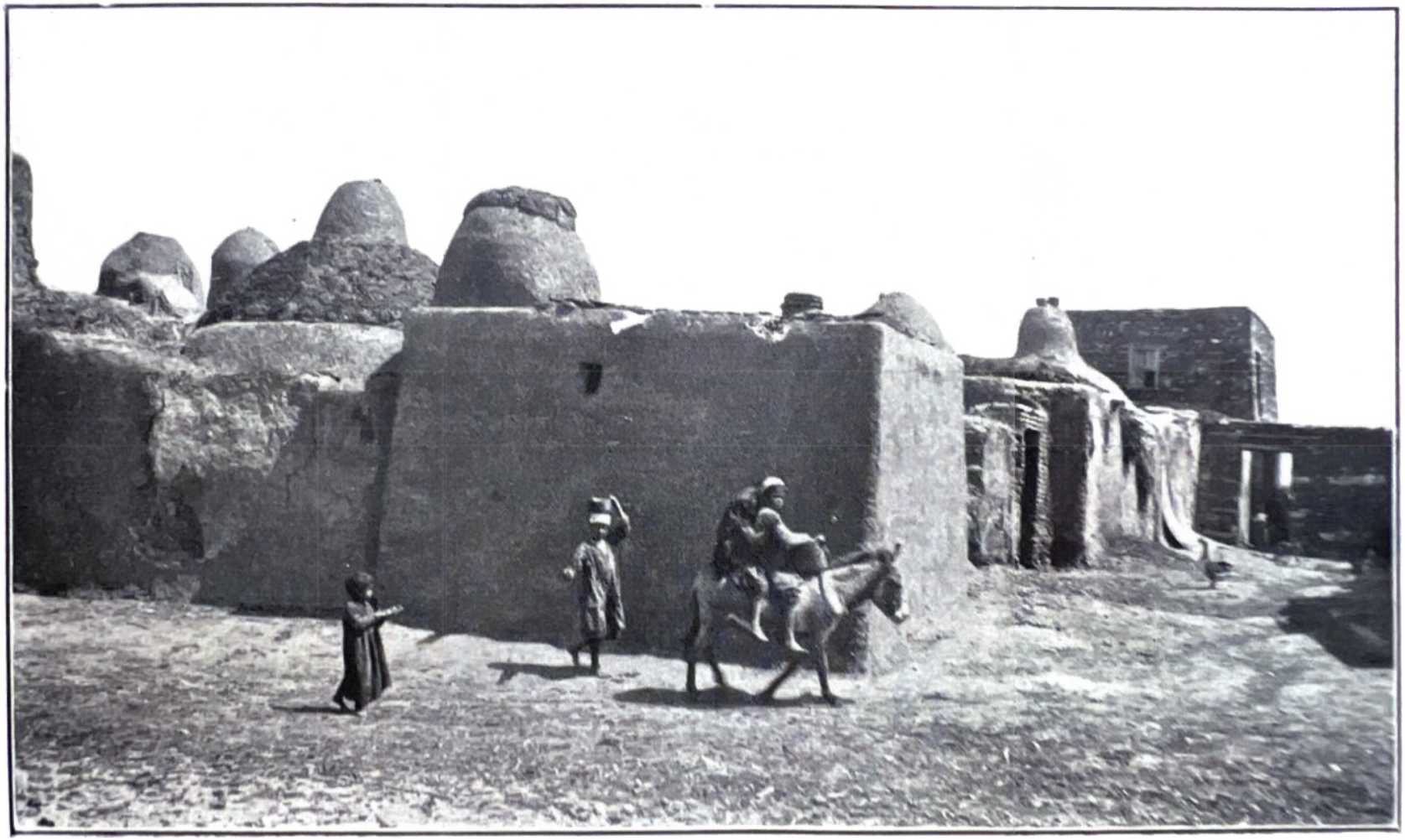
v. 14. *Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away.* "Abraham . . . sent her away, and she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba."

v. 15. *Hagar wanders in the wilderness without water.*

To face page 32



EASTERN GIPSIES OR BEDOUIN OF THE DESERT



A MUD VILLAGE IN EGYPT

"And the water was spent, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs."

v. 16. *She sits at a distance and weeps over her dying boy.* "She went and sat down a good way off, for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat and wept."

v. 17. *God hears the child's cry.* "God heard the voice of the lad, and the angel of God called to Hagar and said, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

v. 18. *God renews His Promise.* "Arise, lift up the lad, for I will make him a great nation.''

v. 19. *God opens Hagar's eyes to see a well.* "And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad to drink."

v. 20. *He grows and becomes an Archer.* "God was with the lad and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and he became an archer."

IV. **The Allegory from the Story in the New Testament.**

"It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid and the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the freewoman was by promise.

"Which things are an allegory, for these are the two covenants, the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is in bondage with her children. . . .

"Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

"But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

"Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

"So then we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Gal. 4. 22-31).

V. **The Allegory Explained.**

God had promised Abraham a son. He should have waited for him, but instead he *acted in the flesh*, and all the

flesh can do is *natural*. Only God can work a miracle, and Isaac was to be miraculously God-given.

Now all Abraham got by his fleshly effort was a slave-born son, whom God rejected as heir of the promises, and who became a persecutor of the child of promise.

So the apostle says Hagar is like Mount Sinai, from which the Law was given.

If any one thinks he can become an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, by Law-keeping, by going to Sinai, he will find all his efforts fail. The law *gendereth to bondage*, that means, never sets a man free either from the curse or power of sin. The Law-keeper (that is, who trusts in the Law for salvation) is still a slave and fleshly, and can never be free, and so God casts him out and says he shall not be an heir. But let a man come to Christ and a miracle takes place, he becomes a child of the promise and an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ.

LOOK INTO THE TWO TENTS.

Hagar's Tent has in it a slave and a son born of the flesh. Here is a picture of the best man can do in the flesh by law-keeping. They are cast out.

Sarah's Tent contains a free woman (a princess) and a son miraculously born by promise—a gift from God to those who had no hope in themselves. This one shall be heir. This is the child of God by faith, an heir through grace.

VI. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. WHAT THE LAW CANNOT DO.

(*a*) It cannot take our sins away.

(*b*) It cannot change the heart.

(*c*) It cannot give repentance, nor will it accept it. It knows no mercy.

(*d*) It cannot make us sons or heirs.

(*e*) It makes nothing perfect.

(*f*) It can never give us hope.

(*g*) It genders to bondage and cannot set us free. The more we struggle to be free the more we are enslaved.

(*h*) It cannot give life. It works death.

Therefore we need not Law, but a Saviour.

2. WHAT FAITH IN CHRIST BRINGS US (The Gift of Grace).
(*a*) Reconciliation with God.
(*b*) The remission of sins.
(*c*) Regeneration by the Spirit.
(*d*) Adoption as Children of God.
(*e*) Inheritance among them that are sanctified.
(*f*) Liberty and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Then hope no more in the flesh (your own efforts), but come to, receive, and confess the Lord Jesus.

3. THE LIBERTY OF CHILDREN. What a difference there is between a son and a slave in the home. One can say, "Father." He is free. He is heir. He has the run of the house. He is at home.

"No longer slaves, but sons, are we,
Who once were bound in sin;
For, Saviour, Thou hast set us free,
And Thou art Lord within."

4. "THOU GOD SEEST ME." A beautiful name for God, 'Lahai-roi." The one who sees me. So Hagar names God. To the sinner this is a dreadful name; to the saint a name of love and power. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good."

5. GOD'S CARE FOR THE SLAVE. Although Hagar and Ishmael are used as allegories and were "cast out" from being heirs, it does not mean that God did not love or care for them. He had blessings for them. The lack of privilege, or of social standing, or of natural advantage does not mean the loss of salvation, and all the love and peace and blessing it brings with it.

God loves the slave, the poor, the outcast; they are often rich in faith and rejoicing in Christ.

6. PERSECUTORS. No one hates the Gospel and persecutes the children of God as the legal professor of religion. The one who hopes in his own law-keeping, religion, or righteousness.

The Pharisees (those great "law-keepers") were the Lord's chief opponents. Saul, the Pharisee, "before the law blameless," pursued the saints to death.

The Papacy, that has sought to reduce Christianity to a legal system, is "drunken with the blood of the saints."

7. THE ISHMAELITES, from whom sprang the false prophet Mohammed, the Saracens and Turks, have been among the fiercest of the enemies of the Cross.

If Abraham had not acted in the flesh, the Church would not have this persecutor all down the ages.

Application.

Are we sons or slaves ?

Do we hope in the Law and our efforts in the flesh, or are we found in Christ, children of grace and heirs of the promises, joint-heirs with Christ ?

OUTLINE.

"Thou God Seest Me."

THE EYES OF THE LORD.

"Run to and fro throughout the whole earth,"	2 Chron. 16. 9 ; Zech. 4. 10
"Are upon the righteous,"	Psa. 34. 15
"In every place beholding the evil and the good,"	Prov. 15. 3
"Preserve him that hath knowledge,"	Prov. 22. 12 R.V.
Hidden from the prayer of the wicked, ..	Isa. 1. 15
"As lamps of fire,"	Dan. 10. 6
"As a flame of fire,"	Rev. 1. 14
"Upon the sinful,"	Amos 9. 8
"Too pure to behold evil, ...	Hab. 1. 13

Now we Are

Sons, not Slaves, ...	Gal. 4. 7
Friends, not Servants, ...	John 15. 15
Free, not Bound, ...	Gal. 4. 31

STORY 6.

A Bride for Isaac

Read GENESIS 24. 1-67.

I. **Text.** "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go" (Gen. 24. 58).

II. **Main Lesson.** God is seeking a bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has made Heir of all. He sends His Holy Spirit into the wilderness of this world to invite sinners to be joined to the Lord—"married to Another." And all who receive Him, together form the Church, the Bride of the Lamb.

III. **The Story Told.** It is a long chapter, but may be summed up thus.

Gen. 24. 1-6. *Abraham being old, causes his servant to swear that he will not take a wife to Isaac from among the heathen,* nor must he bring him back to the land from which they came out.

v. 10. *The servant starts,* and comes to the city of Nahor, in Mesopotamia.

vv. 11, 12. *He prays for guidance.* "O Lord God of Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day."

vv. 13, 14. *He asks for a sign.* "Behold I stand here by the well of water, . . . let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher that I may drink, and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Isaac, and thereby I shall know."

v. 15. *Rebekah comes out with her pitcher.* "Before he had done speaking, behold Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher on her shoulder."

vv. 16-22. *She does just as the servant had prayed.* "She said, Drink, my lord, and I will draw water for thy camels also. . . . And she hasted and emptied her pitcher into the trough. . . . The man wondering at her, held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not."

vv. 23-30. *He inquires who she is, gives her presents, and seeks a lodging.* "And the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord."

vv. 27-31. *He is welcomed by her brother Laban.* "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standeth thou without, for I have prepared the house and room for the camels."

vv. 32-48. *The man tells his errand and the way in which the Lord had led him and answered his prayer.*

vv. 49-55. *Laban and Bethuel recognise* "the thing proceedeth from the Lord, take her and go." *But they ask for a delay of ten days.*

vv. 56-58. *The servant asks not to be hindered, so they call Rebekah.* "We will call the damsel and enquire at her mouth. They called Rebekah and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go."

vv. 59-60. *She is sent away with a blessing.* "They sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse. . . . They blessed Rebekah and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate thee."

vv. 61-67. *She came to Isaac.* "Isaac took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her."

IV. **Enlargement of the Main Lesson.**

1. Isaac, the miraculously born child of promise, the son of the free woman, the heir of Abraham, is a type of Christ.

(*a*) In his miraculous birth.

(*b*) As being "the seed" according to the promise.

(*c*) As being appointed heir of all.

(*d*) As being the bridegroom of the Church, of which Rebekah is a type.

(*e*) As being "one flesh, one spirit" with those who are "married to Him" (Eph. 5. 30; Rom. 7. 4).

(*f*) As the Beloved of the Father.

(2) The Lord Jesus spoke in parable of God as, "A certain king which made a marriage for His Son" (Matt. 22. 2). Abraham's servant, probably the faithful Eliezer of Damascus, of whom we read in Genesis 15. 2, that he was

steward of Abraham's house, is a type of the Holy Spirit whom God has "shed forth," that He may witness to men :

(*a*) Of the glories of Christ.
(*b*) Of His being "appointed heir of all things."
(*c*) Of His love to the Church.
(*d*) Of His death to redeem it unto Himself.

Isaac was like Christ in that in figure he was sacrificed and received again from the dead (Gen. 22. 1-14 ; Heb. 11. 19).

3. The appeal to each one is : "Wilt thou go with this man ?" That is, respond to the striving and pleading of the Holy Spirit to be joined to the Lord Jesus by faith.

Let the answer be, as with Rebekah, "I will go."

"*Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty for he is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.*" (Psalm 45. 10-11).

4. The figure of marriage is a holy and beautiful one, as illustrating the believers' union with Christ. The following Scriptures should be considered.

2 Cor. 11. 2. "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Eph. 5. 30. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones ; for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church."

Rom. 7. 4. "Ye became dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

5. The closing words of the story should be noted : "*And he loved her.*"

"The love of Jesus what it is,
None but His loved ones know."

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. NO WIFE FROM THE HEATHEN (vv. 1-6). The awful folly of a believer entering into marriage with an un-

believer is stated in 2 Cor. 6. 14-18, in the form of questions. Beware the unequal yoke.

" What agreement hath—

(1) Righteousness with unrighteousness ? "

(2) Light with darkness ? "

(3) Christ with Belial ? "

(4) Believer with an infidel ? "

(5) The temple of God with idols ? "

Answer these before you marry an unbeliever or a lifeless professor.

2. NO RETURN TO THAT FROM WHICH WE HAVE COME OUT. (v. 6. " Beware that thou bring not my son this way again.").

Backsliding is a terrible thing. Only one who has gone back can realise the misery of the experience. Bunyan graphically describes it in his " Christ a Complete Saviour."

" None knows the things that haunt a backslider's mind. His new sins are all turned talking devils, threatening devils, roaring devils within him. . . . No man was in the whale's belly and came out alive again ; but backsliding and returning Jonah ; consequently no one can tell how he was there, what he felt there, and what working of heart he had when he was there, but he."

Beware, then, not to go back (2 Peter 2. 20-22).

3. PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE. Eliezer illustrated the Scriptures. " Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass " (Psa. 37. 5) ; and, " The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord " (v. 23). So, being in the way, the Lord led him.

4. A SIGN FOR GUIDANCE. Often in Scripture we find God graciously giving a sign to those who asked guidance. Twice Gideon was granted a sign (Judges 6. 37-40). Hezekiah, too (Isaiah 38. 7-8), and here we find Eliezer asking God to give him a sign.

This must not encourage us to seek signs and wonders. Evidences unmistakable will be given to faith, and the wise will understand them. When the cloud moves the spiritual man discerns it. The conviction within concurs with the working of providence without, and the will of the Lord is

clearly discovered by those who honestly seek to know and do it.

5. "BEFORE THEY CALL." Eliezer's answer appeared while he was yet speaking, but Rebekah must have started out before he began. So was the word fulfilled, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65. 24).

6. "COME IN, THOU BLESSED." Here is a text for the hesitating and undecided, who stand outside the door of mercy in fear.

Invitation—"Come in."
Description—"Thou blessed of the Lord."
Enquiry—"Wherefore standest thou without?"
Encouragement—"I have prepared the house."
A good Gospel message.

Application.

1. "Wilt thou go with this Man?"

2. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

OUTLINE.

The Heavenly Bridegroom.

"Chiefest among ten thousand," .. S. of. S. 5. 10
"He is altogether lovely," .. .. S. of S. 5. 16
"Higher than the kings of the earth," .. Psa. 89. 27
"He shall have dominion," .. .. ,, 72. 8
"All kings shall fall before Him," .. ,, 72. 11
"His Name shall endure for ever," .. ,, 72. 17
"All nations shall call Him blessed," .. ,, 72. 17
"Behold the Bridegroom cometh," .. Matt. 25. 6

STORY 7.

The Ark of Bulrushes

THE STORY OF A PROPER CHILD.

Read EXODUS 2. 1-10.

I. **Text.** "She saw he was a proper child" (Heb. 11. 23).

II. **Main Lesson.** A story of faith triumphing over fear. Moses was a child of promise, so in direct defiance of the king's command, his mother hid him, and thus saved him from death.

God wrought for her, honouring her faith, and blessed and used her child to do His great work.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1, 2. *Pharaoh, seeking to prevent the increase of the children of Israel in his land, orders all the male children to be killed. A man and his wife of the tribe of Levi, have a man child.* "A man of the house of Levi took to wife a daughter of Levi, and the woman bare a son."

v. 2. *Seeing him to be a goodly child she hides him.* "When she saw him that he was a goodly child she hid him three months."

v. 3. *Then when too old to conceal, she makes an ark of bulrushes and laid him in the flags by the river.* "When she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with slime and with pitch and put the child therein, and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink."

v. 4. *Miriam his sister watches.* "And his sister stood afar off to wit what would be done to him."

v. 5. *Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe and sees it.* "The daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river, and her maidens walked along by the river's side, and when she saw the ark among the flags she sent her maid to fetch it."

v. 6. *On the opening of the ark Moses cries.* "And when she had opened it she saw the child, and behold the babe wept."

v. 6. *She is moved with compassion and guesses the truth.* "And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."

v. 7. *Miriam suggests calling a nurse for it.* "Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee."

v. 8. *Pharaoh's daughter assenting, she calls her mother.* "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go, and the maid went and called the child's mother."

v. 9. *The mother is bidden nurse the child for the princess.* "And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it."

v. 10. *The child grows, and is named Moses.* "The child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son, and she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water."

IV. New Testament Reference to the Story.

Acts 7. 20. "In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months. And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him for her own son."

Heb. 11. 23. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

The R.V. changes the word "proper" to "goodly" as in Exodus 2. 2.

"*Not afraid*" would mean, that they willingly took the risk of death consequent on disobedience, being confident that God would work for them. This is true faith.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. A PROPER OR GOODLY CHILD. This must not be understood merely as a healthy, fine boy, but a child born into the Covenant Promises made to Abraham his forefather of which his circumcision would be the seal. The parents knew:

(*a*) That God had vouchsafed to be their God and to bless and protect those who put their faith in Him.

(*b*) That He had promised to bring them out of Egypt after 400 years (Gen. 15. 13).

(*c*) That that period was nearing its close and therefore that the time of the promise drew near.

(*d*) That God had promised to raise up a deliverer, and this every Hebrew maid hoped would be her son, for he was to be "the seed of the woman." In this case, Moses was not *the*, but *a*, deliverer, and type of *the* Prophet who should come. With such covenant blessings around him, why should they fear the king's command? God would honour faith and save their little one—as He did.

2. FAITH IS SEEN AT ITS BEST WHEN EVENTS ARE AT THEIR WORST. Faith looks impossibilities in the face and says it shall be done.

As *Abraham* hoped for a son when he was past age (see Rom. 4. 18-21). He was fully persuaded that "what God promised He was able to perform."

As *Abraham* also offered up Isaac, believing that God would raise him up from the dead (Heb. 11. 19).

As *Daniel* faced the den of lions.

As *Shadrach*, Meshach, and Abednego faced the burning fiery furnace.

As all the heroes of faith have done all down the ages.

3. THE MOTHER'S WISDOM. How love teaches a mother is well illustrated in the wit and skill with which she provided for her child. There is no heart like a mother's heart, and all wise teachers will teach their scholars to value their mother's love and counsel.

"*An ornament of grace and chains about the neck.*" So is a mother's counsel when observed (Prov. 1. 9).

4. THE SISTER'S PRESENCE OF MIND AND WIT. We cannot but admire the skill of Miriam (for almost certainly it was she), in thinking of proposing a nurse, and then fetching the mother. No doubt sharing the faith of her parents, she was helped of God of Israel at this critical moment. The wisdom from above is promised to all who ask (James 1. 5).

5. THE OVERRULING HAND OF GOD. God makes even the wrath of man to praise Him. Pharaoh little thought that his cruelty and folly, instead of impairing this people, was, under God's providence, providing and educating for them a mighty deliverer, who would break his power and lead the people out from under him. That his own daughter should be chosen of God to train this deliverer is wonderful. Truly God's works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.

6. THE NAME FULL OF MEANING. Pharaoh's daughter named him Moses. He was "drawn out," and he would in due course draw the people out of Egypt. It is one of those instances, so frequent in Scripture, when the name suits the work and character of men.

It seems as if God often guided in the choice of names in view of the work they were to do. Methusalah, Noah, Jacob, David, and Peter are examples among many others. Jesus is the Great Example. "He shall save His people from their sins."

7. "TAKE THIS CHILD AWAY AND NURSE IT FOR ME." This sentence may be taken by every teacher of the young. The Lord says of each child in your class :

(1) *Take this child.* Receive it as from Me and as Me (Matt. 18. 5).

(2) *Away.* If possible out from the world into the Church of God.

(3) *And nurse it for Me.* Not only win for, but nurture, for Christ.

(4) *I will give thee thy wages* (as in John 4. 36). "He that reapeth receiveth wages."

Application.

TO PARENTS. Regard your child as a proper child—a child of promise (Acts 2. 29). Fear not the world and its prince. Trust it to and train it for God.

TO TEACHERS. Take each child in your class away and nurse it for Christ (as above, IV. 7).

TO ALL. Have faith in God.

STORY 8.

Moses' Great Renunciation

Read EXODUS 2. 11-15 and HEBREWS 11. 24-27.

I. **Text.** "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. 11. 24).

II. **Main Lesson.** The outstanding example of the choice of faith. With all the pleasures and treasures of Egypt before him, Moses chose Christ, His reproach, His affliction, His people.

III. **The Story Told.**

Exod. 2. 11. *Moses being grown up* (40 years old, Acts 7. 23), *interests himself in his oppressed people.* "When Moses was grown . . . he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens."

v. 11. *He sees one being smitten by an Egyptian.* "He spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren."

v. 12. *He kills the Egyptian and hides his body.* "He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand."

v. 13. *The following day he sees two Hebrews quarrelling.* "When he went out the second day, behold two men of the Hebrews strove together."

v. 13. *He interferes.* "He said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?"

v. 14. *And gets an angry retort—showing that his killing the Egyptian was known.* "And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou killest the Egyptian?"

v. 14. *Moses feared* (probably he had made his choice at this time). "And Moses feared and said, Surely the thing is known."

v. 15. *Pharaoh* (possibly already angry at Moses having left the palace) *seeks to kill him.* "When Pharaoh heard this he sought to slay Moses."

(*Note.*—Moses did not fear Pharaoh's wrath (Heb. 11. 27) when he made his great choice and left the palace, but

feared to remain in Egypt after his murder of the Egyptian.

v. 15. *So Moses left Egypt and dwelt in Midian.* "But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian."

IV. New Testament Accounts of the Story.

This is one of the cases where we learn more of the story from the New Testament references than we do from the original account. The Holy Spirit not only uses it, but adds many details.

(*a*) STEPHEN'S SPEECH (Acts 7. 22).

"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian, for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God would by his hand deliver them, but they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove and would have set them at one again saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another. But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian."

(*b*) THE ACCOUNT IN HEBREWS (chap. 11. 24-27). Let us look closely at this wonderful story.

1. *The Great Refusal.* "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." No doubt God had exercised his heart. He saw his life passing in idle pleasure and vanity, even in sin and shameful idolatry at Court. What should he do? Should he quietly acquiesce and lose the golden opportunity? No, he could not, would not waste life so. That were to lose his life altogether (Matt. 10. 29).

"There is a tide in the affairs of men . . . which omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. . . . We must take the current when it serves, or lose our venture" (Shakespeare).

The call of God had come, he could not dally or remain

in trifling! He must not. So he refused the pleasing path and made the renunciation.

2. *The Choice of Faith.* "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

A prince, he looks on the slaves and choses to share their lot! Why? Because of the *Messianic Promises.* He knew that at any time a Redeemer, a Saviour (Messiah, the Christ) might come to that despised people, and then where would he be? Enjoying the pleasures of sin when Christ the Messiah came! Never, it must not be!

He knew the time of the promise drew near, and feared to be found "in sin," instead of "in Christ." Just as we say "Maranatha," the Lord is near. So these old Hebrews looked for Messiah. So faith chose Christ and His people.

3. *The Reproach of Christ Esteemed.* "Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

He knew, as we know, that to suffer with Christ now is to reign with Him when He comes. He could say, as the woman of Samaria did, "I know that Messias cometh" (John 4. 25). What would be the suffering of the present, then, in comparison with the glory?

So he went forth to Christ outside the pleasures and treasures of Egypt, bearing His reproach. Even glorying in the Cross as Paul did later (Heb. 13. 13; Gal. 6. 14).

4. *The Recompense of the Reward Respected.*

> "O how will recompense, His smile,
> The suffering of this little while."

This life is always a conflict between the present of self-indulgence and the future of blessing. Esau can choose his morsel of meat, but Jacob covets the blessing and the birthright. Moses let go the present for the future. The recompense—the reward. Yes, he had respect for these and made his choice.

5. *He forsook Egypt.* "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."

The world is very angry when one forsakes it for Christ. "Marvel not," Jesus said. That one should so despise

To face page 48



A WEDDING PROCESSION IN EGYPT
The bride is under the canopy on the first camel



WATER CARRIERS BY THE RIVER NILE

its treasures and pleasures and so prefer the Lord Jesus, as to welcome His Cross, should choose to suffer, amazes and enrages them, but fear not, "Be of cheer, I have overcome the world," Jesus said.

Action follows decision and choice. Many "decide for Christ" who never act. Decision is not conversion nor salvation. It must lead to action, "Forsaking" and "Following," or it is mere trifling. Casting fear aside, Moses forsook Egypt.

6. *He Endured as seeing Him that is Invisible.* Oh, the mystery and majesty of these words!

For forty years he was at the backside of the desert. A simple shepherd. Had he made a great mistake? During those long years did he never look back and regret his choice? Did Egypt never appeal again? We do not know, but this we know, Christ was His strength and stay. By faith he could see that Invisible One ever with him. What communion he held with Him in the desert. What lessons he learned. So he endured till His Lord appeared to him in the burning bush. The time for his life work came.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE AWAKENING TO THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LIFE. Pleasure seeking is utterly selfish, and idle indulgence a great sin. Awake to righteousness. Life soon passes, the opportunity is soon gone. One must begin early if anything useful is to be done. Beware lest pleasure and treasure steal away your life.

2. FAITH SEES THINGS AS THEY ARE, NOT AS THEY APPEAR. These slaves were the "elect of God," having the Messianic Hope, the Covenant Promises. A glorious future! The world despised them and afflicted them, but God loved and esteemed them. It is well to be numbered among them.

3. FLESHLY EFFORT. Moses made the common mistake of trying to do God's work in his own energy and strength. He failed, as the arm of flesh will always fail. He must wait God's time and God's ways.

4. HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD UNDERSTAND. But they did not. We must not wait for men to understand us in God's work. Those whom God has used have nearly always been misunderstood by those to whom they go and opposed by those whose good they seek. It was so with Jesus, it is so with His disciples.

5. MURDER CANNOT BE HIDDEN IN THE SAND. We must not do evil that good may come. Think of the hidden bodies of Scripture and they will be known to cry from the ground. Sin never is in the will of God and never effects His work.

6. AN UNKNOWN STRANGER FOR 40 YEARS. In this he was like his Lord, who lay hidden and unknown in Nazareth until He began to be about 30 years of age. Most of God's warriors have had a waiting, training, and learning time. God's weapons must be well sharpened before He uses them.

7. HIS CHOICE NOT REGRETTED. When on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses looked on the radiant shining face of Jesus, did he regret that solemn choice in Egypt? The refusal, the choice, the reproach, the suffering, the endurance? No! He must have blessed God a thousand times for the grace given and the wisdom of that step.

Application.

If you have not already done so, *choose Christ.* Forsake the pleasures of sin, the treasures of the world, and cast in your lot with the people of God.

OUTLINE.

Seven Things to be Renounced.

Hidden works of dishonesty, ...	.. 2 Cor. 4. 2
Ungodliness and worldly lusts, ..	.. Titus 2. 12
The old man and his deeds, ..	.. Col. 3. 9
The flesh with its passion and lusts,	.. Gal. 5. 24
The unclean thing, ...	.. 2 Cor. 6. 17
The unequal yoke, ...	.. 2 Cor. 6. 14
The World, ...	.. Gal. 6. 14

STORY 9.

Moses and his Excuses.

Read EXODUS 3, 11-4, 17.

I. **Texts.**

1. " Who am I ? " (3. 11).
2. " What shall I say ? " (3. 13).
3. " They will not believe me " (4. 1).
4. " I am not eloquent " (4. 10).
5. " Send by the hand of him whom thou wilt send " (4. 13).

II. **Main Lesson.** Moses, the reluctant servant, shrinks from the life work to which God had called him. He raises five excuses (as above), which God graciously answers. He is seen as a man of like passions as we are, and from the story we learn the skrinking of the flesh from the work of God and the all-sufficiency of the grace that calls and enables us. A true worker will say with Paul : " I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me " (1 Cor. 15. 10). Yet we must not be disobedient to the heavenly calling and excuse ourselves.

III. **The Story** must be divided into 5 chapters, and each be taken separately. Let us first note the circumstances and the setting. The following facts must be well remembered.

1. MOSES HAD 40 YEARS BEFORE MADE HIS GREAT CHOICE. It is best described in Heb. 11. 24-27. " He refused—chose—esteemed the reproach—had respect to the reward—forsook Egypt—endured." (See last lesson).

2. HE HAD BEEN 40 YEARS A SHEPHERD. It was for this long period " he endured," perhaps often tempted to think his great decision had been a mistake ; but " he saw Him who was invisible," and so endured the long trial.

3. GOD HAS APPEARED TO HIM IN THE BURNING BUSH, and says : " Come and I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth My people out of Egypt " (v. 10).

His life work is before him and he fears.

(1) THE FIRST EXCUSE " Who am I that I should go ? "

Answer : " Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be a token that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

FROM THIS LET US LEARN :

(*a*) *Man's first idea is to look to himself* and his own resources : " Who am I ? " The answer is : Nothing ! So Paul acknowledges. Glorying in his apostleship, he adds " though I be nothing " (2 Cor. 10. 11). He warns all to be of the same mind. " If any man thinketh himself to be something *when he is nothing*, he deceiveth himself." And again : " We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves."

(*b*) *God's grace is sufficient* for all to which He calls us. " Certainly I will be with you."

Compare Isaiah (Isa. 6. 5), Jeremiah (Jer. 1. 6), Gideon (Judges 6. 15). Each in turn realising their insufficiency and each receiving the word of enabling grace. " Go in this thy strength, have not I sent thee ? " " Lo I am with you always."

So Moses learned his first lesson : " Not I, but Christ."

(2) THE SECOND EXCUSE (v. 13). " Behold when I come and say, The God of your fathers have sent me, and they shall say, What is His name ? What shall I say."

Answer : " I AM THAT I AM." " Thou shall say I AM hath sent me unto you. . . . Saying I have surely visited you and seen that which is done to you in Egypt."

FROM THIS LET US LEARN :

(*a*) *What is our message* as servants of God ? It is that God has sent us. " Now then we are ambassadors for Christ " (2 Cor. 5. 20). We must first be sure of this and then be fearless in proclaiming it. If we can say with David (Psa. 116. 16) : " O Lord, truly I am Thy servant," then we may boldly add, " God has sent me." Has He not said, " Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel."

(*b*) *We must know the Power of the Name.* What a wonderful name, " I AM." It means that God is the ETERNAL, UNCHANGING, EVER PRESENT ONE. And the repetition of it, " I am that I am " means : I am (to you) that I am (in My own glorious being). All that the Living God of

Abraham was He is, and all He is, He is to His people. Jesus claimed this Name :

" Before Abraham was I AM " (John 8. 58).

" If ye believe not that I AM ye shall die in your sins " (v. 24), and " When ye have lifted up the Son of Man ye shall know that I AM " (v. 28).

Our message will only be powerful as we know and act in the power of that great Name (see Acts 4. 10-12). There is " None other name," but " the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

(3) THE THIRD EXCUSE (v. 41). " They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice, for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." What a reasonable objection !

Note the answer : Moses is to make them believe by *three great signs.*

(*a*) " *What is that in thine hand ?* " (4. 2-5). Only his shepherd's rod, but cast down it became a serpent, and again once more a rod.

The lesson is simple. Prove that God has sent you by using whatever is in thine hand to the glory of God. Is it a book, a pen, an instrument of work? So consecrate it and its service to God that it will convince men that God has blessed and sent you. The smallest thing may be so used as to show whose we are and whom we serve.

(*b*) " *Put thine hand in thy bosom* " (vv. 6-8). It was leprous. The second time it was clean. " They will believe the voice of the latter sign."

Nothing will convince men of the truth of your message as a life once leprous with sin being made clean. Let them see that your heart and hands have been cleansed and they will believe. A holy life is the best argument.

(*c*) " *Take of the water of the river and pour it upon the dry ground, and it shall become blood* " (v. 9).

Sometimes God permits His servants to execute judgments (Psa. 149. 5-9), as when Peter rebuked Ananias and Sapphira ; and Paul, Elymas. Then sinners believe and fear and turn to the Lord. " To execute upon them the judgments written, this honour have all His saints."

4. THE FOURTH EXCUSE (v. 10). " O my Lord, I am

not eloquent. . . . I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue."

The Answer : " Who hath made man's mouth ? Have not I the Lord ? . . . I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say."

LET US LEARN FROM THIS :

(*a*) *Not to think too much of eloquence* or natural gift. God has fitted our mouth for all He wants us to say. Paul's speech was " contemptible," so his enemies said (2 Cor. 10. 10), and he never asked God for eloquence. He was indeed afraid of it as mere fleshly effort (see 1 Cor. 2. 1-5), but he prayed for *utterance*, a very different thing. Utterance is God speaking through a man—it is a man speaking " as the oracles of God."

(*b*) *Our message must be from the Lord.* " I will teach thee what thou shalt say." The true worker seeks a message, not eloquence.

(5) THE FIFTH EXCUSE. " O Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send." This was equivalent to saying : " Send some one else. Anyone Thou wilt." Here was unbelief—unwillingness and even stubbornness.

The Lord was angry, and appointed Aaron to be Moses' speaker, or spokesman (v. 16). Learn :

(*a*) God will be patient with infirmity, with conscious weakness, but defiance and disobedience incur His just anger.

(*b*) Yet He is gracious, and does not take our service from us.

(*c*) But the honour is often given to another that we might have had.

(*d*) And that other is often a burden and a trial, as Aaron became (see Exod. 32. 22-24 and Numb. 12. 1).

Application.

1. Let us Christians who are called to service cease from self, from excuses. Let us go forth in faith, saying: " Here am I, send me."

2. To all workers : Remember you are nothing, and say : " I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

STORY 10.

Pharaoh and His Compromises

Read EXODUS 8. 8-32 ; 10. 7-11, 24-26.

I. **Texts.**

1. " And he said, To-morrow " (8. 10).
2. " Sacrifice to God in the land " (8. 25).
3. " Ye shall not go very far away " (8. 28).
4. " Go now ye that are men " (10. 11).
5. " Let your flocks and your herds be stayed " (10. 24).

II. **Main Lesson.** Pharaoh (type of Satan, the Prince of this World), king of Egypt (type of this present evil age), seeks to hinder the children of Israel from going out of Egypt, and proposes five different compromises. All of which Moses refuses.

It is a lesson in separation from the world. God would have us to be " Out and out," right out from the world and right out to Christ. No compromise must be allowed.

III. **The Story Told in Five Parts.**

PART 1.—THE FIRST COMPROMISE (8. 10). " And Pharaoh said, To-morrow."

The Second Plague, that of Frogs, was upon the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh sends for Moses to intreat God for its removal, adding : " And I will let the people go that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord " (v. 8). When pressed to know when, He replies, " To-morrow."

LEARN FROM THIS :

(*a*) *The danger of procrastination.* How many never really come out and out for Christ who yet quiet their fears and still their consciences with the pleasing word " To-morrow." But to-morrow never comes. Every day there is a to-morrow, until one, and that day is too late.

(*b*) *That " now " is the day of salvation.* To act while conviction remains is important, because the enemy lulls to sleep and indifference, and the convictions pass away. Act while yet it is to-day.

PART 2.—THE SECOND COMPROMISE (8. 25). " Go ye, sacrifice to God in the land."

The Plague of Frogs had given place to that of Lice, and then to the Swarm of Flies. Again Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron, and suggests that they can serve God in Egypt. To this Moses objects.

(*a*) "*It is not meet so to do*" (v. 26). It is certainly unbecoming of a child of God to try and serve God "in the world," that is, while continuing in the fashions and in conformity with and love of the world.

(*b*) *The sacrifices* (*oxen*) *were the gods of the Egyptians.* There would be trouble, they would be stoned.

The Sacred Bulls of Apis, whose great tombs still remain at Sakkara, and the Cow, sacred to Isis, were worshipped in Egypt. How then could they slay them as burnt offerings to Jehovah without raising a tumult?

The things the world admires and seeks after are the very things the child of God abstains from and sacrifices for the sake of Christ.

(*c*) *Three days' journey* must separate them from Egypt. This means entire and complete separation. As though we said, we must "go the whole way," which implies no return. The break with the world must be definite and for ever. (For definition of the world, see Story 4.)

FROM THIS LEARN.

(*a*) *Any attempt to serve God while continuing "in the world" is a failure.* "Ye cannot serve two masters."

It is sometimes proposed to Christians that by mixing with others and joining in their worldly pleasures they can win them, but this is found unpracticable for the following reason.

The world will only invite and have you *on condition you are silent about Christ*, salvation, death, and judgment. In other words, on the understanding that you cease to be an effective and aggressive Christian. Will you compromise and agree to shut your mouth?

(*b*) *Faithfulness will mean persecution.* We cannot go "physically" out of the world, nor is it God's wish (John 17. 15-18), and we have our work in it, but the world hated Christ and it will hate us if we are faithful. We must be prepared (as Stephen was) for stoning if so is the will of God.

PART 3.—THE THIRD COMPROMISE (8. 28). "Ye shall not go very far away."

The Plague of Flies was removed, but Moses said: "Let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go" (v. 29). But he did again. Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not let them go.

We guess why he would have them "not go very far." He hoped and expected them soon to return.

LEARN FROM THIS:

(*a*) *The world hates "extreme" Christians.* "Be a Christian," it says, "but don't go too far." Why give up everything to Christ? There's no harm in this, in that, and others do it, quite good Christians, too. Don't go too far."

But we are a "peculiar" people, that is not eccentric, for the sake of being so, but because the whole centre and aim of our lives is different.

When two circles have the same centre they never clash, they are *concentric*; but when two circles have different centres they are *eccentric*. That is why faithful Christians clash with the world. Their centre of life is different. They confess: "For to me to live is Christ;" but the world: "For me to live is self." They must clash.

(*b*) *The only true and safe way is "three days' journey."* A complete separation. Read again the story of Lot (Story 4) and see how he vexed his righteous soul and lost all his labours. "Remember Lot's wife." No, it must be right out.

PART 4.—THE FOURTH COMPROMISE (10. 11). "Go now ye that are men and serve the Lord."

Pharaoh, seeing his land destroyed by Locusts, has been angry and defiant, and yet dare not altogether refuse to let them go. His words in verse 10 may be rendered: "Your intentions are evil. Your little ones shall not go." So they were driven out of Pharaoh's presence. How useless to go and leave wives and little ones behind!

LEARN FROM THIS:

(*a*) *That the ideal of Christianity is the Christian home,* where father, mother, and children all love and serve the Lord Christ.

It is sad when a man (like Bunyan's "Christian") must go on pilgrimage alone. How much happier if Christiana and the boys could have started with him.

(*b*) *Pray that "all the house" may go out.* In the beginning we read of several who "believed with all his house." We cannot willingly leave one behind.

(*c*) *A divided household* is a sad thing. Often such are the chief enemies. "A man's foes," Jesus said, "shall be those of his own household." Pray that all yours may come out.

PART 5.—THE FIFTH COMPROMISE (10. 24). "Go ye serve the Lord, only let your flocks and your herds be stayed, and let your little ones also go with you."

Thick darkness had settled on the land, except there was light in the humble hovels of the Israelites (v. 23), and Pharaoh, driven to desperation, makes his final offer: "Leave your property behind." Then he bade them see his face no more (v. 28). But Moses replies:

(*a* They would need their flocks to serve the Lord with.

(*b*) The whole must go, "not a hoof be left behind."

LEARN FROM THIS:

(*a*) *That in full consecration to the Lord we must include "all we have"* (Luke 14. 33). "For where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." If it remains in Egypt our hearts will still be there.

(*b*) *Not a hoof must be left behind.* We must not make a legal bargain with God to give Him a tenth that we may call the rest our own. All must be His, and we, only stewards to lay all of it out to His glory. Some for the home, some for the children, some for the poor, some for the Lord's work—but all His.

(*c*) *We must serve the Lord with it* (v. 26). We know not how, that will be shown us later, but it must be at His disposal.

Application.

Come out and be separate.

Be wholehearted in the full surrender to your Lord.

Admit no compromise.

Story 11.

By the Red Sea

or, The First Song.

Read Exodus 15. 1-19.

I. **Text.** "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously" (Exod. 15. 1).

II. **Main Lesson.** The children of Israel, having been delivered from Egypt, and brought through the Red Sea and having seen their enemies dead on the sea shore, sing their song of triumph. It is the first recorded song in the Bible, and is the first of the songs of salvation that abound in the Scriptures. It teaches us the joy of salvation and how to sing the new song, that God puts into the mouth of His redeemed. Salvation and song go together.

III. **The Setting of the Song.** The children of Israel, after being in Egypt 430 years, are brought out gloriously. So that the song may be called :

1. A Song of Redemption. The Passover lamb has been slain, the blood has been sprinkled upon their houses, the destroyer had passed, and God had saved their firstborn because "He saw the blood." They were a ransomed people—redeemed by blood and power. It is only such can really sing.

2. A Song of Resurrection. They had passed through the sea and the cloud, a figure of death, burial, and resurrection in Christ. It was as though the sea (death) had swallowed them and then yielded up its prey in resurrection.

In 1 Cor. 10. 2 we read : "They were all baptised unto Moses in the sea and in the cloud." So are we baptised into Christ, into His death and resurrection (Rom. 6. 3, 4). We can sing the new song—"I died. I live."

3. A Song of Release. The cruel bondage and slavery of Egypt is passed and gone for ever. Who then should sing as they. So we are "free." Sin shall no more have dominion over us, we are under grace (Rom. 6. 14). O joy of the ransomed, joy of the free !

4. A Song of Rejoicing. Not only in salvation, but in the Lord Himself "The Lord is my song" (v. 2). We love the Lord for what He has done, but more for what He is. We rejoice in His salvation, but we rejoice more in the Lord Himself.

IV. **The Song Itself.**

v. 1. *It is a Song of Triumph.* "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and the rider hath He thrown into the sea."

v. 2. *The three great "S.'s."*—Strength, Song, Salvation. "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." (This note of praise is repeated often in Scripture. It occurs in Psa. 118. 4, Isaiah 12. 2, and in various forms throughout the Word of God.)

v. 3-16. *The Lord is a Man of War.* This note of the song is prophetic. It foretells the triumph of Christ in righteousness over all the earth. Edom, Moab, Canaan (v. 15), all shall fall before Him, and these are only figures of the whole God-opposing forces of the earth.

vv. 11-16. *His character is wonderfully described.*

"Glorious in holiness."
"Fearful in praises."
"Doing wonders."

v. 17. *His blessing for His people.* In mercy He led them forth. He guided them unto the holy habitation. Bringing them in and planting them in the mountain of His inheritance. "To dwell in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thine hands have established."

v. 18. *The Final Triumph.* "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

So the First Song is a survey of the past (triumph and salvation), the present (blessing and rest), the future. The glorious reign of Christ for ever and ever.

V. **Other Lessons from the Song.**

1. All Christian Joy is Based on the Finished Work of Christ Until redeemed and set free from the reign of sin, men cannot sing. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land," said the captives in Babylon,

Prisoners cannot sing. The first song followed deliverance from Egypt.

2. Salvation and Joy are ever Associated. It was so with Israel. It is so with the sinners saved by grace. When the Gospel came, the announcing angel called it "Good tidings of great joy." Wherever it was preached there was great joy, as when Philip preached in Samaria, and with individuals as the Eunuch (Acts 8. 39), the Jailer of Philippi (Acts 16. 34), and many others.

All false religions are gloomy and sad. In Christ is joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3. Christian Joy is Not Excitement. It is the "joy of faith." It is joy "in the Lord." It rejoices in the work of God, believing it, in the present salvation, in Christ, and it is the "joy of hope" and anticipated the coming and future triumph of Christ. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. How different is this from the emotion and excitement of the flesh or the hollow and empty laughter of the world.

4. The Red Sea Triumph is a type of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, as stated above (3. 2), to enter fully into this in experience so as to sing from joy of heart we must "*reckon*" it so in faith, since God has said it, and *act as if it were so*, believing simply and sincerely as those who died with Christ (Col. 3. 3), and as risen with Him; minding no longer earthly things, but setting our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (Col. 3. 1).

5. Singing a Healthy Spiritual Exercise. Perhaps a hundred times comes the command to "Sing unto the Lord." David, in the Psalms, says again and again, "I will sing," exhorts us to "Take a Psalm" (often the best medicine for a sad heart) and sing praises. The filling of the Spirit is attested by "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody with the heart unto the Lord" (Eph. 5. 18-20). "Giving thanks always for all things unto God."

6. Singing a Grand Testimony. When the Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's glory, and "his ascent by which he

went up to the house of the Lord," when the Psalms and Songs of Degrees were sung (Psa. 120. 134), there was no more spirit left in her, and she said, " Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants."

So when others see us happy in Christ and hear us praising the Lord they will be drawn to Him.

7. OUR CHIEF THEME OF JOY AND SONG should not be selfish. Those Christians who are always seeking for excitement (" religious dissipation " it has been called) are not the stable and useful workers, they are out for their own satisfaction. Joy should not be sought as a gratification, it should and will accompany every work of faith and labour of love in Christ. Its chief subject is Christ, His work, His coming, and specially His future glory. " The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." I am not out for joy, but to serve the Lord. I find joy in that service, but my real joy is to come when I see my Lord in His glory.

Application.

1. To THE SINNER. Did you but know God's salvation you would be able to sing for joy of heart.

2. To THE SAINT. Rejoice in the Lord and be so filled with the Spirit that you sing to the Lord.

3. To THE SERVANT. Do not turn aside to seek joy or excitement. Be sober. Work, for the night is coming.

OUTLINE.

A Singing Lesson.

THE TEACHER—The Holy Spirit, ..	Eph. 5. 18, 19
THE SONG BOOK—The Bible.	
WHAT TO SING—The New Song, ..	Psa. 40. 3
WHEN TO SING—Continually, ...	Psa. 41. 1
HOW TO SING—With the Spirit and Understanding	1 Cor. 14. 15
WHY TO SING—For Joy of Heart, ..	Isa. 65. 14
TO WHOM TO SING—The Lord, ...	Eph. 5. 20

STORY 12.

The Waters of Marah

Read EXODUS 15. 22-27.

I. **Text.** "They wandered in the wilderness. . . . Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord and He delivered them" (Psa. 107. 4-6).

II. **Main Lesson.** In distress, we should not murmur, but call on the Name of the Lord. The relief He gave them by the tree cast into the waters making them sweet, was a type or figure of how Christ sweetens every earthly trial.

III. **The Story Told.**

Exod. 15. 22. *The first wilderness journey.* "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea and they went out into the wilderness of Shur."

v. 22. *They go three days without water.* "And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water."

v. 23. *Coming to Marah, they find the water bitter.* "And when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah for they were bitter."

v. 23. *They call the place Marah* (bitter, the same meaning as Miriam and Mary) (see Ruth 1. 20). "Therefore the name of it was called Marah."

v. 24. *The people murmured.* "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?"

v. 25. *Moses calls on God and is shown a tree.* "And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree."

v. 25. *Cast into the waters the tree sweetens them.* "Which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

v. 25. *There a statute was made.* "There He made a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them."

v. 26. *The Promise.* "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God. . . . I will put none of these diseases upon thee. I am the Lord that healeth thee."

v. 27. *They find wells and palms at Elim.* "They came to Elim where were twelve wells of waters and three score and ten palm trees, and they encamped by the waters."

IV. Further Lessons from the Story.

1. THE ENTHUSIASM AND JOY OF THE RED SEA triumph soon passed away. Feelings, however exalted, are no resting place for faith. Unless the faith has really found rest in Christ *firmly established upon His Word* (which never changes), it will prove unabiding and unavailing in the day of trial. Hence the reaction after many an exciting mission or holiness convention.

2. UPS AND DOWNS IN WILDERNESS LIFE. God has never promised us an easy life. Sometimes Marah, and at others Elim. Thirst or wells and palms—all are sent to prove us.

3. HE PROVED THEM. All faith or profession of it is sooner or later put to the test. Trials are sent not to distress us, but to test us, our sincerity and our reality. They show what is in our hearts. The real man is what he is under trial.

4. MURMURING. It will be found in the history of Israel that God bore very patiently with the murmuring of His people. Three days before they were shouting in triumph, now they are abusing Moses and saying in unbelief: "What shall we drink?" There is no rebuke from God, but later when they used insulting language: "Wherefore is it that thou hast brought us out of Egypt to kill us and our children with thirst?" (17. 3), they are rebuked, and later when they spoke against God chastisement fell on them and many died (Num. 21. 5-6).

The habit of murmuring will bring judgment. Faith and complaining cannot go together.

5. WHAT SHALL WE DRINK? This reminds of the gracious teaching of Christ in Matthew 6. 31, "Take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? . . . for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

6. GRACE SWEETENS EVERY TRIAL. This is the true lesson of the story, the secret of peace and Christian content. The Father knows. His grace is sufficient. He will not fail thee. So faith rejoices in grace. We have not only peace, but even joy in trial. *We glory in tribulations*, since

we know that they are sent not only to prove, but to bless. "The love of God is thereby shed abroad in our hearts." We learn the love and know the sufficiency of Christ in every trial (Rom. 5. 35).

7. THE TREE CAST INTO THE WATER. Without straining for typical meaning, we should remember that Christ is often likened to a tree or branch (Jer. 23. 5; Isa. 4. 2; Zech. 3. 8; 6. 12). He was cut off and cast into the bitter waters of death for us. Surely then we may think of Him as the tree that sweetens every bitter lot.

"O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown."

Or some love to think of the Cross as the tree. For we have peace through the blood of the Cross and rest through His death.

8. THE BITTER MADE SWEET, reminds us of the first miracle of our Lord, when the water was made wine. The great truth runs through Scripture that God's salvation is the turning for us of our sorrow into gladness, our darkness into light.

9. A UNIFORM FAITH. Let the story teach us then to have a more uniform and firm faith in God and in His Word. So that, come storm or calm, bitter or sweet, we shall not be troubled for our faith rests not on our feelings or experiences, but on His faithfulness and His unchanging Word.

Application.

1. Has Christ so come into our lives that the bitter has been made sweet?

2. Let us not grieve the Spirit of God by unbelief and murmuring.

OUTLINE.

Miracles in Water.

Red Sea divided—Jordan divided—Marah healed—Elisha heals waters (2 Kings 2. 21). Valley filled (2 Kings 3. 20). Water from the Smitten Rock—Water turned to wine (see p. 169).

STORY 13.

The Golden Calf

Read EXODUS 32. 1-28.

I. **Text.** "Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them, as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** The extraordinary enormity of this sin is a lesson on the weakness and wickedness of the natural heart, even after the most solemn dealings with God. The nature of idolatry is shown. It will ever bring down the judgment of God. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

III. **The Setting of the Story.**

The people of Israel were encamped round Sinai. They had received the Ten Commandments (chap. 20), and had entered into a most solemn covenant by blood to observe them (chap. 24). Moses had gone up to the Mount to meet God and had been absent 40 days.

IV. **The Story Told.**

Chap. 32. 1. *The people, not knowing what had become of Moses, call on Aaron to make them gods to go before them.* "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, they gathered together unto Aaron and said, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses we wot not what is become of him."

v. 2, 4. *Aaron asks for their golden earrings and from them fashioned a golden calf (such as the Egyptians worshipped).* "And Aaron said, Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives and sons and daughters. . . . and the people brought them to Aaron, and he received them and fashioned it with a graving tool after he had made it a molten calf."

v. 4. *They blasphemously ascribe the Exodus to it.* "And they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

v. 5. *Aaron ordains regular worship to it.* "Aaron . . . built an altar before it and made proclamation, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord."

v. 6. *They observe the feast in an idolatrous way.* "They rose up early . . . offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

vv. 7-10. *God tells Moses of it, and threatens to destroy the people and make Moses a great nation.* "The Lord said unto Moses, Go get thee down for My people . . . have corrupted themselves, . . . they have made them a molten image and have worshipped it. . . . I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiffnecked people. Now therefore let Me alone . . . that I may consume them and I will make of thee a great nation."

vv. 11-14. *Moses pleads for the people and they are spared.* "And Moses besought the Lord his God. . . . Wherefore should the Egyptian say, For mischief did He bring them out. . . . Turn from Thy fierce wrath and repent the evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom Thou swearest. And the Lord repented of the evil He thought to do unto the people."

vv. 15-18. *Moses and Joshua discuss the scene as they come down.* "Joshua said, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the noise (of war), but the noise of them that sing do I hear."

v. 19. *Moses breaks the Tables of the Law.* "As soon as he saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands and break them beneath the mount."

v. 20. *He ground the golden calf to powder, strawed it on the water, and made the people drink it.* "And he took the calf and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it."

v. 21-24. *Aaron makes a feeble apology.* "Moses said to Aaron, What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought so great a sin on them? Aaron said, They are set on mischief. They said, Make us gods. I said, Whosoever hath any gold let them break it off . . . then I cast it into the fire and there came out this calf.'"

v. 25-29. *Moses calls for volunteers and tells them to slay the idolaters. The sons of Levi respond and* 3000 *perish.*

"And Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered unto him. Put every man his sword by his side and go in and out from gate to gate and slay. . . . And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."

V. **Other Solemn Lessons from the Story.**

1. GOODNESS AS THE EARLY DEW. The quick way in which these people turned from the Living God to idols teaches us the weakness of man's heart by nature. Well might Hosea (6. 4) complain, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew it goeth away." Let us remember our childhood's history, and remember how this is so. Only grace can change the heart and give stability and continuance.

2. THE ENORMITY OF THE OFFENCE. Well might Moses say: "Oh this people have sinned a great sin." It was more deeply guilty because:

(*a*) Of *the wonderful deliverance* from Egypt they had been through.

(*b*) The Law given so recently from Sinai *expressly forbade the worship of other gods* and the making of graven images.

(*c*) They had entered into *a solemn covenant ratified by blood* to keep the laws they had received (see 24. 3 and 8; Heb. 9. 19-21).

(*d*) *They blasphemously ascribed their deliverance from Egypt to the idol.* "These be the gods that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

(*e*) *The wicked indulgence and ungodly behaviour that accompanied it.* The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. The people were naked unto their shame among their enemies.

3. THE NATURE OF IDOLATRY. These are the features of idolatry of which there is such strong condemnation in Scripture.

(*a*) *It insults God, by misrepresenting Him.* This is the most frequent indictment of it in the Bible. Rom. 1. 23: "*They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an*

image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts (as this calf) *and creeping things.*"

See also Isaiah 40. 18 : " *To whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him. The workman maketh a graven image,*" etc.

Images or pictures of God, of Christ, and of so-called saints invariably drag down the idea of God, His Son, and His saints to something weak or sentimental or grotesque. It is an awful thing to misrepresent the Holy God either to ourselves or to others, and specially to children.

The heathen have so degenerated in their ideas of God that their idols generally have a beastly conception, often of the most debased kind.

(*b*) *These conceptions of God are made use of by demons to corrupt and destroy the souls of men.* " What shall I say then ? That the idol is anything ? But I say that the things the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons " (1 Cor. 10. 19, 20, R.V.).

(*c*) *Idolatry is nearly always accompanied by licentiousness.* Their priests are generally sensual and depraved, indulging every passion under the guise of religion. The people hold feasts to their idols which are times of disgraceful and shameless indulgence.

" The people sat down to eat and drink " (usually to excess), and when excited and inflamed " rose up to play " —such " play " as was a shame in the eyes of the onlookers (v. 25).

Anyone who has witnessed the excesses of the Mid-Lent Carnivals in Romish places will know that degenerate Christianity is no exception. Think, too, of the carnal indulgence of many at Christmas time.

(*d*) *Idolatry is the turning of the heart from God to some other object.* It is therefore called " covetousness " (Col. 3. 5). It is the desire, the affections, and the energy withdrawn from God and given to other objects.

The worldling's life history may well be summed up in the words : " They sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play " (or dance—" when he saw the dancing," v. 19). Such a one is a pure idolater. The golden idol of pleasure has robbed God of all His glory in that life.

4. MOSES' HOLY INDIGNATION. The drastic way in which Moses dealt with the sin of the people is instructive. He had pleaded for the people and obtained mercy for them, but he made some a solemn example of wrath.

(*a*) *He brake the Tables of the Covenant.* We are not told why, but surely as a token that they had already been flagrantly broken by the idolaters. What a testimony against them were those broken stones at the foot of Mount Sinai.

(*b*) *He made them swallow their idol,* after he had burnt and ground it to powder. Thus he showed them his contempt for their "gods"—their utter stupidity and inability to help either themselves or them.

(*c*) *He called for swift judgment upon the most licentious ones,* who, naked and drunken, sought to continue their orgy before his eyes.

May we learn "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and never spare it, but make a full end of it. No other repentance avails. Sin must not be spared.

5. AARON, "THE SAINT OF THE LORD." The feeble acquiescence of Aaron, the anointed High Priest of Jehovah, in this awful blasphemy is a reminder that none, not even the most exalted, is out of danger. Only as we are kept by the power of God through faith are we secure from the grossest evil. "Let him not return unto folly," is a word for every child of God.

6. GRIEVING THE SPIRIT. We must not forget in all this that God loved this people, that He had brought them out of bondage, fed them with manna, and given the water from the rock, and guided them by the pillar of fire and cloud. Do we wonder, then, that it is written: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation and I said, it is a people that do err in their heart for they have not known My ways." Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit.

Application.

Beware of idolatry.

Keep heart-whole with Christ.

STORY 14.

Two Slave Stories

Read EXODUS 21. 1-6; DEUT. 23. 15-16.

I. **Texts.** "I love my master . . . I will not go out free" (Exod. 21. 5). "Thou shalt not deliver up the servant which is escaped to thee" (Deut. 23. 15).

II. **Main Lesson.** God taught us to be merciful. The slave who loved his master and did not desire freedom, was not to be compelled to go. The escaped slave was not to be given up to his master.

There are here two lessons of Christ to be learned.

(*a*) His servants do not want to go free.

(*b*) He never gives up one who flees to Him.

III. **The Stories Told.**

1. THE HEBREW SERVANT.

Exod. 21. 2. *Was to be allowed to go free in the seventh year.* "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him."

v. 4. *Where the wife and children are the master's property he must go alone.* "If his master hath given him a wife and she have born him sons and daughters, the wife and her children shall be her masters', and he shall go out by himself."

vv. 5, 6. *If he will not go because of his love to his master, wife, and children, then he must go before the judges.* "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges."

v. 6. *His ear is to be bored through to the door, as evidence of his decision and choice.* "He shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever."

2. THE RUNAWAY SLAVE.

Deut. 23. 15. *An escaped slave must not be given up to his master.* "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee."

v. 16. *He is to live with them.* "He shall dwell with thee, even among you."

v. 16. *He may choose his own place.* "In that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best."

v. 16. *He is not to be oppressed.* "Thou shall not oppress him."

III. **The Bible and Slavery.** Sometimes surprise is expressed that the Bible should countenance slavery. But this surprise will be removed when the whole teaching on the subject is considered. It will be seen that the Law regulated most mercifully what the nation at that time was not sufficiently prepared to abolish. They did not keep the merciful regulations and would certainly have rebelled against abolition. God did not therefore put this upon them, because of their hardness of heart. When the Gospel came it wrought by grace what the law had not enforced and slavery was voluntarily abandoned. Grace works by love and not by constraint.

Note then the following points:

1. Slavery among the Hebrews themselves was expressly forbidden (Lev. 25. 39-43).
2. Except for debt or theft (Exod. 22. 3).
3. Then it was for six years only. In the seventh year the slave went free (Exod. 21. 2).
4. Foreign slaves from among the condemned nations might be held, but must be mercifully treated (Lev. 25. 46).
5. They might at any time be redeemed (Lev. 25. 48).
6. If not redeemed, they went out free at the jubilee (Lev. 25. 54-55).
7. An escaped slave was not to be given up to his master (Deut. 23. 15).
8. When the Gospel came, slaves who were converted were received as "brethren beloved" (Philemon 16) into the churches.
9. The love of Christ led men at first to esteem it a good work to free their slaves.
10. Ultimately the nations learned the wisdom and justice of this, and paid large sums to redeem all their slaves and abolished the system.

IV. More Lessons from the Stories.

1. CHRIST A GOOD MASTER. While the service of Christ is perfect freedom, and the believer is called unto liberty, the child of God delights to call Jesus His Master, and himself the slave of Jesus Christ, as Paul so often does in his epistles.

We remember the story of the man who, out of compassion, bought a slave and gave him his liberty. The slave at once, falling at his feet and begging to be allowed to serve for love, the one who had redeemed him.

2. HIS SERVANTS LOVE THEIR MASTER AND WILL NOT GO OUT FREE. The Lord's service is all voluntary love service. There is no law to bind them, they are free to go, but love constrains them to live unto Him (2 Cor. 5. 14, 15).

We remember Miss Havergal's beautiful hymn (Golden Bells, 484) :

I love, I love my Master,
I will not go out free,
For He is my Redeemer:
He paid the price for me. . . .
Rejoicing and believing, henceforth my song shall be:
"I love, I love my Master, I will not go out free."

3. THE BORED EAR is a beautiful figure of "full surrender," and of the acceptance of God and the sealing of the Holy Spirit whereby I become Christ's for ever and ever.

The expression, "My ear hast thou opened," is used of Christ as denoting his perfect submission and obedience to the Father, that obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross that drew forth His Father's love (John 10. 17).

It is found in Isaiah 50. 5 : "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." And again in Psalm 40. 6 : "Mine ear hast Thou opened (*margin*, "digged")."

There is perhaps here an allusion to the "bored" ear of Exodus 21. 6.

4. THE JOY OF LOVE SERVICE. His servants sing for joy of heart. They reckon it their highest privilege to serve the Lord Jesus, their joy in it is unbounded, their prayer (G.B., No. 439) :

"Dismiss me not Thy service, Lord,
But train me for Thy will,
And I will ask for no reward
Except to serve Thee still."

Their hope hereafter is to be among those of whom it is said: "His servants shall serve Him."

5. THE LORD JESUS A REFUGE. The runaway slave must not be delivered up to his master. The master, by being so unmerciful as to drive him to flight, has forfeited all claim upon him.

The Lord's commands are all messages from His own heart. He asks us to be what He is Himself—full of compassion and very merciful. Those who flee to Him are never given up. Here is good matter for preaching the Gospel of grace.

6. RECEIVED AMONG THEM. "He shall dwell with thee." So the sinner fleeing to Christ is accepted in Christ, and is added to the company of His saints. They are to receive Him as Christ received them when they fled for refuge to Him. So Paul bade Philemon receive the runaway slave Onesimus "as a brother beloved."

7. WHERE IT LIKETH HIM BEST. The accepted sinner is made happy and contented. There must be no discontented saints. In Christ there is for the regenerate soul all that "liketh him best."

8. HE MUST NOT OPPRESS. Such is the law of the house of God. Where love reigns it will be so. "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because the Lord is the avenger of all such as we also have forewarned you" (1 Thess. 4. 6).

Application.

1. Is our love to Christ such that we will not go out free? Do we desire the "bored ear."

2. Let the oppressed sinner flee to Christ from his cruel task-master. He will not give him up.

3. Let us be merciful and receive one another.

(For Outline "SLAVE" see p. 82.)

STORY 15.

Moses Veils His Shining Face

Read EXODUS 34. 29-35 and 2 COR. 3. 13-18.

I. **Text.** "We use great plainness of speech, and not as Moses, who put a veil over his face" (1 Cor. 3. 12, 13).

II. **Main Lesson.** Contact with the Living God causes the face to shine. But the glory under the law was only temporary and passed away. So Moses put on a veil, so that the people should not detect that the glory was fading. In Christ is greater glory, and permanent.

III. **The Story Told.**

Exod. 34. 29. *Moses, coming down from Mount Sinai with the Law, did not know that his face shone.* "It came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him."

v. 30. *Aaron and the people are afraid to draw near.* "When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him."

v. 31. *Moses calls them and talks with them* (he had not the veil on then, v. 33). "And Moses called unto them, and Aaron, and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him, and Moses talked with them."

v. 32. *He gives them all the commandment of the Lord.* "He gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai."

v. 33. *And when (not "till," R.V.) he had done speaking with them he veiled his face.* "And when Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face."

v. 34. *He took off the veil when he went in to God, and when he spoke with the people.* "But when Moses went in before the Lord he took the veil off until he came out. And he came out and spake unto the children of Israel."

v. 35. *They see the shining of his face.* "And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses that the skin of Moses face

shone, and Moses put the veil upon his face again until he went in to speak with Him."

IV. The New Testament Explanation.

2. Corinthians 3. 12-18. "*Seeing then we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could* (R.V., should) *not stedfastly look on the end of that which is abolished* (R.V., was passing away): *but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away at the reading of the Old Testament* (R.V., covenant); *which veil is done away in Christ.*

"*But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.*

"*Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.*"

FROM THIS WE LEARN:

1. That the Law was TEMPORARY, and never intended to be the permanent ground of our relationship to God. Its glory was great, but FADING, and destined to pass away.

Note. Distinguish between the Law as a ground of covenant relationship (this it could never be) and as instruction in righteousness which it remains to the Christian.

2. THAT THE GLORY ON MOSES' FACE ILLUSTRATED THIS. It faded away.

3. THAT THE ISRAELITES DID NOT DISCERN THIS, but thought the Law was permanent, and all God intended. They were too foolish and blinded by unbelief to see that "grace," and not "law," was what they needed.

4. BECAUSE OF THIS, MOSES VEILED HIS FACE SO THAT THEY SHOULD NOT SEE THE FADING OF THE GLORY. He allowed them to think the Law was their hope, so that it might do its full work in their hearts (that is, to show them their sinful state and the exceeding sinfulness of sin).

5. THE JEW STILL HOPES IN THE LAW. The veil is still on his unbelieving heart

6. IT CAN ONLY BE REMOVED BY HIS TURNING TO CHRIST. Then he will learn that the Law could not save; was only temporary, and as a "hope" was passing away.

7. WE, AS MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE, DO NOT VEIL THE TRUTH, but use great plainness of speech, and as the Spirit reveals to our unveiled faces the glory of Christ we are changed into the same image.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE GLORY OF THE LAW. Because the commandment can never be our Saviour, we must not despise it. It is the reflection of God's character (love and truth), and His moral requirement from men. It is the way of material contentment and happiness on earth. If men kept the Commandments there would be no stealing, no adultery, no disobedience to parents, no army, no police, no prisons would be needed. Think of it !

2. THE LAW DESCRIBED. It is called by three names.

(*a*) *The letter* (2 Cor. 3. 6) *that kills.* For the more I try with my sinful fallen heart to keep the Commandment as it should be kept from the heart, the more I see my hopelessly sinful and lost estate, and my hopes die and perish.

(*b*) *The ministration of death* (2 Cor. 3. 7). As one great preacher said : " I preached morality till there was not a moral man left in the place." Prohibition provokes. Sin is " revived " and " abounds " by being forbidden (see Rom. 7. 5-13).

(*c*) *The ministration of condemnation* (2 Cor. 3. 9). For every law condemns the breach of it, and those whose hope is in their law-keeping are hopelessly condemned.

3. THE " GLORY THAT EXCELLETH " (2 Cor. 3. 10). The glory of Grace is seen in the finished work of Christ, in the free gift of salvation, in the glorious gift of the Holy Spirit, and in His gracious ministry of Christ to the soul. How exceeding in glory ! How excellent in majesty !

4. THE PEOPLE FEAR THE SHINING FACE. Unsaved men are always afraid of holiness. When Stephen's face shone they could not bear it, but stoned him to death.

The enmity of the world is on this ground. They hated Christ because He told them the truth. Only the broken and contrite heart welcomes the searching light of His face.

5. THE UNVEILED HEART AND FACE. When the sinner

turns to Christ (Jew or Gentile) the veil of unbelief and natural darkness (blindness and hardness) disappear, and he can see the glory of Christ and His all-sufficiency as Saviour, Guide, Keeper, and Friend.

6. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IS SEEN IN THE MIRROR. That is the Gospel (as contrasted with the Law), or in the Word of God which brings the knowledge of the Gospel to us.

How many have found Christ by listening to the Gospel, by reading the Word of God. As they heard, they lived, they received the Holy Ghost (Gal. 3. 2), and were born from above.

7. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT brings two blessings.

(1) *Liberty.* Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

(2) *Transfiguration.* We beholding, are changed into the same image. (Changed, same word as "transfigured" and "transformed," Matt. 17. 2; Rom. 12. 2).

8. "GREAT PLAINNESS OF SPEECH." The Gospel preacher speaks out. He warns the legalist that he cannot rest on or be saved by the Law. He bids him turn to Christ that the veil may be removed.

Application.

1. TO THE SINNER. The Law can kill and condemn; it can never save or give hope. Therefore flee to Chirst.

2. TO THE SAINT. Look much in the mirror, that you may see the glory of Christ and be changed.

3. TO THE SERVANT. Use great plainness of speech.

OUTLINES.

Wonderful Faces.

MOSES—Whose face shone,	.. ..	Exod. 34. 29
THE ANGEL—Very terrible,	.. ..	Judges 13. 6
STEVEN—Like an angel's,	.. ..	Acts 6. 17
THE LORD—Like the Sun,	.. ..	Rev. 1. 16
Full of the Glory of God,	..	2 Cor. 4. 6

STORY 16.

The Scapegoat

Read LEVITICUS 16.

I. **Text.** "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited" (Lev. 16. 22).

II. **Main Lesson.** The sinner's guilt is, after identification with Christ, removed from him and remembered no more. The scapegoat is God's chosen type of how sin, having been atoned for, is removed from the sinner, so that he may enjoy all that for which Christ died.

A lesson in imputation (Isa. 53. 5, 6).

III. **The Story Told.** As it is long, let us divide the chapter into paragraphs and thus learn the story.

Lev. 16. 29. The Great Day of Atonement was to be kept once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month.

vv. 1-4. Aaron was never to go within the veil, except on this occasion. Dressed in white, and having washed, he was to bring a bullock and a ram.

vv 5, 6. Of the congregation he was to take two kids and one ram. The bullock he offered for himself.

vv. 7-10. *Lots were cast on the two goats.* One for the Lord, the other for the scapegoat. The first was offered as a sin offering. The second presented alive.

vv. 11-14. *Aaron entered the Holy of Holies* with the blood of the bullock (for himself) and with incense, and sprinkled the blood on and seven times before the mercy seat.

vv. 15-19. *He then took in the blood of the goat* (for the congregation) and sprinkled it in the same way. Then he sprinkled the holy place and the altar.

vv. 20-22. *Aaron laid his hands on the head of the live goat,* and confessed the people's sins, putting them on the head of the goat.

The goat was sent into the wilderness, and bore upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited.

v. 34. *It was an everlasting statute* to make atonement for Israel for all their sins once a year.

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE HOLINESS OF GOD. The veil that hung before the Holy of Holies in which was the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, and shut out every one from the Divine Presence, teaches us that God is so holy that no sinner in his sins can approach Him or stand in His presence.

When Aaron's own two sons, Nadab and Abihu, attempted (probably under the influence of drink, 10. 9) to do so, fire came out from the Lord and devoured them. The way into the Holiest was not yet open (Heb. 9. 8).

2. THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION. Every year this national public convocation was held, and, as we are told in Hebrews 10. 3 :

(1) *There was remembrance made of sins.* They must never forget their sinnership and their need of mercy.

(2) *A yearly illustration of sin put away.* In Hebrews 9. 7 we read that the High Priest went into the Holiest alone, not without blood, which he "presents" (not "offers," for the offering had been made at the brazen altar), for the sins of the people, and then the scapegoat bore the sins away.

3. THE REPETITION EVERY YEAR of the same thing was necessary because it was only a type : "For the blood of bulls and of goats can never take away sins" (Heb. 10. 4). Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep at the dedication of the temple, but they did not really put away one sin. They were but figures of the true.

4. THE ONE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, offered "once for all," and never to be repeated, did three things :

(*a*) It "*justified*" from all things (Rom. 5. 9).

(*b*) It "*sanctified*" all who believe (Heb. 10. 10).

(*c*) It "*perfected for ever*" them that are sanctified (Heb. 10. 14).

5. THE BLOOD SPRINKLED ON THE MERCY SEAT was the evidence of a finished sacrifice which had been made at the Brazen Altar, taken into God's presence. It typifies Christ, who, having offered His one great sacrifice at Calvary, entered "by virtue of His blood" (Heb. 9. 12),

once for all into the Holiest, and is now our Propitiation there (1 John 2. 2).

Be careful not to quote Hebrews 9. 12 wrongly. Jesus did not enter *with* His own Blood, but by virtue of (" by ") it into Heaven. When He went to Heaven He had no blood to carry in His hands, but they were outstretched in blessing. He has certainly not shed any there since. No, His atoning work was finished on earth.

6. THE SPRINKLED BLOOD turned the Throne of God from a Throne of Judgment into a Throne of Grace, or " Mercy Seat."

Since Jesus died, God has proclaimed a day of grace. Sinners are now invited to come to the Throne of Grace to find mercy (Heb. 4. 16).

7. TWO ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF CHRIST. The two goats on the Day of Atonement represent One Christ.

The first showed *how God was satisfied.* The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat evidenced to Him the finished sacrifice. The other (the scapegoat) shows *how the sinner is satisfied*, for he sees that God has put all his sins on Christ, the Sin-bearer.

It is a graphic and grand picture of imputation. Aaron confessing over and laying the sins upon the goat's head reminds us that the guilt of our sins was imputed or laid to the charge of Christ, who, by His atoning death, bore them all away.

" God laid our sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bore them all, and frees us
From the accursed load."

8. IDENTIFICATION. The type may be viewed in another way. Again the two goats are One Christ, the one Christ in death, the other Christ in resurrection. The goat that died is Christ in His death, obtaining mercy for us by His blood. The scapegoat is Christ in His resurrection, and we who learn what He has done in death come to Him, the Living, Risen One, and becoming identified by faith with Him, see all our guilt carried away, and find our consciences relieved.

A very solemn lesson is: We may know that Christ has died, that He has returned to the Father, but may refuse to

" . . . lay our hand
On that dear head of Thine,"

in identification with Him as our Substitute and Sin-Bearer, and so may remain yet in our sins.

There is no substitution until there is identification.

Application.

1. To the sinner: Make haste to Christ, and lay your hand in faith on Him.

2. To the saint: Rejoice to see the guilt removed.

OUTLINES.

The Precious Blood.

BLOTS OUT SIN, ...	1 John 1. 7
BRINGS TO GOD, ...	1 Peter 3. 18
BESTOWS PEACE, ...	Col. 1. 20
BEGETS VICTORY, ...	Rev. 12. 4.

Seven Substitutionary Words in Isaiah 53.

Wounded for our transgressions, etc., ...	v. 5
Iniquities laid on Him, ...	v. 6
Led as a Lamb to the slaughter, ...	v. 7
Stricken for people's transgression, ...	v. 8
His soul made an offering for sin, ...	v. 10
Poured out His soul unto death, ...	v. 12
Bare the sin of many, ...	v. 12

SLAVE.

THE BELIEVER A SLAVE OF CHRIST.

Satisfied with Him.
Looking unto Him.
Accepted in Him.
Victory by Him.
Eternity with Him.

STORY 17.

The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

NUMBERS 16. 1-50.

I. **Text.** "They perished in the gainsaying of Core" (Jude 11).

II. **Main Lesson.** Lawlessness, which is sin in individuals, becomes rebellion in companies. Rebellion against appointed authority is ever visited by judgment.

This rebellion may be regarded as typical of the great apostasy when man will seek to throw off all fear of God and submission to Christ under the Antichrist.

III. **The Story Told.** It is a long chapter, and therefore can only be stated shortly.

Numbers 10. 1, 2. *The leaders of the rebels were: Korah, the Levite, and Dathan, Abiram, and On, three Reubenites.* "Now Korah, etc., took men and rose up before Moses."

v. 2. *Two hundred and fifty princes join them.* "Two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, and they gathered themselves to go against Moses and against Aaron."

v. 3. *Their complaint.* "Ye take too much on yourselves, all the congregation are holy. The Lord is among them, wherefore then lift ye yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

vv. 4, 5. *Moses falls on his face and appeals to God.* "When Moses heard it he fell on his face . . . saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are His and who is holy."

vv. 6-11. *He challenges Korah and the Levites.* "This do; Take your censers and put fire in them before the Lord. . . . Ye take too much on yourselves, ye sons of Levi.... Seek ye the priesthood also?"

v. 12. *Moses then calls out the Reubenites.* "Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram."

vv. 12-14. *They refuse to come, and reproach Moses insolently.* "We will not come up. Is it a small thing that

thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself prince over us ? . . . Thou hast not brought us into the land. . . . Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men ? "

v. 15. *Moses' just wrath.* " Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not their offering. I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them."

vv. 16-18. *Moses calls on Korah to stand in the door of the Tabernacle with Moses and Aaron.* " Take every man his censer, put incense in them. They stood in the door of the Tabernacle with Moses and Aaron. . . . Korah gathered all the congregation against them."

v. 19. *The glory of God appears.* " The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation."

vv. 20-27. *God bids Moses and Aaron separate themselves that He may consume the rebels.* " They fell on their faces and said, O God, the god of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation ?"

vv. 23-27. *The congregation is warned to go away. Moses goes to Dathan and Abiram and bids the people get up from them. They do so, and the Reubenites stand at their tent doors.* " So they gat up from the Tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram on every side. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives and their sons and their little children."

vv. 28-30. *Moses gives a sign. If the earth open her mouth and swallow them up ye shall know they have provoked the Lord.* " Hereby ye shall know, if these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me, but if the Lord make a new thing and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, . . . then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord."

vv. 31-34. *The earth opens and swallows them.* " The ground clove asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up."

v. 35. *A fire follows and destroys the Levites.* " There came a fire from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

v. 36. *Their censers are taken up and made into a covering for the altar* " The Lord spake, Take up the censers

out of the burning, for they are hallowed. They shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. . . . They were made broad plates for a covering of the altar."

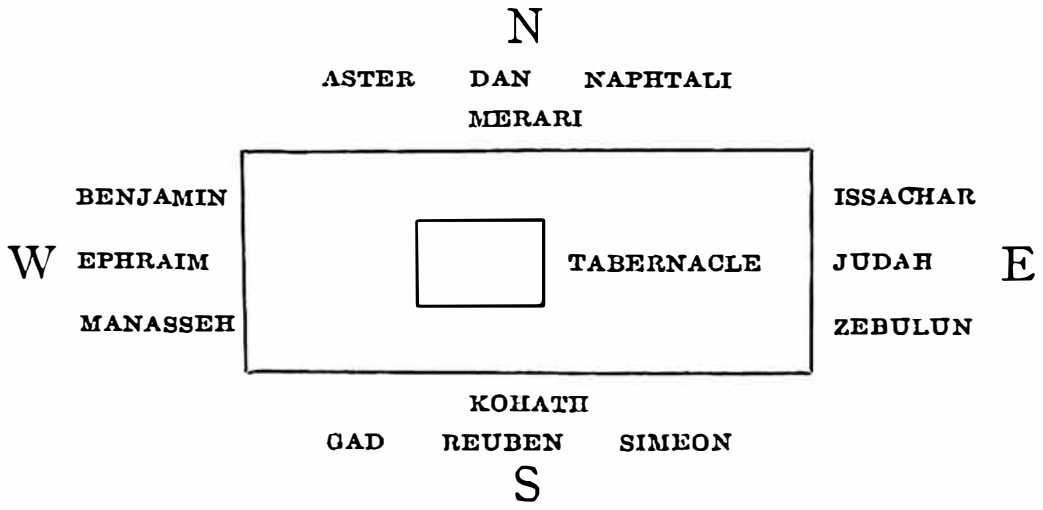
vv. 41-46. *The glory of God appears and a plague breaks out.* "The congregation murmured. Ye have killed the people of the Lord. Behold . . . the glory of the Lord appeared and the Lord said, Get up . . . that I may consume them in a moment."

vv. 46-50. *Aaron makes atonement standing between the living and the dead, and the plague is stayed.* "Moses said to Aaron, Take an censer and put fire therein from off the altar. Make an atonement . . . the plague is begun. Aaron . . . stood between the dead and the living and the plague was stayed."

v. 49. 14,700 *die of plague, in addition to those who perished in the rebellion.* "Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah."

IV. Further Lessons from the Story.

1. THE POSITION OF THE REBELS IN THE CAMP. If you turn to Numbers 2 you will see how the camp was arranged. The sons of Levi were close around the Tabernacle, and the tribes in order around thus :



From this it will be seen that the sons of Levi, the Kohathites (of which Korah was a prince), were close to the camp of Reuben on the S. side.

When, therefore, the Levites went to the door of the Tabernacle on the E., they left the Reubenites on the S. standing by their tents.

2. THE REASON OF THE REBELLION. Korah was a cousin of Moses and Aaron (who were also Levites), his father was Izhar, younger brother of Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron (Exod. 6. 18).

Probably jealousy moved him. Why should Aaron, and not he, be a priest? Morover, the chief of the Kohathites, Elizaphan (3. 30), had been chosen from a younger branch of the family, that of another uncle, Uzziel (3. 27).

Then the Reubenites were children of Jacob's first-born, and they had been displaced in favour of Judah, to whom the honour of leadership had been given. Hence their discontent.

3. THREEFOLD JUDGMENT. It will be noted that the calamity was in three stages. First, *the earth opened* and swallowed up the Reubenites who were at their tents on the S. side of the Tabernacle. Then *fire consumed Korah and the Levites* at the Tabernacle door on the E. side, and then *the plague* broke out among the people.

So terrible was the manifested wrath of God on rebellion.

4. JUDGMENT IS FRUITFUL OF GOOD. We must never attach either malice of passion to God's wrath. God as truly loves when He executes judgment as at other times To make striking examples that men may fear is ever the wise providence of God. To record such judgments for all time is gracious, that we may learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The lives thus swiftly taken from the earth will by their lesson save multitudes from the like fate. Judgment is never without mercy when viewed in its right proportion. Let us then never rashly impute harshness to God, but ponder His ways and learn wisdom.

5. A LESSON ON ATONEMENT. The fire that had consumed the sacrifice upon the altar was used to kindle the sacred incense—a type of *the intercession of Christ based upon His finished work.* He is our Propitiation (1 John 2. 2). He saves because He ever lives to make intercession (Heb. 7. 25).

6. "BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING." This very striking expression should be used to impress upon the hearers the value of Christ's atoning work.

See Aaron standing in his robes of glory and beauty with the incense rising silently from his hands, and pale death standing arrested before it, and show how nothing is between the sinner and death but the Lord Jesus and His precious Blood and glorious intercession.

7. THE BRAZEN CENSERS MADE A MEMORIAL. God wished the effect of this awful judgment to remain. So the censers rescued from the fire are made into a permanent reminder, being beaten into a covering for the altar.

God frequently instituted memorials.

Here are seven such :

(1) His great Name, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exod. 3. 15).

(2) The Passover day (Exod. 12, 14 ; 13. 9).

(3) The Record of the Victory over Amalek (Ex. 17. 14).

(4) The Stones in the Ephod and on the Shoulders of the High Priest (Exod. 28. 12).

(5) The Blowing of Trumpets (Lev. 23. 24).

(6) The Stones from Jordan (Josh. 4. 7).

(7) The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11. 24, 25).

V. **Application.**

1. Fear to sin, fear rebellion even in heart against God.

2. Fear God, who is terrible in judgment.

3. Rejoice in and take shelter under the atoning Blood of Christ.

4. Remember He ever lives to intercede, and can save to the uttermost.

OUTLINE.

FROM THIS STORY LEARN :

The WILL of God—"Even our sanctification."
The WRATH of God—Rom. 1. 18, against all sin.
The WAYS of God—In Righteousness (4. 3, 4).
The WORK of Christ—In Atonement (4. 5).
In Intercession (4. 6).
The WITNESS of the Spirit in Scripture—The sacred memorial (4. 7).

LESSON 18.

Miriam's Leprosy

NUMBERS 12. 1-15.

I. **Texts.** "Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam" (Deut. 24. 9).

II. **Main Lesson.** It is a solemn thing to speak against the Lord's Anointed. Judgment follows on sin, but mercy upon confession.

A lesson also in restoring grace.

III. **The Story Told.**

1. *Miriam and Aaron* (sister and brother of Moses) *find an excuse to speak against Moses.* "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because . . . he had married an Ethiopian (Cushite) woman."

2. *Their presumptious claim.* "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it."

v. 3. *Moses' meekness.* He does not reply. "Moses was very meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth."

vv. 4, 5. *The Lord takes up the case.* "The Lord spake suddenly . . . Come out ye three unto the Tabernacle, and the three came out. . . . The Lord came down in the pillar of cloud."

vv. 6-8. *He vindicates Moses as His servant.* "If there be a prophet, I will make Myself known to him in a vision and speak in a dream. . .

"My servant Moses is not so, . . . with him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches. The similitude of the Lord shall he behold!

"Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

vv. 9, 10. *Miriam becomes a leper as white as snow.* "The anger of the Lord was kindled. . . . The cloud departed and behold Miriam became leprous, white as snow."

vv. 11-13. *Aaron asks Moses to pray for her restoration, which he does.* "Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, lay not this sin upon us . . . wherein we have sinned. . .

Let her not be as one dead. . . . And Moses cried unto the Lord, Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech Thee."

v. 14. *God restores her, but requires her to be ashamed and apart for seven days.* "The Lord said, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?"

"Let her be shut out seven days, and after that received in again."

v. 15. *The whole camp await the event.* "Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. MIRIAM'S NAME. Miriam, or Mariaim, means "bitter," the same as "Mara," as we read in Ruth 1. 20: "Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

It is the same name as Mary (the Mother of our Lord). In the Greek of Luke 2. 27, 30, 34, etc., you will find Mary's name spelt "Mariam." Her lot was bitter, for a sword pierced through her own soul (Luke 2. 35), but her sorrow was turned into the most exalted joy in her Son and Lord.

2. EXCUSES TO ATTACK MOSES. When envy and jealousy rule in the heart, any excuse is good enough to attack the object of our envy. "Any stick to beat a dog."

That Moses had married a Cushite was no reason, but perhaps an occasion for envy. His first wife, Zipporah, was a Midianite, this one a descendent of Cush, the father of Nimrod, who founded Babylon (Gen. 10. 6), the first-born of Ham. It was not a forbidden alliance, only, Canaan (another son of Ham) was cursed (Gen. 9. 25).

That Moses married a Midianite and a Cushite has often been used as a type of the opening of covenant blessing in Christ to the Gentiles. Miriam and Aaron's discontent being similar to the Jew's offence at the Gentile's finding mercy.

3. EXALTING ONESELF. "Hath He not spoken also by us?" "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased," Jesus said (Luke 19. 14), and here we have a very striking illustration of the truth. Never put self forward.

If God wants you in the front rank He will put you there; if He does not, and you put yourself there, you will be humbled. Remember your Lord's teaching in Luke 14. 7-11. "Sit down in the lowest room."

4. MEEKNESS is self-abnegation, not weakness. It requires more moral courage to be meek than almost anything else. Anyone can be self-assertive; but who will be silent under abuse and reproach.

The two finest and noblest characters in the Bible are said to be meek—Moses and the Lord Jesus (Matt. 11. 29), and strangely enough, each called himself meek.

This to us would seem a contradiction, but to claim meekness was no pride, when meekness meant silence when others would speak out.

"Blessed are the meek (who don't assert themselves), for they shall inherit the earth" (since God will assert Himself for them).

5. GOD VINDICATES HIS PEOPLE. If we leave our case in God's hands He will take up our defence.

Jesus did this for Mary, when Judas reproached her for waste (John 12. 7). She was meek and answered nothing, but Jesus defended her—as He did also when Martha reproached her.

Are you badly treated and spoken against? Answer nothing, leave your Lord to defend you. He set us the example (see 1 Peter 2. 23).

6. "THE LORD HEARD IT" (v. 2). How well to remember this when we speak

> "Yet is He here beneath our eaves,
> Each sound His wakeful ear receives.
> Hush idle thoughts and words of ill;
> Your Lord is listening;
> Peace, be still." (*Keble.*)

It is written of Jephthah that "he uttered all his words before the Lord" (Judges 11. 11). Let us do so.

7. ASHAMED AND APART. The rebuke God gave Miriam by letting her become leproused white as snow is likened to the shame a daughter would feel if her father spat upon her (v. 14). Yes, rebuke from the Lord should make us ashamed!

Recovery from sin, so that the guilt is removed from the conscience and the joy of God restored to the soul, is not always immediate. Sometimes we go mourning many days for our folly, shut out from the camp, that is, the happy fellowship of love, joy, peace, and praise that signalise those who are walking in light and communion with God.

Application.

1. BEWARE OF PRIDE. It always leads to contention. It goes before destruction. God promises to humble it, He says He hates it.

2. WALK HUMBLY, for true exaltation comes only from God, and He exalts the lowly in His own time.

3. BEWARE OF SPEAKING AGAINST GOD'S SERVANTS. for God may take up their defence and put us to shame.

OUTLINE.

MIRIAM'S HISTORY.

1. By the Ark of Bulrushes (Exod. 24),	SERVING.
2. By the Red Sea (Exod. 15. 20), ..	SINGING.
3. Smitten with Leprosy, ...	SINNING and
(Num. 12. 10), ...	SUFFERING.
4. Buried at Kadesh (Num. 20. 1), ..	SLEEPING.

THREE WOMEN TO REMEMBER.

Remember what God did unto Miriam,	Deut. 24. 9
Remember Lot's Wife, ...	Luke 17. 32
Remember the Woman who anointed Jesus with ointment, ...	Matt. 26. 13

STORY 19.

Balaam and His Ass

NUMBERS 22. 22-35.

I. **Text.** "Balaam was rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet" (2 Peter 2. 16).

II. **Main Lesson.** God uses extraordinary means of awakening men to a sense of sin. It is no use wishing to die the death of the righteous if we live the life of the sinner. God is not "bribed" by sacrifices to consent to or excuse evil.

III. **The Story Told.** Balak, the king of Moab, sent for Balaam to curse Israel. God forbade Balaam to go, but on Balaam persisting, gave him his will, and he went.

v. 22. *God being angry with Balaam, sends the angel of the Lord to withstand him.* "God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him."

v. 23. *The ass sees the angel.* "The ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand."

v. 23. *The ass turns into a field and is smitten.* "And the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field, and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way."

vv. 24-27. *The angel stands in a narrow walled-up path, and the ass crushes Balaam's foot against the wall, and being unable to pass the angel, falls down under him.* "The angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side, and when the ass saw the angel of the Lord she thrust herself unto the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. . . .

"And when the ass saw the angel she fell down under Balaam, and he smote the ass with a staff."

v. 28-30. *The ass speaks and rebukes Balaam, who complains of being mocked and would kill the ass.*

"The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said

unto Balaam, What have I done that thou hast smitten me these three times ? "

" Balaam said, Because thou hast mocked me. I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

" And the ass said, Am not I thine ass upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day ? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee ? And he said, Nay."

v. 31. *Balaam sees the angel and falls on his face.* " The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord and his sword drawn in His hand, and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face."

vv. 32, 33. *The angel speaks.* " Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times ? Behold I went out to withstand thee because thy way is perverse before me.

" The ass saw me. . . . Unless she had turned from me, surely now I had slain thee and saved her alive."

v. 34. *Balaam says, "I have sinned," and offers to go back.* " Balaam said, I have sinned ; now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

v. 35. *He is bidden go on, but only speak God's word.* " The angel of the Lord said, Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the prince of Balak."

IV. OTHER REFERENCES TO BALAAM.

Numbers 31. 8. " Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword."

Numbers 31. 16. " Behold these caused the children of Israel, through the *counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord."

Joshua 13. 22. " *Balaam the soothsayer* did the children of Israel slay with the sword."

Joshua 24. 9-10. " Then Balak, king of Moab, sent and called *Balaam to curse* you, but I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still, so I delivered you out of his hand."

Nehemiah 13. 2. Moab " hired Balaam against them, howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing."

Micah 6. 5. " O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam answered him

from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord."

2. *Peter* 4. 15. *The way of Balaam* (see text 1).

Jude 11. *The error of Balaam.*

Rev. 2. 14. *The doctrine of Balaam,* who *taught Balak* to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication.

From these passages we read of :

The Counsel of Balaam.
The Curse of Balaam.
The Soothsaying of Balaam.
The Way of Balaam.
The Error of Balaam.
The Doctrine of Balaam, and
The Teaching of Balaam.

These seven words help us to understand the kind of man he was. Prevented by God from cursing Israel, and compelled as a prophet to bless them, he nevertheless by his teaching seduced them and led them into evil so that many perished.

V. **The Ass Speaking.** Much ridicule has been hurled by infidels and critics at this miracle, as though it were beyond belief. A little thought shows that this is a hasty and ill-considered judgment, for the following reasons :

1. *If man can teach a parrot or a raven to speak with man's voice,* why should not God do so with an ass ?

Who made the infidel and the critic to speak ? Did not God ?

When Moses said : " I cannot speak," God answered very reasonably : " Who hath made man's mouth ? "

From these simple truths it will be seen that no sensible reason can be alleged against the miracle. Any silly man can say, " I don't believe it," but don't let him ask us to consider him of superior wisdom in doing so.

2. *Science has nothing to say on the matter.* The greatest scientist on earth can only say it is not usual, and we all know that. To say it is impossible is presumption, with no fact in support. " With God all things are possible."

3. *To reject a miracle because it is a miracle is contrary*

both to science and logic. Creation is a miracle, but science cannot deny it. The Word made Flesh is a miracle. So is the Resurrection; so is the Bible; so is the Church. They cannot be explained by natural causes, and to deny them is unscientific and illogical.

4. Since then *the Holy Spirit has recorded the fact,* "The dumb ass spoke with man's voice," we must not be counted fools for replying, "I believe God." It is rather the other way, for the Lord Jesus said: "O fools and slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken."

VI. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. BALAAM'S SIN. What was it? "He loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2. 15). He "erred for reward" (Jude 11).

This is a common sin, *to barter truth for reward,* to crush conscience, avoid clear truth, to compromise with falsehood for the sake of reward, position, influence, and honour from men.

It appeared early in the Church's history. The third of the seven churches in Revelation, Pergamos, held this doctrine (2. 11).

The Lord Jesus warned against it. "How can ye believe," He said, "that receive honour one of another" (John 5. 44), for "a gift (reward, honour) destroyeth the heart." We must keep a single eye if we want light.

2. BALAAM'S ERROR AND MADNESS. The ass rebuked his madness. What was it? It was that he refused to obey God, but tried to persuade himself that God would alter His mind. He would ask Him again and again until He did. Then thinking he had got his desire, he rushed on his doom, only to be saved by the ass, that rebuked him. This is a common sin with such as Balaam. They want their own way, and though they know God's will they will not rest in it, but go on playing and trifling with the light until it becomes darkness.

Insincerity and self-will overcome conscience at last and they go their own way.

3. BALAAM'S SACRIFICES. It seems hard to understand how Balaam could think that by his repeated sacrifices he

could persuade God to alter his mind and let him curse the people. Yet this, too, is a common sin. *Men think they can bribe God.* By saying many prayers, by making a few sacrifices, by giving money, by promising to amend later on, they cheat themselves into thinking God will give them their own way.

The Pharisees made long prayers and robbed widows' houses. The robbers of the Pontine marshes paid part of their spoil to the Holy Church. So men think to bribe God to condone their sins.

Such sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord. Men sin and try to ease their conscience by religious observances.

4. BALAAM'S FOOLISH PIETY. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Num. 23. 10). Balaam knew how terrible a thing it is for a man to die in his sins, but he would not cease sinning. He had recourse, as many do, to pious wishes or empty professions of faith—anything but obey!

Now man dies as he lives; to die the death of the righteous one must live the life of the righteous. The mockery that tries to patch up a peace with God at the last moment by pious talk will not avail in the hour of death.

Balaam died the death of the sinner. He was slain by the sword while teaching Israel to sin.

5. THE ONLY WAY TO PEACE AND BLESSING is prompt obedience, unquestioning faith that hates compromise and policy, that turns the eyes from reward and position and honour from men, that seeks only the honour that is from God.

"Perish, policy, and cunning;
Perish all that hates the light."

6. GOD USES STRANGE WAYS TO AWAKEN MEN. Often as extraordinary as the ass speaking. The biographer of great saints afford many instances of how God awakens and alarms men. A stroke of lightening in the case of Luther; a voice from Heaven in the case of Bunyan, saying, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to Heaven, or wilt thou have thy sins and to to Hell?"

7. NO CURSE CAN PREVAIL AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF

GOD. God ever turns the curse into a blessing. Often, as in Balaam's case, preventing him even uttering it, forcing his unwilling lips to bless and prophesy good.

VII. Application.

Beware of the way, the error, and the doctrine of Balaam.

See that prompt obedience is yielded to the known will of God.

OUTLINE.

Ten persons who said, "I have sinned."

Five who turned from their sin—

David, ...	2 Sam. 12. 13
Nehemiah, ...	Neh. 1. 6
Job, ...	Job 7. 20
Micah, ...	Micah 7. 9
The Prodigal Son, ...	Luke 15. 18

Five who continued and died in their sin.

Pharaoh, ...	Exod. 9. 27
Balaam, ...	Num. 22. 34
Achan, ...	Josh. 7. 20
Saul, ...	1 Sam. 15. 24
Judas, ...	Matt. 27. 4

Seven Animals that Served the Lord.

The DOVE from the Ark.
The RAM that Abraham offered.
The ASS that spoke to Balaam.
The FOXES that Samson Caught.
The RAVENS that fed Elijah.
The FISH that swallowed Jonah.
The ASS that the Lord rode.

LESSON 20.

The Capture of Jericho

JOSHUA 6. 1-27.

I. **Text.** "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Heb. 11. 30).

II. **Main Lesson.** That victory is given to faith, the faith that obeys the voice of God implicitly and trusts His power only. The story is a typical one. Jericho is like this doomed world, but sinners, like Rahab, may be saved by faith.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 12. *Joshua rises early and the priests take up the ark.* "Joshua rose up early in the morning and the priests took the ark of the Lord."

v. 13. *The Order of March.* "The seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns. The armed men went before them. The rereward came after the ark of the Lord. The priests going on and blowing with the trumpets."

v. 14. *Each day the city is encircled.* "And the second day they compassed the city once and returned unto the camp. So they did six days."

v. 15. *On the seventh day they compass the city seven times.* "And on the seventh day they rose early and compassed the city seven times."

v. 16. *The command to shout.* "And it came to pass at the seventh time when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city."

v. 17. *Rahab to be spared.* "Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house; because she hid the messengers that we sent."

vv. 18, 19. *Orders not to touch the spoil.* "Keep yourselves from the accursed thing lest ye make yourselves accursed, and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it. But all the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

v. 10. *The shout of Faith and Victory.* "So the people shouted with a great shout, . . . The wall fell down flat so

that the people went up into the city every man straight before him."

v. 20. *The city taken.* "And they took the city."

(For the story of Rahab see "70 Best Bible Stories," No. 19).

IV. **Some Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE WAY OF FAITH PREPARED. Before faith can triumph there are some preliminary steps to be taken. They are :

(1) *The Jordan must be crossed* (chap. 3). Jordan is a type of our association with Christ in death and resurrection. With Him we died, in Him we passed through judgment, and in Him we are risen. *Faith must reckon it so* (Rom. 6. 11) if we are to be victorious.

(2) *The reproach of Egypt must be rolled away* (chap. 5). We must put off the body of the sins of the flesh, we must turn our backs for ever on all of Egypt, and this we can do by faith in and separation to Christ.

(3) *We must know our Captain* (chap. 5. 13-15). It is a Living, Risen Saviour who appeared to Joshua with His sword drawn in His hand and proclaimed Himself : "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Thus dead, risen, separated, and conscious of the Presence of our risen Lord, we can advance to victory.

2. THE ORDERED MARCH. The one who overcomes recognises that he is not doing so as an isolated individual, he must take his place in the godly order of the people. We are called to fellowship and must learn to keep rank, to march in step. No Christian is very strong for God who disregards the order of God or His Church. The very strength of an army lies in its mutual help and support, in its acting as one. Disorder and independence means defeat. So the stately order is observed, and the army marches forth.

3. THE ARK IN THE MIDST. This ark of the covenant was a symbol of the Lord's presence. They knew that if the Lord were in their midst they were sure of victory. "If Thou go not up with us, take us not up hence," was Moses' prayer, but with the Lord in their midst, who would fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us ?"

But the Ark alone was not sufficient, as we know from 1 Samuel 4. 5-11. Symbols are no value in themselves.

4. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH. An unbeliever might have murmured : " What's the use of walking round those immense walls ? " But faith " staggers not." It can look at high walls quietly and wait God's time.

One thing only is needed for faith's triumph. Obedience, the obedience of love and confidence, that asks not How ? It does as He bids, it leaves the miracle to Him.

5. THE PATIENT CONTINUANCE OF FAITH. Day after day for six days, they compassed the city, and seven times on the seventh day.

Were not the inhabitants on the walls laughing at them ? What did they think they were doing ? But faith goes on, regardless of the taunts of unbelievers. It is by faith and patience we inherit the promises, by " patient continuance in well doing."

6. THE SHOUT OF FAITH. It was anticipatory. " The Lord hath given you the city." Some unbeliever might have objected, " Let us see the walls down before we shout," but faith believes God without waiting to see. The city is ours. Let us shout. Herein lies the great secret of victory. It believes and rejoices in advance.

" Glory to Thee for all the grace.
I have not tasted yet."

7. THE REALISATION OF FAITH. Faith inherits the promises. With a shout of triumph it enters through the gates of praise into the walls of salvation. Isaiah 60. 18 : " Thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise."

Application.

There is no difficulty too great for God. Let us see that we are in the line of His will and then go on in faith.

His power is always ours if we do this.

OUTLINE.

THE MARKS OF TRIUMPHANT FAITH.

It **F**alters not in unbelief.
Asks no sign.
Invites no help from the world.
Trusts wholly in God.
Honours God.

LESSON 21.

Achan and Ai

JOSHUA 7. 1-26.

I. **Text.** "Israel hath sinned, . . . therefore they could not stand before their enemies" (Josh. 7. 11, 12).

II. **Main Lesson.** Victory can only be maintained where there is a good conscience. Secret sin means sure defeat.

III. **The Story Told** in Chapters.

Chap. 1. SECRET SIN. Achan disobeys.

v. 1. "Achan, the son of Carmi, . . . took of the accursed thing."

Chap. 2. SHAMEFUL DEFEAT.

vv. 2-5. "They went up (to Ai) and they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai smote of them thirty-six men . . . wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water."

Chap. 3. SORROWFUL INQUIRY.

vv. 6-12. "Joshua rent his clothes and fell on his face before the ark of the Lord, . . . and said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore? . . . What shall I do? . . . What wilt Thou do for Thy great Name? . . . And the Lord said, Israel hath sinned."

Chap. 4. SANCTIFICATION CALLED FOR.

v. 13. "Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves. There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel, thou canst not stand . . . until ye take it away."

Chap. 5. SEARCHING OUT THE CULPRIT.

vv. 14-18. "Joshua rose up early and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. . . And he brought his household man by man, and Achan was taken."

Chap. 6. SELF-JUDGMENT AND CONFESSION.

vv. 19-23. "Achan said, Indeed I have sinned. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them and hid them in the earth in the midst of my tent."

Chap. 7. STONING THE TROUBLER.

vv. 24-26. "Joshua and all Israel took Achan to the valley of Achor and stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones, and they raised a great heap of stones. The name of that place was called, The Valley of Achor."

IV. **The Scene of the Tragedy.**

Jericho lies in the Jordan valley with steep hills behind. Ai lies up the precipitous valley, where in some places the path becomes a narrow gorge, with cliffs 800 feet high. A ruin called Haiyan marks the spot still. It was so laborious a climb that it was said, "Let not all the people go up." They could scarcely have done so in anything like battle array. This town formed the key to the interior.

The valley of Achor was chosen for the execution of Achan because in the Jordan valley about Gilgal, where the camp was, there were few stones, whereas the valley of Achor lies between Jerusalem and Jericho in a district strewn with rocks and stones in abundance.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. SECRET SIN FINDS MEN OUT, in that it robs them of their strength. God is not with them in power, and this is soon evident. They no longer overcome, their song of praise is dumb, their hands are weak, their testimony is valueless, their work without fruit. Sin cannot be hid from God. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

2. SIN INVOLVES OTHERS IN SORROW. Those 36 men who died in the defeat of Ai must be laid to the charge of Achan. No man liveth to himself. It is impossible to prevent our sin injuring others.

A man who goes about with infection on him infects others. So that it is said of Achan, "This man perished not alone in his iniquity" (Josh. 22. 20).

3. STRENGTH FOR VICTORY can only be recovered by putting away the "accursed thing in the midst."

Confession without self-judgment is no use. "Sanctify yourselves" means cleanse your hands and put away the evil of your doings. Nothing else will avail. Lying on the

ground weeping with dust on the head (v. 6) is not enough. God says. Get thee up, there is sin in the camp, it must be searched out and put away, or "*I will not be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you.*" These are ever God's terms with His people.

4. COVETOUSNESS is a common but deadly sin. Jesus said : "Take heed and beware of covetousness." The lust for what is not lawful, the pride of possession, the love of gain, the greed of accumulation. These, and many other forms of this sin, have cost many their souls. "They that will (are determined at all cost) to be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6. 9).

5. ONE SINNER DESTROYETH MUCH GOOD. The whole campaign was hindered; the enemy was encouraged; the hearts of the people became as water; the lives of many were lost. The wrath of God rested upon the camp, and all because of one man's sin. Adam sinned his whole race. Who can ever tell what that one transgression meant to man.

6. YET THERE IS FORGIVENESS and restoration upon confession, self-judgment, and putting away of sin.

Our failures are not to become weights hindering our progress. God delights in mercy, and very quickly responds to faith and obedience. The sin, while it delayed, it did not stop the course of victory. We may forget the things that are behind and press on to the prize set before us, of full victory in all things in Christ.

Application.

Sin stops all blessings, robs of all power, and involves us in moral and spiritual defeat.

Therefore sin not.

Power from God is only given when we are in the will of God.

OUTLINES.

The story told as above in 7 Chapters.

1. Secret Sin.
2. Shameful Defeat.

3. Sorrowful Inquiry.
4. Sanctification Called For.
5. Searching Out the Culprit.
6. Self-judgment.
7. Stoning the Troubler.

Three Names to Remember.

Achan, ...	The Troubler.
Ai, ...	The Scene of Defeat.
Achor, ...	The Place of Judgment.

"The valley of Achor" is thus "for a door of hope and she shall sing there" (Hosea 2. 15).

Men whose Sin Caused them Defeat.

Samson, ...	Judges 16. 20, 21
Achan, ...	Joshua 7
Saul and his Sons, ...	1 Samuel 31
Ahab, ...	1 Kings 22. 24-37

Seven Secrets of Victory.

Reconciled through Blood.
Clean through the Word.
Obedient in Faith.
Mighty in the Scriptures.
Strong through the Spirit.
Bold in Venturing.
Yielded in Heart

LESSON 22.

Joshua Cheated by the Gibeonites

JOSHUA 9. 1-27.

I. **Text.** "They asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord" (v. 14).

II. **Main Lesson.** Even the finest men cannot do without prayer, and are liable to be deceived if they lean to their own understanding. It is not in man to direct his way.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 3-6. *The Gibeonites plot to deceive Joshua into making terms with them.* "When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, they did work wilily and made as if they were ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses and wine skins, old, and rent, and bound up; and old shoes and clouted . . . and all the bread dry and mouldy, and went to Joshua at Gilgal."

vv. 6-13. *Their false story.* "We be come from a far country, now therefore make a league with us . . . because of the name of the Lord, for we have heard the fame of Him and all that He did in Egypt . . . to Sihon and Og. . . .

"We are your servants therefore, make ye a league with us."

v. 14. *The princes of the congregation are deceived.* "The men took of their victuals and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord."

v. 15. *Joshua makes a league with them.* "And Joshua made peace with them and made a league with them, and let them live, and the princes sware unto them."

vv. 16-18. *When they find out the truth the people murmur.*

"It came to pass at the end of three days they heard they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

"Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim.

"And the princes smote them not, and all the congregation murmured against the princes."

v. 19. *The princes stand to their word.* "The princes

said, We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel, now therefore we may not touch them."

v. 20-27. *They are made hewers of wood and drawers of water.* "This will we do, we will let them live lest wrath be upon us because of the oath. . . . Let them live, but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation.

"Joshua called them and said, Now are ye cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being bondmen."

IV. Other References to the Gibeonites.

Joshua 1. 2. "Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty."

Joshua 18. 25. "It was given to the tribe of Benjamin, and became a Levitical city (21. 17).

2 *Samuel* 21. 1. "There was a famine in the days of David three years, and David enquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house because he slew the Gibeonites."

2 *Samuel* 20. 8. "They were at the great stone which is in Gibeon" (Joab slays Amasa).

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE DANGER OF SUCCESS. It is most probable that the camp at Gilgal was celebrating their great victory at Ai, when these Hivites appeared. Flushed with success, they were self-confident and forgot that the Captain of the Lord's host, whom Joshua had met outside Jericho, was among them, though now unseen. He should have been consulted, but in their enthusiasm they forgot Him. It is true that :

> "Calm seas have their dangers.
> Mariner beware!"

What cannot be done by force is often accomplished by guile.

2. CARNAL WISDOM IS NO SAFE GUIDE. True, the princes examined these visitors, they looked at their stale bread, clouted shoes, and old clothes, and no doubt used what judgment they had. But the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

Our minds need illumination from on high. Let us never forget we need guidance always, and cannot do without it. "Lean not on thine own understanding," is the solemn warning.

3. ASKING COUNSEL OF THE LORD. The example of the Lord Jesus, the perfect Man, should teach us how greatly we need to ask counsel. He prayed, even spending whole nights alone with God.

In Isaiah 50 we read of Him: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned (the instructed one) that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning. He wakened mine ear to hear as the learned."

If He needed as man thus to pray, how much do we? Let us remember the words: "In every thing by prayer."

4. THE SANCTITY OF AN OATH. The princes recognised their mistake, but they dare not go back on their word. They had sworn by the Lord God of Israel and must not go back.

Now the Bible teaching on oaths is—

(1) *Swear not at all*, neither by heaven nor by the earth. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one" (Matt. 5. 37, R.V.).

(2) *But solemn engagements*, even when without an oath, *must be respected.*

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it for He hath no pleasure in fools, pay that which thou has vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin: neither say thou before the angel, It was an error" (Eccles. 5. 4-6).

(3) *Even when loss will result* we must be faithful to our word.

"He that sweareth to his own heart and changeth not" (Psa. 15. 4) is one who shall abide in the tabernacle of the land and dwell in the holy hill.

It will be seen from 2 Samuel 21, quoted above, that God required it at the hand of Saul's posterity that he had violated the solemn promise to the Gibeonites.

5. YET GOOD COMES FROM EVIL. The appointment of them to the work of hewing wood and drawing water for the host no doubt set at liberty many for more active service in the army ranks.

Application.

Let us fear to go to the Lord's service without asking counsel of the Lord. Let no decision be made alone. Our natural wit is not sufficient to unmask the wiles of the enemy. Only by walking in the Spirit shall we be wise unto salvation every time.

OUTLINE.

Prayer is Commanded

FOR

Kings, ...	1 Tim. 2. 2
All in Authority, . .	1 Tim. 2. 2
All Saints, ...	Eph. 6. 18
All Men, ...	1 Tim. 2. 1
The Sick, ...	James 5. 14
Our Persecutors, ...	Matt. 5. 44
Our Friends, ...	Job. 42. 8
Workers, ...	1 Thess. 5. 25
The Gospel, ...	1 Thess. 3. 1

LESSON 23.

The Sun Stands Still

JOSHUA 10. 1-27.

I. **Text.** "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8. 31).

II. **Main Lesson.** The Living God is with His people in all He bids them undertake. Nothing is impossible with Him. This stupendous miracle is a test of faith. Who then believes the oracles of God?

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1-5. *Five Canaanite kings join to oppose Joshua.* "When Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, had heard how Joshua had taken Ai . . . and how Gibeon had made peace . . . they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, . . . and the men thereof mighty. Wherefore he sent unto Hoham, king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, Come and help smite Gibeon. . . . Therefore the five kings went up and encamped before Gibeon."

vv. 5-7. *The Gibeonites send to Joshua for help.* "The men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, saying, Slack not; come and save us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal and all the people of war with him."

vv. 8-11. *Encouraged by God, Joshua defeats and chases them.* "The Lord said, Fear them not. . . . Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly and slew them with a great slaughter to Beth-horon, Azekah, and Makkedah."

v. 11. *Great hailstones destroy many.* "They were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew."

vv. 12-14. *Joshua bids the Sun and Moon to stand still and they obey him.* "Joshua said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed. . . . Is it not written in the book of Jasher? . . . There was no day like that before it or after it."

vv. 15-21. *The Five Kings hide in a cave and are walled up in it.* "These five kings fled and hid themselves in a

cave at Makkedah, and it was told Joshua, and Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave and set men by it for to keep them. . . . stay not, pursue your enemies."

vv. 22-24. *The Kings are brought out and the captains put their feet upon their necks.* "Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave and bring out those five kings. And Joshua called and said unto the captains, Come near and put your feet upon the necks of these kings ; and they came near and put their feet upon the necks of them."

vv. 25-27. *Joshua uses this to encourage them. The kings are slain and hanged.* "Joshua said, Fear not. Be strong, for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies. And Joshua slew them and hanged them on five trees."

IV. **The Sun Standing Still.** Are we to take this as actually true ? Most certainly, for it is recorded as a fact by the Holy Spirit in the oracles of God.

To represent it as a legend from the Book of Jasher is a mere evasion, unworthy of an honest believer. The statement is clear, both here and in Habakkuk 3. 11 : "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation."

It is not necessary to believe that these heavenly bodies ceased to move, but *that they retained their relative position to the earth,* which of course also moves. God speaks in man's language and expresses Himself in such a way that men will understand His meaning.

Even to-day the greatest scientists speak of "sunrise" and "sunset," even the official returns from Greenwich Observatory doing so.

While not pretending to explain how this great event was brought about, it may interest readers to know that God has many ways in which the effect may be produced without disturbing the whole order of the universe.

I quote from "The New Biblical Guide" (Vol. 4, pp. 399-400), by John Urquhart.

"There was one other method by which the sun and moon might to all beholders have kept their place in the heavens. An old experiment will illustrate my meaning. Place a shilling in the bottom of a basin and go back till the shilling disappears from sight. Let a little water then

be poured into the basin and the shilling will once more come into view. Go back further till it once more disappears. It will appear again if more water is poured into the basin. This is explained by the bending or refracting of the rays of light. The more dense the medium is through which the rays pass, the greater is the refraction. We see the sun on the horizon for instance for a short time after it has really sunk beneath it. The Creator might surely have been able so to modify the atmosphere that the sun and moon might still stand over Gibeon and over Ajalon....

"Travellers in the Polar regions give many instances when the sun is seen for *several days* when they know the orb is one degree below the horizon."

It is with no desire to make the miracle easier for God (!) that we quote this, but to refute the infidel statement that the miracle was impossible without such an interference with nature as would mean a catastrophe to the earth.

V. **Other Miracles of the Sun.**

Isaiah 38. 7. HEZEKIAH. "The Lord said to Isaiah Go and say to Hezekiah. . . . Behold I will bring again the shadow of the degrees which is gone down in the dial of Ahaz ten degrees backwards. So the sun returned ten degrees by which degrees it was gone down."

Luke 23. 44, 45. WHEN CHRIST DIED. "It was about the sixth hour (midday), and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour, and *the sun was darkened.*"

VI. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE CANAANITES. The command to destroy these nations was given because of their vile practices and for the purging and health of the nations, just as a surgeon amputates a limb in order to save the life.

God showed great longsuffering in waiting 500 years (Gen. 15. 13-16), until the iniquity of the Amorites was full and no longer endurable (Lev. 18. 27-30).

To charge God with cruelty because He allowed these men to be cut off speedily at one time is sheer ignorance, for surely it was more merciful than to let them die one by one of the loathsome and lingering diseases engendered by their evil practices. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

2. OUR MIRACLE WORKING GOD. To rob God of His power of doing miracles on behalf of His people is to reduce Him to a mere man, with the restrictions and limitations by which we are surrounded. This is, of course, foolish on the face of it.

If, on the other hand, we say "True, He can do miracles, but will He, and does He?" The answer is:

(1) *He does so when the circumstances demand such a witness.* That is why miracles only occur in the Bible at certain stages in human history. Only when God does some new thing needing Divine attestation. Such as at the Exodus; in the days of Elijah and Elisha; in the days of our Lord; and at the initiation of the Church.

(2) *In answer to prayer* the Lord works in His providence strange and wonderful things—healing, providing for the need, and delivering from enemies and calamities those who trust in Him.

(3) *He would not have us run after and seek for signs and wonders,* just to gratify curiosity or obtain a thrill.

"It is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign." Faith can trust God without signs. How solemn the rebuke to unbelief: "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."

3. THE FIVE KINGS. To put their feet on the necks of five kings was a striking symbol of victory.

I once heard a speaker say, those five kings are our five senses, and the Lord bids us have our feet on their necks. In other words, to learn in the power of Christ godly self-control over all the passions of the body. As Paul said: "I buffet my body and bring it into subjection."

Our Joshua bids us come and put our feet on the necks of these five kings.

4. NO ENEMY CAN STAND BEFORE US, while we are in the line of God's will; while the Spirit of God is ungrieved within us; while we abide in Christ we are invincible. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Application.

Who shall dare to say what our Glorious Lord cannot and will not do for His people?

Let faith be simple and sincere as we trust in the Living God.

LESSON 24.

Thumbs and Toes Cut Off

JUDGES 1. 5-7.

I. **Text.** "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7. 2).

II. **Main Lesson.** The Law of Retribution is part of God's order. As a man treats others, so will he be treated. The merciful find mercy (Matt. 5. 7). "He shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy" (James 2. 13).

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 5. *Adoni-bezek of Bezek is attacked.* "They found Adoni-bezek in Bezek : and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites."

v. 6. *He flees, but is pursued and captured.* "But Adoni-bezek fled, and they pursued after him and caught him."

v. 6. *They cut off his thumbs and great toes.* "And cut off his thumbs and his great toes."

v. 7. *He confesses to having treated* 70 *kings in the same way.* "And Adoni-bezek said, Three score and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table."

v. 7. *He acknowledges the Divine Retribution.* "As I have done, so God hath requited me."

v. 7. *He dies at Jerusalem.* "And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died."

IV. **The Law of Retribution in History.** The story of Ahab and Jezebel, the wicked king and queen of Israel, illustrates this principle. After they had conspired to slay Naboth and seize his vineyard. Elijah the Tishbite announced the judgment of God upon them.

In the portion of Jezreel (Naboth's vineyard) shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

And upon Ahab : "Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy

blood, even thine." And so it came to pass (2 Kings 9. 30-37 and 1 Kings 22. 37, 38).

A PARALLEL IN MODERN HISTORY. In the reign of Frederick II, of Russia (called " The Great "), three nations, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, conspired together to fall upon Poland and divide the ill-gotten spoil between them, deposing the king, wiping out that kingdom, and oppressing the people for many years. But the time of retribution came with the last war. On the very ground they had stolen, those three nations fought in deadly conflict, and the land they had so badly treated was stained with the blood of millions of their slain. It was the retribution of Naboth's vineyard again.

As those kings had deposed the king of that stricken land, so in the Great War was each of their kings hurled from his throne.

A SAD ILLUSTRATION. There was a man whose old father was past work and had become a burden to him. So heartlessly he ordered him to the workhouse, himself conducting him there. Years passed, and like old age and evil fell upon the sinner ; his son treated him as he had done his father. As they made their way to the same workhouse, the enfeebled man asked to be allowed to rest for a moment on a mile-stone by the roadside. As he did so, he said mournfully : " My old father sat on this same milestone the day I took him to the workhouse."

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THREE GREAT LAWS. In human life three great laws are seen to operate. In the lives of all, saint and sinner alike.

(1) *The Law of Sowing and Reaping.* " Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is no avoiding this.

(2) *The Law of Discovery.* " Be sure your sins will find you out." It may not be found out, but it will discover itself unwittingly. Just as a man who works in a scent factory cannot hide the fact, or a man employed in a fishmongers cannot prevent it being known. So a man who plays with sin will show it in look, manner, and conduct. It cannot be hid. It is written on his character and conduct.

(3) *The Law of Retribution.* As a man acts to others, so will he receive. An angry man finds this an angry world. A selfish man finds every one selfish. The world is like a looking-glass, it presents to us the face we show it.

And God awards to us what we award to others.

2. THESE PRINCIPLES WORK BOTH WAYS. Just as evil brings evil, so will kindness bring kindness. The merciful find mercy. The loving are loved. The generous win many friends who give to them in turn. He who sows to the Spirit reaps everlasting life. He who walks with Christ becomes like Christ.

These great working principles are not displaced by the Gospel, any more than the laws of cause and effect of health and physics.

3. THE CURSE OF CRUELTY. We are not told why the Israelites treated this man as they did. Something led them to cut off his thumbs and toes, and then they discovered from his own confession, the pitiable cruelty he had shown to others.

What is more detestable than cruelty? It can be exercised—

(1) *By Neglect.* Many a heart has been broken for want of love, and thought, and kindness.

(2) *By Harsh Words.* The tongue wounds more than a piercing sword. The poison of asps lies in the lips, we read, and life and death are in the tongue. Many tender persons die of cruel words.

(3) *By Brutal Conduct.* The records of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and to Animals reveal an awful depths of shame and wickedness.

There is much need for teachers to teach this lesson.

4. **Other Thoughts on Retribution.**

As you treat your parents, so your children will treat you. A friend of mine rebuked a boy for cruelty to a bird, when his mother interfered and told him it was no business of his. "Ah, mother," he replied sadly and tenderly, "one day that son will be cruel to you."

Application.

So act as remembering that your action will react on your own head.

LESSON 25.

Deborah, Prophetess and Poet

JUDGES 4 and 5.

I. **Text.** "Until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel" (5. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** The Bible contains many stories of noble women. Nowhere is woman honoured as in the Scriptures. Christianity has raised her to the position intended by God, a companion and help-meet for man.

In this story we have an illustration of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. "A woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised."

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1-5. *Deborah, a prophetess, is raised up in a day of oppression.* "Jabin, king of Canaan, whose captain was Sisera for twenty years mightily oppressed the children of Israel."

"And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at this time. She dwelt under the palm tree between Rama and Beth-el."

vv. 6-7. *She called Barak to deliver Israel.* "She sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam, and said, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, Go, . . . take ten thousand men, and I will drqw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, and I will deliver him into thine hand."

vv. 8, 9. *He refuses unless she goes with them.* "Barak said, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not, then I will not go."

v. 9. *She consents, but says the honour shall go to a woman.* "I will go, but the journey thou takest shall not be for thine honour, for the Lord shall sell Sisera unto the hand of a woman."

vv. 10-17. *Barak goes against Sisera and defeats him.* "So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him, and the Lord discomfited Sisera, who fled away on his feet, and Barak pursued, and all the host fell and there was not one left."

vv. 18-24. *Sisera takes refuge with Jael, and is slain by her.* "Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said, Turn in to me, fear not. And when he had turned into the tent she covered him with a mantle. He asks water, and she gives him milk. Then she took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly and smote the nail into his temple and fastened it into the ground, for he was fast asleep and was weary. So he died."

IV. **The Song of Triumph** may be divided thus—

vv. 1-5. Praise to God for the avenging of Israel.

vv. 6-11. The sad state of the land described, until Deborah arose and the people were delivered.

v. 12. She describes how the various tribes behaved under the call to arms.

v. 13. The governors (leaders) offered willingly.

v. 14. *Ephraim*, *Benjamin*, *Zebulun* are praised, and the princes of *Issacher*.

v. 15. *Reuben* was divided, and there were great searchings of heart.

v. 17. *Gilead* and *Dan* and *Asher* did not respond, remaining at their places.

v 18. *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* hazarded their lives in the battlefield.

v. 23. *Meroz* is cursed for not coming to the help of the Lord.

v. 24. *Jael* is blessed for ridding them of the tyrant Sisera.

And the song ends :

v. 31. "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord."

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. ISRAEL'S SIN IS PUNISHED BY THE OPPRESSION OF JABIN. Sin and sorrow are never separated. What happened to Israel is true of each spiritually. Directly there is departure in heart from the Lord, our enemies oppress. Old sins resume their power and dominion. Prosperity of soul ceases. There is no fruit unto God, and the sound of joy and the new song of praise is no longer heard.

2. WHEN MEN CRY TO THE LORD HE DELIVERS. This

is true every time. Psalm 107 repeats the refrain, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them" four times (vv. 6, 13, 19, and 28).

Mercy never fails. O that we might learn this and cease to grieve the Holy Spirit by departure from the Lord.

He delivers every time, but desires us not to go on constantly needing to be delivered.

3. THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN. Though woman is called "the weaker vessel," she is never spoken of as inferior. This is purely a heathen idea. Yet her ministry is different from man's. It is that of sympathy and encouragement.

(1) As seen in those women who ministered to the Lord.

(2) As described in 1 Timothy 5. 10: "If she have brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted; if she have diligently followed every good work."

(3) As illustrated in Phoebe, a "deaconess" of the Church at Cenchrea.

(4) As graphically described in the 31st chapter of Proverbs—"The virtuous woman."

4. WOMEN HAVE ENCOURAGED THEIR MEN EITHER IN GOOD OR EVIL. Eve led Adam into sin; Delilah led Samson to his death; Jezebel stirred Ahab to evil; the daughter of Herodias betrayed Herod into the murder of John the Baptist; while Deborah inspires Barak to his great triumph.

5. JAEL'S DESTRUCTION OF SISERA need not cause us astonishment, nor are we justified in condemning her action. Men must be judged by the light they have, and to remove an oppressor by guile, as she did, was then regarded as justified.

God had purposed the deliverance of His people by the death of the tyrant, and used this ignorant woman as *an instrument of wrath*, as He did many other evil men, as Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, etc. (and even Satan). Her courage and daring and love of her people and desire to deliver them, are therefore commended. The moral question is not raised in the text, and must be left to Him who judgeth according to what a man hath and not to what he hath not.

6. THE SONGS OF THE BIBLE are beyond all comparison, beyond any man has ever written. Without affectation or flowery and showy language, they are simple, strong, and moving to the heart.

The Psalms stand alone for beauty, tenderness, and appeal to every need of man's nature. The Song of Songs, the greatest of love songs. The Lamentations, the mightiest dirge. Job is the greatest poem in the world. Moses' song is unequalled as are Miriam's and this of Deborah.

The Lord is the greatest Leader of Song and Praise among His people.

7. PRAISE AND BLAME IN A DAY OF NEED. See how Deborah allots praise or blame.

The *Willing*. The leaders offered willingly.

The *Uncertain*. Great searchings of heart, but indecision.

The *Slackers*. Who did not respond.

The *Daring*. Who hazarded their lives.

The *Cursed*. Who came not to the help of the Lord.

To which do we belong ? How do we act in the Holy War ? Do we shirk the Lord's battle ?

Application.

Life brings to each its opportunity. The battle is real. What part do we play in it ?

OUTLINE.

The Prophetesses of Scripture.

MIRIAM, ...	Exod. 15. 20
DEBORAH, ...	Judges 4. 4
HULDAH, ...	2 Kings 22. 14
NOADIAH, ...	Neh. 6. 14
ANNA, ...	Luke 2. 36
PHILIP'S DAUGHTERS, ..	Acts 21. 9

STORY 26.

Gideon's Great Victory

JUDGES 7. 1-25.

I. **Text.** "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" (Eccles. 9. 11).

II. **Main Lesson.** Victory is of the Lord. He gives it to whom He will. He would not have us lean upon an arm of flesh nor glory in numbers, but trust in Him—the Living God.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 1. *Gideon's army of* 32,000 *is pitched by the well of Harod.* "Then Jerubbaal, which is Gideon, and all the people . . . rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harod, and the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Morea in the valley."

vv. 2, 3. *The Lord says the people are too many, the fearful are to go home—*22,000 *return.* "The Lord said to Gideon, The people are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

"Proclaim . . . Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilhead. And there returned twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."

vv. 4-8. *There are still too many. They are taken to the water. Those that lapped are chosen—*300 *only.* "The Lord said to Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down to the water, and I will try them. It shall be of whom I say, This shall go. . . . This shall not go. The same shall not go.

"Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

"And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth were three hundred men; but all the rest bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

"The Lord said, By the three hundred that lapped I will save you. Let all the others go. So he sent all the

rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men, and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley."

vv. 9-14. *Gideon is encouraged by a visit to the enemy camp, where he heard one recount the dream of the Barley Loaf.* "Behold I dreamed a dream, and lo a cake of a barley loaf tumbled into the host of Midian, and came into a tent and smote it and overturned it.

"And his fellow answered, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, . . . for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host."

vv. 15-18. *Encouraged by the dream, Gideon attacks in three companies, each man having a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a lamp.* "Gideon said, Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

"He divided the three hundred into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

"And he said, Look on me and do likewise. When I blow the trumpet, then blow, and say, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

vv. 19-23. *They do so, and the host of Midian flee.* "So Gideon and the three hundred came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, . . . and they blew with the trumpets and break the pitchers and held the lamps in their left hands, . . . and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

"And all the host ran and cried and fled . . . and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow throughout all the host, and the host fled to Bethshittah; and the men of Israel gathered themselves out of Naphtali and Asher and Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites."

vv. 24, 25. *Gideon sends for help. The princes Oreb and Zeeb are slain.* "Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim. . . . Come down and take the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. And they took the two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, and slew them."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. GIDEON'S PREPARATION FOR HIS WORK (6. 11-24). Just as the God of Glory appeared to Abraham; and in the

Burning Bush to Moses; and as the Man with the drawn sword to Joshua, so the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. All true workers are thus equipped by the revelation of the Lord. Only those who have found Christ can work for Christ.

"Go in this thy might; have not I sent thee?" was Gideon's commission.

2. TESTED BEFORE USED (6. 25-32). Gideon was called upon to throw down the altar of Baal. He risked his life in doing it, but until he obeyed he could not be used. It is so with every true worker. It is the faithful who are used of God.

3. A SIGN GIVEN FOR ENCOURAGEMENT (6. 36-40). God condescends to Gideon's want of faith, and strengthened him by giving him the sign of the fleece of wool, first filled with dew while all was dry around, then dry when all around was wet with dew.

It is better to trust the Lord without signs. Gideon seems to know he was acting contrary to God's mind, for he prays Him not to be angry with him. Yes, it is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeks a sign. "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." "Except ye see signs and wonders," some, Jesus said, "will not believe."

4. THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS (Zech. 4. 10). "Who hath despised the day of small things." God loves small things and often does His work by means of the weak and the despised (1 Cor. 1. 27). So that the glory due to His Name is not given to another.

While the lifeless ritual of the great Temple went on in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus had a small company in an upper room, by which He was to do His great work.

So Gideon learned that it is not by might, nor by power, nor by great armies, that God saves, but by the faithful few of whom it can be said like Jonathan and his armour bearer, "They wrought with God that day."

5. THOSE THAT WERE AFRAID. Cowardice is want of faith. It is the commonest sin in the world. Probably still two-thirds of any company would return home if a

call came to venture life or goods for Christ. It is those who are strong in faith who are strong in the Lord.

6. THOSE THAT LAPPED. Putting the hand to the mouth is a hurried way of drinking. Dr. A. Moody Stewart describes one he saw do so as follows :

"With one knee bent before him and the other limb stretched behind him in the same attitude as he ran, and with his face upward toward heaven, he threw the water apparently with his fingers in a continuous stream through his open lips, without bringing his hand nearer to his mouth than perhaps a foot and a half, and so satisfied his thirst in a few moments."

This lapping, "putting their hand to their mouth" (v. 6), indicating not only haste, but a readiness and eagerness to get to the battle. It is such willing souls that God uses.

7. TRUMPETS, PITCHERS, AND LAMPS. These may spiritualise thus : It is by a bold outspoken testimony we overcome. "They overcame," we read, "by the Blood of the Lamb, *by the word of their testimony*, and they loved not their lives to the death."

Then the shining of the lamp in the pitcher reminds us that it is our light, the new light exhibited in the earthen vessel, that convicts and brings men to submission to the Lord. "We have *this treasure in an earth vessel.*"

Application.

I shall borrow from Chas. Simeon these excellent points.

1. To undertake nothing in our own strength.
2. To draw back from nothing to which we are called.
3. To doubt of nothing wherein God has promised His aid.
4. To take the glory of nothing which God does by us.

OUTLINE.

Victory Given to the Weak.

Jonathan and his Armour bearer.
Gideon's Three Hundred.
David against Goliath.
Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20. 12).

STORY 27.

Jephthah's Rash Vow

JUDGES 11. 1-40.

I. **Text.** "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back" (v. 35).

II. **Main Lesson.** To bind one's future conduct by vows is contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel. It was permitted under the Law, but a Christian should leave himself entirely at the disposal of his Lord, *who by His Spirit will direct his life.* To anticipate the guidance of the Spirit by vowing oneself (or another) to a certain course of conduct is therefore a mistake. Yet it is noble to stand to any promise to God or man.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1-3. *Jephthah the Gileadite is driven from his home as an illegitimate son.* "Jephthah was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot; and Gilead begat Jephthah. And his wife's sons grew up, and thrust out Jephthah, and said, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house. Then Jephthah fled and dwelt in the land of Tob."

vv. 4-6. *The Ammonites invade the land. The elders of Gilead send for Jephthah.* "The children of Ammon made war against Israel, and the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob, and said, Come and be our captain that we may fight with Ammon."

vv. 7-11. *Jephthah's reasonable reply.* "Did not ye hate me and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress? . . . If the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? And the elders said, The Lord be witness between us if we do not so according to thy words. . . .

"And the people made him captain, and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh."

vv. 12-28. *Jephthah reasons with the Ammonites, but to no effect.* This passage is too long to quote. It should be read.

vv. 29-31. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he attacks Ammon. He vows to God, whatever comes*

out to meet him on his return. "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

"And he vowed a vow, . . . If Thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me shall surely be the Lords' or (not "and") I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

vv. 32-34. *Jephthah defeats Ammon, and returning home, his daughter comes out to meet him.* "The Lord delivered them into his hands, and he smote them to Minnith. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued.

"And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances, and she was his only child."

vv. 35-40. *He devotes her to the Lord. Every year the daughters of Israel went to talk with her for four days.* "When he saw her he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low, . . . for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back.

"She said to her father, Let this thing be done for me. Let me alone two months that I may bewail my virginity. And at the end of two months she came back unto her father, who did with her according to his vow, and she knew no man.

"And it was a custom that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament (R.V., celebrate ; R.V. *m.*, talk with) the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year."

IV. **What Did the Vow Mean ?**

It has by many been treated as if Jephthah offered his daughter up as a burnt offering, but the story, more carefully considered, does not justify this. The following are the reasons :

(1) The word "and" in verse 31 may be rendered "or" (as in Exod. 21. 16 and 17 ; Lev. 6. 3 and 5 ; 2 Sam. 2. 19), when it would read : "Whatever cometh forth to meet me shall surely be the Lord's, or I will offer it up for a burnt offering." It was either to be "devoted" as in Leviticus 27 under "a singular vow," or if an animal, offered as a burnt offering.

(2) Human sacrifices were expressly forbidden in Israel (Deut. 18. 9, 10).

(3) He could have redeemed her for 30 shekels of silver (about £3 8s. 6d.) (Lev. 27. 4) had there been nothing unusual.

(4) She was to be devoted to perpetual virginity, as appears from verse 37, when she bewails, not her early death, but her virginity; and verse 39, where she is said to have remained unmarried.

(5) Every year four days were spent by the daughters of Israel visiting her and celebrating her self-sacrifice. The word to lament is rendered in the R.V. "to celebrate," and in the margin to "talk with" her.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. GOD DOES NOT NEED TO BE PERSUADED TO BE GRACIOUS. He cannot be "bribed" by promises or gifts, nor does His loving heart need to be turned toward us by vows or promises or self-denials. No, Jephthah need not have treated God thus. God would hear his prayer and deliver him if his heart were right without these.

Yet it is a very common and sadly mistaken idea that God needs some such promise or gift or sacrifice to induce Him to help us. It is a purely heathen and Romish idea, foreign to everything taught of God in the Bible. He delights in mercy. He giveth liberally. (See also Matt. 6. 8; Luke 11. 13).

2. JEPHTHAH IS A TYPE OF CHRIST in one thing. His brethren hate him and cast him out, then in their distress call on him to come and save them.

How reasonable his reply: "You cast me out, and now ask me to save you. If I come, shall I be your head?" This is truly what the Lord says to each seeking sinner: "If I am your Saviour, shall I be your Lord?"

For it is those who receive and confess Jesus as Lord who find Him their Saviour (see my tract, "Prince and Saviour," where this is worked out).

3. A NOBLE RESOLVE. "I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back" (v. 35). Alas! how many go back, even those who have made most solemn vows.

For vows have no power to hold a sinful heart. Only Christ can give the perseverance and constancy that "cannot go back."

But the purpose of the believer is to stand fast in the Lord. If we read the word "vow" as, purpose in Christ (2 Tim. 3. 10 ; 2 Cor. 1. 17), how good is the verse :

"High heaven that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

4. A PATIENT AND WILLING SUFFERER. Jephthah's daughter is beautiful in her gracious submission to her father's will. "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth."

She reminds us of Isaac, another willing offering, who suffered his father to bind him as a sacrifice to the altar.

And of a greater, who for our sakes yielded Himself without spot to God, a willing, sinless sacrifice for our sins.

5. JEPHTHAH UTTERED ALL HIS WORDS BEFORE THE LORD (v. 11). It would be well if we could form the habit of doing so ; to remember that the Lord hears all our words.

6. "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON JEPHTHAH." Again we are reminded that man in his own strength cannot prevail. It is not by might nor by strength that we overcome, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. "This I say then, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

Here alone is the secret of victory.

Application.

1. Let faith in Christ take the place of fleshly vows. Do not seek to bind your will, it cannot be bound ; let the Spirit guide you step by step.

2. Be faithful. Do not go back.

OUTLINE.

Hasty Words that Led to Sorrow.

Jephthah (Judges 11. 35)	Saul (1 Sam. 14. 43)
Herod (Mark 6. 23)	Thomas (John 20. 25)

LESSON 28.

Samson the Strong Man

JUDGES 16. 1-31.

I. **Text.** "Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth" (v. 6).

II. **Main Lesson.** Sin robs man of strength. Passion and disobedience are the enemies of all grace. "Flee youthful lusts which war against the soul."

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 15-17. *Samson, urged by Delilah, discloses to her the secret of his strength.* "Delilah said, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me; thou hast mocked me these three times. . . . She pressed him daily, so that his soul was vexed unto death. Then he told her all his heart and said, There hath not come a razor upon mine head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God. If I be shaven my strength will go from me."

vv. 18-20. *Delilah betrays him to the Philistines, and cuts off his seven locks of hair. The Lord departs from him.* "Delilah sent for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. . . .

"And she made him sleep upon her knees, and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head, and his strength went from him.

"And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke and said, I will go as at other times, and shake myself; and he wist not that the Lord had departed from him."

vv. 21-24. *The Philistines take him, put out his eyes, and bind him with fetters of brass and make him grind in the prison.* "But the Philistines took him, and out out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison house.

"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again. . . .

"The lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice. . . . Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand, and they praised their god."

v. 25. *Samson is sent for to make sport.* "It came to pass, when their hearts were merry, they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport."

vv. 26-30. *Samson prays. He recovers strength and throws down the two middle pillars on which the house stood, and destroys the Philistines.* "Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean on them.

"Now the house was full of man and women, and the lords of the Philistines were there, and upon the roof about three thousand that beheld while Samson made sport.

"And Samson said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me that I may be avenged for my two eyes.

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and all that were therein."

v. 31. *They bury him in his father's tomb.* "Then his brethren brought him up and buried him in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel 20 years."

IV. **The Character of Samson.** The history we have recorded of Samson would lead us at first glance to presume him to be a wicked man, but this does not appear so on a closer examination. For :

1. We find him *included among the heroes of faith* in Hebrews 11. 32 : "Time would fail me to tell of . . . Samson . . . who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousnesses, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions," etc.

So that his moral lapse and sad ruin must be the sad end of an otherwise noble life.

2. *He ruled Israel for twenty years*, and delivered his land many times from the tyranny of the Philistines.

3. *He observed his Nazarite vows* until the last great catastrophe. No strong drink was permitted, and his hair was allowed to grow uncut.

4. He was *a man of prevailing prayer*, as we see from chapter 15. 18 and chapter 16. 28, and no stranger to God.

5. He was *a man of fearless courage*. Not all strong men are so, but he faced a young lion that roared against him (14. 5), and allowed himself to be taken bound into the Philistines' camp (15. 12).

All those things go to enforce the great outstanding lesson of his life. Sin destroys even the strongest.

It is a lesson that Paul enforced : "*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*" (1 Cor. 9. 27).

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. SOWING TO THE FLESH. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6. 7, 8).

God seems to have borne long and patiently with His passionate and erring servant. He was without excuse, for the same law that imposed the Nazarite vow, forbade all inchastity and fleshly indulgence. Samson was deceived by the one whom he gave his strength to. He did not think when she pretended to love him that she really sought to slay him.

But sin is always after a man's life. It will never stop till it kills, as Paul said, "Sin deceived me and slew me" (Rom. 7. 11). Remember, then, the deceitfulness of sin.

2. A USEFUL LIFE MAY END BADLY. We are never safe except we abide in Christ, walking in the path of obedience. The battle does not end until the final victory over death.

Each period of life has its own temptations. That of middle life is to relax the vigilance and prayer watchfulness that we have learned in our first love. Many a brilliant career has been overshadowed at the end. He that shall *endure to the end* shall be saved, and shall have an abundant entrance into life.

3. THE WAGES OF SIN. The sorrows that befell Samson may be taken as an example of what sin does.

(1) *All his dignity and office are gone at a stroke.* The once mighty ruler is now a degraded slave.

(2) *His usefulness is ended.* He can no more deliver his people, for he is himself taken and bound.

(3) *His eyes are put out.* Sin always blinds. It is the pure in heart that see God. Passion blinds. Sin robs men of spiritual perception.

(4) *His strength is gone,* for when the Lord departs from a man he is weak, even though he often "wists it not," and thinks he can still do as before he did when the Lord was with him.

(5) *His liberty is gone.* Strong fetters of brass bind his once powerful limbs. "For he that committeth sin is the servant of sin." The sinner is bound with the chains of his own sins.

(6) *He is a reproach and object of scorn.* How the Philistines mock this once noble man. They praise their god Dagon (the fish god) for this notable triumph. How then is the honour of God dragged in the dust by this man's folly.

(7) *He is put to grind in prison.* To such base uses does he come. Poor Samson! May it be then a terrible warning to all who look on at the sad scene of the sorrow of sin and the misery that falls on disobedience.

4. HIS RECOVERY AND REVENGE. It is never too late to cry to the Lord. As Jonah cried from the belly of the whale and was delivered, so blind Samson cried from this prison, and was heard by Him who ever delighteth in mercy, whose ear is never closed to the prayer of the penitent.

So in death he was allowed to triumph and break the power of the proud enemy, and no doubt again delivered his people from the cruel tyranny.

Application.

Beware of trifling with sin.
Beware of presumption with God.
Be not deceived, God is not mocked.
Be watchful to the end.

LESSON 29.

Jonathan and His Armourbearer

1 SAMUEL 14. 1-52.

I. **Text.** "He hath wrought with God this day" (1 Sam. 14. 45).

II. **Main Lesson.** This is best stated in Jonathan's own words: "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." Faith manifests itself by courage.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 1. *Jonathan, Saul's son, invites his armourbearer to go with him to attack the Philistines.* "Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison."

vv. 4, 5. *They have to climb a steep passage to reach the enemy's camp.* "Between the passage by which Jonathan sought to go over, there was a sharp rock over the one side and a sharp rock on the other side, named Bozez and Seneh. "The forefront of the one was northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah."

v. 6. *Jonathan speaks in faith to his young man.* "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

v. 7. *The armourbearer seconds him.* "His armourbearer said, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold I am with thee according to thy heart."

vv. 8-10. *They devise a plan to know the mind of the Lord.* "Then said Jonathan, Behold we will pass over and we will discover ourselves unto them. If they say, Tarry until we come to you, then we will stand still in our place and will not go up unto them. But if they say unto us, Come up unto us, then we will go up, for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand, and this shall be a sign unto us."

vv. 11, 12. *They discover themselves, and are bidden to come up.* "Both of them discovered themselves unto

the garrison of the Philistines, and the Philistines said, Behold the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves ; and the men of the garrison answered and said, Come up to us and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said to his armourbearer, Come up after me, for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel."

vv. 13, 14. *They make their assault.* " And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him, and they fell before them . . . about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land."

vv. 15, 16. *The enemy flee, beating one another down.* " And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and amongst the people : the garrison and the spoilers they also trembled, and the earth quaked so it was a very great trembling. . . .

" Behold the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another."

IV. **Asking Signs from the Lord.**

The frequency with which the saints of the Old Testament asked the Lord for a sign to indicate His will, suggests the question : How far is it in the present dispensation the will of the Lord that we should seek to ascertain His mind and will in this way ? Are we justified in acting as Gideon did with the fleece, or as Jonathan and his armourbearer did ?

The answer would seem to be as follows :

1. *The Lord rebuked those who sought for signs.* It was, He said, an evil and adulterous generation that sought a sign (Matt. 12. 39), and He told the nobleman, " Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." He rebuked Thomas for his unbelief thus : " Because thou hast seen thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet believe." And the Apostle Paul says of the unbelieving Jews : " They require a sign " (1 Cor. 1. 22).

2. *Signs are, and will, be wrought by Satan* (2 Thess. 2. 9) and the Apostasy (Rev. 13. 13), and many will be deceived in this way and believe lies. The heathen, Romanists, and nearly all new theories (Christian Science, etc.) have professed to do miracles and show signs and have deceived many and led them astray.

3. *Since Pentecost* the believer is content to trust His Lord to guide him

(1) By the Scriptures applied to his heart by the Spirit.

(2) By a sound judgment and a good conscience exercised before God in prayer and faith.

Having sought guidance, *he acts before the Lord in simplicity and godly sincerity*, and has reason to believe that he will be guided wisely and aright according to the promise. "The meek will He guide in judgment."

It is a mark of want of faith to seek for signs. Signs are only for unbelief.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. FAITH IN AN EVIL DAY. Israel had dearly paid for their folly in seeking a king. He had begun well, but had fallen away from God, and had allowed the kingdom to degenerate into a state of helpless servitude to the Philistines. Saul had but 600 men, with not a weapon among them (1 Sam. 13. 15, 19-22).

But God never forsakes those who call upon Him in faith, and so when Jonathan dared to act in faith he found God still ready to answer.

It is so to-day. Those who believe can still triumph.

2. A PROMISE LITERALLY FULFILLED. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight" (Deut. 32. 30), for that day 30,000 chariots with 6000 horsemen and people as the sand fled before two (13. 5).

When the earth quaked (14. 15), it was God working to complete the brave deed wrought by these two men of faith. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

3. GOD DELIGHTS TO USE WEAK THINGS. As He did with Gideon, so here with Jonathan, He teaches us that He has chosen the weak (strong in faith) to confound the mighty. Faith reasons thus: "When I am weak, then I am strong." For then God has all the glory, and then the power of Christ rests upon me (2 Cor. 12. 9).

4. IT IS NEVER TRUE WITH THE CHILD OF GOD: "THERE IS NO HOPE." Hope is faith looking forward. To him that believeth it is never true: "It is no good," "There's no hope." Hope Thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him."

The state of Israel was, as we should say, "hopeless." The best the backsliding king could show was 600 unarmed, discouraged men, against a multitude. Yet it was double Gideon's victorious army! What a difference hope fixed on God's faithfulness makes.

5. ONE CAN ENCOURAGE ANOTHER'S FAITH. It is usually God's way to send His servants two by two. Ecclesiastes 4. 9 teaches how two are better than one.

(1) If one fall the other can lift him up.

(2) Two can keep each others hearts warm.

(3) Two have more strength than one. It is important then to see that we play the true part and never discourage by our want of faith, but as these two did, each encouraging the faith and stirring the courage of the other.

6. FAITH AND COURAGE. Just as faith and hope are allied, so faith and courage are. Courage is faith daring. Without faith, courage is foolhardiness. Let me see I am in the line of God's will, and that He has bidden me act, then I need fear nothing. The want of courage is unbelief. Faith can remove mountains when God bids it do so. For the power of God is always in the line of the will of God.

Application.

Do not let failure and weakness all around hinder your action. Work with God and He will work with you.

Let faith become hope and put on courage.

OUTLINE.

Men of Courage.

Joshua (1.9)
Caleb (Josh. 14. 6-14)
David (1 Sam. 17. 32)
Jonathan (1 Sam. 14. 6)
Jashobeam (1 Chron. 11. 11)
Eleazar (1 Chron. 11. 12, 13)
Shammah (2 Sam. 23. 10)
Abishai (1 Chron. 11. 20)
Benaiah (1 Chron. 11. 22)

LESSON 30.

The Witch of Endor

1 Samuel 28. 7-25.

I. **Text.** "The works of the flesh are manifest which are these, . . . witchcraft. They that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5. 19-20).

II. **Main Lesson.** Spiritism of all kinds is a confession of the failure of faith, and has the wrath of God resting upon it.

III. **The Story Told.** Saul, having been rejected of God for his disobedience and sin, and obtaining no answers to his prayers, has recourse to spiritism."

v. 7. *He inquires for a witch.* "Then said Saul, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her, and his servants said, Behold there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit in Endor."

Saul goes to inquire of her disguised, and relieves her fears by assuring her that nothing should happen to her.

v. 11. *The woman asks whom he would speak with.* "Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee?"

v. 11. *He asks for Samuel.* "And he said, Bring me up Samuel."

v. 12. *Samuel appears unexpectedly.* "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice, and spake to Saul saying, Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul."

v. 13. *He asks what she saw.* "The king said, Be not afraid for what sawest thou; and the woman said, I saw gods ascending out of the earth."

v. 14. *She describes Samuel.* "He said, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up and he is covered with a mantle; and Saul perceived it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed himself."

v. 15. *Samuel demands why he has been disquieted.* "Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? Saul answered, I am sore distressed. . . . God is departed from me and answers me no more. . . . I



THE DOME OF THE ROCK

Standing on Mount Moriah, the Site of Solomon's Temple, Jerusalem

To face page 136



THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT

Showing the path up to the Temple on the right

have called thee that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

vv. 16-19. *Samuel pronounces his doom.* "Samuel said, The Lord hath done as He spake to me, for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand and given it to David, because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst His fierce wrath upon Amalek. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines, and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

v. 20. *Saul faints under the blow.* "Then Saul fell headlong . . . and there was no more strength left in him. The woman brought (food) to Saul and his servants and they did eat, . . . and rose up and went away that night."

IV. Necromancy, or Communicating with the Dead.

Deuteronomy 18. 10 expressly forbids all divination, observing of times (with a view to telling the future), enchantment, witchcraft, charms, consulting spirits and necromancy, or seeking to get into touch with the dead. It states : "For all that do these things *are an abomination unto the Lord.*" This should be sufficient to stop anyone who fears God from having anything to do with Spiritualism or spiritist seances.

Two things are withheld from men :

(1) *The Future*, except in so far as God has been pleased to reveal it in the Holy Oracles, the Scriptures.

(2) *Intercourse with the Dead.* All attempts to break through these limitations are not only disobedience, but failures. Whether the fraud be on the part of the medium or the evil spirits themselves does not matter. All is false and wicked, with the saddest results to the dupes who are deceived by it.

That our dear ones who died in the faith of Christ should after death deliberately disobey Him and sin against the Word and Command of God is utterly unthinkable, so that whoever may personate them is a lying fraud and an abomination to the Lord.

The alleged results of necromancy in modern times are so absurd as to leave one amazed that any are found to believe the pretended communications. Not one idea

from beyond the grave, that any fraud could not have invented has come to light. Had any message reached us from beyond, it would certainly have been different from the trivialities and nonsense so far passed off as coming from the beloved dead.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. A BACKSLIDER ONLY WILL BECOME A NECROMANCER. It was not till God has forsaken Saul because of his disobedience that he had recourse to this witch. He had, in his spiritual days, when God had given him another heart, shown great zeal in putting away all who had familiar spirits.

A familiar spirit is a demon who has become familiar with some man or woman.

2. THE WITCH WAS A FRAUD. This is seen from the fact that while she pretended to be able to call up Samuel, she never really expected him to come, and was terror-stricken when he did (v. 12).

Her familiar demon was no doubt in the habit of personating anyone the witch or medium asked for, but this time God intervened and really allowed Samuel to appear, to the amazement of the poor wicked woman.

3. SPIRITS WHO COMMUNICATE WITH MEN ARE "EVIL" ONLY, because God has expressly forbidden such intercourse, and no good or holy spirit would wilfully dishonour Him by such rebellion against His Word.

All good spirits "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word" (Psa. 103. 20).

4. THE RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE IS ALWAYS SORROW. What could Saul have expected from Samuel? If God had become his enemy, could he expect His prophet to be his friend on such an occasion?

Only one course was open to Saul, and that was to repent and turn to God with a broken heart, and God would have met him in grace as he always does.

5. THE FOLLY OF NECROMANCY is shown from the words of Isaiah 8. 19: "When they say, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and that mutter. Should not a people seek unto their God? Should the

living seek to the dead? To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

If man wants light, let him go to God and to the Scriptures; in them alone is any solution found to his questions or any comfort in his sorrow.

Application.

BEWARE OF SPIRITISM and all attempts to communicate with the dead.

BEWARE OF DESPAIR. It is never too late to repent and turn to God.

BEWARE OF IMPENITENCE: a stubborn continuance in disobedience. Leave the future in the hands of Him who knows and loves perfectly.

OUTLINE.

Evil Spirits and their Work.

Saul destroyed for seeking to spirits,	.. 1 Chron. 10. 13
Ahab deceived by lying spirits, ..	.. 2 Chron. 18. 21
Manasseh dealt with a familiar spirit,	.. 2 Chron. 33. 6
Man with unclean spirit, ...	.. Mark 1. 22
Legion possessed of many, ...	.. Mark 5. 12
Boy grievously tormented, ..	.. Mark 9. 18
Girl with unclean spirit, ...	.. Mark 7. 25
Woman with spirit, a Python, ..	Acts 16. 16 R.V. *m.*
Spirit that attacked Sceva's sons,	.. Acts 19. 14

LESSON 31.

Absalom's Sad Fate

2 SAMUEL 18. 9-17.

I. **Text.** "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son" (2 Sam. 18. 33).

II. **Main Lesson.** Vanity and ambition have led to the ruin of many a noble young life.

III. **The Story Told.** Absalom having raised a rebellion against his father, King David, is defeated in the battle in the woods of Ephraim and flees upon his mule.

v. 9. *He is caught in the boughs of a great oak and suspended.* "Absalom met the servants of David, and Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak and his head caught hold of the oak and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth, and the mule went away."

vv. 10-13. *Joab is told, and offers a reward to the man to destroy Absalom, who refuses.* "A certain man saw it and told Joab, Behold I saw Absalom hanged in an oak. And Joab said, Why didst thou not smite him to the ground, and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle. And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son."

v. 14. *Joab goes himself and slays Absalom.* "Then said Joab, I must not tarry thus with thee; and he took three darts in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak."

v. 15. *His men surround Absalom and finish the cruel work.* "And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom and slew him."

vv. 16, 17. *They bury Absalom with stones.* "And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel, and they took Absalom and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him, and all Israel fled every one to his tent."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. BEAUTY A DANGEROUS GIFT. Absalom's beauty is

described in 2 Samuel 14. 25. His hair especially is noted, and the weight of his luxuriant locks. The snare of beauty is that it leads to vanity and self-esteem. It leads to despising and triumphing over others not so favoured; it leads to a neglect of more necessary things, as faithfulness and diligence, as if beauty could dispense with these, so that beauty and ignorance often are found together; and it leads to an inordinate desire for admiration and praise. Thus, while it is a gift not to be despised, for it opens hearts readily, and gives wonderful opportunities of service, yet it is described in Proverbs 31. 30, "Favour (being well favoured) is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Absalom's beauty led to his downfall and death.

2. VANITY IS THE OPPOSITE OF HUMILITY (2 Sam. 15. 1). The vain person is self-centred and self-occupied, always thinking of self; whereas God gives grace to the humble. True humility does not think highly of itself, nor meanly; it does not think of itself at all.

We are bidden not to think more highly of ourselves than we should, but to think soberly according as God has given us grace. It is grace that matters and not self. "Love seeketh not its own."

3. AMBITION MAY BE GOOD OR BAD. If ambition goes with vanity, then self will be its aim. To exalt self, to be someone, to win applause, a place of honour, or make a name for oneself, this is unworthy ambition. What the prophet was bidden to say to Baruch is good for all to receive. "*Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not*" (Jer. 45. 5). Let God exalt you to honour if He will, but do not exalt yourself for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the lowly.

The builders of Babel sought to make themselves "a name." This is the spirit of the world. The servant of God is ambitious to exalt the Name of Christ.

4. THREE TEXTS ON AMBITION. The word *philotimeomai* in Greek means to desire the honour or to be ambitious. It is used only three times in the New Testament,

Romans 15. 20. "Yea, so have I *strived* (or been ambitious) to preach the Gospel."

2 *Cor.* 5. 9 (R.V.). "Wherefore we *labour* (are ambitious) that . . . we may be acceptable to Him."

1 *Thess.* 4. 11. "Study (be ambitious) to be quiet."

These help us to understand the true ambition of the child of God. To be quiet, to preach the Gospel, and to please the Lord.

5. A WICKED SON. That vanity and ambition should lead Absalom to desire his father's throne, and even to compass his life, is very sad. It shows how one sin leads to another, the lesser to the greater. Probably Absalom never admitted to himself even that his ambition was a cover for patricide, the murder of his own father. Sin never stops when once it is allowed. It goes on to ruin and shame.

6. A LESSON IN RETRIBUTION. Absalom's sin recoiled on his own head. Seeking the death of his father, he ran upon his own. The wicked, we read, "shall fall himself into his own pit," for "whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein," and "he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him" (Prov. 26, 27 ; 28. 10).

So it was with Absalom, his iniquity returned upon his own head.

7. GRACE AND CRUELTY CONTRASTED. The honourable conduct of the man who found the prince hanging in the tree, and the cruelty of Joab, are in striking contrast. To honour the king's son was noble, to slay a helpless enemy was pitiable cruelty.

Application.

There is no safety nor rest in the vain and ambitious heart.

Let us beware of pride, for it leads to all sin, and is an abomination to the Lord.

Let our ambition be worthy.

LESSON 32.

Solomon in All His Glory

1 KINGS 4. 20-34.

I. **Text.** "Solomon built Him a house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7. 47, 48).

II. **Main Lesson.** Earthly splendour may cover moral failure. Fame without grace will not save man from sin and ruin.

III. **Solomon's Glory Described.**

v. 21. *His wide dominion.* "Solomon reigned over all kingdoms, from the river (Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt. They brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life."

vv. 22, 23. *His daily provision.* 30 measures of fine flour, 60 measures of meal, 10 fat oxen, 20 oxen from the pastures, 100 sheep, besides harts, etc., and fowls.

v. 26. *His horsemen.* Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen.

v. 29. *His wisdom.* "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the seashore."

v. 32. *His proverbs.* "He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five."

v. 33. *His knowledge of natural history.* "He spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes."

v. 34. *His renown.* "There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom."

IV. **Solomon's Own Description.** This is given in Ecclesiastes, chapters 1 and 2.

"I the preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I gave my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all things that are done under heaven."

"Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem."

He then enumerates the subjects of his study.

1. Wisdom and madness (1. 17).
2. Mirth and pleasure (2. 1) and laughter (2. 2).
3. Wine, yet with wisdom (2. 3).
4. Great works, vineyards, gardens, orchards, and pools of water (2. 4-6).
5. Servants and maidens (2. 7).
6. Great possessions of cattle (2. 7).
7. Silver, gold, and treasure (2. 8).
8. Singers and musical instruments of all sorts.

Yet, all of it being "under the sun," and of the earth, it gave him no satisfaction. He pronounced it all:

"Vanity and vexation of spirit" (2. 11), and therefore he adds, "I hated life" (2. 17).

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. SOLOMON'S CAREER may be divided into four stages.

(1) *Purpose.* When as a young man he set his heart to seek the Lord, who appeared to him twice (1 Kings 11. 9), and encouraged him with promises of wisdom and life.

(2) *Prosperity.* When he attained to the highest glory. Probably the greatest, richest, and wisest king in the earth. Nothing that this world could give was withholden from him.

(3) *Privilege.* He was permitted to build the Temple on Mount Moriah, at Jerusalem; and, more lasting still, to contribute several books to the Holy Oracles, the Sacred Scriptures. Much of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

(4) *Perversion.* His heart was turned from the Lord, and the result was that he died under the shadow of his folly, and the kingdom was divided in the hand of his son.

2. THE REASON OF SOLOMON'S DECLINE. The reason was that "his heart turned from the Lord God of Israel," for the life and conduct follow the heart.

But what turned his heart? We can suggest several things.

(1) *Unholy Alliances.* He married Pharaoh's daughter and many other strange wives, and these "outlandish women" turned him aside (Neh. 13. 26). For he had to please them and let them have their false gods (1 Kings 11. 4-8).

(2) *He Disobeyed the Law of God* in the following things:

(*a*) Multiplying horses (Deut. 17. 16).
(*b*) Taking many wives (Deut. 17. 17).
(*c*) Amassing to himself silver and gold (Deut. 17. 17).
(*d*) Serving other gods (Deut. 28. 36).
(*e*) Offering on high places (Deut. 12. 13).

He should have written out a copy of the Law and read daily in it. No doubt he neglected to do so as he grew prosperous (Deut. 17. 18-20).

(3) *Giving his Heart to Worldliness.* The world is very subtle and enticing, but all that is "under the sun," while it can draw the heart from God, can never satisfy, and cannot last. Therefore, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, . . . for the world passeth away and the lust thereof."

3. PROSPERITY IS DANGEROUS TO SPIRITUAL LIFE. The soul often suffers when the man prospers. "The cares of this world" and "the deceitfulness of riches," and "the pleasure (lust) of other things," Jesus said, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.

It is still true that the prosperity of the foolish destroys them (Prov. 1. 32).

Habakkuk (2. 6) speaks of the prosperous proud man as one who "ladeth himself with thick clay," like one trying to run a race in heavy clay soil.

We must lay aside these weights and "clinging sins" if we are to run the Christian race.

4. RICHES DO NOT ENRICH THE CHARACTER. Often as the wealth increases the godly character decreases. "It requires a steady hand to carry a full cup." Many a rich man is poor in spiritual life, and many a poor man rich in faith (James 2. 6).

5. TWO KINDS OF WISDOM. The *wisdom of this world* is foolishness with God, because in all its calculations it leaves out God, and so goes astray.

Christ is the Wisdom of God to those who walk with Him, because by His Spirit He teaches them the hidden wisdom (1 Cor. 2. 7).

It is sad that the wisest man who ever lived should have left behind him a reputation for folly, sin, and departure from God.

6. FAME AND SPLENDOUR are not the best things. So that Christ warned us of two things concerning Solomon.

(1) That *his glory*, being artificial, was not like even the meanest flower. "Solomon in all his glory was not so well arrayed," and Christ clothes the soul with His beauty, as He does the lilies of the field.

(2) That *there is a greater than Solomon*, of whom we may learn wisdom—Jesus, the Wisdom of God.

Application.

Let your treasure and your wisdom be in Heaven.

Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

Hold all you have loosely, that it may not turn away your heart.

OUTLINE.

Egypt—Type of World.

Self-indulgence, ...	Num. 11. 5 ; 1 John 2. 16
Vain Treasures, ...	Heb. 11. 26
Cruel Bondage, ...	Exod. 1. 11
Treachery, ...	2 Kings 18. 21 ; Isa. 30. 17.
Enmity Against God, ...	James 4. 4
Unblessed with Rain, ...	Deut. 11. 10
Under Judgment, ...	John 16. 11 ; 2 Peter 3. 7

LESSON 33.

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

1 KINGS 10. 1-13.

I. **Text.** "The Queen of the South came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a Greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12. 42).

II. **Main Lesson.** The Queen of Sheba condemns many for their never seeking the Lord, in that she came so far to hear Solomon. It is a good thing to bring our hard questions to Christ. He will give us the true answer.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 1. *The Queen of Sheba, having heard of Solomon's wisdom, comes to prove him.* "When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the Name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions."

v. 2. *She arrives with great treasure and talks with Solomon.* "She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices and very much gold and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart."

v. 3. *Solomon satisfies her on all points.* "Solomon told her all her questions; there was not anything hid from the king which he told her not."

vv. 4, 5. *She is overcome at the contemplation of his greatness.* "When the queen had seen all Solomon's wisdom and the house he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent to the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her."

vv. 6-9. *She expresses her delight in it all.* "She said, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, . . . howbeit, I believed not until I came, and mine eyes have seen, behold the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

"Happy are thy men, happy are thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel."

v. 10. *She makes him a great present.* "She gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones."

v. 13. *And Solomon gives her of his royal bounty.* "And Solomon gave her all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country."

IV. **Where was Sheba ?**

The Lord Jesus describes it as in the south, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Matt. 12. 42).

Josephus speaks of it as Ethiopia, and this seems to be borne out by the fact that Sheba is named in Genesis 10. 7, as one of the descendants of Ham, through his first-born, Cush, from whom the Egyptians were descended.

That the Ethiopians were frequently governed by queens is clear from Acts 8. 27, where the eunuch from Ethiopia was in charge of the treasure of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians.

But in Genesis 10. 28 another Sheba is named, a descendant of Shem, through Eber and Joktan—and Sheba was a large kingdom in Arabia—so that some are inclined to regard the queen as coming from this land.

It seems, however, unlikely that the Lord would describe Arabia as the uttermost part of the earth, for the Arabians were of the same great branch of the human race (Shemites) as the Jews and comparatively not so far away.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, was a long journey, involving months of hard travelling, and crossing of the great desert lying between Palestine and Egypt, perhaps 1000 miles.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. "A GREATER THAN SOLOMON." By describing Himself thus, the Lord asserts His pre-eminence as Son of God and Messiah, and, moreover, encourages us to draw comparisons from the story. As the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, so let every seeker come to Him.

2. HEARING AND SEEKING. The queen heard, and this led her to seek. Now the Gospel is preached that men may hear of Jesus, the Greater than Solomon, the Lord and Saviour of men, and hearing should lead to seeking.

Hearing, even knowing and believing, the Gospel is not enough. The Gospel must be *obeyed* (Rom. 10. 16), for it bids us "Seek the Lord," and promises us, "Seek and ye shall find," and assures us that "every one that seeketh findeth."

3. HARD QUESTIONS, or, more correctly, "riddles"—"nuts to crack," we might say, to prove how far his reputation for wisdom was true. And Solomon told her all the answers.

Now most have "hard questions" in their hearts, "riddles" of their lives, things they cannot understand.

Difficulties about the Bible, about the Lord Himself, about salvation and holiness. If instead of trying to answer these with their own carnal wisdom, they were to bring them to the Lord Jesus, He would solve them all.

4. "I BELIEVED NOT TILL I CAME." Only one thing will give real conviction of the truth and reality of God's salvation. We must come to Christ. The truth of God is not to be held as a theory, it is to be proved only in experience.

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" He replied, "Come and see." When Philip told Nathaniel he had found Messiah, and Nathaniel doubted, Philip said, "Come and see."

Vital Christianity is not learned from books or sermons, we must "Come and see." "O taste and see that the Lord is good." We all have to say, "I believed not till I came."

5. "IT WAS A TRUE REPORT." So all who come find. None are disappointed. Millions have been able to sing from the heart:

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad,
I found Him in a resting place,
And He has made me glad."

6. "THE HALF WAS NOT TOLD ME." There are now

discoveries of Christ every day. The more we know of Him the more we learn of grace and power, the longer we live the richer treasures do we find in Him, the inexhaustible mine of "every precious thing."

7. "THY WISDOM AND PROSPERITY EXCEEDETH THE FAME WHICH I HEARD." When we come to Christ our verdict is: It is true, but the reality is far better. No one can describe in advance all the blessedness of the love and power of Christ.

8. A HAPPY PEOPLE. This struck the queen specially. The servants of Solomon were a happy people. Their happiness lay in standing continually before Him and hearing His wisdom.

Joy, great joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory, is the constant note in Scripture to describe the lot of those who have come to Christ.

9. "NO MORE SPIRIT IN HER." Her deepest desires were met. Her hard questions were all answered. Her gifts were received, and she departed laden with presents—all she could ask, besides the royal bounty from the king, over and above all she asked or thought. It is thus that Christ blesses us, "More than we ask or think."

Application.

1. If you have heard of Christ, come and prove the truth of the Gospel.

2. Bring Him your hard questions.

3. O taste and see that the Lord is good.

OUTLINE.

Satisfied People in the Psalms.

The Meek, ...	Psa. 22. 26
With the Fatness of Thy House, ...	Psa. 36. 8
As with Marrow and Fatness, ...	Psa. 63. 5
With the Goodness of Thy House, ..	Psa. 65. 4
With Honey from the Rock, ...	Psa. 81. 16
In Thy Likeness, ...	Psa. 17. 15

LESSON 34.

The Still Small Voice

1 KINGS 19. 1-18.

I. **Text.** "Be still and know that I am God" (Psa. 46. 10).

II. **Main Lesson.** God speaks in quiet to man's heart. In order to hear His voice, let us "study to be quiet" and know His will, as the Spirit reveals it to us through the Scriptures. It is not the whirlwind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire that we need to learn His will, but the still, small voice.

III. **The Story Told.** Elijah has slain all the prophets of Baal at the memorable scene on Mount Carmel, when fire had fallen from Heaven to consume his sacrifice and to attest his message.

Now Jezebel threatens his life, and he flees to Beersheba, and thence into the wilderness. There an angel ministers to his physical needs, and he goes forty days and forty nights to Horeb (Sinai), the Mount of God.

v. 9. *Elijah lodges in a cave in Horeb.* "And he came thither unto a cave and lodged there."

v. 9. *The Lord speaks to him.* "And behold the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

v. 10. *Elijah's answer.* "He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away."

v. 11. *He is bidden to stand on the mount before the Lord.* "And He said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord."

v. 11. *The Lord passes by, and a great wind.* "Behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountain, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind."

v. 11. *An earthquake follows.* "And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake."

v. 12. *Then a fire.* "And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire" (1 Kings 19. 12).

v. 12. *A still, small voice.* "And after the fire, a still, small voice."

v. 13. *Elijah retires to the cave and God speaks again.* "It was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, What doest thou hear, Elijah?"

v. 14. *He replies exactly as before* (see v. 10). "I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away."

vv. 15, 16. *He is bidden return to his appointed work.* "Go, return to the wilderness of Damascus; anoint Hazael king over Syria; Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be prophet in thy room."

v. 18. *He is not the only one left.* "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

IV. New Testament References to History.

Romans 11. 2. "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying, Lord, they have killed Thy prophets and digged down Thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. "A MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS AS WE ARE." This is how Elijah is described in James 5. 17, and we see it exemplified in this story. He was a great man of God; but apart from his God, and when he was out of the line of God's will, he was such as we are when we, too, are left to ourselves. There is no difference, the flesh is the same in all, an incureably bad thing if yielded to. Let us reverently notice his weaknesses that we may be warned by them.

(1) *The reaction of his nerves.* After the fierce day on Carmel, he seems to have lost courage, and fled at the

threat of a woman. We are never so near to failure as after a great success.

(2) *His self-esteem.* "I have been very jealous for the Lord." Had he forgotten to say, "Yet not I, but the Spirit of the Lord upon me." How easy to boast of our success when it was the Lord who wrought by us, because we confessed our weakness and cried to Him for help. He gave help, and then we boast, "I have." Again, he says, "I am not better than my fathers" (v. 4). But who said he was? Was it the pride of his heart that whispered it to him?

(3) *His despondency.* He asked to die. "It is enough, O Lord, now take away my life." Probably he would not really have wished it, but depression is a very severe test of faith. See how David triumphed over it (Psa. 42. 11 and 43. 5). It was well his prayer was not answered, for later he went up to Heaven without dying.

(4) *His hasty speech.* The Children of Israel had been won by his bold action on Carmel; had slain the prophets and turned to the Lord. Had he forgotten this when he said they had forsaken the covenant. They had slain Baal's prophets, yet he says they have slain Thy prophets." We are liable to speak rashly when we are distressed. Only Job in his sorrow would not accuse God falsely.

(5) *His foolish conclusion.* "I, even I only, am left." No, there were 7000 hidden ones, who, like him, had not bowed to Baal nor given him the kiss of allegiance.

How ready we are to presume that we alone are the people that we alone are faithful to God.

2. GOD'S GRACE TO HIS SERVANT.

(1) He sends an angel to minister to his physical need.

(2) He rebukes him with the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

(3) He gives him a remarkable vision of His power and majesty in whirlwind, earthquake, and fire.

(4) He speaks to him in a still, small voice.

(5) He sends him back to his work as he did with Jonah.

(6) He removes his misconception, and tells him of the faithful seven thousand.

(7) He sends him to anoint kings and a prophet, that he may know that the future is safe in His hands.

3. THE VISION AT HOREB. That mountain, Sinai (in Horeb), had once before been shaken with a great earthquake and burned with fire, so that Moses did exceedingly fear and tremble; and once more God manifests Himself in Majesty and Power.

The God of the Wind, as we know from Exodus 15. 10, when He brought the Red Sea upon Pharaoh and his host.

The God of the Earthquake, as we know from Numbers, when the earth opened to swallow up Dathan and Abiram.

The God of Fire, as Elijah knew when he saw the fire descend upon his sacrifice at Carmel.

Yet it was not as from a God terrible in judgment, fearful in praises, doing wonders, that Elijah received comfort. It was from the Still Small Voice. It is not from Sinai, but from Calvary, that our hope comes (see Heb. 12. 18-24). Not a fiery law, but grace and peace.

4. THE STILL SMALL VOICE. How striking, after the fearful vision of the rocks rending and the fire consuming. What does it teach ?

That the Word of the Lord comes as a shower that waters the earth. It falls silently upon the heart, as the dew upon the mown grass.

We must listen to what the Spirit saith through the Scriptures, for therein is God's still, small voice.

Not in tumultuous and noisy scenes, not in great visions, not in signs and wonders; but in the inner consciousness, does God speak to those who are quiet before-Him.

5. THE MESSAGE OF THE VOICE. God has one thing to say to the fearful, despondent, run-away prophets. "Go back." "Take up your work again."

There is no peace out of the path of duty, out of the line of God's will. Get back and Go on.

Application.

Do not yield to passions, or the weakness of the flesh.

Attend to the still, small voice and obey. Hear it saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Beware of false conclusions. Get back and go on.

LESSON 35.

Four Starving Lepers

2 KINGS 7. 1-20.

I. **Text.** "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace" (2 Kings 7. 9).

II. **Main Lesson.** The prophet, having proclaimed deliverance, some believed and some believed not. In this we have an illustration of the Gospel. The outcast lepers were saved, the unbelieving noble perished.

III. **The Story Told.** Elisha, having proclaimed deliverance when the Siege of Samaria was at its height. A lord, one whose army the king leaned, said, "Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" and is rebuked, "Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

v. 3. *Four lepers outside the gate are ready to perish.* "There were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate, and they said, Why sit we here until we die? If we enter the city, then the famine is in the city and we shall die there; if we sit here we shall die. Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die."

v. 5. *They go to the Syrian camp and find no one there.* "They rose up in the twilight, and when they were come to the camp of Syria, behold there was no man there."

vv. 6, 7. *The Lord had caused them to flee.* "The Lord had made the host to hear a noise. . . . Wherefore they arose and fled."

v. 8. *The lepers find food.* "The lepers went into one tent and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold and raiment, and went and hid it."

vv. 9-11. *They resolve to tell the king.* "They said, We do not well. This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. So they came and called the porter of the city, and they told it to the king's house within."

vv. 12-14. *The king is suspicious, and sends out to see.* "The king arose in the night, and said, I will now show you what the Syrians have done. They know we be

hungry, therefore are they gone to hide, saying, When they come out of the city we shall catch them alive and get into the city. And the king sent after the host of the Syrians saying, Go and see."

v. 15. *They find the way full of castaway garments.* "They went after them, and lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messenger returned and told the king."

vv. 16-20. *The people press out to the spoil, and trample the unbelieving nobleman under foot.* "The king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate. So it fell out unto him, for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE GOSPEL IN THE STORY. Like this doomed and perishing city, the world lies in the power of the evil one. It is under wrath, and all in it are "guilty," "under sin," and "ready to perish."

Then good news is announced. Salvation near at hand, from God Himself. So in Christ is salvation proclaimed to the perishing.

Men hesitate to believe the good news. Some, like the nobleman, mock at it; but all who believe and make their way out of the city prove the message true and find salvation.

2. THE WORD OF THE LORD STANDS TRUE, THOUGH MEN DO NOT BELIEVE IT. Many have the foolish idea that if they do not believe the Gospel it makes it untrue. But it is true, though all men reject it.

Some think that by believing there is no judgment and no hell—they have got rid of them. But they are still true. God's Word stands unchangeable. "So it fell out," will always be said of all God's Word.

3. GOD RESISTETH THE PROUD. The lord who mocked at the word of the Lord was made a solemn example of God's judgment on unbelief. His boasting unbelief was rebuked. He should see, but not taste, of the good things.

Let us fear, then, to speak lightly against the Bible. Unbelief is the crowning sin :

(1) Because it dishonours God.

(2) Because it robs us of our share in blessing.

(3) Because it stumbles others.

4. GOD USES HUMBLE INSTRUMENTS. Four outcasts, lepers dying of hunger, these became the heralds of God's salvation. So we have an illustration of 1 Cor. 1. 27, "God hath chosen . . . the base things of the world." Why ? "That no flesh should glory in His sight."

We may gather this, too, that we may be used if we are willing.

5. THE WORST MAY ENJOY GOD'S SALVATION. None are too vile, too loathsome, to come to Christ. These poor leprous skeletons found plenty, and that without money and without price. This is the glory of the Gospel of Grace, the good news of free salvation.

"None too vile or loathsome,
For a Saviour's grace."

6. WE SHOULD PASS ON THE GOOD NEWS. The lepers rightly reasoned, "We do not well this day ; it is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace" (v. 9). So we who know the good news should "go and tell."

7. GOD HAS MANY WAYS OF BLESSING. The proud noble could only think of one—"windows in Heaven." But God has many unseen agents and secret plans that we can never guess.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

We need not dictate to God how He should answer our cry. He knows best how to provide.

Application.

Think of the folly of unbelief, how it dishonours God and robs us of blessing.

Believe the promises of God, and specially the Gospel, and seek in Christ the salvation God has provided.

LESSON 36.

The King who Burnt the Word of God

JEREMIAH 36. 20-32.

I. **Text.** "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2. 30).

II. **Main Lesson.** Jehoiakim king of Judah, treats the Word of God with contempt, cutting it up and burning it. He brings judgment upon his head, for God is not mocked, and has exalted His Word above all His Name. The Word of God must be revered, and feared, and obeyed.

III. **The Story Told.** Jeremiah has written, by God's command, a roll containing God's judgments on Israel, and Judah gives it to Baruch, who reports it to the princes, who tell the king.

v. 21. *He sends Jehudi for it and bids him read it aloud.* "So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll, and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king and of all the princes."

v. 22. *The king has a fire burning in his winter house.* "Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month, and there was a fire in the hearth burning before him."

v. 23. *He cuts the roll with a penknife and casts it into the fire.* "When Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire."

v. 24. *They were not alarmed.* "Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

v. 25. *Some of the princes beg him not to do it.* "Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them."

v. 26. *The king sends to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah.* "The king commanded . . . to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the Lord hid them."

vv. 27-29. *Jeremiah is bidden rewrite the roll.* "The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, Take thou again

another roll and write in it all the former words. Thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thou hast burned this roll therefore——."

vv. 30-32. *His doom pronounced.* "Thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the cold, and I will punish him, . . . but they hearkened not."

IV. **Some Facts about Jehoiakim.**

(1) He was the son of the good king Josiah, who when he found the Word of God, mourned and called for national repentance, and had it read to the people, and caused all to enter into a covenant to keep it.

So this insolent king could have no excuse, being the son of a godly king, who reverenced the Word of God.

(2) His name was Eliakim, but the king of Egypt, who dethroned his elder brother, Jehoahaz, changed his name to Jehoiakim when he put him on the throne of Judah.

(3) He was a young man of twenty-five when he came to the throne, and reigned but eleven years.

(4) He was exceedingly wicked, filling Jerusalem with innocent blood, until Nebuchadnezzar brought his ignoble career to an end.

(5) Having treated God's Word with contempt, he would himself be so treated.

"They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother! or, Ah, sister! They shall not lament for him saying, Ah, Lord, or, Ah, his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22. 18, 19).

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE HONOUR GOD HAS PUT UPON HIS WORD.

(1) *Its Name.* "The Oracles of God," "The Sacred Writings," "The Scriptures of the Prophets," "My Word," "Truth" (John 17. 17).

(2) *Its Dignity.* "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name" (Psa. 138. 2), "To that man will I look . . . who trembleth at My Word" (Isa. 66. 2).

(3) *Its Power.* "The Word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword" (Heb. 4. 12). "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6. 63).

(4) *Its Testimony to Christ.* "These are they which testify of Me" (John 5. 39). "Moses wrote of Me" (John 5. 46). "Abraham saw My day and was glad" (John 8. 56).

(5) *Its Permanence.* "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet. 1. 25). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24. 35). "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10. 35).

2. THE WORD OF THE LORD STANDS SURE. Men may burn it, but it will come true. Man may hate it and reject its teaching, but it will prevail No word of God has ever or will ever fail. All shall come to pass.

The neglect of the Word of God does not hinder its fulfilment in time and eternity.

3. JEHOIAKIM'S DOOM. "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David" (Jer. 36. 30). This came true. No son of his ever did so.

Although his name appears in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1. 11), it is only to record that he and his brethren were carried away to Babylon.

No son of his reigned, and even Christ was not his seed "after the flesh," for his genealogy is that of Joseph and was to show the royal succession ; the Lord Jesus becoming heir to the throne by the marriage of Mary with Joseph after his birth.

4. DESPISING THE WORD. In Proverbs 13. 13, we read, "Whoso despiseth the Word shall be destroyed : but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded."

Destroyed, not necessarily as to his body, as Jehoiakim was, but morally and spiritually as every despiser is.

5. CUTTING AND BURNING THE WORD OF GOD. We have our modern representatives of this king. *The critic* who treating the Bible with contempt in his carnal wisdom, and supposed superior learning cuts out portions of it, and *the Romanist*, who, hating its light, burns not only it, but when he can, those who love it.

To face page 160



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF EVIL COUNSEL ON THE SOUTH



ON THE TEMPLE AREA AT JERUSALEM.
THE TOWER OF ANTONIA

They represent the two chief enemies of truth. *The wisdom of this world* (1 Cor. 1. 19-21 and 2. 14) and of the natural man, and *tradition and usurped authority*, which attempts by the overbearing weight of false claims to get rid of truth.

6. BRAVADO. "They were not afraid, nor rent their garments." Man is ever a boaster, his tongue "boasteth great things" (James 2. 5), and his pride refuses to be afraid or ashamed, though he sins with a high hand.

Perhaps this is the highest advance in sin that a man can attain to. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3. 18).

It is spoken of as "the hardening of the heart," the "searing of the conscience," the "closing of the ears." It is always the precursor of impending judgment.

7. "THE LORD HID THEM." We are not told how Baruch and Jeremiah escaped, but the Lord is the Hiding Place of His people, not a hair of their head can fall to the ground until He pleases, and He has many ways of hiding His faithful servants.

Just as Jesus passed through His enemies unharmed, because His hour was not yet come, so the worker is immortal till his work is done.

Application.

Let us see that we tremble at the Word of God.
For ever it is settled in Heaven.

OUTLINE.

The Word of God Received.

Saves (James 1. 21).
Stablishes (Col. 2. 7).
Satisfies (John 4. 14).
Sanctifies (John 17. 17).
Strengthens (Rom. 4. 20).
Shines (Psa. 119. 105).
Speaks (Deut. 6. 7).

LESSON 37.

A Black Man to the Rescue

JEREMIAH 36. 6-13; 39. 15-18.

I. **Text.** "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** Faith ever works by love. Ebed-melech, having put his trust in the Lord (39. 18), acted with compassion for Jeremiah, and delivered him from the pit. He is rewarded by being saved from the overthrow of the city.

III. **The Story Told.** The princes, having complained to the king of Jeremiah foretelling the doom of Jerusalem, obtain permission to do as they will to him. They throw him into the dungeon of Malchiah in the prison court. It is so boggy that he sinks in the mire.

vv. 7-9. *Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch hears of it and tells the king that his life is in danger.* "When Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house heard . . . the king then sitting in the gate of Banjamin, Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house and spake to the king saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is, for there is no more bread in the city."

v. 10. *He is bidden to rescue him.* "Then the king commanded Ebed-melech, Take thirty men with thee and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die."

vv. 11-12. *He rescues him with ropes and old rags from the dungeon.* "So Ebed-melech took the men and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah, and said, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so."

v. 13. *Jeremiah is dragged out of the mire.* "So they drew Jeremiah with cords and took him up out of the

dungeon; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison."

Chap. 39. 15. *The Lord sends Ebed-melech a special promise of grace.* "Now the Word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, Go and speak to Ebed-melech. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will bring my words upon the city for evil and not for good. . . . But I will deliver thee in that day, and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid, . . . but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE ENMITY OF THE HEART. The natural man is ever at heart the enemy of God. Because in some things men conform to His Word, that does not show they really love it. Many a man does many things right, not because he loves righteousness, but because it suits him. Many go to church and join in prayers who do not love God or holiness. When the Word of God opposes their will they are enemies to it. It is not until God has renewed the heart by His Holy Spirit that men love God and His Word and holiness.

2. THE CRUELTY OF MEN. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." This does not only refer to the heathen (where the cruelty is appalling), but wherever darkness reigns.

Princes can be fearfully cruel. Priests are notorious for their cruelty to those who oppose their self-willed worship and spiritual pride.

Only when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit does this cease.

3. AN OLD TESTAMENT GOOD SAMARITAN. Just as when the Priest and Levite had passed by, the despised Samaritan showed mercy to the man who had fallen among thieves, so it is a black man—an eunuch (little better than a slave) an Ethiopian—who has compassion on the prophet.

Grace is found thus among the lowly. All may find mercy and all may show mercy.

4. THE ETHIOPIAN IN SCRIPTURE. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" No, truly not, but better than that, the Ethiopian's heart may be changed by grace.

We have *Two Ethiopian Eunuchs* mentioned in Scripture. In Acts 9 we read of one who believed, was baptised, and went on his way rejoicing. And here we have the other, who trusted in the Lord and showed mercy. Shall we have to confess that we are in worse plight than these dark-skinned men? They have black skins, but white hearts. Have we white skins and black hearts?

5. "MOVED WITH COMPASSION." How often we read these words of the Lord Jesus, and we find the same pity in this eunuch.

Jeremiah, deep sunk in the filth at the bottom of this foul dungeon, ready to die of wretchedness and hunger, touched his heart.

Only those who have seen such dungeons know the horror of them, and how soon a man dies in them.

6. PRACTICAL MERCY. Ebed-melech recognised that the aged prophet would be hurt by being forcibly dragged by thirty men with ropes, out of the mirey clay, so he provided himself with old rags to put under his arms.

There is a touch of thoughtfulness that showed how real was his pity for the prophet.

We hear the expression, "Cold as charity," let our mercy ever be "Warm as love."

7. MERCY REWARDED WITH MERCY. It is ever so with God. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." So Ebed-melech, though in great fear because he believed the prophet's word that the city would fall, yet receives assurance that he shall not perish in the overthrow.

Application.

Let us seek for that change of heart that only God can give. That faith which works by love. The mercy that makes us merciful.

Lesson 38.

A Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37. 1-10.

I. **Text.** "Ye must be born again" (John 3. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** Israel as a nation was dead. No hope remained except that God would by His Spirit quicken the nation into new life, and this He has promised to do. The story is a Parable of Regeneration.

What is true of Israel is true of each, "Ye must be born again," and that new birth is by the Spirit of God.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1, 2. *Ezekiel is set down in a valley full of bones.* "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them and round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry."

v. 3. *He is asked if they can live.* "And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest."

vv. 4, 5. *He is bidden prophesy to the bones.* "Again He said unto me, Prophesy unto these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, Hear the Word of the Lord.

"Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live, . . . and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

vv. 7, 8. *He prophesies and the bones come together.* "So I prophesied and there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them."

v. 9. *He is bidden prophesy to the wind.* "Then said He unto me, Prophesy to the wind and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

v. 10. *He does so, and the dead bodies stand up, a great army.* "So I prophesied as He commanded, and the breath come into them, and they lived and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army."

IV. **The Double Fulfilment of Prophecy.** All students of Scripture recognise that prophecy is not generally limited to the immediate occasion to which it relates. It has often a primary and then an ultimate fulfilment. It is often fulfilled in stages and in part only at first.

The first great prophetic utterance is an illustration of this. The Protevangel, as it is called (Gen. 3. 15). The seed of the woman (the Lord Jesus) bruised the head of the serpent at Calvary, but the enmity still continues between his seed and that of the woman—and will until finally the head of the serpent is crushed, as foretold in Revelation 20. 10.

The same is true of Joel 2. 28, foretelling the pouring out of the Spirit. It had its first fulfilment in Acts 2. 16, but there is yet to be a great outpouring upon Israel before the great and notable day of the Lord comes.

In this passage the same is true, the primary application of Ezekiel's vision is given thus :

" *These bones are the whole house of Israel.* . . . I will open your graves and cause you to come out . . . and put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live " (vv. 11-14).

But what will one day be true of Israel is true in this Gospel dispensation of every believer. He receives the Spirit and new life in Christ. He passes out of death into life and is born again.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. CAN THESE BONES LIVE ? The prospect before the prophet is much the same as that before the servant of God now. The world lying in the wicked one ; man dead in trespasses and sins ; indifferent and careless of eternity. As he looks upon the fields his heart would fail him as he asks, " Can these bones live ? " Were it not that the same God who revived the dead then, still breathes upon the dead and they live.

2. The Place of the Word of God in Regeneration. It is by the preaching of the Gospel men are born again. As Paul told the Corinthians; "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel" (1 Cor. 4. 15).

The Word is the Seed, containing in itself the germ of life, which, quickened by the Spirit, springs up into life. So that James tells us that God "begat us with the Word of Truth;" and Peter, that we were "born again by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1. 23).

So that our duty is to preach the Word even to the dead, that peradventure the Spirit may breathe upon them and quicken them to life.

3. The Spirit that Quickeneth. It is the Spirit that quickeneth (that is, recreates), so that three times Jesus used the expression, "Born of the Spirit," in John 3. 5, 6, and 8.

The modern teaching, that makes the new birth simply a moral change brought about by our own efforts, is false in fact and dangerous heresy. No one is thus born again.

It is the Holy Spirit Who moved upon the waters at the first creation that operates in the new creation, using as His medium the Word of God, which is Spirit and life.

4. Our Responsibility in Regeneration. "O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord" (v. 4). Man's sin is that he will not listen to God's Word. God speaks once, yea twice, but the dull ear of unbelief regards Him not.

Our guilt is that we will not listen to God. Yet His word of promise is plain: "Hear, and your souls shall live" (Isa. 55. 3).

5. Regeneration a Crisis, Not a Process. Just as the first birth is an event, so is the second. "Life must be received before it can be lived."

All the conversions in the Acts of the Apostles are "sudden," for the gift of new life is a sudden quickening, an act of creation.

No one gradually becomes a child of God. One moment dead, the next they are alive.

As Lazarus was called to life at the Word of the Lord, so it is in every case of regeneration.

6. THE PURPOSE OF REGENERATION. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord." The aim of new life is to know God and thereby to be made like Him. Jesus stated this in John 17. 3 : "This is life eternal (that is, the main purpose of the gift), that they might know Thee, the Only True God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The soul "dead in sins" cannot know God nor Christ. That knowledge comes with the gift of life, as we read in 2 Cor. 4. 6 : "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Application.

Have we been born again ?
Do we live in newness of life ?
Do we know the Lord ?

OUTLINES.

How Dead ?	Dead in trespasses,	.. Eph. 2. 1
	Dead while living,	.. 1 Tim. 5. 6
	Dead toward God.	
How Live ?	Live by faith, ..	.. Gal. 2. 20
	Live Godly in Christ,	.. 2 Tim. 3. 12
	Live soberly, righteously, Godly, ..	.. Titus 2. 12

Regeneration.

A CRISIS, followed by a Process.
A GATE, leading to a Way.
A BIRTH, followed by a Life.
An OPENING of the EYES, to see thereafter.
A RESURRECTION, followed by Newness of Life.

STORY 39.

Water Turned to Wine

JOHN 2. 1-11.

I. **Text.** "Come . . . drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9. 5).

II. **Main Lesson.** The first miracle wrought in Cana of Galilee was no doubt intended to strike the keynote of our Lord's work on earth. He had come to bring joy to men, to turn their sorrow into gladness.

The Law, which was a ministry of death, was to give place to the Gospel a ministry of life, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1, 2. *The Lord and His disciples are invited to a wedding at Cana.* "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, and both Jesus was called and His disciples, to the marriage."

vv. 3-5. *Mary, noticing that the wine had failed, speaks to the Lord about it.* "When they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

vv. 6, 7. *Jesus bids them fill six stone jars with water.* "There were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus said unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."

v. 8. *He bid them pour out and bear to the governor of the feast.* "And He said unto them, Draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it."

vv. 9, 10. *The ruler comments on the quality of the wine.* "When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom and said unto him, Every man at

the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

v. 11. *This was the first of the Seven Signs in John, when Jesus manifested forth His glory.* "This beginning of miracles (signs) did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him."

IV. The Seven Signs in John.

Chap. 2. 1-11. *Water turned to wine.* Figuring the Lord's mission to turn our death into life, our misery into joy.

Chap. 4. 46-54. *The Nobleman's Son.* Teaching that faith is the only way to blessing.

Chap. 5. 1-16. *The Man at the Pool of Bethesda.* Teaching that no case is too difficult (38 years) for the Lord.

Chap. 6. 1-14. *The Feeding of the Five Thousand.* Teaching us that the Lord is not only our Saviour, but the Shepherd who feeds.

Chap. 6. 17-21. *Walking on the Water.* Teaching that the Lord is above all circumstances.

Chap. 9. 1-7. *The Blind Man Healed.* Teaching that the Lord is the Light of men.

Chap. 11. 1-46. *The Raising of Lazarus.* Showing the Lord's triumph over our last enemy, death.

V. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. OUR LORD'S SYMPATHY WITH ALL OUR AFFAIRS. By His presence at this wedding He for ever sanctified the marriage union. Every believing couple since has invited Him to grace their nuptial feast.

2. HIS REPLY TO MARY (vv. 3-5). He could not allow even the dearest and closest earthly tie to come between Him and the Father's will. In this He set the example to those who have been called on to forsake father and mother for His sake, and who to come after Him have had to "hate father and mother" (Luke 14. 26). On another occasion He put those who do God's will above these earthly ties (see Mark 3. 35).

3. MARY'S ADVICE. "Whatsoever He saith unto you,

do it." Mary, who had stored all His sayings and doings in her heart, had learned this, that it was safe and wise to do as He bade them.

4. THE MIRACLE FOLLOWS ON OBEDIENCE. This is a great principle in the Christian life. The servant's part is to obey, His part to give power.

"Fill the water pots, with water,
Fill them, to the very brim,
Do exactly as He bids you,
Leave the miracle to Him."

5. THE SERVANTS KNEW (v. 9). It is part of the privilege of the Lord's servant to see His power and know His secrets. We recall His words in John 15. 15, where He calls us friends rather than servants, because He has made known His secrets to us.

6. THE BEST LAST. This is the joy of the Christian life: the best is always to come in this life and that to come.

The worldling laments the best days of youth and folly, and looks for the worst to come—old age, death, judgment.

7. JOY THE OUTCOME OF SALVATION. Just as pain is a sign of something physically wrong, so is misery. The one who is really enjoying Christ is full of joy.

Application.

The Lord still turns water into wine, sorrow into joy.

Come, for the feast is spread.

O taste and see that the Lord is good.

OUTLINE.

Some Wines of Heavenly Vintage.

The Wine of the Gospel, for the Sinner, .. Matt. 9. 17
The Wine of Communion, for the Saint, 1 Cor. 10. 16
The Wine with Myrrh, for the Saviour, .. Mark 15. 23
The Wine of Wrath, for the Stubborn, .. Rev. 14. 10
Without Money bought, ... Isa. 55. 1
Something better than Wine, ... S. of S. 7. 2

STORY 40.

The Nobleman's Son

JOHN 4. 46-54.

I. **Text.** "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken" (v. 50).

II. **Main Lesson.** The true nature of faith. It believes the Word without asking to see signs and wonders. It is by faith that we receive salvation and blessing.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 46, 47. *Returning to Cana, a nobleman beseeches Him to come to Capernaum to heal his dying son.* "So Jesus came again unto Cana of Galilee, . . . and there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum . . . went to Him and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death."

v. 48. *The Lord tests his faith.* "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."

v. 49. *The nobleman does not answer, but continues to entreat.* "Sir, come down ere my child die."

v. 50. *Jesus bids him go home as his son liveth.* "Go thy way, thy son liveth."

v. 50. *The man believes and acts on the word.* "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."

v. 51. *His servants meet him next morning and tell him his son is well.* "As he was now going down, his servant met him and told him, saying, Thy son liveth."

v. 52. *He inquires when the change took place.* "Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend, and they said unto him, Yesterday, at the seventh hour the fever left him."

v. 53. *The father recognises it to be the time Jesus had spoken, and believed.* "So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth, and himself believed and his whole house."

v. 54. *It is the second sign.* "This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when He was come out of Judaea into Galilee."

IV. Signs and Wonders.

Since to-day there has been a great revival of alleged miracle working, healing campaigns, and other signs and wonders, it may be well to state the Scriptural teaching on these subjects.

1. Signs were given at certain periods of the world's history as attestations of the work of God:

(*a*) At the Exodus.
(*b*) In the days of Elijah and Elisha.
(*c*) At the Coming of Christ.
(*d*) At the Establishing of the Church.

Except at these periods, miracles and signs are rare and exceptional in the Bible.

To represent the whole of the history of Israel, or that of the Church, as a long series of miracles is to misrepresent the facts of Scripture and to mistake the whole purpose of the signs. Signs are no longer signs if they are the regular and usual thing. The sign gifts ceased when the conditions demanding them passed.

2. Signs are not needed by the faithful, but were given (1) to convict gainsayers, and (2) to leave them without excuse.

They do not generally convince, and often lead to conversion. See Luke 16. 17 : " Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead ; " and Acts 4. 16 : " That indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all . . . and we cannot deny it." Yet they plotted to kill the apostles who had wrought it.

So a sign is " *not to them that believe, but to them that believe not* " (1 Cor. 14. 22).

3. Signs and miracles appeal to and excite the flesh, whereas faith is satisfied with the Word of God. " Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

Christ sternly denounced those who wanted signs.

" *A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.*"
" Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."
" Blessed are they that hath not seen and yet have believed."

"John (the Baptist) did no miracle, but all that he spake of this Man (Christ) was true."

4. The Apostasy has always traded in signs, wonders, miracles, and cures. It is one of the evidences we are to look for, of the mystery of iniquity, and the coming of the man of sin.

"Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with *all power and signs and lying wonders*" (2 Thess. 2. 9).

"There shall arise false Christs and false teachers, and *shall shew great signs and wonders*, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before" (Matt. 24. 24).

After such solemn warnings let us no more run after miracles, healings, and other thrills, but keep in the path of faith, the will of God, and the patient continuance in well doing.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. A NOBLEMAN. "Not many noble are called" (1 Cor. 1. 26), but as the Countess Selina of Huntingdon said, she was glad of the "m." It did not say "not any," but "not many." All down the ages some noble have confessed the name of Christ.

2. FAITH TESTED. The nobleman showed that he was noble in faith as well as noble in family, by (1) accepting the bare word of Christ; (2) not requiring any sign; and (3) going his way in quiet confidence and expectancy.

His faith was the assurance of the thing he hoped for, and the evidence of what he did not see (Heb. 11. 1).

God sooner or later tests all faith. It is precious to Him (see James 1. 12; and 1 Peter 1. 7).

3. BELIEVING THE WORD. Faith is a confidence in God that leads one to believe, rely upon, and act on what He says. Hath He not said, and shall He not perform?

Until this principle of faith is adopted there is no real rest of mind; but directly a man believes God, takes Him at His Word, rests on what He has said, he finds a firm rest for his heart.

"How firm a foundation ye Saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word,

4. GOING HIS WAY. When we act on the Word of God the blessing comes. Power ever accompanies obedience. This is the obedience of faith. Believing, the man went his way.

5. CANA TO CAPERNAUM is perhaps fifteen miles' journey. As it was the seventh hour when the nobleman met Jesus, it was too late to get home before dark, so the nobleman probably put up on the way home, and continued his journey in the morning. This we gather from verse 52: "Yesterday . . . the fever left him."

6. DISTANCE NO HINDRANCE TO THE LORD. The fact that the Lord could heal with a word at a distance is strengthening to our faith. Often we pray for those far off. How encouraging to know that with our wondrous Lord there are no limitations of time and space.

Application.

Let our confidence in Christ lead us to take His Word, to believe what He has spoken.

Let us not seek signs and wonders, but go in the obedience of faith and love.

OUTLINE.

How to Treat the Word of God.

Receive it with Meekness,	Jas. 1. 21
Mix it with Faith,	Heb. 4. 2
Hide it in the Heart,	Psa. 119. 11
Be Doers, and not Hearers only,	Jas. 1. 12
Hold it Forth,	Phil. 2. 16
Meditate in it,	Psa. 1. 2
Rightly Divide it,	2 Tim. 2. 15
Preach it,	2 Tim. 4. 2
Adorn it,	Titus 2. 10

STORY 41.

Crumbs from the Master's Table

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

MATTHEW 15. 21-28.

I. **Text.** "That the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (Rom. 15. 9).

II. **Main Lesson.** Though the Gentiles are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise" (Eph. 2. 12), yet there is salvation in Christ for them if they believe in Him. Great faith recognises the truth and yet looks for mercy.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 21, 22. *In the coast of Tyre and Sidon a Canaanitish woman calls on the Lord.* "Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and behold a woman of Canaan came and cried unto Him."

v. 22. *She appeals to Him as the Son of David to heal her daughter.* "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

v. 23. *He does not answer her.* "But He answered her not a word."

v. 23. *The disciples would send her away.* "His disciples came and besought Him saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us."

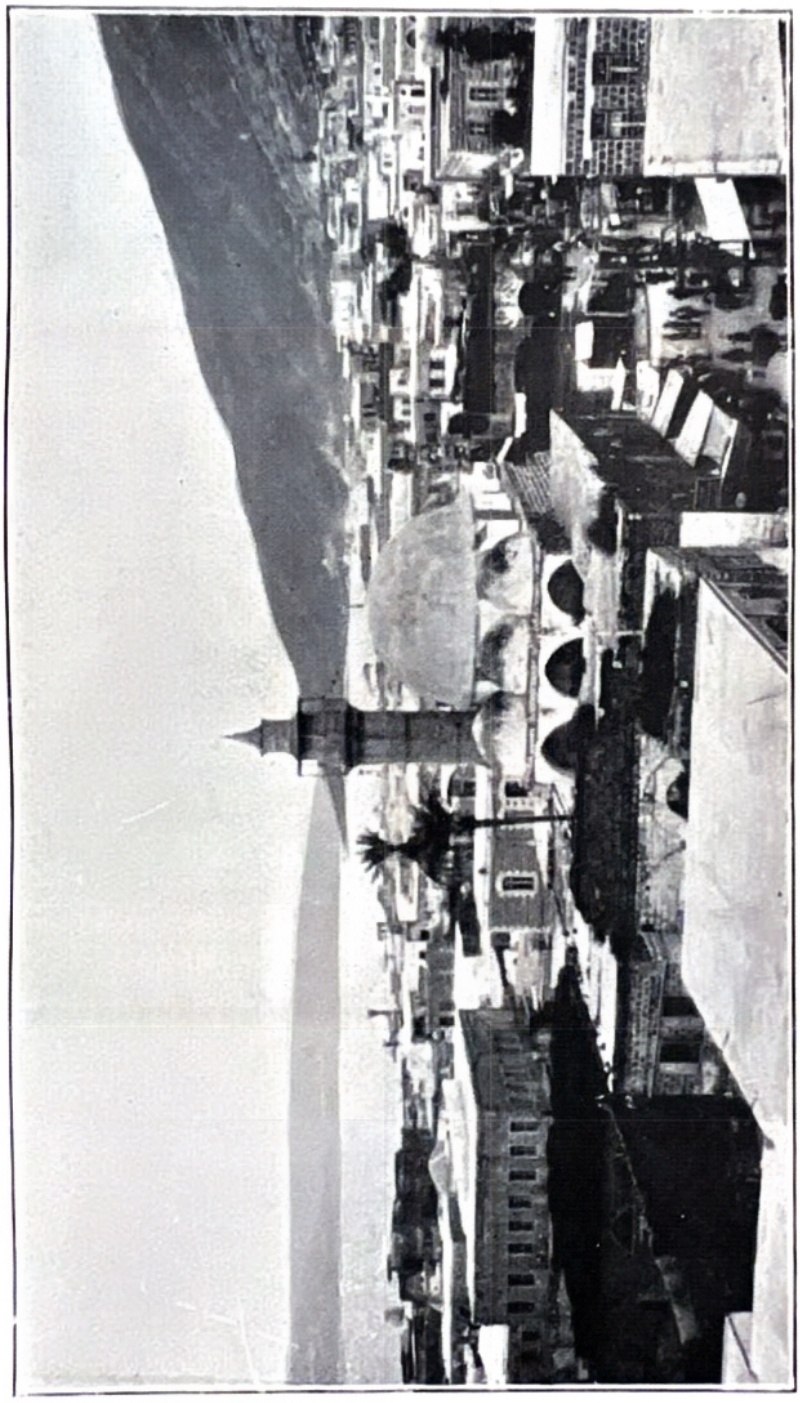
v. 24. *He tells her He is only sent to Israel.* "He answereth and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

v. 25. *She worships Him and appeals for help.* "Then came she and worshipped Him saying, Lord, help me."

v. 26. *The children's bread not to be cast to dogs.* "He answered, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

v. 27. *She assents, but begs for crumbs.* "She said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

v. 28. *He commends her faith.* "O woman, great is thy faith."



TIBERIUS AND THE LAKE OF GALILEE

To face page 176



FISHERMEN ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE

v. 28. *And heals her daughter.* "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt; and her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. TYRE AND SIDON are in Phoenicia, north of Galilee; Tyre, 35 miles north of Carmel, and 20 south of Sidon—both being on the coast of the Mediterranean. Part of Tyre being on an island. Its history dates back to 2700 B.C. Hiram, king of Tyre, had happy associations with King Solomon (1 Kings 7. 13; 9. 26-28; 10. 22).

2. CANAANITES. Canaan was a son of Ham, son of Noah (Gen. 10. 6). Sidon is called the first-born of Canaan (Gen. 10. 15). We read of Jabin, the king of Canaan, in Judges 4. 2, 23, 24. They were the inhabitants of the land which Joshua was bidden to destroy. So that this woman was one who belonged to a condemned race. A picture of all who because of sin are "condemned already."

3. HER FALSE APPEAL. She appealed to Jesus as the Son of David. But she as a Gentile stranger had no portion in David. She had taken up a wrong position, and put in a false claim to blessing.

Let us remember that we are Gentiles outside the covenants of promise. If we want blessing we must take up our true position as lost sinners, having no hope.

4. THE LORD'S SILENCE. This was because of the false attitude she took up. The Lord cannot recognise anything untruthful. If we claim blessing on the ground of merit, He will be silent to us; or on the ground of works, or of privilege, there will be no answer. The silences of Christ are most impressive. He would never respond to a wrong attitude.

5. THE DISCIPLES' READINESS TO SEND HER AWAY. This readiness to send people away is often seen in the disciples, who had yet to learn of what spirit they were.

They sent the children away. They would call down fire from heaven. They forbade those who did not follow them.

When shall we learn to bear with and receive others as the Lord graciously bore with and received us?

6. THE LORD'S EARTHLY MINISTRY WAS CONFINED TO ISRAEL. That is, the twelve tribes who are so called in the New Testament. He never visited Rome or Athens, or other great world centres, but came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Yet He was the Saviour of the world and a light to lighten the Gentiles.

Isaiah (49. 6) says : "*It is a light thing that thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and so restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give Thee a Light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My Salvation unto the ends of the earth.*"

7. THE LORD'S CRUMBS are sweeter than all the world's dainties. This woman at last took her right place. A Gentile dog. She had no right to the children's bread, that is the covenant blessing of Israel, but she felt instinctively that the Lord would not refuse her, and she was right. There are crumbs for the dogs. When she took her right place she had all she needed.

8. GREAT FAITH lies not in straining and trying to believe beyond others, but in this :

(*a*) That it is reposed in a *Great Saviour*.

(*b*) That it is *Great in Confidence* in Him.

(*c*) That it is *Great in Persistence*.

(*d*) That it is *Great in its Demand*. It opens its mouth wide.

Faith has no merit, whether it be small or great, but the greater in these things it is the greater will be the blessing.

Application.

Take the right attitude to God, that of a lost sinner.

Have faith in Christ.

OUTLINE.

What is Great Faith ?

Great Confidence in Christ.
Great Assurance in the Word.
Great Persistence in Prayer.
Great Venturing on God.
Great Demand from God.

Story 42.

A Roman Officer's Faith

Matthew 8. 5-13.

I. **Text.** "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matt. 8. 13).

II. **Main Lesson.** Great faith is great confidence in a great Saviour. It recognises its own unworthiness and the Lord's omnipotence. Blessing is not only conditioned on faith, but proportionate to it.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 5, 6. *At Capernaum a Centurion entreats Christ for his servant.* "When Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a Centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."

v. 7. *Jesus will come and heal him.* "Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him."

v. 8. *The Centurion regards himself as unworthy of such a visit.* "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou should come under my roof."

v. 8. *He asks Him to speak a word of command.* "Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed."

v. 9. *He, though under authority, has yet power to command.* "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

v. 10. *The Lord commends his great faith.* "When Jesus heard this He marvelled, and said, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

v. 11. *He foretells the blessing of the Gentiles.* "Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

v. 12. *And the rejection of many of Israel.* "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

v. 13. *He sends the Centurion away, telling him his servant is healed.* "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee; and his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE CENTURION'S CARE FOR HIS SERVANT. There are some who never regard those who serve them, but good masters give their servants not only what is just and equal (Eph. 6. 9; Gal. 4. 1), but sympathy and even affection where they are faithful and true.

2. PALSY is another name for paralysis. It took various forms, sometimes simple inability, the atrophy of the powers, and at others trembling and spasms, which, as in this case, were "grievously tormenting."

It is a striking type of the effects of sin in paralysing the noble powers of the soul with which God endowed us. Sin has robbed us of all power. We are "without strength" (Rom. 5. 6). The word CANNOT is written over us—

Cannot please God (Rom. 8. 8).

Cannot bear good fruit (Matt. 7. 18).

Cannot cease from sin (2 Peter 2. 14).

Cannot enter the kingdom (John 3. 5).

3. "I AM NOT WORTHY." This true confession was sure to commend itself to the Lord.

"I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." We are indeed unworthy. It is those who pretend to nothing that receive blessing from God. False pretences obtain nothing. Who is worthy to receive the Son of God into the home?

4. "HE IS WORTHY." In Luke 7. 4 we read that the elders of the Jews said to Jesus: "He was worthy for whom He should do this, for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." In this they were both right and wrong. Right to praise generosity and kindness in an officer of Rome, who might well have been oppressive. Wrong in thinking that anything could be received of Christ on the ground of merit. Nothing in us is worthy of Him or His salvation. Yet the Centurion had "a good repute," which is an excellent thing, and he let other lips praise him, and not his own.

5. "I WILL COME." The Lord's willingness is the great manifestation of His grace. How often He said, "I will" (as to the leper in v. 3). He changes not. To-day as then :

"He is willing, He is able,
Doubt no more,"

6. "SPEAK THE WORD ONLY." The Centurion recognised the absolute power of Christ. One word was all that was needed. This confidence in the power of Christ and His Word is the very essence of true faith.

Faith relies on the Word, because it is His Word. It is all-sufficient for faith. "Speak the Word only." He has spoken it. Let us believe it and act on it.

7. A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY. But he was a man "in authority." He had a hundred soldiers under him. Yet he modestly compared his authority with that of Christ. His little power was limited, for he himself was a subject; but Christ's was unlimited. If he could say, Go, Come, Do this, and be obeyed, how much more could the Eternal Son, the Lord of lords.

8. JESUS MARVELLED, in Mark 6. 6, at the unbelief of some; here at the simple and sincere faith of the soldier.

It is marvellous that Israel, with its privileges, its promises, and its many prophecies of Messiah, should yet not know Him or hear Him when He came.

It was marvellous that a Gentile stranger should so readily trust Him.

9. BLESSING PROPORTIONED TO FAITH. Little faith gets little blessing, great faith receives great things. It is like children at the seaside. Some bring small pails to the sea, other larger, but all are filled.

"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

Elisha rebuked the king for asking so little (2 Kings 13. 19).

"Thou art coming to a king,
Large petitions with thee to bring."

Application.

We have ground for the greatest possible faith in Christ.

He is willing, He is able, He has promised.

Let us then ask great things of Him.

STORY 43.

Peter's Wife's Mother

MATTHEW 8. 14, 15.

I. **Text.** "He touched her hand and the fever left her" (v. 15).

II. **Lesson.** Fever, like all other body infirmities, is a type of the sorrow of sin. It represents the restlessness and burning passion that sin brings. This, too, the Lord can heal.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 14. *Jesus enters Peter's house.* "When Jesus was come into Peter's house."

v. 14. *He finds his mother-in-law ill with a fever.* "He saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever."

v. 15. *He touched her hand.* "And He touched her hand."

v. 15. *The fever leaves her.* "And the fever left her."

v. 15. *She rises and serves them.* "And she arose and ministered unto them."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. A PEEP INTO PETER'S HOME. That Peter had a house, that he was married, and that his wife's mother lived with them interests us.

The Lord did not choose ascetics for His apostles. He loved home life. The ideal of Christianity is not asceticism nor celibacy, but home life. The most beautiful thing in the world is a home where Christ is Lord, and where love reigns.

2. THE FEVER OF SIN. What Shakespeare has well called "Life's fitful fever," or what Dr. Watts describes:

> "So when a raging fever burns,
> We shift from side to side, by turns.
> And 'tis a poor relief we gain,
> To change the place but keep the pain.

The marks of the fever of sin are;

(1) *Restlessness.* "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57. 20, 21).

(2) *Thirst.* Burning desire that is never satisfied. Sin never satisfies, nor does the world. Over its best is written, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Shall thirst!

(3) *Burning Heat.* Fierce passions rule in the heart and life. There is no abatement of them. The sinner cannot cease from sin. "Wickedness," we read, "burneth like a fire" (Isa. 9. 18).

(4) *Consumption.* Unless the fever is stayed, it will destroy the sufferer. It consumes the very life by its fiery heat. So will sin. Sin destroys. More die of sin every day than from all the bodily diseases put together. The wicked does not live out half his days.

3. THE LORD'S TOUCH. How simple and beautiful is this phrase, "He touched her hand and the fever left her."

He touched the leper (Matt. 8. 3).

He touched the blind eyes (Matt. 9. 29, and 20. 34).

He touched the sleepers (Matt. 17. 7).

He touched the stammering tongue (Mark 7. 33).

He touched the bier that bore the dead (Luke 7. 14).

He touched the wounded ear (Luke 22. 51).

His touch denotes sympathy, compassion, and power.

4. THE FEVER LEFT HER. Peace is the first fruits of the Gospel. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Those that believe do enter into rest, since they cease from their own works and know Christ as their Peace. The fever of sin gives place to the quiet of peace with God.

5. SHE AROSE AND MINISTERED UNTO THEM. It is not until the fever is gone that we can serve. But as soon as we are at rest we can minister to others.

Application.

Let the troubled, anxious, and fevered heart seek the touch that gives rest.

STORY 44.

The Withered Hand

MATTHEW 12. 9-13.

I. **Text.** "Lift up the hands that hang down" (Heb. 12. 12).

II. **Main Lesson.** The withered hand is a symbol of the useless life, that renders no service to God. It is atrophied by sin. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." As soon as the soul is healed, the hands begin to serve.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 9. *The Lord goes into a Synagogue on the Sabbath and finds a man there with a withered hand.* "He went into their synagogue, and behold there was a man which had his hand withered."

v. 10. *They ask Him if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath.* "And they asked Him saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? That they might accuse Him."

v. 11. *He replies that they would lift a sheep out of a pit on that day.* "He said, What man of you that shall have one sheep and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out?"

v. 12. *A man is better than a sheep.* "How much more then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day."

v. 13. *He bids the man stretch out his hand, and it is healed.* "Then said He to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole like the other."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. USELESS HANDS. Psalm 115. 4-8 describes the idols in which the idolators trust. It tells us they have—

Mouths that speak not,
Eyes that see not,
Ears that hear not,
Noses that smell not,
Hands that handle not,
Feet that walk not.

It then adds : " They that make them are like unto them." That is, they have hands, but they are as useless to God as are those of the idol in which they trust.

2. " SAVED HANDS." When, however, a man is saved, his hands begin to work for God. Like the Thessalonians, he turns to God from idols " to serve the living and true God." With the rest of his body he presents his hands to God.

" Take my hands, and let them move,
At the impulse of thy love."

3. THE COMMAND TO STRETCH FORTH THE HAND. This was a call to do an impossibility. A withered hand cannot be stretched forth. But with the command comes the power. This is the great principle of the Gospel.

The dead hear the voice of the Son of God.
The palsied get up and walk.
The Satan-bound are loosed.

All the Lord's commands are enablings. There is nothing impossible that He bids us do. Peter can walk on the water when Christ says, " Come."

4. " THAT THEY MIGHT ACCUSE HIM." How hard is the human heart ! They knew He would heal the poor man. They anticipate the exhibition of His power in their malice.

Miracles do not convince the human heart. They serve to leave them without excuse, but seldom is a sinner, though convicted and convinced by a miracle, converted by it. Only grace can soften the heart hardened by sin.

5. A MAN BETTER THAN A SHEEP. This the Lord taught on another occasion. When speaking of the Heavenly Father's love, He said He cared for the sparrows, and added : " Ye are of more value than many sparrows " (Matt. 10. 31).

6. THE SABBATH. " Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day ? " The Sabbath was meant to be a blessing, not a burden.

This does not excuse self-pleasing, pleasure-seeking, and the neglecting of the worship of God. These are not doing

good. The true way to keep the Sabbath is described in Isaiah 58. 13, 14. Its principle points being :

To delight in the Lord,
To cease from your own pleasure.
To call the day " the holy of the Lord, honourable."

Application.

To those who have hands that never serve the Lord : At the command of Christ stretch them out that they may be healed.

To those who live unto God : Let our hands be full of service to His Name.

OUTLINE.

Some " Hands " of Scripture.

Wicked Hands that slew the Lord, ..	Acts 2. 23
Wounded Hands of Christ, ...	Zech. 13. 6
Welcoming Hands stretched out to Save, ..	Isa. 9. 12
Weary Hands lifted up, ...	Heb. 12. 12
Working Hands for others, Eph. 4. 8 ;	1 Cor. 4. 12
Washed Hands, ...	James 4. 8

STORY 45.

The Two Sons

MATTHEW 21. 28-32.

I. **Text.** "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard" (Matt. 21. 28).

II. **Main Lesson.** True repentance leads to obedience. Profession that does not result in good fruit is not doing the will of God. Faith without works is dead.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 28. *The Lord asks the chief priests and elders* (v. 23) *a question, and tells them a parable.* "But what think Ye? A certain man had two sons."

v. 28. *The elder son is invited to work in the vineyard.* "And he came to the first and said, Son, go work in my vineyard."

v. 29. *He refuses, but repents and goes.* "He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went."

v. 30. *The second promises to go, but does not.* "And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not."

v. 31. *The Lord inquires which did the Father's will.* "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"

v. 31. *They reply rightly—the first.* "They say unto Him, The First."

v. 31. *The Lord draws a solemn moral.* "Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

v. 32. *He explains Himself.* "For John (the Baptist) came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not, but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye when ye had seen it repented not afterwards that ye might believe him."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Parable.**

1. DOING THE WILL OF THE FATHER. Our Lord Jesus constantly spoke of this as the great aim and end of our faith. He Himself set us an example.

"Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book, it is written of Me) *to do Thy will O God*" (Heb. 10. 7).

"I delight *to do Thy will, O My God.* Yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Psa. 40. 8).

In the Parable of the Rock and Sand Foundations, the one who built on the rock was the man *who heard and did* His sayings (Matt. 7. 26).

Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, but "*he that doeth the will* of My Father," enters the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 7. 21).

He recognises as His brother, sister, and mother "whosoever *shall do the will* of My Father" (Matt. 12. 50).

In the Garden of Gethsemane His prayer was: "Not My will, *but Thine be done.*"

And He taught us to pray: "*Thy will be done*" (Matt. 6. 10). Nothing else is acceptable.

2. PROFESSION WITHOUT PURPOSE. The younger son was polite in his disobedience. "I go, sir," and went not. This sin is so common nowadays that a lesson greatly needs to be given on this Parable. It is most commonly seen in:

(1) *Baptismal Promises* to renounce the world by those who are living in it, and for it, who have no intention to do otherwise, on behalf of their children, whom they propose to train up in every form of worldliness.

(2) *In Confirmation Vows*, taken by young folk who never think of carrying them into effect, even had God asked for vows to that end, which He certainly has not. Vows, from the unregenerate, are mockery, and the true child of God should know better than think he can bind his heart by them.

(3) *In Ordination Vows* to preach only the Word of God by those whose "modern" views cause them to question and challenge its inspiration and authority.

(4) *In Professions at Gospel Services*, the signing of decision cards, etc., which result in no conversion or change of life.

All these, alas! are so common that the unbeliever looks on in mockery at those forms of, "I go, sir, and went not."

3. THE NATURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE. There are few better illustrations of the nature of true repentance than this: "Afterward he repented and went." It meant:

(1) *A Change of Mind*, brought about perhaps by considering his own selfishness and ingratitude to his father; by the thought of his father's goodness (Rom. 2. 4).

(2) *Resulting in Conversion*, that is, in turning. For the order in true salvation is repentance, conversion to God, faith in Christ and submission to Him as Lord (to serve) and Saviour (to trust).

As David said, "I thought—I turned—I made haste" to keep Thy commandments (Psa. 119. 60).

4. REPENTANCE NECESSARY TO FAITH. Note the words of Christ: "Ye repented not that ye might believe" (v. 32). Until the will is yielded, the heart is willing, and the feet turned, the sinner will not, cannot believe. God does not reveal His salvation to the rebel; till he repents he will not believe. Repentance is that he may believe.

5. SELF-ESTEEM SHUTS THE DOOR OF MERCY. The Pharisees saw the publicans and harlots entering the kingdom, those notorious sinners, but they were too much blinded by self-esteem and self-righteousness (Rom. 10. 3) to follow their example.

The door of mercy is very low, one must stoop to enter. It is very strait, one must divest oneself of pride to press into it.

6. CONVINCED, BUT NOT CONVERTED. Such was the state of the Pharisees. They could not deny (Acts 4. 16) nor resist (Acts 6. 10) the truth, but they would neither receive nor obey it. Often the head knows what the heart refuses. Men go to hell with the knowledge of the way to heaven.

7. NO SINNER TOO GUILTY TO COME. The *publicans*, the tax collectors who robbed and oppressed the poor, even destroying widows houses; and the *harlots*, who had bartered away purity, beauty, and true love for indulgence in passion and lust; these examples of the exceeding sinfulness of sin could believe in Christ and be saved.

Christ receives even the devil's castaways.

Application.

Is our profession a polite lie? "I go, sir," and we go not.

If so, repent, convert, make haste. The gracious Lord will receive the guiltiest sinner.

STORY 46.

The Elder Brother who Refused to come into the Feast

LUKE 15. 25-32.

I. **Text.** "It was meet that we should make merry" (v. 32).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The return of a sinner to God should be a reason for great rejoicing. To despise such is to forget that we ourselves are only saved by grace. To withhold sympathy is to forget what spirit we are of. The pride of heart that professes superiority is an abomination to God and a misery to ourselves.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 25, 26. *The Prodigal Son having returned home, is received with grace, forgiveness, and holy joy. The elder son hears the revels and asks a servant the reason.* "Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing, and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant."

vv. 27, 28. *He hears the news of his brother's return, and is angry, and refuses to go in.* "And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in."

v. 28. *His father comes out to him.* "Therefore came his father out and intreated him."

vv. 29, 30. *He complains of being treated badly by comparison, and speaks sneeringly of "this thy son."* "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."

v. 31. *The father reminds him of his happier lot, and that it was proper to rejoice over the lost one's return.* "He said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have

is thine (R.V., all that is mine is thine). It was meet that we should make merry and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again : and was lost, and is found."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. ITS HISTORICAL APPLICATION. All expositors have agreed that this story has an application in the jealousy of the Jew at the promises of Abraham (Gal. 3. 14) being extended to the Gentiles. Romans 11. 11 says : " Salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy."

It was when Paul told the Jews that the Lord had said to him on the road to Damascus : " Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles " (Acts 22. 21-22), that they cried him down with shouts of, " Away with such a fellow from the earth."

2. MUSIC AND DANCING. That our Lord should use these words to describe the joy of salvation, words of happy abandon to gladness, is very striking. Only those who have tasted these things can realise how true the description is. It is " joy unspeakable and full of glory," " fulness of joy."

3. SALVATION DESCRIBED. The sinner is " dead " and " lost " (v. 32) ; that is, insensible to God, and in a state " ready to perish." When he comes to God in Christ he is quickened from the dead (Eph. 2. 1) and found of the Good Shepherd, alive and saved.

4. THE SPIRIT OF THE PHARISEE, that sneers at the sinner, despises the new convert, and mocks at his joyful testimony, is depicted in the elder brother.

No one who knows " the plague of his own heart " will do so. Spiritual pride that fancies superiority is a wicked thing. Only of grace were we saved. Only by grace are we what we are, all we have was received, and only by grace can we stand.

" *Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?* " (1 Cor. 4. 7).

Never forget two things—

(1) You were once a returning prodigal yourself.

(2) You have nothing in yourself to recommend you to God now.

5. HARSH JUDGMENTS REBUKED. How often the Lord Jesus rebuked this spirit of the elder brother.

(*a*) In the eight "woes" against the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. 13-33, the most terrible language in the Bible is followed by a burst of tears over the guilty city.

(*b*) When James and John (the sons of thunder) would call down fire from heaven, or rebuke those who followed not with them: "Ye know not what spirit ye are of."

6. THE MISERY OF THE ELDER BROTHER. His pride, jealousy, and harsh judgment kept him away from the feast and in the outer darkness, while the music and dancing went on within. So always do the unloving punish themselves. The angry man suffers more from his own temper than the other with whom he is angry.

7. "THIS THY BROTHER." One who is angry with or jealous of a brother should remember that God loves that brother, however much the other may sneer at and despise him. He is the Avenger of the injured brother. "*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such as we have also forwarned you*" (1 Thess. 4. 6).

8. "ELDER BRETHREN." Every age in the Christian life has its particular temptations and dangers. That of the elder is to despise the younger—to crush or snub their first efforts, because they are immature and ignorant. Let us be compassionate, however, remembering three things:

(1) *We were once young*, immature, and inexperienced.

(2) *Our first efforts were very poor* performances, and full of pride and ignorance.

(3) *That new gift will be different and fresh*; we must not expect it to be on the same lines as that of the past. Each generation needs fresh methods.

Remember the caution of Ecclesiastes 7. 10.



THE RIVER JORDAN, JUST BELOW THE LAKE OF GALILEE

To face page 192



THE VIA DOLOROSO

Down which the Lord went after His condemnation

9. "THOU GAVEST ME NO KID." Had the father neglected to encourage the elder son? Had he never made him a feast? If so, it was a grievous mistake. To expect obedience without sympathy or reward is to be a hard taskmaster.

10. THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGES. How beautiful they sound. "Thou art ever with me" and "All that is Mine is thine." Communion and enrichment are the two outstanding blessings of the Christian. "All things are yours, . . . and ye are Christ's" (1 Cor. 3. 21-23).

Application.

Let us beware of the elder brother spirit.

Let us give the returning prodigal a good welcome, a warm, loving reception.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

THY Word is for my feet a LIGHT,
A LANTERN for the darkest night,
The ORACLE from which is heard
The Message of the Living Word,
A FOUNTAIN flowing from the Throne
That quickens into life His own,
A MIRROR where the Soul may see
Its guilt and stain, and then 'twill be
A LAVER where for cleansing stored
Is water, washing by the Word.
'Tis MILK and BREAD and HONEY sweet,
And for the full-grown man STRONG MEAT;
FINE GOLD that we enriched may be,
The EYESALVE that our eyes may see.
FIRE that will purge and try our work,
A HAMMER that can break the rock,
SEED that we scatter o'er the plain,
And DEW and soft distilling RAIN;
A SWORD with which we meet the foe
And overcome him blow for blow;
A TELESCOPE through which behold
The City with the Streets of Gold!

G.G.

STORY 47.

The Parable of the Growing Seed

A HARVEST FESTIVAL STORY.

MARK 4. 26-29.

I. **Text.** " God gave the increase " (1 Cor. 3. 6).

II. **Main Lesson.** The growth of grace in the soul is silent, continuous, and mysterious—it is the work of God. It develops as it grows—the blade, the ear, and the full corn represent stages in the development of the Christian character.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 26. *The things of God's kingdom are by analogy, the same as those of nature, e.g., seed.* " So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into the ground."

v. 27. *It springs up of itself, night and day.* " And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."

v. 28. *The earth produces fruit.* " For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself."

v. 28. *In stages.* " First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

v. 29. *The harvest comes at last.* " But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Parable.**

1. SEED CONTAINS LIFE. Seed is a figure used in the Bible of—

(1) *The Lord Jesus Himself*, as in John 12. 24 : " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it died it bringeth forth much fruit. So the Son of Man must die in order to raise up a godly seed.

(2) *Of the Word of God*, which is " living " (Heb. 4. 12, R.V.). " The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life " (John 6. 63). So when the Living Word casts the Written (or spoken) Word into the heart of the believer who is good soil, it germinates and grows.

2. SEED CAST INTO THE GROUND. In sowing the seed is *sacrificed* to the future hope of harvest. So the true worker spends and is spent, often seeing no present result for his toils; but he "sows in hope" and has great patience (James 5. 7).

3. SECRET AND MYSTERIOUS GROWTH. "He knoweth not how." No one knows now truth springs up in the heart, the exercise of mind, the secret prayer, the earnest desire, the unexpressed motions of faith, the private tears of repentance. All these are unseen and unrecorded—the work of the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus sees and knows.

"I know not how His saving grace,
To me He did impart,
Or, how believing in His word,
Wrought peace within my heart."

4. SLEEP AND RISE, NIGHT AND DAY. The life proceeds as usual, the daily round the common task, while the secret working of the truth is going on. No one knows what is going on in the soul. Often an apparently careless exterior covers a broken and contrite heart—a cold indifference, a hungry and thirsty soul.

5. "FIRST THE BLADE." The early stages of the Christian life are feeble and tender as a blade of grass. We must not expect too much. The marks of the first signs of grace are usually a love of the truth, a hunger and thirst after righteousness, a delight in the people and things of God, a yearning after an, as yet, unobtained full victory, with a deep sense of sin and repentance, this, and little more. Character is often wanting, and inconsistencies many, and weaknesses very apparent; but it is the blade. It is alive and will develop.

6. "THEN THE EAR." Character begins to form. The believer has come to the "young men" stage, addressed by John in his first epistle (2. 14-17). He speaks of them as strong; the Word of God abideth in you; ye have overcome the Wicked One.

Strength, knowledge, and victory are experienced. It is the time of battle and joy, of full life and conquest of faith.

Much remains to be known. Yet often at this stage the

believer is harsh in judgment, rash in conduct, and unloving in action and impatient with weakness. But it is the ear—the full corn will come if he continues to walk in the light.

7. "AFTER THAT THE FULL CORN IN THE EAR." Now the fruit forms—those maturer graces that are so often missing in the earlier stages. Humility, meekness, goodness, self-sacrifice, and silent suffering with patience.

Maturity of loving care for others, of rich thought and meditation, a knowledge and understanding of God that produces a likeness to Him The fruit is ripe.

8. "THE HARVEST." The harvest for the believer is different from that of the godless. The harvest of the unsaved is described in Revelation 14. 18-20 and 20. 11-15. That of the believer in Matthew 25. 14-23 and 1 Corinthians 3, 11-15. Then the reward will be according to the faithfulness and diligence. More honourable service will be given to those who by patient continuance in well-doing have earned the "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Application.

Growth of Christian character goes on day and night, secretly and persistently. The one who sees to it that he has good food and exercise in the Word of God, and walks in light, will grow and bring forth fruit.

Let us see that we do so.

OUTLINE.

The Seed of the Word.

Sown in the heart grows secretly,	See IV. 3.
Effectually works,	IV. 6
Ever increases,	See IV. 5-7
Devoured or Does Well,	Matt. 13. 4-8

STORY 48.

The Wicked Servant

MATTHEW 18. 23-35.

I. **Text.** "O thou wicked servant, . . . shouldest thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" (vv. 32, 33).

II. **Main Lesson.** The one who has found mercy will show mercy. If he does not do so, he reveals himself as an unregenerate and wicked man.

All owe service to God: all have been dealt with less than their sins deserve. Those, then, who continue in their unmerciful conduct will receive stern judgment.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 23. *The Lord likens affairs in His kingdom to a king taking account of his servants.* "Therefore is the kingdom of Heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants."

v. 24. *One is found who owes him ten thousand talents.* "When he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents."

v. 25. *Not being able to pay, his wife and children are ordered to be sold.* "Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

vv. 26, 27. *He cries for mercy and is forgiven.* "The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all. Then the lord was moved with compassion, and loosed him and forgave him the debt."

v. 28. *He finds a fellow-servant who owes him a hundred pence and demands payment.* "The same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence, and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat saying, Pay me that thou owest."

vv. 29, 30. *He, too, begs mercy, but is refused and cast into prison.* "His fellow-servant fell down at his feet and besought him saying, Have patience with me and I will

pay thee all; and he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt."

v. 31. *The fellow-servants report it to their lord.* "So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done."

vv. 32-34. *His lord rebuked him, and delivers him to the tormentors until he should pay.* "Then his lord said, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me. Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

"And his lord was wrath and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him."

v. 35. *The solemn moral.* "So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Parable.**

1. AVOID FALSE INTERPRETATIONS. This parable lends itself to mistaken exegesis. To make the servant a regenerate man is obviously a false interpretation, for the following reasons:

(1) True children of God do not owe their Lord ten thousand talents, their sins are forgiven.

(2) Those born of God love their brethren (1 John 3. 14). Such an unmerciful spirit is contrary to their new life.

(3) All men owe service to God, and may in that sense be likened to servants.

(4) Though not "justified," the unregenerate man has been treated mercifully by God. Who cannot say, "Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to out iniquities." In this sense he may be fairly likened to a forgiven man.

(5) Sins once forgiven are never required again, but an ungodly man with whom God has dealt mercifully will be brought into judgment for all.

2 GOD DELIGHTING IN MERCY. The readiness with which the debtor was forgiven ten thousand talents is meant to teach us God's readiness to show mercy.

This mercy is in Scripture shown even to those who do not finally forsake their sins. Ahab, Manasseh, and Saul are illustrations. In the Psalms we read : " Many times did He deliver them, but they provoked Him with their counsel " (Psa. 106. 43).

The ungodly go down to hell in spite of many mercies (Heb. 10. 29).

3. INGRATITUDE AND HEARTLESSNESS. So much forgiven, so little forgiving ! Nothing is so hateful as these sins.

" Blow, blow thou wintry wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ungratitude."

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF A FORGIVING SPIRIT. No more solemn words occur in our Lord's teaching than those of verse 35. The reality of our new life in Christ is shown by the spirit we display. Our Lord referred to the matter when teaching the Lord's Prayer. " If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

5. HOW TO LEARN FORGIVENESS.

(1) Remember how much we have been forgiven.

We are to forgive, " as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

(2) Study the depravity of your heart, that you may be delivered from it.

(3) Cultivate a gracious and merciful spirit to all.

(4) Do not forgive only those who deserve it, but all, without exception.

(5) Remember, an unforgiving spirit hurts you ; it spoils your character ; it robs you of your joy and love.

Application.

1. To those harbouring an unmerciful spirit. Beware ! It is a mark of death—the sign of the unregenerate.

2. To all. Go and learn what that meaneth. " I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

STORY 49.

The Feast at Bethany

JOHN 12. 1-11.

I. **Text.** "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3. 20).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The characters of the three who entertained the Lord teach us the three great outstanding responsibilities of the Christian life.

1. LAZARUS THE WITNESS, who had been raised from the dead.

2. MARTHA, THE WORKER, who served.

3. MARY, THE WORSHIPPER, who anointed the Lord's feet.

We are to be all these—witnesses, workers, and worshippers.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 1, 2. *The Lord had come to Jerusalem for the last Passover, and, going out to Bethany, is entertained by them there.* "Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead whom He raised from the dead.

"There they made Him a supper."

v. 2. *Martha served and Lazarus was at table.* "Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him."

v. 3. *Mary anoints the Lord's feet with very costly ointment.* "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

vv. 4-6. *Judas Iscariot complained of the waste.* "Then said Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

vv. 7, 8. *The Lord defends Mary.* "Then said Jesus,

Let her alone : against the day of My burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you ; but Me ye have not always."

v. 9. *The people come to see Lazarus.* "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there, and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead."

vv. 10, 11. *The priests consult to put Lazarus to death.* "The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death ; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. BETHANY lies on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, which is west of that mount. It is on the road to Jericho. It was from Bethany the Lord ascended (Luke 24. 50, 51). The home at Bethany is the only one where we learn that Jesus was welcomed and found loving friends.

2. LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD is a figure of every true believer who is "Risen with Christ" (Col. 2. 12 and 3. 1), and recognises his responsibility to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6. 4). He thus is a Living Witness to the resurrection power of Christ, as Lazarus was.

3. MARTHA SERVING. To serve Christ or His people is very honourable work. It is true that the Lord once rebuked Martha (Luke 10. 41), but :

(*a*) He did not rebuke her for serving.

(*b*) But for serving more than was needful, that is, for extravagance.

(*c*) For criticising her sister, and

(*d*) Thinking service was to be preferred to worship.

(*e*) The "good part" is to be satisfied with little (one dish) and to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His Word (Luke 10. 39).

4. MARY'S SACRIFICE OF LOVE. Worship is the overflow of a grateful heart in adoration, thanksgiving, love, and giving. With such sacrifices God is well pleased (Heb. 13. 15-16).

Mary is found thrice at the feet of Jesus :

(1) Luke 10. 39. Hearing His word.

(2) John 11. 32. Seeking His comfort.

(3) John 12. 3. Anointing His feet.

5. IS ANYTHING TOO COSTLY FOR JESUS ? When it was too much food He rebuked it, but when it was as Judas thought, too much love, He defended it.

The spikenard, or pure or liquid nard, was distilled from a small plant, the Spiked-nard. It is twice mentioned in the Song of Solomon (1. 12 and 4. 13). The first of these well applies to the scene at Bethany. " While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."

6. THE HOUSE FILLED WITH THE ODOUR OF THE OINTMENT. If our devotion is seen at home it will be true of our house : " We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ " in home and church alike. We should make manifest the savour of His knowledge in every place (2 Cor. 2. 14, 15).

" The Father seeketh such to worship Him."

7. JUDAS CRITISES. There is more criticism from hypocrites than anyone else. Those who are truly serving the Lord know the difficulties of the path too well themselves to want to find fault with others.

Often criticism is malice and envy only. In this case the Holy Spirit uncovers Judas's heart and reveals the truth. He cared nothing for the poor, but wanted to enrich himself by theft.

8. FALSE PHILANTHROPY. Whenever spiritual life declines and the Gospel is neglected, men talk on philanthropic lines. But the Gospel is the truest philanthropy. For a man himself to be changed in heart and life is the quickest way to relieve his poverty. It is well known in every slum mission that the convert quickly recovers his social standing and moves to a better neighbourhood. What he saves from drink and sin goes to his new home.

9. THE LORD DEFENDS MARY. It is a wise thing to leave our case in the Lord's hands. To commit ourselves to Him who judges righteously that He may vindicate us.

It is better than sticking up for ourselves, and using the carnal weapons of answering back and showing anger for anger and pride for pride.

10. LAZARUS SHARING HIS LORD'S SUFFERINGS. They would put him to death, too! It has always been the case with those who are witnesses for Christ. "They suffer with their Lord below."

11. MIRACLES DO NOT CONVINCE THE UNGODLY. The priests had no excuse for their murderous purposes. They could not gainsay the miracle, but instead of leading them to think and believe, it only hardened their hearts.

In the Parable of the rich man in Hades, he asked that the other Lazarus might go from the dead to his five brothers, but Jesus said that would not convince them (Luke 16. 31), and we see when this Lazarus rose from the dead it did not do so.

Application.

Let us each seek to be witnesses, workers, and true worshippres.

OUTLINE.

Some Who Made Feasts in the Bible.

Lot (Gen. 19. 3); Abraham (Gen. 21. 8); Isaac (Gen. 26. 30); Laban (Gen. 29. 22); Pharaoh (Gen. 41. 20); Joseph (Gen. 43. 32-34); Samson (Judges 14. 10); Nabal (1 Sam. 25. 36); Solomon (1 Kings 8. 65); Vashti (Esther 1. 9); Esther (2. 18); Belshazzar (Dan. 5. 1); Herod (Mark 6. 21); Levi (Luke 5. 29); Mary and Martha (John 12. 1-11).

Some Dishes at the Gospel Feast.

Forgiveness of Sins.
Everlasting Life.
Acceptance in the Beloved.
Strength to Overcome on Song of Praise.
Triumph in Christ.

STORY 50.

In the Upper Room.

LUKE 22. 7-14.

I. **Text.** "They went into an upper room" (Acts 1. 13).

II. **Main Lesson** Two events were taking place in Jerusalem at the same time. The gorgeous ceremonial in the Temple at the Passover season. The simple feast, when Jesus gathered His own around Him in the upper room.

They are typical of the passing away of the old—"*the worldly sanctuary*" (Heb. 9. 1), and the introduction of the *new spiritual worship* of those who gather together in the Name of Jesus.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 7-9. *The time for killing the Passover was come. Peter and John asked Jesus where they were to prepare the Feast.* "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when Passover must be killed, and He sent Peter and John saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. and they said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare?"

v. 10. *He gives them a sign that they may know where to go.* "He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in."

vv. 11, 12. *They were to ask the owner of the house to show them the room.* "Ye shall say to the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready."

v. 13. *They do as bidden, and make ready the Passover.* "They went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover."

v. 14. *The Lord sits down with the twelve apostles.* "When the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him."

IV. **The Celebration of the Passover.**

The killing of the lamb took place " between the evenings " (Exodus 12. 6), which the Rabbi tell us was about three o'clock, the time of the evening sacrifice. Josephus says : " They offer this sacrifice from the ninth to the eleventh hour " (3 to 5 o'clock). The idiom " between the evenings," probably means, between early and late evening.

It took place on the fourteenth of the first month, Abib or Nisam, which is about our April (Exodus 13. 4).

The Feast of Unleaven Bread followed immediately, and lasted seven days

The Lord did not drink the Passover cup (Luke 22. 17, 18), and thereby solemnly abrogated the old order, thus making it the last Passover. It gave place to the Lord's Supper, which He instituted immediately after it.

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY. We are told of the Mosaic order, that it had " ordinance of divine service " and " a worldly sanctuary " (Heb. 9. 1). That is to say, that it had its temple on earth and a ritual of legal ordinances.

But the believer now has no temple on earth. Jesus told us that the hour had come when places were no longer sacred in the sense of having a monopoly of worship, as the Temple had (John 4. 21-24). Moreover, we are warned not to be " subject to ordinances " (Col. 3. 20), as if " living in the world," that is to say, belonging to the order when there was a worldly sanctuary.

Those legal enactments were merely rudimentary (" beggarly elements," Gal. 4. 9) from which the believer now is freed. He is " seated with Christ in the heavenlies " (Eph. 2. 6), and has his citizenship there. He worships not by legal codes or man-made ordinances, but by the Spirit of God (Phil. 3. 3) and the Word of God.

2. THE MAN WITH THE PITCHER OF WATER is an illustration of how " all things work together." Small circumstances evidence the guidance of God to those who are spiritually minded enough to discern them.

A well-known evangelist told me whenever he went to a new sphere of labour he looked for the man with the

pitcher of water, that is, circumstantial evidence that the Lord had gone before him.

3. "THE MASTER." (*Didaskalos*, Teacher.) There are seven words translated Master, the first six of which are applied to the Lord Jesus. They are :

(1) *Didaskalos.* The word used here which means teacher. One who has disciples.

(2) *Kurios*, the common word for Lord, as the Head of the house, of the Church, and of the Kingdom.

(3) *Rabbi.* A title of honour, having the value of "Learned Doctor," a chief teacher.

(4) *Epistatus.* One set over others, a superintendent, or overseer (Luke 17. 13).

(5) *Despotes.* An absolute ruler, the word from which our term "Despot" comes (1 Tim. 6. 1, 2 ; 2 Tim. 2. 21 ; Titus 2. 9).

(6) *Kathegetes*, the common term for Guide, or Leader (Matt. 23. 8-10).

(7) *Kubernetes.* The pilot or steersman of a vessel (Rev. 18. 17).

These teach us how true must be our full surrender to so great a Master.

4. "GOD DWELLETH NOT IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS" (Acts 7. 48-50). The most glorious fane will not take the place of heart worship and the simplicity that is in Christ.

> "Where're we seek Thee, Thou art found,
> And every place is holy ground."

5. THE CALL TO "GO FORTH UNTO HIM" (Heb. 13. 13). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, having shown how the Perfect (Christ) has superceded the Type and Shadow, the rudimentary things, bids the godly Hebrew to leave behind the old order and go outside "the gate" and "the camp," to Jesus, because we have no continuing city here (Heb. 13. 12-14).

Application.

Let us see to it that our worship is in spirit and in truth, and that our confidence is not in holy places, an earthly priesthood, or religious ceremonial and ritual.

Let us leave the Temple for the Upper Room.

STORY 51.

Peter's Denial of Christ

MATTHEW 26. 69-75.

I. **Text.** "Peter followed Him afar off" (Matt. 26. 58).

II. **The Main Lesson.** The story of Peter teaches us the danger of falling. From it we learn what are the steps that lead to a denial of Christ, and also the elements that make for recovery.

III. **The Story Told.** We must gather the full story from a number of passages. It will be well to do so under three heads.

1. BEFORE THE FALL.
2. THE TIME OF DEFEAT.
3. THE RECOVERY.

1. BEFORE THE FALL.

(1) *The Boasting.* Matthew 26. 33: "Peter said, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet I will never be offended."

(2) *The Warning* in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26. 40: "He findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

(3) *The Intercession.* Luke 12. 31-34: "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you that thy faith fail not. . . . And he said, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me."

2. THE TIME OF DEFEAT.

(1) *The Arm of Flesh.* John 18. 10, 11: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup that My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

(2) *Followed Afar Off.* Matthew 26. 58: "Peter

followed Him afar off into the high priest's palace, and went and sat with the servants to see the end."

(3) *At the Fireside.* John 18. 18 : " Peter stood with them and warmed himself."

(4) *The Threefold Denial.* Matthew 26. 69 : " Now Peter sat without in the palace, and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee : but he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." (John 18. 17. This was the damsel who kept the door.)

vv. 70-72. " When he was come out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth : and again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man."

vv. 73, 74. " After a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man : and immediately the cock crew."

(5) *The Contrition.* Luke 22. 61 : " And the Lord turned and looked on Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, . . . and went out and wept bitterly."

3. THE RECOVERY.

John 21. 15-19 : " So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me." (Read the whole beautiful passage.)

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. KNOW THYSELF. Peter was self-confident and ready to boast of what he would do. How easy to be brave before the battle. He did not know—

(*a*) That physical courage may exist with moral cowardice. It is easier to wield a sword than to face a girl's sneer.

(*b*) That he would forsake his Lord and flee with the rest.

(*c*) That he would say such things as these : " I do not know the Man." " I am not one of His disciples."

(*d*) That hewould curse and swear, as in the old fisher days.

It is a hard lesson to learn to know the weakness and exceeding sinfulness of our own hearts.

2. PROGRESS IN DANGEROUS PATHS. After having *fled* with the rest, Peter *follows afar* off. He had not the courage to stand by his Lord in that hour of shame.



"GORDON'S CALVARY"
The supposed site of the Crucifixion

To face page 208



THE GARDEN TOMB AT THE FOOT OF
THE HILL CALLED CALVARY

Then he *associates with the wicked.* He gets through the door by influence, and stands to warm himself at the fire of the enemy. His first denial is an attempt *to avoid all knowledge* of the affair. "I know not what thou sayest" (Matt. 26. 70). Then is *a positive denial* : "I do not know the Man." This from the lips of the one who had made the great confession (Matt. 16. 16). Then he attempts *to brazen out the denial with oaths and curses.*

How slippery is the downward path.

3. THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST. This prayer for Peter may be taken as an example of His present intercession for His saints in Heaven, where as our Great Priest He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

"That thy faith fail not." There is always hope of recovery if faith is retained.

David's recovery after his sin is disclosed in Psalm 51.

There his faith failed not. He never despaired. He prayed with confidence. He anticipated recovery, and the time when again sinners would be converted through his testimony.

4. THE TENDERNESS OF CHRIST TO THE FALLEN. The touching scene with Peter recorded in John 21. 15-19, teaches us how true a Priest Jesus is. "*Who can have compassion on them that are out of the way*" (Heb. 5. 2). It is when we have erred that we need His compassion.

His words to Peter are full of instruction, too. He restores the fallen (1) with love, (2) with encouragement, "Feed My lambs, . . . My sheep," (3) with promises. Peter was to suffer triumphantly for Christ (v. 18). He had boasted he would in the flesh ; he is promised he shall in the spirit.

5. THE SECRET OF STANDING FAST. Remember your own weakness. "Without Me ye can do nothing." Pray that your faith fail not. Watch and pray against subtle snares and beginnings in evil. Avoid unholy associations. Seek for courage in the day of contempt. Remember the flesh is weak and then live and walk in the Spirit.

Application.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

STORY 52.

In the Garden of Gethsemane

LUKE 22. 39-53.

I. **Text.** "He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** The Perfect Servant of Jehovah sets us an example in the Garden, of His perfect obedience even unto death. Knowing and feeling all that the cup meant, He nevertheless accepts it, and in dependence and obedience says, "Thy will be done."

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 39. *After the Supper, the Lord goes out to Olivet.* "He came out and went, as was His wont, to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples also followed Him."

v. 40. *He bids them pray.* "When he was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

v. 41. *He withdraws a stone's cast.* "And He was withdrawn from them a stone's cast and kneeled down in prayer."

v. 42. *His prayer.* "Saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

v. 43. *An angel strengthens Him.* "And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him."

v. 44. *His agony and bloody sweat.* "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

v. 45. *He rises and finds them sleeping.* "And when He rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow."

v. 46. *He reproaches them.* "And said unto them, Why sleep ye? . . . Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

v. 47. *Judas arrives with a crowd.* "While He yet spake,

behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him."

v. 48. *Jesus addresses him.* "But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

v. 49. *They ask Jesus if they shall defend Him.* "They said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?"

v. 50. *One of them (Peter) cuts off the ear of the High Priest's servant.* "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear."

v. 51. *The Lord heals it.* "Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far, and He touched his ear and healed him."

v. 52. *He demands why they come with weapons.* "Jesus said unto the chief priest and captains of the temple and the elders, Be ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves?"

v. 53. *It is the hour and power of darkness.* "But this is your hour and the power of darkness."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Lesson.**

1. THE LORD'S PRAYER. Although He knew that He was to be delivered to death in accordance with Scripture and by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, yet He nevertheless prays: "If Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me." For predestination is not fatalism—nor is the ear of God ever shut to His saints when they make known their requests.

2. THE LORD'S SUBMISSION. "Not My will, but Thine be done." This is the language of the obedient servant. It had been foretold of Him: "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiter and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50. 5, 6). "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Psa. 40. 7, 8; quoted in Heb. 10. 7).

3. "HE WAS HEARD IN THAT HE FEARED." This passage, quoted above in the text from Hebrews 5. 7, is generally taken as having reference to Gethsemane. What

then was His prayer that was heard? It would seem that it was that His soul might not be left in Hades, but that God would deliver Him out of death, and this He did. In Acts 2. 25-28, Peter quotes from Psalm 16. 8, and applies it to Christ: "Because Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."

David, foreseeing the resurrection of Christ, spoke this. His soul was not left in Hades. God answered His prayer and raised Him up.

4. THE "AGONY." The word used here is also used of us in several places. Phil. 1. 30 and Col. 2. 1, where it is translated "conflict." 1 Tim. 6. 12 and 2 Tim. 4. 7, where it is translated "fight." And Heb. 12. 1, where it is translated "race."

His conflict with the powers of darkness was far more terrible than anyone shall be called upon to go through; but in our good fight to do the whole will of God we are made partakers of His sufferings.

5. THE ANGEL MINISTRY. This is recorded for our help. There are ministering spirits for the heirs of salvation. They were allowed to appear to the Lord, that we might be assured that as He was strengthened, so we in our deepest agony shall be also strengthened—though the angels are not allowed to reveal themselves to us, nor make their presence known to our senses.

6. WANT OF SYMPATHY. How sad the reproach: "Why could ye not watch with Me one hour?" This is one of the hardest trials to bear—when no eye pitied and no heart understood or shared the sorrow. "I have trodden the winepress alone."

7. BETRAYED WITH A KISS. A friend turned traitor, and so miserably betraying Him, added yet more to His sorrow. Knowing all, He had patiently borne with Judas, had bestowed much love and labour upon him.

Application.

Let us pray that we may learn to suffer in the will of God.
Let us do the will of God from the heart.
Let us watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.

STORY 53.

Judas the Traitor

I. **Text.** "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22. 48).

II. **Main Lesson.** We learn the depths of sin and shame to which the human heart can descend. Even under the most wonderful privileges and opportunities. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26. 24).

III. **The Story Told.** The whole story of Judas must be gathered from several parts of Scripture. Let us do so under three heads.

1. HIS LIFE PRIOR TO HIS GREAT BETRAYAL.

(1) *Chosen.* Matthew 10. 1-4. "When Jesus had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits. . . . Now the names of the twelve apostles are these, . . . and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him."

(2) *Character.* John 6. 70. "Jesus answered, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is *a devil.*" John 12. 4: "Then saith Judas Iscariot, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was *a thief*, and had the bag and bare what was put therein." John 17. 12: "None of them is lost but the *son of perdition*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

2. HIS BETRAYAL OF CHRIST.

John 13. 27: "After the sop, Satan entered into him."

Matt. 26. 14: "Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; and from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."

Matt. 26. 47: "Judas came with a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him gave a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus and said,

Hail, Master, and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto Him, Friend, wherefore art thou come ? "

Luke 22. 48 : " Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss ? "

3. HIS DESPAIR AND SUICIDE.

Matt. 27. 3 : " Judas when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us ? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the treasury, and departed and hanged himself. They took counsel, and bought with them a field to bury strangers in. Wherefore the field was called, the field of blood unto this day."

Acts 1. 18 : " This man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. . . . That field is called in their proper tongue Aceldama . . . the field of blood."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE LORD'S EPITHETS FOR JUDAS. Three terms are used : " a devil," " a thief," " the son of perdition." A man, yet because Satan entered into him, he became devil controlled. Son of perdition, a ruined soul, a name only elsewhere applied to the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2. 3, for which reason some have believed that the man of sin will be a reincarnation of Judas—a theory with no sufficient support.

2. CHOSEN AND EMPOWERED. Yet the Lord chose him as one of the twelve apostles ; gave him power over demons, etc, and " part of this ministry," or " bishoprick " (Acts. 1. 17 and 20).

We are told that this was " that the Scripture might be fulfilled," not, of course, in any ignorance of his true character. God was pleased to ordain this striking illustration of apostasy.

3. EXALTED PRIVILEGES. To have companied with the Lord for three years, to have listened to all His teaching, to have seen His mighty works, to have been loved and

patiently borne with, and yet to be unaffected by it all, shows how far men may go with holy things and yet be lost. Hebrews 6. 1-6 teaches this. Many taste everything, but obey none. As Bunyan says in the closing words of "Pilprim's Progress," "Then I saw there was a way to Hell, even from the gates of Heaven." Privileges and holy associations will not save men.

4. THE POWER OF AVARICE. The love of money is a root of all evil. For it men have sold themselves and forfeited all hope of the future.

Thirty pieces of silver seems a small price for which to sell one's soul. Yet it is commonly done.

How true it is that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6. 9). It was in that whirlpool that Judas was drowned.

5. THE HEARTLESSNESS OF SIN. The betrayal with a kiss is so heartless, so pitiably ungrateful, so miserably selfish and unfeeling, that it makes us shudder. But sin has always robbed men of their finer feelings. Sin slays all love. Mother love is crushed, and the tender love of husband and wife marred by sin. Even "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. 12. 10).

6. THE WORST FROM THE BEST. The worst characters are often drawn from the best surroundings. The son brought up in the godliest home makes often the wildest prodigal. The pendulum swings to the opposite extreme.

From the holiest business Judas "by transgression fell" to the deepest guilt. It is not necessarily a reproach to the godly mother that the disobedient son becomes a drunkard, or to the godly father that the heir becomes a waster.

Application.

Let us each pray Augustine's prayer: "Lord, save me from that wicked man, myself."

STORY 54.

Caiaphas the High Priest

JOHN 11. 49-57.

I. **Text.** "Being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11. 51).

II. **Main Lesson.** Apostate religion has ever been the most blood-thirsty thing on earth. Caiaphas, though holding a divinely ordained office, was the instrument used for the condemnation of the Son of God, of whom he, in his office, was a type.

"Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Psa. 49. 20).

III. **The Story Told.** We gather the history of Caiaphas from the following passages.

1. HIS OFFICE.

Luke 3. 2 : "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests,' or, as in the Revised Version : "In the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas."

2. HIS PROPHECY.

John 11. 49-52 : "One of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he, not of himself, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 18. 14).

3. HIS EVIL BARGAIN WITH JUDAS.

Matt. 26. 14 : "Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests and said, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you : and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

4. HIS ARREST OF JESUS.

John 18. 3 and 12, 13. "A band of men and officers from the chief priests . . . cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons . . . and took Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away."

5. HIS TRIAL OF JESUS.

Matt. 26. 59 : " The chief priests . . . sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death."

Matt. 26. 62 : " The high priest arose and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing ? What is it which these witness against thee ? "

Matt. 26. 63 : " But Jesus held His peace, and the high priest answered, . . . I adjure thee by the Living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

Matt. 26. 64 : " Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said. . . . Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Matt. 26. 59 : " Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses ? Behold now ye have heard His blasphemy."

Matt. 26. 66 : " What think ye ? They answered and said, He is guilty of death."

6. HIS MOCKERY OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

Matt. 27. 41-43 : " The chief priests mocking Him, . . . said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God : let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him ; for He said, I am the Son of God.' '

3. HIS PERSECUTION OF PETER AND JOHN.

Acts 4. 6 and 21 : " And Annas the high priest and Caiaphas . . . were gathered together, and when they had set them (Peter and John) in the midst, they asked, By what power and by what name have ye done this ? . . . They commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the Name of Jesus. . . . So when they had further threatened them they let them go.' '

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. DEGENERACY IN RELIGION. Where the heart is not truly exercised, and that habitually, to be right with God and in line with His Word, decay in spiritual things will set in.

Nothing can prevent it. The holiest office is no safeguard, the most solemn oaths, the greatest responsibility, the highest privileges, will not keep man from sin and folly if the heart departs from Christ and the conscience from the Word of God.

2. NO LIMIT TO SIN. When once Caiaphas allowed himself to sin against the light, he could not stop the progress of evil. He became the creature of circumstances. One sin quickly followed on another—bribing to murder, suborning false witnesses, miscarriage of justice, cruelty to the innocent and harmless Saviour—until carried on by the torrent of his crimes, he commits the greatest sin the world has ever seen, the judicial murder of the Prince of Life.

Sin never stops. It knows no limit.

3. THE DIGNITY OF THE SACRED OFFICE. Although so sadly abused, the dignity of the high priesthood is seen in that the spirit of prophecy was not withdrawn even from that wicked man. Being high priest, he prophesied. Not wittingly, but by the over-ruling power of God.

4. THE PROPHECY. Caiaphas no doubt intended that it was better to put a troublesome man out of the way (even by a miscarriage of justice) than that the whole nation should get into trouble.

This wicked law of expediency has been the excuse of the apostasy ever since. But the Spirit of God guided those evil lips to say by reason of his office as high priest, words having a prophetic meaning.

In quite a different sense from that which Caiaphas intended, Jesus was to die for the nation, and not for them only, but for us all.

5. THE RENT CLOTHES. It was expressly forbidden the high priest to rend his garments.

Lev. 21. 10 : " He that is the high priest . . . shall not uncover his head nor rend his clothes."

In this flagrant act of disobedience the high priest no doubt typically revealed the fact that from that time God no longer recognised the office. The glory had departed, the sin was consummated, the sacred office was disrobed

and ended for ever. We have an High Priest in Heaven now, the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. THE MOCKERY. That the priest should use Scripture to mock the Lord as He hung upon the Cross, shows how evilly Scripture may be misquoted, twisted, and abused by unspiritual men. The truth can only be held in a good conscience. Only the pure in heart can see the things of God. In the hands and lips of the guilty the Scriptures are a treacherous weapon.

7. THE TWO HIGH PRIESTS. The fact of there being two high priests at this time (Luke 3. 2, "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests") is explained thus. Annas had been priest, but was deprived arbitrarily by Valermo Gratus (the Governor before Pilate), so that many still regarded him as the true priest, while Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was the one officially recognised.

Application.

Let us beware lest our profession of godliness cover heart departure from God.

OUTLINE.

Things Mocked At.

Fools make a mock at SIN (or the Sin Offering), ... Prov. 14. 9
Enemies of God mocked at the SABBATH, .. Lam. 1. 7
Disobedient mock at SERVANTS OF GOD, 2 Chron. 36. 16
Some mock at the POOR, ... Prov. 17. 5
Wicked children mock at their Father, .. Prov. 30. 17
JESUS endured mocking, ... Matt. 27. 29
GOD is not mocked, ... Gal. 6. 7

STORY 55.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor

JOHN 18. 29—19. 22.

I. **Text.** "Pilate . . . was determined to let Him go" (Acts 3. 13).

II. **Main Lesson.** The man of the world, though he may be convinced of what is right, and even determine to do it, is unable for want of grace to perform it.

The fear of man, the desire to hold office, the love of money and place are too strong, and lead a man such as Pilate to crucify the Lord of Glory.

III. **The Story Told.** The incidents in the life of Pilate are as follows:

1. HIS POSITION. He is called "The Governor of Judaea" (Luke 3. 1).

2. HIS CRUELTY. Luke 13. 1: "Some told (Jesus) of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

3. HIS ATTEMPTS TO EVADE RESPONSIBILITY.

John 18. 31: "Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law."

Luke 23. 7: "As soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod."

Luke 23. 22: "I have found no fault in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go."

Matt. 27. 17: "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus, which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him."

Matt. 27. 24: "He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. Se ye to it."

4. HIS WIFE'S WARNING. Matt. 27. 19: "His wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

5. HIS INTERVIEW WITH CHRIST.

John 18. 33: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

v. 35. "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me. What hast Thou done?"

v. 37. "Art Thou a King then?"

v. 38. "What is truth?"

John 19. 9, 10: "Whence art Thou? Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and power to release Thee?"

6. HIS CONSIDERED JUDGMENT.

Luke 23. 14: "Ye have brought unto me this Man, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him."

7. HIS SENTENCE. Luke 23. 24: "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. . . . He delivered Jesus to their will."

John 19. 1: "Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him. . . . Pilate went forth again and said unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. . . . Take ye Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."

v. 12. "Pilate sought to release Him."

v. 14. "Behold your King!"

v. 15. "Shall I crucify your King?"

v. 16. "Then delivered he Him to them to be crucified."

8. THE TITLE ON THE CROSS. John 19. 19: "And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

John 19. 22: "What I have written I have written."

9. HIS GRANT OF THE BODY. John 19. 38: "Joseph of Arimathaea besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave."

10. HIS WATCH OVER THE SEPULCHRE. Matt. 27. 65, 66: "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. PILATE'S FATE. Pilate became Procurator of Judaea in A.D. 27, and continued ten years. In A.D. 37 he was removed from his position by Vitellius, the legate of Syria, and hastened to Rome to defend himself before the Emperor Tiberius; but before he reached that city the Emperor died. According to Eusebius, he fell into such troubles that he committed suicide. His wife, Claudia Procula, is alleged to have become a Christian.

2. COWARDICE AND CRUELTY are very often found together. Pilate could order an innocent man to be scourged, but could not act according to his conscience. "He was the more afraid" when he heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. He feared at the thought of not being Caesar's friend, and so cruelty and cowardice prevailed over conscience, and he gave way.

3. WASHING HIS HANDS. This extraordinary action signified that he knew he was doing wrong, but that while he did it, he sought to put the responsibility on others. His attempted evasions were five:

(1) Trying to get the Jews to judge Him.
(2) Sending Him to Herod.
(3) Offering to scourge Him.
(4) Offering to release Him at the Passover.
(5) Washing his hands.

But there is no way of avoiding the solemn decision. He must release or condemn the Lord. So we must act, receive or reject the Saviour. Evasions, as putting off the decision, compromising by being moral or religious, formality or hypocrisy will not avail.

4. PILATE'S QUESTION: "WHAT IS TRUTH?" The mocking question of an infidel. It received no answer, for the Lord never replies to those who do not want to obey the truth.

The true answer had been given to Thomas in the upper room the night before: "*I am the Truth.*"

To receive and walk in Christ is to know and walk in the Truth. The Word of God, the written Truth, is the medium by which we know the Living Truth (John 17. 17).

5. AN AWFUL POSSIBILITY. It is possible, as Pilate did, to see and talk with Christ, and yet reject Him, put Him to an open shame, and crucify Him.

When we read the gracious and courteous replies Christ gave to this brutal man, we think of the solemn warning of Hebrews 10. 29 : " Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall He be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God . . . and done despite unto the Spirit of Grace ? " Every one who hears the Gospel of Christ and rejects Him is guilty of this.

6. THE WRATH OF MAN PRAISES GOD. " Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee " (Psa. 76. 10). Pilate unwittingly glorifies God and bears testimony to Christ in the following matters :

(1) *His questions* brought out in the answers of Christ the great revelation of His Kingship and of the nature of the Kingdom (John 18. 33-37).

(2) *His pronouncement* of the Lord's innocence and oft repeated, " I find no fault in Him."

(3) *His mocking cry, " Behold your King,"* bore witness to the truth.

(4) *The superscription on the Cross.* " This is Jesus the King of the Jews," did the same.

(5) *His certifying that Jesus was really dead* (Mark 15. 44, 45) is of historical importance, as answering the foolish suggestion that He did not really die, but merely fainted.

(6) *The grant of the body* to Joseph of Arimathaea (John 19. 38) is further evidence of the actual death.

(7) *The setting a watch and seal on the tomb* added to the historical evidence of the resurrection.

So does God overrule the actions of evil men to His own glory. Even the enemy becomes a witness to the truth (Deut. 33. 31).

Application.

There is no escaping the responsibility of the rejection of Christ.

STORY 56.

Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch

MATTHEW 14. 1-12; LUKE 23. 7-12.

I. **Text.** "Herod, with his men of war, set Him at naught and mocked Him" (Luke 23. 11).

II. **Main Lesson.** God has permitted His saints to suffer at the hands of kings and rulers for a testimony. "Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne."

John the Baptist and Christ were both cruelly treated and unjustly condemned by this wicked man. His story warns us of the awful guilt of power wrongly used.

III. **The Story Told.** The history of this Herod, as found in the Bible, is as follows:

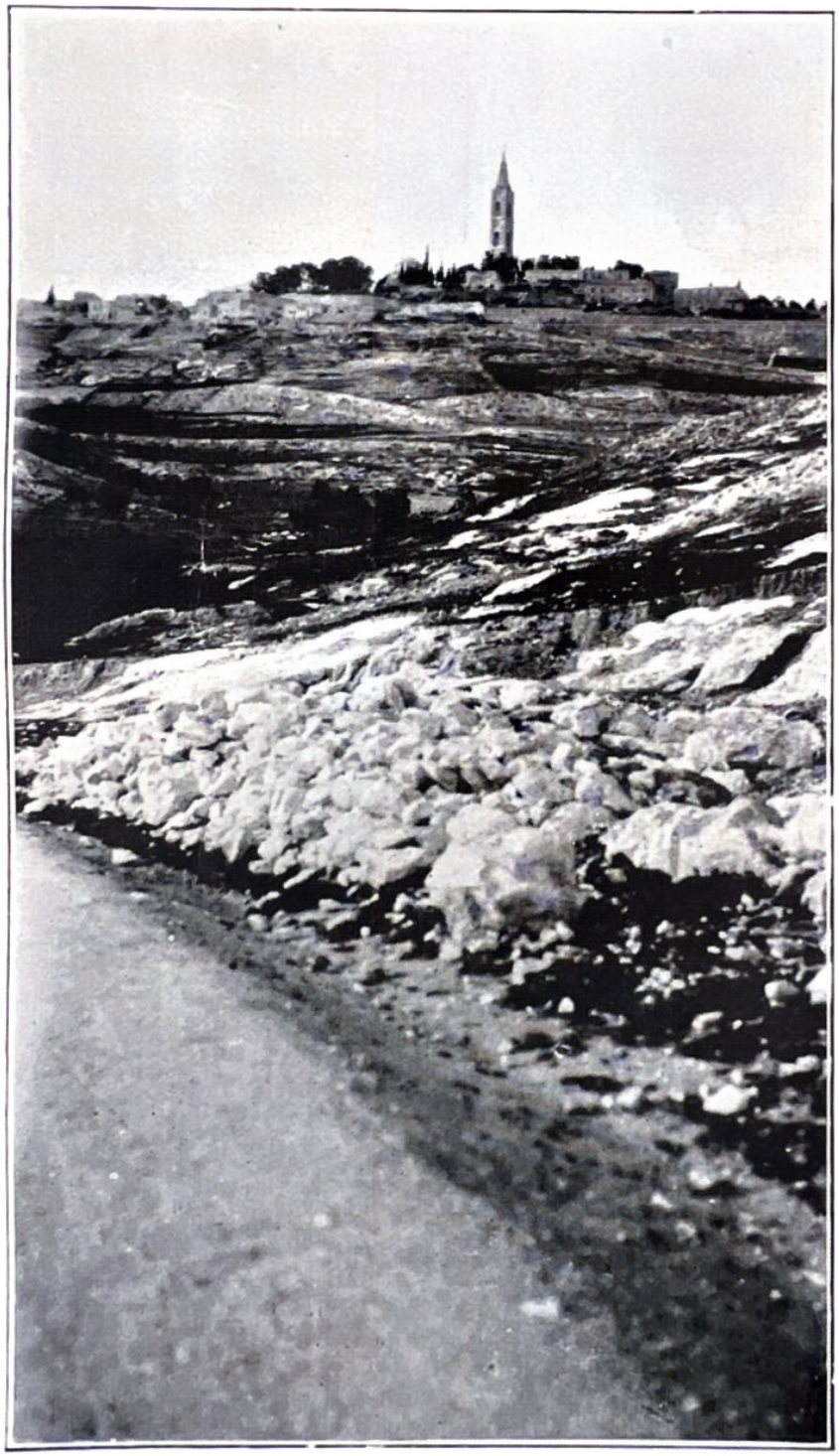
1. HIS POSITION is described in Luke 3. 1: "Herod, being Tetrarch of Galilee."

2. HIS FEAR OF JOHN'S PREACHING. Mark 6. 20: "Herod feared John, knowing he was a just man and a holy, and observed him, and when he heard him he did many things and heard him gladly."

3. HIS ARREST OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Luke 3. 19: "Herod the tetrarch being reproved by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for the evil which Herod had done, added yet this above all that he shut up John in prison."

4. HIS MURDER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Mark 6. 21: "When a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a great supper. . . . when the daughter of Herodias came in and danced and pleased Herod, . . . the king said, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. . . . And she said, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry: yet for his oath's sake . . . he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in prison."

5. HIS SUPERSTITIOUS FEARS. Luke 9. 7-9. "Now



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, FROM THE
BETHANY ROAD

To face page 224



THE CITY WALL OF DAMASCUS
Down which Paul was lowered in a basket

Herod the tetrarch heard (of Jesus) : he was perplexed, because that it was said of some that John was risen from the dead. . . . John have I beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things ? And he desired to see Him "

Mark 6. 16 : " It is John whom I beheaded : he is risen from the dead."

6. HIS THREAT TO KILL JESUS. Luke 13. 31 : " The Pharisees said, Get Thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill Thee."

7. HIS TRIAL OF JESUS. Luke 23. 8 : " When Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad. . . . He hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. He questioned with Him in many words, but He answered him nothing."

8. HIS MOCKERY OF JESUS. Luke 23. 11 : "Herod, with his men of war, set Him at naught and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate."

IV. **The Six Herods in the Bible.**

1. HEROD THE GREAT (B.C. 41-A.D. 2) was Procurator of Galilee for forty years. It was he who slaughtered the little children of Bethlehem. He built the Temple (Matt. 2. 1-16).

2. HEROD ARCHELAUS, his son (Matt. 2. 22), was Ethnarch of Judaea.

3. HEROD ANTIPAS, the Tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 3. 1).

4. HEROD PHILIP, his brother, being Tetrarch of Ituraea (Luke 3. 1).

5. HEROD AGRIPPA, the elder, referred to in Acts 12. 20-23, as " eaten of worms."

6. HEROD AGRIPPA, the younger, before whom Paul appeared (Acts 26. 1).

V. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. HEROD'S OPPORTUNITY. It is not often that any man had the opportunity of seeing and hearing two such wonderful preachers. John, the greatest born of women ; and the Lord Jesus, the greater than he.

We learn how men may hear the best preachers and yet continue in sin and go down to destruction.

2. HE "DID MANY THINGS." Herod was not without his serious thoughts and convictions.

He feared John—as evil men often fear good men.

He knew John was a holy man, and nothing convicts men so quickly as seeing those who live holy lives.

He observed him—as men will watch Christians to see if their lives bear out their words.

He heard Him gladly—for evil men often love to hear good preaching.

He did many things. What is commonly called turning over a new leaf. Perhaps he drank less, or swore less, or abated his cruelty somewhat. But he was a stony-ground hearer, his gladness soon passed away and he was offended.

3. THE DARLING SIN. Herod's sin was that he had his brother's wife. When John rebuked him he had him imprisoned.

Men will listen till their own beloved sin is exposed, and then they are angry. So Herod's guilty conscience was awakened, but it lead to no repentance.

Men cannot have their sin and Christ. If the sin is retained salvation is lost.

4. A MURDERER FROM COWARDICE. Herod had not the courage to refuse the dancing girl her wicked request. He had sworn a hasty, foolish oath, and had not manliness enough to refuse to give it so literal an interpretation. Moreover, he feared them that sat at meat.

The fear of man bringeth a snare, and Herod, caught in it, was led to the greatest crime of his life.

5. HIS CURIOSITY. He longed to see Christ, and hoped when He was brought before him to see a miracle. But the Lord never satisfies mere curiosity. Nor would the Lord answer his questions, nor pay the least heed to "that fox," as He called Herod (Luke 13. 32).

6. HIS MOCKERY. Was the gorgeous robe one of his own kingly dresses? Just as Pilate bore unwilling testimony to Christ, so does this act of Herod's. He little thought how in putting on Him a kingly robe he was but anticipating the day when He will be declared to be King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6. 15).

7. HEROD'S FATE. Son of Herod the Great and Malthace a Samaritan woman, he ruled Galilee from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. He was charged with treason and banished in disgrace to Lyons in Gaul, where he died in great misery.

Application.

Hearing the truth from the best preachers, doing many things, moral reforms, or religious exercises, will not excuse continuation in sin. Sin must be forsaken and Christ received if the sinner is to be saved.

OUTLINES.

Three Forms of Sin.

None Morally Wicked, but all Deadly.

SLEEP. INDIFFERENCE. NEGLECT.

The Sinner

IS

Sinful (Luke 5. 8)	.. and has no	Salvation.
Inexcusable (Rom. 2. 1),	,, ,,	Interest in Christ
Naked (Gen. 3. 10, Heb. 4. 13),	,, ,,	Nothing to say.
Needy (Psa. 40. 17), ..	,, ,,	Nothing to pay.
Enemy of God (Rom. 5. 10),	,, ,,	Expectation.
Ruined (Luke 6. 49), ..	,, ,,	Ransom.

OR

Sinful, with No Saviour.
Inexcusable, with No Interest in Christ.
Naked, with Nothing to Say.
Needy, with Nothing to Pay.
Enemy, with No Expectation.
Ruined, with No Ransom.

STORY 57.

Thomas the Doubter

JOHN 20. 24-29.

I. **Text.** "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14. 31).

II. **Main Lesson.** The unreasonableness of unbelief. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" is an unanswered question.

To disbelieve because we cannot understand is no sound reason for refusing truth.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 24. *Thomas was absent when the Lord appeared to the disciples after His resurrection.* "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus (the twin) was not with them when Jesus came."

v. 25. *The others tell him they have seen the Lord.* "The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord."

v. 25. *His refusal to believe it without physical proof.* "But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

v. 26. *The Lord appears again.* "After eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

v. 27. *He invites Thomas to touch Him.* "Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side."

v. 27. *He rebukes his unbelief.* "And be not faithless, but believing."

v. 28. *Thomas confesses his Lord as God.* "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

v. 29. *Jesus instructs him.* "Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. UNBELIEF THE GREAT SIN. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me," Jesus said. For unbelief—

(*a*) *Robs God of His glory*, for it makes God a liar by refusing to accept His Word (1 John 5. 10).

(*b*) *Leads to lawlessness*, for those who do not believe will not submit to authority nor obey. Unbelief shuts Christ out of the life.

(*c*) *Leads to ruin.* He that believeth not shall be damned. Not that God delights in judgment, but because the unbeliever will not flee from the wrath to come, and so will perish in it.

Just as one who refused to believe there was danger in touching a dynamo, would if he touched it die for his unbelief.

2. UNBELIEF IS UNREASONABLE.

(*a*) *When no examination or inquiry has been made* The man who has never read the Bible and says he doesn't believe it is foolish, and may be justly condemned as being wilfully ignorant.

(*b*) *When the facts are clear, but the heart is unwilling*, then unbelief is guilty and becomes madness. To refuse light is to sin against one's own soul.

(*c*) *When it is the result of pride or prejudice.* "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God" (Psa. 10. 4). "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another?" (John 5. 44).

(*d*) *When no sound reason can be given for it.* As to the question above quoted from Acts 26. 8.

Why is resurrection incredible? It is not. Because I cannot explain it and have never seen it is no good reason for disbelieving it.

3. UNBELIEF SOMETIMES THE RESULT OF DISPOSITION. As is well known, many find it harder to believe than others. Thomas was one such. Notice his peculiar disposition.

(*a*) *He was easily despondent*, as unbelievers often are, inclined to pessimism rather than optimism. This is so

is John 11. 16, where he says : Let us also go (to Jerusalem) that we may die with Him."

(*b*) *He was ready to raise difficulties.* In John 14. 5, he interrupts the Lord with the question : " Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ? "

(*c*) *He was self-opinionated.* One against ten, he nevertheless insists the Lord had not risen. " The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason " (Prov. 26. 16). He " rages and is confident."

(*d*) *He is obstinate.* He says, "*I will not* believe." If he had said, " I *cannot*," we would respect him more, but " *will not* " is obstinacy.

(*e*) *He demands unreasonable evidence.* Others were satisfied without such material (even vulgar) demands. He will be doubly convinced before he will believe.

4. TRUTH IS WONDERFULLY BALANCED. It forces no man, but leaves each without excuse. If I seek I shall find, but truth will not force itself upon the idle or the unwilling.

If I do not seek, I am verily guilty. Part of the discipline of life is to come to the knowledge of the truth.

5. FAITH IS BETTER THAN SIGHT. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed. A boy who refuses to believe his father's word without being shown, is a poor unbeliever. Confidence in God is far better than mistrust. God rightly expects to be believed without proving all He says to our natural reason. Faith is never unreasonable, but is often above reason.

6. THOMAS CONFESSES CHRIST AS GOD. He is the first to use that word in addressing Christ. So the doubter outstrips the other believers, when once convinced. But he would have honoured his Lord more by believing what He had often told them, and the testimony of others who had seen the Lord.

Application.

Be not faithless, but believing. Let the doubter remember he is responsible to seek the light from God and His Word honestly and diligently. To rush hurriedly to a wrong conclusion is the danger of doubt.

STORY 58.

The Ascension

MARK 16. 19, 20; LUKE 24. 50, 51; ACTS 1. 9-11.

I. **Text.** "Jesus hath God raised up, . . . being by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2. 32, 33).

II. **Main Lesson.** The historical fact is that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified and died, has risen from the dead, has ascended into Heaven, and taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

III. **The Story Told.** There are three accounts of the Ascension, as follow:

Mark 16. 19, 20. "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

Luke 24. 50, 51. "He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven."

Acts 1. 9-11. "When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you unto Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE MAN IN HEAVEN. The fact that One who is Man is in Heaven is a reason for great and holy joy. Man, intended by God for great honour, has fallen by sin; but though we do not see him over all the works of God's hand as God purposed, yet "*we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour*" (see Heb. 2. 6-11).

A Man—the representative Man—the "Second Man" and "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15. 45-47), the "Lord from Heaven" become Man, is in Heaven. It means we shall be there, too, of a certainty, for "both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one."

2. WHERE HE SITS. This is variously described as, "On the right hand of the Majesty on High" (Heb. 1. 3). "Sit Thou on My right hand" (Heb. 1. 13). "On the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens" (Heb. 8. 1). "On the right hand of God" (Heb. 10. 12).

The right hand being a figurative description of all authority and power, as the Lord Himself said: "All power (authority) is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28. 18).

3. WHY HE IS THERE—AS LORD. He has been appointed "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2. 36), "Prince and Saviour" (Acts 5. 31), as foretold in Psalm 2. 6. "Yet have I set My King upon My Holy Hill of Zion." All nations are bidden to bow to Him as such. "Serve the Lord with fear. Kiss the Son lest He be angry and ye perish from the way" (Psa. 2. 11, 12). A Christian is one who receives and confesses Christ as Lord (Rom. 10. 9).

4. WHY HE IS THERE—AS HIGH PRIEST. He hath an unchangeable priesthood. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He represents His people there as Advocate Intercessor, and Saviour. Because He ever lives He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him.

5. WHY HE IS THERE—AS HEIR OF ALL THINGS. He awaits the time when His enemies will be made the footstool of His feet. "Sit on My right hand until I make Thine enemies thy footstool" (Heb. 1. 13). For God has appointed Him "Heir of all things." He will possess all as His inheritance and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords for ever and ever.

6. UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN. One day the Master of the House will rise up and shut to the door of mercy (the day of grace), and come to gather together His own to Himself, for "Yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

Application.

Let us avail ourselves of all the resources of our glorified Lord.

STORY 59.

The Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate

ACTS 3. 1-9.

I. **Text.** "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart" (Isa. 35. 6).

II. **Main Lesson.** The power that is in the Name of Jesus is the lesson here. "His Name, through faith in His Name hath made this man strong" (v. 16). There is no salvation in any other than Christ; no other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (4. 12).

III. **The Story Told.**

Acts 3. 1. *Peter and John go into the Temple at the time of evening sacrifice* (3 *o'clock*). "Peter and John went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."

v. 2. *A lame man sits daily at the Beautiful Gate begging.* "A certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the Temple."

v. 3. *He begs from Peter and John.* "Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the Temple asked an alms."

vv. 4, 5. *Peter bids him look on them.* "Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed, expecting to receive something of them."

v. 6. *Peter discloses his poverty and power.* "Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee."

v. 6. *He bids him rise and walk.* "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

v. 7. *He takes him by the hand and lifts him.* "And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up."

v. 7. *He is immediately healed.* "And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."

v. 8. *He follows them, leaping and praising.* "And he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered with them into the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God."

v. 9. *The people witness it.* "And all the people saw him walking and praising God."

(The rest of the chapter should be read.)

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE FIRST MIRACLE AFTER PENTECOST. The purpose of "signs" is to awaken interest and display the power of God. That this well-known beggar, lame from birth, over forty years old (4. 22), should be healed was a "notable miracle."

There was need to advertise the New Doctrine, and God chose this means. It had the desired result in raising the great issue of the Power of the Name of Jesus.

2. LAME FROM BIRTH. This is a graphic picture of our condition by nature. We are lame, and cannot walk in God's ways until by the power of the Name He has healed and given us strength.

It was appropriate that the notable miracle (sign) should be to make a lame man walk who had never walked. This is the aim of the Gospel.

3. "IMMEDIATELY." This element in the miracle is to teach us the truth of sudden conversion. None of the cases of conversion recorded in the Bible were otherwise. One moment dead, the next alive. One moment lost, the other saved. One moment dark, another light. One moment lame, another leaping and praising God.

4. THE "NAME." The Name stands for the Person. Directly a name is pronounced, a person stands before the mind. All that he is and has power to do is in the Name. So the Name above every Name, JESUS, brings the Person before the eye of faith.

> "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
> In a believer's ear."

"Name" is derived from "know." It is that by which one is known. "They that know Thy Name shall put their trust in Thee."

5. THE POWER OF THE NAME. The Person brought before the mind by the Name is all powerful. He is able to save. No other, by whatever name called, has this saving grace. "Neither is there salvation in any other."

6. NO HALF-MIRACLE. That a man who had never walked should walk and leap and continue to do so, is no doubt wonderful.

How different from the supposed "healings" of the present-day campaigns, that will not bear investigation, and are as bad as before a week later.

This "leaping" put the cure beyond all dispute. It took us all a long time to learn to walk; this man learned at once, for of the Lord we may say, "Who teacheth like Him?"

7. PRAISING GOD. Not Peter nor John, but the blessed God who, through the Lord Jesus, had made him whole. How true were the spiritual instincts of this lame beggar. The glory went to God, for the Lord Jesus brings us to God. We come unto God by Him, and the human instruments refuse all honour.

"Why look ye so earnestly upon us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (v. 12.)

Let the worker ever do this. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name be the glory for ever."

Application.

The Name of Jesus is still all powerful. Let His saints know how to preach it and do wonders by it. Let the sinner know that there is salvation in that Name, but in no other.

OUTLINE.

The Lame.

Are HEALED, PRAISE GOD,	.. Acts 3. 11
WALK, ...	.. Matt. 11. 5
LEAP as the Hart, ...	.. Isa. 35. 6
TAKE the Prey, ...	.. Isa. 33. 23
SIT at their Lord's Table, ..	.. 2 Sam. 9. 13
COME into the Temple, ..	.. Matt. 21. 14

STORY 60.

Peter brought out of Prison

ACTS 12. 1-19.

I. **Text.** "Bring my soul out of prison" (Psa 142. 7).

II. **Main Lesson.** The lives of the saints are in their Lord's hands. They escape, suffer, or die according to His will. James is slain by the sword. Peter escapes the edge of the sword. Some are called to suffer, some to triumph, each by his faith glorifies God. No prison can hold the one whose liberty the Lord proclaims.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 3. *Herod, having slain James, takes Peter.* "He proceeded to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread."

v. 4. *He secures him in prison.* "When he had apprehended him he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison."

v. 5. *Prayer is made for him.* "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

v. 6. *While sleeping in prison the angel of the Lord appears.* "The same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keeper before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison."

vv. 7, 8. *The angel bids Peter get up and follow him.* "And he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he said, Cast thy garment about thee and follow me."

vv. 9, 10. *They go out of the prison, the doors opening before them.* "And he went out and followed him, and wist not it was true, . . . but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and second wards, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened

to them of its own accord ; and they went out and passed on through one street."

v. 10. *The angel leaves him.* "Forthwith the angel departed from him."

v. 11. *Peter recognises God's delivering grace.* "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

(Read to the end of verse 19.)

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. We are not told why the Lord let James die and delivered Peter, nor why the Lord allowed John the Baptist to be put to death, whom He could have set free with a word. The path of faith is to rejoice in the will of God. To triumph or to die—Thy will be done.

One Missionary Society has for its seal an ox between an altar and a plough, with the motto, "Ready for either." To labour or to be offered.

Read Hebrews 11. 33-38, and note the two classes : (1) The overcomers (vv. 33-35) and (2) the sufferers (vv. 35, from "and others," to v. 38). Faith rejoices in the will of God.

2. SIXTEEN GUARDS TO ONE PRISONER. Four for each watch of the night. What great preparations did Herod Agrippa I, take to keep Peter. But as though to mock all his efforts, one angel is sent to deliver Peter. "He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh : He shall have them in derision." When will evil men who fight against God know that their breath is in His hands.

3. SLEEPING IN PRISON. The next day Peter was to die, so all believed, but Peter slept that night. A good conscience and a simple faith are soft pillows in a dungeon. "So He giveth His beloved sleep."

4. PRAYER WAS MADE UNCEASINGLY. The prayer meeting described in the 12th verse, in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, shows how simple and informal it was. The answer coming so suddenly and unexpectedly, found their faith unready to receive so definite an answer.

These early Christians were like ourselves, ready to regard it as madness to look for definite answers to prayer.

5. ANGEL MINISTRY. The ministry of angels is real, though usually silent and unseen. These ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, are not permitted to discover themselves as a rule. This angel had nothing to say to Peter more than the necessary words of directions. This reticence is no doubt with a view to avoid angel worship, or rendering to the servant what is due to the Lord.

6. DOORS OPENED. Not only do prison doors open at the Word of the Lord, but doors of opportunity and service too. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door."

Difficulties are nothing to God. What seems impossible to us is possible to Him. The mountains flow down at His presence.

7. THE GOD OF DELIVERANCES. "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath delivered." When it pleases God to deliver His people then they rejoice.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion we were like men that dream (as Peter was, v. 9)." "Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing."

Application.

Let us commit our way to the Lord, is the confidence of simple faith, for He is the God of deliverances.

OUTLINE.

Saints Brought Out of Prison.

Joseph (Gen. 41. 14).
Micaiah (1 Kings 22. 27).
Jeremiah (see p. 154).
The Apostles (Acts 5. 19).
Peter (Acts 12. 17).
Paul and Silas (Acts 16. 40).

Some who Died in Prison.

Samson (see p. 120), James (Acts 12. 2), John the Baptist (Mark 6. 27).

STORY 61.

Cornelius the Centurion

ACTS 10. 1-48.

I. **Text.** "In every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him" (Acts 10. 35).

II. **The Main Lesson.** It was the purpose of God from the beginning to extend the blessings of the Gospel to the Gentile nations. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, given at Pentecost, was repeated in the house of Cornelius.

"God has granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11. 18).

III. **The Story Told.** The story is too long to give in detail. Let us notice the outstanding features:

1. AN ANGEL APPEARS TO CORNELIUS. He is a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, giving alms and praying alway.

The angel bids him send for Peter, who was at Joppa, in Simon the tanner's house (vv. 1-8).

2. PETER'S VISION OF THE GREAT SHEET: He saw Heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as a sheet knit at the four corners containing all manner of beasts, reptiles, and birds.

He is bidden kill and eat, and demurs, since they are unclean things. He is told not to call anything that God has cleansed common or unclean. This was done three times (vv. 9-16).

3. CORNELIUS' MESSENGERS ARRIVE, and Peter is bidden go with them. They explain their errand, and after staying the night, set off together with Peter (vv. 17-23).

4. CORNELIUS GREETS PETER. He would have worshipped him, but Peter restrains him, and hears his explanation, ending thus: "NOW, therefore, we are all here present before God . . . to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (vv. 24-33).

5. PETER PREACHES THE GOSPEL TO THEM. That God is no respecter of persons. That Jesus Christ is Lord of all. That He went about doing good, was crucified, and raised from the dead, and is to be the Judge of living and dead.

All the prophets witness that whoever believes on Him shall receive the forgiveness of sins (vv. 34-43).

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT FALLS ON THE HEARERS. "While Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word" (vv. 44-46).

7. THEY ARE BAPTISED. He commanded them to be baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus (vv. 47, 48).

III. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE. It is true that the Gospel was to the Jew first, and that eleven years elapsed between the day of Pentecost and the scene in the house of Cornelius. Yet the Gentile is to share the same blessings. There is no difference in that—

(*a*) *He is a sinner like the Jew.* "Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin" (Rom. 3. 9).

(*b*) *God's grace is alike to both.* "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (Gentile), for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him; and whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10. 12, 13).

(*c*) *They are justified alike by grace through faith.* "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yea of the Gentiles also, seeing it is One God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom. 3. 29, 30).

(*d*) *They partake of the same promises.* "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. 3. 6).

2. NOTHING COMMON OR UNCLEAN. No longer are the Gentiles to be regarded as unclean or common, for in Christ there is now neither Jew nor Gentile. Salvation was "of the Jew," but not only for the Jews. God has sanctified both in the offering of the body of Christ once for all (Heb. 10. 10).

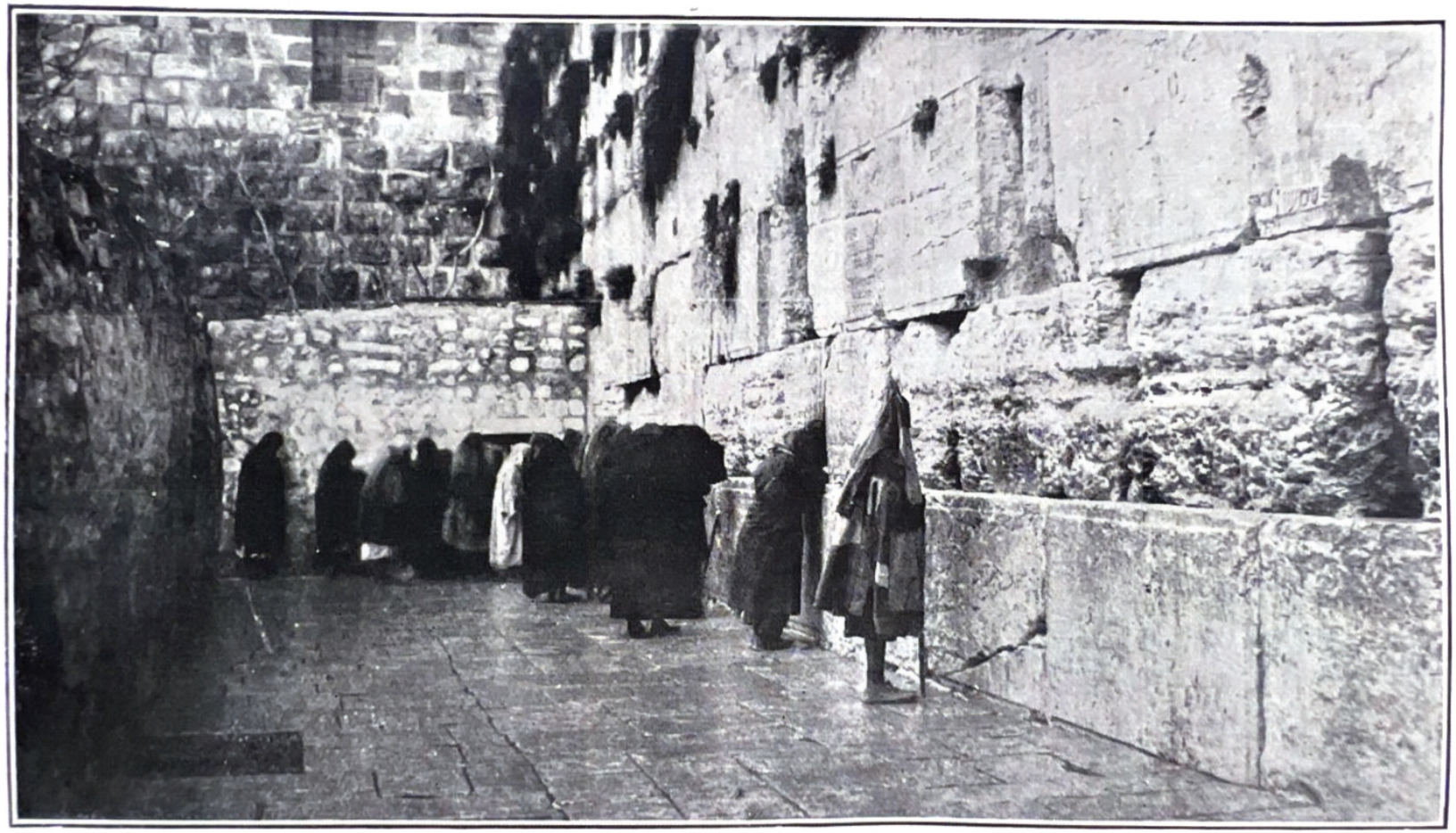
3. "THE HEARING OF FAITH." While he yet spake, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word." This agrees with what Paul said to the Galatians: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law (certainly not), or *by the hearing of faith?*" (Gal. 3. 2).

To face page 240



ATHENS

Showing on the left Mars' Hill, on which Paul preached; on the right the Acropolis, with its "Stone graven by art and man's device"



THE JEWISH WAILING PLACE IN JERUSALEM

Where they meet each Friday to weep over their sorrows and pray for the peace of Jerusalem

This is how the Holy Spirit is received when men hear (that is, heed) the Gospel, with the hearing of faith, the Holy Spirit is given. Receiving Christ, they receive with Him the gift of the Spirit.

4. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD OF ALL. This was the great theme of Peter's preaching. It should be of every Gospel address. Those who receive and confess Christ as Lord alone are saved (Rom. 10. 9), for those who receive Him are privileged to become Children of God (John 1. 12).

5. THE WITNESS OF ALL THE PROPHETS. "Whosoever believeth on Him shall receive the forgiveness of sins" (v. 43). Clear and simple is the promise, none need mistake it. "Whosoever" means all. "Shall" makes it certain.

6. THE POURING OUT OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST (v. 45). The baptism or pouring out of the Spirit was a historical event never again to be repeated, and all who believe in Christ receive the gift of the Spirit as and when they receive the forgiveness of sins (compare Acts 2. 38).

7. THEIR BAPTISM. Since they had believed, and so received the Holy Spirit, they were right and proper persons to be baptised. None other is, for the challenge still holds good: "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" (Acts 8. 37). Indeed to such there is a command: "He commanded them to be baptised," and this on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Application.

Let us see to it that we are among the number of those, whether Jew or Gentile, who have heard with the hearing of faith and believed in the Lord Jesus, received forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and obeyed the command to such to be baptised.

OUTLINE.

Some Good Centurions.

The Centurion at Capernaum,	.. See p. 171
The Centurion at the Cross,	.. Luke 23. 47
Cornelius, ...	.. See above.
Julius, ...	.. Acts 27. 1

STORY 62.

Paul's First Reported Sermon

ACTS 13. 14-43.

I. **Text.** "By Him (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things" (v. 39).

II. **Main Lessons.**

(1) An example for all time and for all preachers how to preach the Gospel.

(2) What a Gospel sermon should contain.

(3) The result of the faithful preaching of the Gospel.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 14. *Paul and Barnabas arrive at Antioch of Pisidia. They go into the Synagogue.* "When they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch of Pisidia, and went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down."

v. 15. *After the reading of the Law and Prophets, they are invited to speak.* "And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the Synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

v. 16. *Paul stands up and preaches.* "Then Paul stood up, and, beckoning with his hand, said:"

vv. 17-41. (*For the analysis of the sermon, see below.*)

v. 42. *The Gentiles ask to be spoken to.* "And when the Jews were gone out of the Synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath."

v. 43. *Many follow the apostles, who exhort them to continue in the grace of God.* "Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."

IV. **Sermons in the Acts of the Apostles.**

There are no less than fourteen sermons or speeches reported in the Acts.

1 SIX BY PETER, in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, and 15.

2. SIX BY PAUL, in chapters 13, 14, 17, 20, 22, and 26.

3. ONE BY STEPHEN, in chapter 7.

4. ONE BY JAMES, in chapter 15.

There should be no doubt, then, as to the doctrine preached by those men who turned the world upside down.

V. **Paul's First Reported Sermon Analysed.**

As we look at it carefully, we find it contains the following points :

1. THE ADDRESS. "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God." A good opening (v. 16).

2. A SHORT HISTORY of the election of the nation, and God's dealings with them, from the Exodus to the reign of David (vv. 17-22).

3. A SAVIOUR JESUS preached. Raised up from the seed of David, according to God's promise (v. 23).

4. HIS ANNOUNCEMENT BY JOHN THE BAPTIST (vv. 24-25), of whose preaching and death many had no doubt heard.

5. THE CONDEMNATION AND DEATH OF CHRIST was a fulfilment of "all that was written of Him" (vv. 26-29).

6. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. This is the chief note in all the sermons in the Acts (vv. 30-33).

7. THIS FACT HE CONFIRMS BY QUOTING THEIR OWN SCRIPTURES Psa. 2. 7 : Isa. 55. 3 ; and Psa. 16. 10), showing that they could not refer to David, who died and saw corruption (vv. 34-37).

8. THE OFFER OF SALVATION. "Be it known." Forgiveness is preached to you. All who believe are justified, which the Law could not accomplish (vv. 38, 39).

9. THE SOLEMN WARNING. Beware ! Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and Perish ! (vv. 40, 41).

It will be seen that this is a true preaching of Christ, Lord and Saviour, once dead, but risen, and salvation in His Name to all who believe.

The closing note is one of warning. Let all preachers learn to preach thus.

VI. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE FIRST PREACHERS were "ignorant and unlearned" men, fishermen merely. Paul was a scholar, but he determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, even Him crucified. Their power lay in this :

(*a*) They preached Christ.

(*b*) They preached salvation by faith in His Name.

(*c*) They used great plainness of speech.

(*d*) They turned aside to nothing else.

(*e*) They preached with the Holy Spirit's unction and utterance.

(*f*) They dealt personally with seekers afterwards.

These are still the secret of soul winning.

2. THE RESULT OF GOSPEL PREACHING is always to divide the hearers into two groups :

Those who receive the truth.

Those who reject it.

It is written several times of Christ : "There was a division because of Him." And this is, and will always be, so.

3. THE PERSECUTION THAT FOLLOWED. The Christ-rejecters though often the religious leaders, are always most bitter against the truth. They spake against, contradicting and blaspheming, and then stirred up persecution, and expelled the apostles (vv. 45 and 50).

Thus the apostle says : "They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life" (v. 46). So, obeying the Lord's Word, the apostles shook off the dust of their feet against them (v. 51).

4. THE SEEKERS COUNSELLED. "They persuaded them to continue in the grace of God." This is the best possible advice to new converts. Continuance is the hall-mark of true conversion.

It is he that continueth to the end that is saved. He discovers his true regeneration by this grace of continuance.

Application.

Let every preacher preach on these lines.

Let every hearer beware lest he fail of the grace of God.

Let every believer continue in the grace of God.

Story 63.

On Mars' Hill at Athens

Acts 17. 16-34.

I. **Texts.** "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17. 30).

II. **Main Lesson.** This sermon teaches us how the wise men of this world are to be addressed. Carnal wisdom is no excuse for sinning, and may be accompanied by gross superstition and ignorance of God.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 16. *Paul, left alone at Athens, is distressed at its idolatry.* "Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

v. 17. *He reasons daily with them.* "Therefore disputed he in the Synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with them."

v. 18. *The Epicureans and Stoics encounter him.* "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? Others some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."

v. 19. *They bring him to Areopagus.* "And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is for thou bringest strange things to our ears?"

"All the Athenians spend their time either to tell or to hear some new thing."

v. 22. *Paul stands on Mars' Hill and preaches.* "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill and said."

(For the analysis of the sermon see below).

v. 32. *The hearers are divided.* "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."

v. 34. *Some cleave to Paul and believe.* "Howbeit, certain men clave unto him and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

IV. **The Greek Philosophers.**

1. THE EPICUREANS were followers of Epicurus, who was born in Samos, in 341 B.C., and died 270 B.C. He sought to answer the two great questions: "What is the aim of life?" and "How to attain to it."

His answers were: "The end of life for every man is his own happiness," and happiness is pleasure. So that pleasure-seeking is alleged to be the aim of life.

How to attain it he answers by telling man to suppress desire and rise above circumstances. Pleasure being "the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul."

2. THE STOICS. The name is derived from the Greek word for porch (*stoa*), since these philosophers lectured under a painted porch in Athens

Zeno, a native of Cyprus, started this form of philosophy in 294 B.C.

Some of its great teachers were Scipio, Cato, Epictetus, Seneca, and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose writings are very beautiful.

Their maxim was, "Follow nature," the law of nature being "the Divine reason immanent in the world." They advised a calm mastery over all emotions, and independence of all circumstances. They taught purity in one's own life, love toward all men, and reverence toward God—high ideals, but with no power but man's unaided efforts to bring them about.

The two schools of thought became in the popular mind, on the one hand, "*Indulge yourself*," hence the common idea of an Epicurean; or "*Suppress yourself*," hence the notion of a Stoic.

These philosophies represent the best man's wisdom, unaided by revelation and the illumination of the Holy Spirit can attain to.

Ideals without power. They are singularly like the worldly wisdom of the present day.

V. The Sermon Analysed.

1. The apostle takes as his text the words he had seen engraved on one of the many altars : "To the unknown God" (v. 23).

2. He rebukes their superstition (v. 22).

3. Offers to make known this One they ignorantly worship.

4. He describes the nature and character of God.

As Creator (v. 24).
Lord of Heaven and Earth.
Unconfined to Temples.
Not worshipped by man's hands (v. 25).
Giving all life (v. 26).
Appointing their habitation.
Not far from any (v. 27).

5. Man is wholly dependent on God for life and being.

6. The command to all to repent (v. 30).

7. The appointment of the Judge (the Lord Jesus) and the day of judgment, certified by resurrection (v. 31).

VI. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE VITAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THESE PHILOSOPHIES AND CHRISTIANITY may be summed up in the words, "SELF OR CHRIST!"

Man cannot, because of his fallen state, be his own saviour. He must be born again. He may have fine ideals, yet be under the power of sin. He may "approve things that are excellent," yet be guilty of the vilest practices, as these philosophers were.

The Lord Jesus comes to be the personal Saviour of each sinner from himself, bad or good (Matt. 22. 10). The flesh must give place to the Spirit. Christ alone can save.

2. PHILOSOPHY AND BLINDNESS. In spite of noble ideals, this worldly wisdom did not save its teachers from :

(1) *Superstition* (v. 22). "Ye are too superstitions." The city was full of idols.

(2) *Ignorance of God* (v. 23 and 30), openly acknowledged by the altar "to the unknown god." Man by searching cannot find out God (Job 11. 7). The knowledge of God is a revelation.

(3) *Stupidity* (v. 29) Imagining that the Godhead is like

" gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

(4) *Sin* (v. 30). Needing repentance and calling for judgment (v. 31).

So true is it that man, professing himself wise, became a fool (Rom. 1. 22).

3. THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD, FOOLISHNESS. 1 Cor. 1. 19-31 should be carefully studied. Its teaching is that :

Natural wisdom is perverted (v. 20).

True wisdom is found alone in Christ (v. 24).

It is revealed by the Spirit of God (chap. 2. 10).

It is a hard thing for the wise man of this world (Mr. Worldly Wiseman) to receive, but it is true.

4. HOW THE TRUTH IS KNOWN.

(1) *By taking the place of the ignorant.* " If any man will be wise let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

(2) *By becoming as little children.* " Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God."

(3) *By prayer for enlightenment.* " Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

(4) *By receiving the Word of God with meekness.* For the entrance of God's Word giveth light and understanding to the simple.

5. THE CALL TO REPENTANCE. Ignorance is no longer an excuse. The true Light now shineth. We are responsible to come to the Light, and so change our minds, and attitude towards God, towards Christ, and towards sin.

6. THE JUDGE APPOINTED. The Lord Jesus Himself, now the Saviour, will in that day appointed be the Judge of living and dead.

Our responsibility is now to Christ. He must be received or rejected, and on this issue turns the question of our eternal destiny.

It is not the sin question (there is no sin question, it is definitely settled, all have sinned), it is the Son question : What shall I do with Jesus ? On our answer to this hangs the issue of death or life.

Application.

Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

STORY 64.

Felix Who Trembled

ACTS 24. 22-27.

I. **Text.** "Go thy way for a time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee" (v. 25).

II. **Main Lesson.** Lost opportunity. Felix heard, was reasoned with, trembled, but put off his salvation to a more convenient season, which never came.

III. **The Story Told.**

Felix Antonius, the Roman Procurator of Judaea, being at Caesarea, has Paul sent to him by Claudius Lysias, the chief captain at Jerusalem.

v. 22. *He hears Tertullus the orator accuse him, but as Paul cries, "Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day, he defers the matter."* "When Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter."

v. 23. *He keeps Paul under easy confinement.* "He commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have his liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintances to minister or come unto him."

v. 24. *He sends for Paul, and hears him concerning the faith in Christ.* "After certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ."

v. 25. *He trembles as Paul speaks of righteousness, temperance, and judgment.* "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."

v. 25. *He postpones the matter.* "And answered, Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

v. 26. *His underhand motive.* "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener and communed with him."

v. 27. *After two years, being removed, he leaves Paul bound.* "But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix' room : and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. DRUSILLA, the wife of Felix, was one of three daughters of Agrippa I, her sisters being Bernice and Mariamne. When fourteen, she married Azizus king of Emeza. She deserted her husband in order to marry Felix. She had one son by him, who perished in an eruption of Vesuvius.

2. FELIX, whose name means "happy," was a cruel and wicked man, given to greed and bribery, as we learn from verse 26, not hesitating at times to employ *sicarii* (assassins) to rid himself of disagreeable enemies. His oppression of the people stirred them to revolts, which, though cruelly suppressed, led up to the rebellion of A.D. 70, which resulted in the loss of the Temple and City of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the people.

3. PAUL'S REASONING WITH FELIX. It was, we read, "concerning the faith in Christ," but more particularly, three subjects which are part of that faith.

(1) *Righteousness.* We know exactly what Paul taught on this subject from his Epistle to the Romans. Chiefly that there was none righteous ; that a righteousness from God had been revealed ; that it was not by law-keeping, for by the works of the law none could be justified ; that it was by faith in Christ Jesus.

(2) *Temperance.* We know, too, Paul's teaching on this, from the Epistle to the Galatians. Temperance (self-control) being the fruit of the Spirit seen only in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

(3) *Judgment to Come.* This we learn from Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians, where we read of the Coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints, followed later by His appearing "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

No wonder Felix trembled as Paul reasoned on these lines.

4. CONVICTION AND PROCRASTINATION. When men are

made to tremble at the Word of God they should act at once and obey the Gospel. The Spirit does not always strive with men. Convictions pass away. Light fades again into darkness.

So it was with unhappy Felix. His fears subsided, His sins prevailed, and he passes off the scene, a man who lost a golden opportunity.

5. A MORE CONVENIENT SEASON. There is never a more convenient season than NOW. It is God's "accepted day," and the day of salvation. No other day can be so convenient:

Because no other day is promised.

Because at no other time will the heart be so deeply moved, since often hearing and disobeying hardens the soul.

Because never again may such opportunities occur.

Felix never again met a Paul to reason with him.

6. THE LOVE OF MONEY is a root of all evil. It is so here. While Paul reasoned, Felix was thinking of how large a bribe he would receive.

Preoccupation with gain has cost many their souls.

Application.

Let the unsaved receive the Gospel while it is called to-day. Let the awakened act on their convictions.

OUTLINE.

The Scripture Order in Salvation.

Hear the Word of God.
Repent toward God.
Convert to God.
Believe the Gospel.
Trust the Saviour.
Be Baptised in His Name.
Walk in the Obedience of Faith.

STORY 65.

King Agrippa "Almost" a Christian

ACTS 25. 13—26. 32.

I. **Text.** "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mark 12. 34).

II. **Main Lesson.** It is possible to be almost, but not altogether, a Christian. To be convinced of the truth; earnestly to desire salvation; to believe the prophets, and yet to turn away from Christ and reject His offer of salvation and life.

III. **The Story Told.** The story is too long to recount. It divides up as follows:

1. *The Royal Visit* (25. 13). King Agrippa and Bernice pay a visit to Festus.

1. *The Interesting Prisoner* (25. 14-21). Whom Felix had left bound, accused by the Jews, whose case was difficult. It seemed to turn on: "One Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

3. *The King's Desire to Hear the Case* (25. 22). Festus promises he shall on the morrow.

4. *The Great Pomp at the Trial Scene* (25. 23-26. 1). The king and queen sit in state and the prisoner is brought up. Festus tells of his difficulty, and the king tells Paul he may speak for himself.

5. *Paul's Speech.* He recounts the story of his conversion (26. 2-23).

6. *Festus Interrupts Him* (v. 24), telling him he is mad through too much study.

7. *Paul Appeals to the King* (vv. 25-27). "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

8. *King Agrippa Replies* (v. 28), "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

9. *Paul Fervently wishes him Altogether a Christian* (v. 30), as he himself was, except for the chains upon his hands.

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. KING AGRIPPA was Herod Agrippa II, the great-grandson of Herod the Great. He was king of Chalcis and Ituraea. He had two sisters, Bernice the one referred to in 25. 23, with whom he lived, to the great scandal of all the Jews; and Drusilla, the wife of Felix (24. 24).

He lost his kingdom through the rebellion of A.D. 70, when he tried to persuade the Jews not to fight against Rome.

He died at Rome, A.D. 100, in the time of the Emperor Trajan.

2. KING AGRIPPA'S DIFFICULTIES. Those in the king's situation are often surrounded by almost insurmountable difficulties. It is almost impossible for them to become Christians. Many, by their folly, have got into such a state.

Look at the king's difficulties:

(1) *His Relations with Bernice.* He would have had to put her away to become a Christian.

(2) *His Pride.* To have confessed Christ would have brought him shame and contempt. He was like many, too proud to be saved.

(3) *His Fear.* "The more eminent and distinguished any are, the more timidity they manifest" (Simeon). How true this is! The humble receive the Gospel. The poor in spirit are blessed.

(4) *His Riches.* How hardly shall they that have riches go into the Kingdom. It is all but impossible, for it is a miracle of grace when a rich man is saved. To the poor the Gospel is preached. So not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called (1 Cor. 1. 26).

(5) *His Exalted Position.* For a king to become a follower of the despised Nazarene, what a moral earthquake that would be! No, Herod Agrippa had not courage sufficient for so great a transaction.

3. "ALMOST," NOT "ALTOGETHER." To be a Christian, one must be altogether Christ's. The "almosts" will not do."

(*a*) *Convinced, but Not Willing* is an "almost" that is insufficient. The will must be Christ's, not the head merely. To believe and reject is to be lost.

(*b*) *Moral, but Not Born Again* is another "almost" that will not avail. The Law, to justify, must be perfectly kept. All morals short of that are sin-stained and insufficient to save.

(*c*) *Religious, but Not Saved*, is another "almost" that will not avail.

(*d*) *Intending, but Never Concluding*, is another "almost." No man intends to die in his sins; but many do so by not coming to the point and really closing with Christ.

(*e*) *Professing, but Not Possessing*, is a very common "almost." A profession that repeats a creed, submits to an ordinance, but never yields to Christ.

4. THE MISERY OF THE "ALMOST."

(1) *It appears hopeful, but is hopeless.* The fair promise is not fulfilled. The conflict of light and darkness is never won. It is hope endlessly deferred, it makes the heart sick.

(2) *It brings none of the joys of the believer.* There is no peace, it is only "almost." There is no assurance of salvation. There is no joy or power or liberty. There is no service or fruit. All is missed because "almost" and not "altogether."

(3) *The guilt increases* as the state continues. Judgment is treasured up. Sin is added to sin, and the rejections of Christ multiplied by each appeal disobeyed.

5. HOW TO PASS from "ALMOST" to "ALTOGETHER." The secret is disclosed in chapter 26. 19, where Paul tells how he became an "altogether" Christian. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

To obey the Gospel is:

(1) To believe its truth,
(2) To accept the Saviour,
(3) To rest in His finished work, and
(4) To confess His Name.

6. THE THREE RULERS. The three persons under whose

jurisdiction the apostle came furnish a striking picture of the attitude of different men to the Gospel :

(1) Felix trembled.
(2) Festus mocked.
(3) Agrippa was almost persuaded.

Application.

To the Hesitating. Make haste and see that the "almost" becomes "altogether." Close at once with Christ.

To the "Almost." Beware lest being "not far" from the Kingdom, you are nevertheless lost.

OUTLINES.

The Three Judges.

TREMBLING FELIX.
TRIFLING FESTUS.
TEMPORISING AGRIPPA.

Almost.

Awakened, but Not Acting.
Listening, but Not Learning.
Moved, but Not Mourning.
Offended, but Not Opening the Heart.
Sin-stricken, but Not Saved.
Trembling, but Not Trusting.

Not Far.

Moral, but Not Made New.
Religious, but Not Regenerate.
Good, but Not Godly.
Trying, but Not Trusting.
Professing, but Not Possessing.

STORY 66.

The Shipwreck

ACTS 27. 1-44.

I. **Text.** "So He bringeth them unto their desired haven" (Psa. 107. 30).

II. **Main Lesson.** The calm and courage of faith in the face of death and in the midst of the storm. The certainty of God's promises to those who can say with the apostle, "I believe God."

An illustration of the nature of faith. Confidence in God and rest on His Word.

III. **The Story Told.** It is so long that the main situations only can be indicated. They are :

1. *Paul, in charge of the Centurion Julius, sets sail for Italy* (vv. 1-6). At Myra they re-embark on a ship of Alexandria.

2. *The wind being contrary, Paul advises wintering at the Fair Havens*, but the master advises going on to Crete, and having a south wind sets sail (vv. 7-13).

3. *A fierce tempest falls upon them* (a wind called Euroclydon). They can only run before it. The state becomes desperate, and all hope vanishes (vv. 14-20).

4. *Paul relates a vision of an angel, who tells him they should be saved.* He is to be brought before Caesar, no one would perish, but the ship be lost. He adds, "Sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God" (vv. 21-26).

5. *They draw near to land*, and fearing to strike the rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern (vv. 27-29).

6. *The sailors attempt to escape by the boats*, but Paul, warning them that to be saved they must remain in the boat, the soldiers cut the ropes and let the boats fall into the sea (vv. 30-32).

7. *Paul encourages them to take food*, they having eaten nothing for fourteen days, and sets the example, giving thanks first (vv. 33-37). The 276 souls on board take courage and lighten the ship by casting out the wheat.

8. *They see land, and drive the ship ashore.* They stick fast, and the ship is broken by the waves (vv. 39-41).

9. *The soldiers would kill the prisoners,* but are prevented by the Centurion's desire to save Paul (vv. 42-43).

10. *They all escape safe to land.* Some swimming, some on boards and broken pieces of the ship (v. 44).

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. LUKE PRESENT, BUT UNMENTIONED. The writer of the Acts, for the first time, writes in the first person "we" (vv. 1, 2, etc.). This shows that Luke was a passenger with Paul. The graphic and skilful account he gives is evidently that of an eyewitness. We know from 2 Tim. 4. 11 that Luke shared Paul's imprisonment at Rome. The beloved physician no doubt looking after the health of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

2. THE FEAR OF DEATH. We learn that all who are in their sins are "all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death." But this fear is removed by faith. "The sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15. 56), but Christ died for our sins, and thus robbed death of its sting for all believers.

The saints of God have all down the ages faced death without fear, for faith removes fear.

3. THE ANGEL ON THE SHIPWRECK reminds us of the Lord's coming to His disciples walking upon the water. The Lord never leaves us, but in the hour of great danger He appears for our comfort. Not always in visible or angelic form, but just as truly to the comfort of our hearts and the removal of our fears.

4. "I BELIEVE GOD." These simple words are the language of pure faith. We read, "Abraham believed God." The first mention of faith. The men of Nineveh believed God, and so found mercy.

Let each of us add our word to the apostle's, "I believe God." Many say, "I believe in God," but believing in His existence while good, is not the same as being able to say, "I believe God." Not believing about Him, but taking Him at His word. This brings heart rest even in the storm.

5. ETERNAL SECURITY AND RESPONSIBILITY. These

twin truths are illustrated in this story. The terrified travellers were told "there shall be no loss of any man's life" (v. 22). Thus they had the assurance of salvation. They could not perish. Yet later they are told, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." So here is responsibility.

Jesus said: "My sheep shall never perish," but bade us "abide in Him." While rejoicing in the assurance, let us recognise the responsibility.

Application.

To those in the storm: "Fear not." Let the doubting say: "I believe God."

OUTLINES.

Rocks on which Souls are Wrecked.

Faith put away, ...	1 Tim. 1. 19
Love of money, ...	1 Tim. 6. 10
Science falsely so called, ..	1 Tim. 6. 20, 21
Love of the world, ...	2 Tim. 4. 10
Flesh not subdued, ...	1 Cor. 9. 27

Three Great Storms.

Jonah Fleeing to Tarshish.
The Disciples on the Lake of Galilee.
Paul on his way to Rome.

STORY 67.

Paul at Rome

ACTS 28. 14-31.

I. **Text.** "I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. 1. 15).

II. **Main Lesson.** There was a church at Rome before Paul arrived there, as is seen by the fact that from Rome "the brethren came to meet us as far as Appii Forum." Though Paul was a prisoner there, the Word of God was not bound. Fruit unto God has often abounded from captivity.

III. **The Story Told.**

vv. 14, 15. *The brethren from Rome go out to meet the apostle on his way from Puteoli, where he had landed.* "So we went toward Rome, and from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."

v. 16. *Paul is handed over to the captain of the guard, who allows him some liberty.* "When we came to Rome, the Centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him."

v. 17. *Paul calls the chief Jews together and states his case.* "Paul called the chief of the Jews together and said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem. . . . . I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar, not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. . . . For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.''

vv. 21, 22. *They reply that they have had no advice about him, but that this sect is everywhere spoken against.* "We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

vv. 23, 24. *A day is appointed and he explains, with the usual result.* "When they had appointed a day, there came many into his lodging to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God. . . . Some believed . . . and some believed not."

vv. 25-27. *He quotes Isaiah* 6. 9, 10 *against them.* "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, etc."

v. 28. *He turns from them to the Gentiles.* "Be it known unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it."

v. 30. *He lives two whole years there, preaching to all who came.* "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE BRETHREN FROM ROME. The bold but foolish claim of the Romanist that Peter was the first bishop of Rome is clearly rebutted by the following facts :

(1) There were brethren at Rome before either Paul or Peter ever arrived there. These, no doubt, met in the Name of the Lord, and this constituted a Scriptural Church.

(2) There were "elders" or "bishops" (the two words are synonymous, see Acts 20. 17 and 28, R.V.) in Rome at that time. In Romans 16. 7 (R.V.) Paul salutes Adronicus and Junias, and speaks of them as "of note among the apostles," and records the fact that they were "in Christ before me."

(3) The Epistle to the Romans, written before his arrival, discloses a well established body of believers, to whom Paul writes : "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole nation" (1. 8).

2. THE LOVE OF THE BRETHREN. We are so often exhorted to this, and it is one of the marks of our new birth (1 John 3. 14). It is good to see an exhibition of it in the saints at Rome going out to meet the prisoner-apostle, who, having landed at Puteoli (now called Potzuolli, where

the stones of the landing stage still remain), was going on foot along the Appian Way to Rome. Paul thanked God and took courage when he saw them.

3. THE APOSTASY OF THE JEWS. As foretold by the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 6. 9, 10, when Isaiah saw the Lord High and Lifted Up, and received his commission, this people were to hear and not understand, to see and not to perceive, lest they should convert and be saved.

Paul saw the fulfilment of this judicial hardening, the punishment of the nation's guilt in murdering their Messiah, the Prince of Life, and calls attention to it. "Well," he says, "spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers."

4. THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES is clearly emphasized here. It was the Holy Ghost who spake by Isaiah in the 6th chapter of his prophecy.

5. SAINTS IN PRISONS. The apostle did a great work from his hired house, in which he was a prisoner, guarded by a soldier.

(1) He preached to all who came to see him (v. 30).

(2) He reached those in the royal palace, so that some of Caesar's household believed (Phil. 1. 13 ; 4. 22).

(3) He wrote the Prison Epistles (Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, and 2 Timothy), the fruitfulness of which who can ever estimate ?

It has been the privilege of many to serve God from prisons. SAMUEL RUTHERSORD, whose letters from his captivity are a sweet savour of Christ ; Madam GUYON, whose awful experience in the Bastile did not prevent her singing :

"A little bird am I,
Shut in from fields of air,
And all day long I sit and sing,
To Him who placed me there."

JOHN BUNYAN, who in prison wrote his immortal allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress."

6. CONTENTMENT IN PRISON. Paul had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. The most joyful of all his Epistles (Philippians) was written in prison.

As Richard Lovelace wrote :

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron Bars a cage,
Minds innocent and quiet take,
Them for a heritage;
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above.
Enjoy such liberty."

Only sin really brings into bondage.

7. THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND. It is not the man who does the work, it is the Word God gives from his lips or pen. This is not bound.

Apostate Rome has sought to rob the people of this Word, and sought to bind its influence, but it cannot be bound. They might as well try to bind the dew or the rain, or prevent the sun shining. The Word of the Lord abideth for ever. It will accomplish that whereto God sent it.

Application.

Let us love as brethren. Let us be content in whatsoever state we are in. Let us spread abroad the Gospel.

OUTLINE.

The Seven Titles of the Gospel that Paul Preached.

" My Gospel " (Rom. 2. 16)

IS THE

Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God,	1 Tim. 1. 11, R.V.
Gospel of the Grace of God, ...	Acts 20. 24
Gospel of Christ, ...	Phil. 1. 27
Gospel of the Glory of Christ, ...	2 Cor. 4. 4, R.V.
Gospel of Peace, ...	Rom. 10. 15
Gospel of your Salvation, ...	Eph. 1. 13
Everlasting Gospel, ...	Rev. 14. 6

STORY 68.

Onesimus, the Runaway Slave

PHILEMON 1-25.

I. **Text.** "Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you" (Col. 4. 9).

II. **Main Lesson.** This short Epistle teaches how a repentant sinner is to be received, even by the master he has defrauded. Mercy is to be extended and love shown. It is an example of perfect advocacy for one in trouble.

III. **The Story Told.**

v. 1. *The Apostle Paul writes to Philemon from prison at Rome.* "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved and fellow-helper."

vv. 8, 9. *He might be bold to urge on Philemon what is* convenient, but rather in love entreats him. "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for loves' sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

v. 10. *He entreats for Onesimus, his son in the faith.* "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds."

v. 11. *He plays upon his name, "Unprofitable."* "Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me."

v. 12. "*He has sent him back to his master.* "Whom I have sent again : thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels."

vv. 13, 14. *He would like to have kept him.* "Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel : but without thy mind would I do nothing."

vv. 15, 16. *Perhaps his running away was to the end that he might be saved.* "Perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever ; not now as a servant, . . . but a brother beloved."

v. 17. *He is to be received as the apostle himself.* "If thou count me as a partner, receive him as myself."

vv. 18, 19. *Any stolen money is to be charged to the apostle's account.* "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it."

v. 19. *Yet Philemon owes himself to Paul.* "Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides."

vv. 20-25. *He closes with confidence, bids Philemon prepare him a lodging and sends salutations and benediction.* "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee. . . . Having confidence in thine obedience I wrote. . . . Withal, prepare me a lodging. . . . There salute thee . . . my fellow-prisoners . . . my fellow-labourers. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. ONESIMUS, THE RUNAWAY SLAVE. From the above we gather these facts:

(*a*) That Onesimus (the unprofitable one) had robbed his master, Philemon, and run away to Rome (v. 18).

(*b*) That in Rome Paul had found him and led him to Christ.

(*c*) That Paul sends him back to his master.

(*d*) He bids him receive him as a brother beloved."

(*e*) He makes himself chargable for any thefts he may have committed.

(*f*) He tells how he would have kept him, since he had become "profitable."

2. THE "UNPROFITABLE" BECOMES "PROFITABLE." This is the chief end of the Gospel, that men's lives, ruined by sin and unprofitable to God and man, may be changed, so that a thief may become "a faithful and beloved brother" (Col. 4. 9).

When we read the list of degenerates in 1 Corinthians 6. 9, 10, we see the depths to which unregenerate man falls, but how grand to read: Such were some of you, but ye are "washed, sanctified, and justified."

So the Gospel transforms men.

3. RECEIVING THE REPENTANT SINNER. We have examples of this in the case of the Prodigal Son. How great and good a welcome he received!

In 2 Corinthians 2. 6-8 we see how the apostle would have the guilty one whom he had delivered over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme (1 Cor. 5. 5), received on his true repentance. He is to be forgiven—comforted—lest he should be overwhelmed, and their love is to be confirmed to him. Tender hearts become the saints of God. Grace is to reign.

4. RESTORATION. Yet stolen money must be restored, and as the thief, being a slave, had none, Paul takes upon himself the responsibility, and undertakes to pay.

This was that grace might reign in righteousness. Sin, though forgiven, is never excused. It is judged and put right so far as can be. Mercy never leads to light thoughts of sin, but ever to hatred of it.

5. OUR MEDIATOR AND ADVOCATE. In this letter of tender entreaty for a guilty yet repentant slave, we have a figure of Christ in the following particulars:

(*a*) In the love with which He pleads.

(*b*) In His identifying Himself with the sinner—"as myself."

(*c*) In his bearing the liability—"Put that on My account."

(*d*) In His not being ashamed to call us brethren—"A brother beloved."

(*e*) In His promises to be responsible—"I will repay."

(*f*) In His joy in our obedience—"Let me have joy of thee."

Application.

Let us have compassion on sinners.

Let us seek their salvation and restoration.

Let us receive the repentant with all love.

Let us rejoice in our Perfect Intercessor.

STORY 69.

The Lord amid the Golden Lampstands

REVELATION 1. 12-20.

I. **Text.** "These things saith He that walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks" (Rev. 2. 1).

II. **Main Lesson.** Here we have in vision the present relationship of the Lord Jesus to the churches of the saints. He walks in their midst, knowing, seeing, and judging all; caring for them and forming the bond of union between them. Each church is a lampstand set in its place as a witness to Him, and is responsible to Him alone.

III. **The Story Told.** John, being in exile for Christ's sake on the Isle of Patmos, is in the Spirit on the Lord's day. He hears a great voice behind him saying, "I am ALPHA and OMEGA, the First and the Last," and bidding him write what he sees and send it to the Seven Churches in Asia.

v. 12. *He turns to see who it was.* "I turned to see the voice that spake with me."

v. 12. *He sees seven golden lampstands* (R.V.). "Being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and—"

v. 13. *The Son of Man walking among them.* "One like unto the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

v. 14. *His personal appearance described.* "His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace."

v. 15. *His voice described.* "His voice as the sound of many waters."

v. 16. *His equipment described.* "He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength."

v. 17. *John falls at His feet as dead.* "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not."

vv. 17, 18. *He declares Himself.* "I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

v. 19. *He bids John write.* "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

v. 20. *He explains the secret of the vision.* "The mystery of the seven stars and of the seven golden candlesticks . . . The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches."

IV. Other Lessons from the Story.

1. THE SEVEN FEATURES OF THE VISION.

(1) *The Person.* One like the Son of Man, who declares Himself to be:

"Alpha and Omega."
"The Beginning and the Ending."
"The First and the Last."
"The Living One who was dead."
"The One who has the keys of Hades and Death."
"The One who Eternally Lives. "Behold I am alive for evermore."

This we recognise, can be none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) *His Position.* He was in the midst of the golden lampstands. The vision, then, is to teach the churches their Lord's attitude toward them. He is their Only Lord in their midst. "There is One Lord" (Eph. 4. 5).

(3) *His Priestly Robes.* Two items only are mentioned a garment and a golden girdle. These denote His Royal Priesthood—the Priest upon His throne—an Eternal Priest, after the Order of Melchizedek. His garment giving His dignity. His girdle denotes His service.

(4) *His Presence,* or personal appearance. His hair, His eyes, and His feet are described. White hair, as denoting the Ancient of Days. Eyes like fire speaking of His all-seeing and searching knowledge. Feet firmly established, telling of the stability of His government; unlike the feet of clay to Daniel's image.

(5) *His Voice*, full of majesty, like the sound of many waters, that when speaking must be heard, having authority and conviction.

(6) *His Equipment.* Seven stars and a sharp sword. The stars are the angels (ministering spirits) and the Sword the Word of God.

(7) *His Message.* To each church He sends a particular message. He knows the state of each, and His Word is directed to counsel, encourage, and warn them.

2. CHURCHES AS SEPARATE LAMPSTANDS. The Bible recognises no one visible church on earth. The Church, which is His Body, is not seen. It consists :

(1) Of all regenerate souls. Each one redeemed by precious blood.

(2) No other belongs to it.

(3) It has no corporate representation on earth organised and controlled by men. Such as " The Church of Rome," etc.

(4) Only a small part is on earth, a great part already with the Lord, and others not yet called out.

(5) It has no visible head on earth, but an unseen Head in Heaven.

(6) Its members are known alone to the Lord, while on earth the wheat is growing together with the tares. This mixture is Christendom.

The Churches of the Saints are separate gatherings of believers in different localities. They are distinguished as confessing Christ as Lord, and gathering together in His Name, owning the Word of God as their only Authority, and walking in fellowship and worshipping by the Spirit.

3. THE BOND OF UNION. The Lord in the midst of the lampstands constitutes their bond of union. Each church is directly responsible to Him, and to Him alone. As they walk in the obedience of faith to Him and subject to His Lordship, they find themselves in harmony with all others who do so. This is " the Unity of the Spirit," " the Unity of the faith " the Sevenfold Oneness of Ephesians 4. 3-6. All other attempts at union fail. Man made circles only effect sectarianism and strife.

4. THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES. These reveal the searching nature of the eyes of flame. The Lord sees and notes all. He calls on those who have left their first love, or have sinned to repent; those who hold false doctrine to purge it out; those who suffer to hold fast till He come, when He will bring His reward with Him.

The solemn warning to each church is that if they do not heed what the Spirit saith to the churches, then He will remove the candlestick out of its place, that is, the dead church will no longer be a witness for Him.

Application.

Let us ponder over the glories of Christ, specially in His office as Head of the Church and Lord in the midst of the assemblies. Let us remember His eyes are as a flame of fire.

OUTLINES.

Things that are Light.

God is Light, ...	1 John 1. 5
Jesus said, "I am the Light,"	John 8. 12
Thy Word is a Light, ...	Psa. 119. 105
Ye are the Light of the World, ...	Matt. 5. 14
The Gospel, ...	2 Cor. 4. 4

Walk as Children of

LIGHT.
INSTRUCTION.
GRACE.
HOLINESS.
TRUTH.

STORY 70.

One Standing at the Door

REVELATION 3. 14-22.

I. **Text.** "Behold I stand at the door and knock" (v. 20).

II. **Main Lesson.** The Lord speaks to the lukewarm in solemn words of warning. He tells how He stands at the door and knocks, desiring to come in and enjoy communion with them.

III. **The Story Told.** The last of the Seven Churches in Asia Laodicea is addressed. Notice the points :

(1) *The One who Speaks Described.*

v. 14. "These things saith the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the beginning of the Creation of God."

(2) *His Awful Description of their State.*

vv. 15, 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

(3) *Their Self-deception.*

v. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

(4) *His counsel to them.*

v. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, . . . and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see."

(5) *He Chastens those He Loves.*

v. 19. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent."

(6) *He Stands Outside and Knocks.*

v. 20. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and He with Me."

(7) *His Reward for the Overcomer.*

v. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne."

IV. **Other Lessons from the Story.**

1. THE LORD OUTSIDE. What was the case with this Church of Laodicea may be true of individuals. Christ may be outside our life, not sanctified as Lord in our hearts, nor really directing and controlling us. In other words, we may call Him Lord and be really going on without Him.

(*a*) *Neither cold or hot.* Not denying His Name or indifferent to His claim, but showing no love or zeal for either.

(*b*) *Self-deceived.* Thinking we are rich because things outwardly prosper, but really being *wretched*, that is, starved and lean in soul; *miserable*, knowing nothing of real joy; *poor* in good works, never winning any soul for Christ; *blind*, thinking we know, when we are really ignorant of spiritual realities; and *naked*, a public shame to the world, who see through our hypocrisy.

2. OUR LORD'S KNOCK AND VOICE. He not only knocks but speaks, for He says: "If any man hear My voice." By the Spirit He knocks, that is, convicts. By the Word He speaks, if we will but read and heed.

3. THE FIRST STEPS TO TAKE.

(*a*) *Buy Gold Tried in the Fire.* Seek the righteousness that is by faith in Christ—which was wrought out in the fire—the judgment of Calvary.

(*b*) *White Raiment.* Godly habits, putting on Christ, and putting off the old man. Learning the purity of heart and walk that will cause the shame of our ungodly testimony to cease.

(*c*) *Eyesalve.* The filling of the Holy Spirit for enlightenment and guidance, the anointing for service, that our blindness may pass away and we may see.

4. ADMITTING THE HEAVENLY GUEST. Opening the Door is yielding the will and receiving the Lord by faith into our inner life. Hearing the voice is giving close

attention to all He says with the obedience of faith. Quickly responding with, "Yea, Lord," to all He bids us do.

5. THE SUPPER. "I will sup with him, and He with Me." Unspeakable privilege and joy. It means that from that time on the life is lived in loving communion with the Lord Jesus.

No step is taken alone, no plan formed without Him. No independent action, but walking with Him in the light of His countenance.

Sharing all sorrows, rejoicing together in all the joys of life and service. This is supper, sweet, unbroken, intimate communion. As Mephibosheth sat continually at the king's table. As the Prodigal sat with the reconciled father.

Application. Rise up and open the door.

OUTLINES.

Eyes Opened.

Hagar, ...	Gen. 21. 19
Balaam, ...	Num. 22. 31
Elisha's Servant, ...	2 Kings 6. 17
The Enemy Army, ...	2 Kings 6. 20
Bartimaeus, ...	Matt. 20. 33

A Prayer for Opened Things.

Open MY EYES that I may see, ...	Psa. 119. 18
Open MY LIPS to speak of Thee, ...	Psa. 51. 15
Open MY UNDERSTANDING, Lord, ..	Luke 24. 45
Open to me THY HOLY WORD, ...	Luke 24. 32
Open the DOOR OF FAITH to me, ...	Acts 14. 27
Open MY HEART to love but Thee, ..	Acts 16. 14
Open a DOOR OF SERVICE new, ...	1 Cor. 16. 9
Open MY MOUTH with Gospel too, ..	Eph. 6. 19
Let me with OPEN FACE behold Thy riches of Glory and Grace untold, ..	2 Cor. 3. 18

The Sinner need not Die.

Tune : " St. Michael."

O GOD of matchless grace,
Thou hast decreed on high,
Thy banished ones be not expelled,
THE SINNER NEED NOT DIE.

No pleasure didst Thou take
In man's despairing cry;
Thy love has sought and found a way—
THE SINNER NEED NOT DIE.

Behold the Lamb of God
Lifted 'twixt earth and sky,
His sinless soul an offering made—
THE SINNER NEED NOT DIE.

The invitation runs :
" Come, without money buy."
The feast is spread, the door stands wide,
THE SINNER NEED NOT DIE.

'Tis Grace provides the feast,
'Tis Blood that brings us nigh,
And faith the invitation takes—
THE SINNER NEED NOT DIE.

GEO. GOODMAN.

Index of Subjects

	PAGE
Aaron, Folly of,	70
Absolom,	140
Achan,	101
Admitting Heavenly Guest,	271
Adonizedek,	113
Advocate, Our,	265
Afraid, Those,	122
Age, Present Evil,	27
Agony in Garden,	212
Agrippa,	252
Ahab and Jezebel,	113
Ai, Capture of,	101
Allegory of Hagar and Ishmael	33
Almost a Christian,	253
Ambition,	141
— Three Texts on,	141
Angel Ministry,	212, 238, 257
Annual Celebrations,	80
Apostasy and Miracles,	174
— of Jews,	260
Ark of Bulrushes,	42
— of Covenant,	99
Army of Gideon,	120
Ascension,	231
Ashamed and Apart,	90
Ass Speaking,	96
Atonement, Day of,	81
— Lesson on,	86
Avarice,	215
Babel, City and Tower,	21
— Aim of Builders,	22
Backslider,	138
Bad End to Good Life,	130
Balaam,	92
Baptism,	241
Baptismal Vows,	188
Baruch and Jeremiah,	161
Beauty a Dangerous Gift,	140
Believing the Word,	174
Bethany,	201
Bitter made Sweet,	65
Black Man to Rescue,	162
Blessing Proportioned,	181
Blood Sprinkled,	35
Bond of Union of Churches,	268
Bones Live,	166
Bored Ear,	73
Bravado,	161
Burnt Bibles,	158, 160
Calf, Golden,	66
Caiaphas, High Priest,	216
Cana, First Miracle,	169
— to Capernaum,	175
Canaanites,	177
Canaanitish Woman,	176
Candlesticks, Golden,	266
Carnal Wisdom,	106
Censers of Korah, etc.,	87
Cherubim,	16
Child, A Goodly,	43
— Take this,	45
Choice, Foolish,	15
— of Faith,	48
Christ, Blood of,	81
— A Good Master,	73
— Lord of All,	241
— One Sacrifice of,	80
— a Refuge,	74
— the True Centre,	24
Churches as Lampstands,	268
— of the Saints,	268
Come in, Thou Blessed,	41
Common, Nothing,	240
Compassion,	164
Compromises, Pharaoh,	55
— with World,	30
Confirmation Vows,	188
Confusion (Babylon),	23
Convinced, not Converted,	189
Cornelius, Centurion,	239
Courage and Faith,	135
Counsel not Asked,	107
Covenant of Works,	13
— of Grace,	13
Covetousness,	103
Cowardice and Cruelty,	222
Cross of Christ,	15
Cruelty and Grace,	142

	PAGE
Cruelty of Men, ...	163
— Curse of, ...	115
Crumbs from Table, ...	176
Dangers of Success, ...	106
Dead, Intercourse with, ..	137
Deborah and Barak, ...	116
Degeneracy in Religion, ..	217
Delilah, ...	128
Deliverances, God of, ..	238
Despising the Word, ...	160
Difference, No,..	240
Discovery, Law of, ...	114
Disobedience, Law of, ..	114
Disobedience, ...	138
Distance No Hindrance, ..	175
Door, Christ at the, ...	270
Doors Opened, ...	238
Double Fulfilment of Prophecy,	166
Drusilla, ...	250
Earthly and Heavenly Worship,	205
Earthquake, ...	154
Ebed-melech, ...	162
Egypt Forsaken, ...	48
Elder Brother, ...	190
— — Historical Application,	191
— — Misery of, ...	192
Elijah, ...	152
— God's Grace to, ...	153
Endurance, ...	49
Encouraging Faith, ...	135
Enemy Cannot Stand, ..	112
Enmity of Heart, ...	163
Epicureans, ...	246
Eternal Security and Responsibility, ...	257
Ethiopia in Scripture,.. ..	164
Exalting Oneself, ...	89
Excuses of Moses, ...	51
— to Attack Moses, ...	89
Ezekiel's Vision, ...	165
Fading Glory, ...	76
Faith, What it Brings, ..	35
— Way of, ...	90
— Shout of, ...	100
— in Bad Times, ..	44, 134
— Vision of, ...	49
— Tested, ...	174
Faith, Great, ...	178
— Roman Officer's, ...	179
— Better than Sight, ..	230
Fallen, Christ's Tenderness to,	209
Fame, ...	142
Feast at Bethany, ...	200
Felix who Trembled, ..	249
Fever of Sin, ...	182
Fire, ...	154
Five Kings, ...	112
Fleshly Effort, ...	49
Folly of Necromancy, ..	138
Forgiveness, ...	103
— How to Learn, ...	199
Fraud of Spiritism, ...	138
Frederick the Great, ...	114
Garden of Eden, ...	13
— of Gethsemane, ...	210
Gibeon, ...	106
Gibeonites, ...	105
Gideon, ...	120
Glory of Solomon, ...	143
— of Law and Gospel, ..	77
— that Excelleth, ...	77
God Needs No Persuasion, ..	126
Go Forth unto Him, ...	206
Golden Calf, ...	66
Gold Tried in Fire, ...	271
Good from Evil, ...	108
Goodness as Dew, ...	68
Good Samaritan in O.T., ..	163
Gospel in Story, ...	156
Grace in Trial, ...	64
Greater than Solomon, ..	148
Greed of Gain, ...	29
Greek Philosophy, ...	246
Grieving the Spirit, ...	70
Guidance, ...	40
Hagar, Story of, ...	31
Hands Saved, ...	185
Harsh Judgments, ...	192
Harvest, ...	196
Hearing of Faith, ...	240
Heathen Wife, ...	39
Heartlessness, ...	199
— of Sin, ...	215
Hebrew Servant, ...	71
Herod Antipas, ...	224

PAGE

Herods, Six, ... 225
Herod Did Many Things, .. 226
— Fate of 227
High Priests, Two, ... 219
Holiness of God, ... 80
Holy Spirit Poured Out, .. 241
Hope to End, ... 134
Humble Instruments, .. 157

Identification, ... 81
Idols Described, ... 184
Idolatry, Nature of, ... 68
Immediately, ... 234
Indignation of Moses, .. 70
Ingratitude, ... 199
Inspiration of Scripture, .. 261
Intercession of Christ, .. 209
Isaac, A Bride for, ... 37
Ishmael, Story of, ... 31
Ishmaelites, ... 36
Israel, Our Lord's Ministry to, 178

Jabin, Oppression by, ... 117
Jael and Sisera, ... 118
Jehoiakim, ... 158
— Facts of, ... 159
— Doom of, ... 160
Jephthah's Vow, ... 124
— Explained, ... 125
— Type of Christ, ... 126
Jericho, ... 98
Jonathan and Armourbearer, 133
Joshua Deceived, ... 105
— Bids Sun Stand Still, .. 109
Joy, Nature of Christian, .. 61
— Not Excitement, .. 61
— of Faith in the Lord, .. 171
Judas Criticised, ... 202
— Traitor, ... 213
Judge Appointed, ... 248
Judgment of Korah, etc., .. 86
— to Come, ... 250
— Fruitful, ... 86

Kings, Five, in Cave, ... 112
Kiss, Betrayed with, ... 212
Know Thyself, ... 208

Lahai-roi, ... 35
Lame Man at Beautiful Gate, 233

PAGE

Lampstands, Seven, ... 267
Laodicea, Church of, ... 270
Lapping Described, ... 123
Law, What it Cannot Do, .. 34
— Ministers Death, .. 13, 77
— Covenant of, Temporary, 76
— Jew hopes in, ... 76
Lazarus, the Witness, .. 200
Lepers, Four, ... 155
Leprosy of Miriam, ... 88
Liberty of Children, ... 35
Lot in Sodom, ... 26
— Progress of, ... 28
Love of Brother, ... 260
— of Money, ... 251
— Service, ... 73
Luke in Shipwreck, ... 257
Lukewarmness, ... 271

March Round Jericho, .. 99
Master, Seven Words for, .. 206
Marvels, the Lord, ... 181
Martha, the Worker, ... 200
Mary, the Worshipper, .. 200
— Our Lord's Reply to, .. 170
Meekness of Moses, ... 90
Memorials, Seven, ... 87
Mercy for Merciful, ... 164
— God delights in, ... 198
Mercy Seat, ... 80
Ministry of Law and Grace, 77
— of Women, ... 118
Miracles, ... 112
— Unconvincing, ... 203
Miriam's Song, ... 60
— Tact, ... 44
— Leprosy, ... 88
Misunderstood, Moses, .. 50
Moses' Great Renunciation, .. 46
— in Hebrews, ... 47
— Excuses, ... 51
— Veiled Face, ... 75
Mother's Wisdom, ... 44
Murder Not Hidden, ... 50
— by Cowardice, ... 226
Murmuring, ... 64
Music and Dancing, ... 191

Name, Making a, ... 24
— Miriam and Mary, .. 89

	PAGE
Name, Power of the, ...	234
Names with Meanings, ..	45
Necromancy, ...	137
Noah's Covenant, ...	19
Nobleman's Son, ...	172
Oaths, Sanctity of, ...	107
Obedience of Faith, ...	100
— Miracle Follows, ...	171
One Sacrifice, The, ...	80
One Sinner Destroys Good, ..	103
Onesimus, ...	263
Ordination Vows, ...	188
Overruling Hand, ...	45
Parable of Seed, ...	194
Parents, To, ...	45
Patient Continuance, ...	100
Patmos Vision, ...	267
Paul's First Sermon, ...	242
— on Mars' Hill, ...	245
— at Rome, ...	259
Passing on Good News, ..	157
Pentecost, ...	25
Persecutors, ...	35, 244
Peter's Wife's Mother, ..	182
— Home, ...	182
— Brought Out of Prison, ..	236
— and John, ...	233
— Denial, ...	207
Pharaoh, ...	42
Pharisee, Spirit of, ...	191
Philanthropy, ...	202
Philosophy and Christianity Contrasted, ...	247
Pitcher of Water, ...	205
Pilate's Fate, ...	222
Pilate, Pontius, ...	220
Plainness of Speech, ..	78
Poland, Division of, ...	114
Praise and Blame, ...	119
Pride, ...	91
Privileges of Believers, ..	193
Procrastinations, ...	250
Profession without Practice, ..	188
— at Gospel Services, ..	188
Promise literally Fulfilled, ..	134
Prophecy by Caiaphas, ..	218
Prophets, Witness of, ..	241
Prosperity, Danger of, ..	145
Proud Resisted, . ..	156
Proving God, ...	64
Rainbow, ...	17
Rain First, ...	18
Rebellion of Korah, etc., ..	83
Receiving Repentant Sinners,	265
Recompense of Reward, ..	48
Red Sea, By, ...	59
Refuge, True, ...	24
Regeneration, ...	167
Rent Garments, ...	218
Repentance, Calls to, ...	248
— Needed to Faith, ...	189
Report, A True, ...	149
Reproach of Christ, ...	48
Responsibility of Life, ..	49
Restoration, ...	265
Retribution, Law of, ..	113, 142
Riches and Character, ..	145
Riddles, ...	149
Rivers, Pison, Gihon, ..	13
— Hiddekel, Euphrates, ..	14
Roman Officer's Faith, ..	179
— Care for his Servant, ..	180
Rome, Church in, ...	260
Romish Claims, ...	260
Runaway Slave, ..	71, 263
Sabbath, ...	185
S's, Three Great, ...	60
Sacred Office, ...	218
Saints in Prison, ...	261
Salvation Described, ...	191
— and Joy, ...	61
Samaria Siege, ...	155
Samson, ...	128
— Character of, ...	129
— Revenge, ...	131
Sanctity of Oaths, ...	107
Satan God of World, ..	27
Scapegoat, ...	79
Secret of Standing, ...	209
Seekers Counselled, ...	244
Self-esteem, ...	189
Separation, ...	30
Seven-Signs in John, ..	170
Sheba, Where is it?	148
— Queen of, ...	147
Sheep, Man better than, ..	85

	PAGE
Shipwreck of Paul,	266
Shining Face,	77
Signs,	41
— Asked for,	133
— Value of,	173
Silence of Christ,	177
Sin Finds Men Out,	102
— Involves Others,	102
— Enormity of,	68
— Unlimited,	218
Singing, Healthy,	61
Sleeping in Prison,	237
Slaughter of Canaanites,	111
Slave Stories,	71
Slavery in Bible,	72
Slaves, God's Care for,	35
Slaves, Runaway,	264
Small Things, Day of,	122
Solomon in all his Glory,	143
— Career and Fall,	144
Song, First, Miriam's,	59
— Deborah's,	115
Songs of Bible,	119
Sons, Two,	187
— Wicked,	142
Sovereignty of God,	237
Sowing and Reaping,	114
— to Flesh,	130
Spikenard,	202
Spirit of the Lord,	127
— Quickeneth,	167
Still Small Voice,	151
Stoics,	246
Sufferer Willing,	127
Supper,	272
Tabernacle in Wilderness,	85
Teachers, To,	45
Temperance,	250
Temples, God Dwells not in,	206
Testing Before Use,	122
Thomas' Confession,	230
Thomas, the Doubter,	228
Thumbs and Toes Cut Off,	113
Touch, the Lord's,	183
Trees in Garden,	13
— of Life,	15
— Cast into Water,	65
Truth Balanced,	230
— What is?	222
Trumpets and Pitchers,	123
Tyre and Sidon,	177
Unbelief, the Great Sin,	229
— Unreasonable,	229
— Result of Disposition,	229
Uniform Faith,	65
Unprofitable,	264
Unveiled Face,	77
Upper Room,	204
Ups and Downs,	64
Valley of Dry Bones,	165
Vanity,	141
Veiled Face,	75
Victory, Strength for,	102
Vindication,	90
Wages of Sin,	130
Washing of Hands,	222
Water to Wine,	169
Waters of Marah,	63
Weak Things,	134
Wicked Servant,	197
Will of God, Doing,	187
Wind,	154
Wisdom, Two Kinds,	146
— of the World,	248
Witch of Endor,	136
Withered Hand,	184
Word of God True,	156, 160
— Honoured,	159
World, What is,	27
Worldliness,	28
Worthy, Not,	180
Wrath of Man,	223