

The Better

HOME

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HOWARD M. REAVES, EDITOR

AN EXPLANATION

To come within our paper quota and at the same time take care of increasing circulation, we have been forced to leave off the covers of all our periodicals for the first quarter 1946. We greatly regret this necessity and hope that by the time these periodicals appear our quota will be larger. The paper for this quarter is, of course, used and charged to us in 1945. We rejoice in the expanding teaching and training ministry of the churches and the increasing demand for our publications. We are determined to make the necessary adjustments imposed by the war crisis and also to supply the materials needed for Bible study and Christian training. The MESSAGE must go out!

THE BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD

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Contributors

Mrs. E. F. Hardin, Morganton, North Carolina, is a pastor's wife who knows and loves young people and who has had practical experience in promoting family worship and in making it interesting and attractive in her home, in which are three daughters and one son. These four young people constitute eloquent and effective testimony to the success of the methods used in maintaining the family altar in this Christian home.

Mrs. Lon Perkins, Baytown, Texas, has given us a vivid picture of a Christian mother in action in pioneer days in the Southwest. Her article, "True Greatness," illustrates the teaching of Jesus: "Whoever will be great among you . . . shall be servant of all."

Rev. E. C. Kolb, Ridge-land, South Carolina, pastor and earnest student of the Word, has written the devotionals for this issue. These are based, as usual, upon the home daily Bible readings.

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Editorially Speaking

The Reading of Boys and Girls

In these days it is not necessary to use persuasion to get most boys and girls to read. Because of the amount and the attractiveness of reading matter available—newspapers, magazines, and books—they are going to spend a considerable amount of their time reading. The chief problem which parents have is to direct their reading along the most wholesome lines.

It does not take children long to discover the comics in the newspapers and to acquire a taste for reading them. So eager do they become to see the comics that there is often a race to see who gets the morning newspaper first—Father, who wants to read the news, or the children, who want to see the funny paper. Authors and artists are capitalizing upon this interest in the comics by issuing a veritable flood of comic magazines. The name "comic" has become a misnomer, however, for few of these magazines are really humorous. Most of them are lurid and fantastic adventure stories with situations remote from real life.

It is just as important that the reading which boys and girls do shall be varied as that their diet shall be varied. It is not good for individuals to eat one type of food altogether and to ignore other kinds. In like manner it is not wholesome for boys and girls to do only one kind of reading. In all likelihood it will not be wise to forbid the reading of comics and adventure stories, but children should be encouraged to do other types of reading.

Fortunately for parents, there is great interest now in the matter of producing books for children. Already the books on the market for boys and girls of all ages are more numerous and more attractive than ever before. Most publishing houses, both denominational and secular, are strengthening or adding departments of books for children. There is every reason to believe that the books for children which will come from the presses in the years just ahead will surpass in interest and in attractiveness those of any other corresponding period.

Fathers and mothers should visit bookstores and libraries and acquaint themselves with the books which are being produced for children. They should decide that a part of the family income will be spent for worthwhile books and should purchase at regular intervals such books as they can afford. They will find that investments made for good books will yield rich returns in the intellectual and spiritual development of their children in years to come.

Howard M. Reeves

Sincerity plus perseverance assure

Family Worship That Appeals to Youth

MRS. E. F. HARDIN

Scarcely a day passes nowadays but that you and I are reminded of the prospects for present and postwar improvements. We may expect ten years from now such advances in mechanical devices and scientific progress that we may feel that we have been veritable Rip Van Winkles awakening to sights which are strange and new.

When it comes to the spiritual realm, however, there can be no such radical change. Certainly we accept the best and most improved methods for use in the educational programs in our churches. In the religious training of our children in the home we can draw from a vast store of new plans and projects to create interest. Yet in the matter of personal prayer and the family altar, I know of but two fundamental qualities which can be counted on to catch and hold the interest of youth. These are sincerity and perseverance.

A number of instances of disappointment and failure of Christian parents in making a success of family worship have come to my attention. In every case, one of these two factors was lacking, and always the effect upon both the parents and the children was tragic. Christians who allow interest to wane until the family altar is forsaken will one day discover that they have neglected the one thing most needed for building and strengthening the home.

Out of my own experience I should like to coin a new beatitude: *Blessed is he whose home was never without its family altar.* A few pictures from the walls of memory may clarify the truth of that statement.

An open fire; a big comfortable rocker beside a table with its kerosene lamp; my father, comfortable in his bedroom slippers, sitting there and reading aloud; my mother on the other side of the table, listening while darning for her family; and my sisters and I in various positions around the fireside—such was the usual picture of my childhood home on a winter evening. Few indeed were the nights when Father failed

to read to us; and on those occasions Mother read. They were never too tired or too busy to give a part of their evening to the children. When the events of the day had been recounted, the family Bible was opened and we listened reverently to words which, even if not always understood, were melodious to our ears. As we grew older and learned to read for ourselves, Father sometimes let us have the honor of reading the Scripture passage for the evening meditation. Then we knelt to pray. Sometimes the prayers were long, and I must confess that my mind frequently wandered to other things, but there was always something that made me know my dad was really talking with God. Even now I can look back over the years and feel the penitence which was in my childish heart when my faults of the day were mentioned in those prayers and forgiveness asked. I can also remember the sense of peace which descended on my soul when I felt that I had been forgiven and was sent to bed with a kiss.

Early I learned to talk to a loving Master, and early I knew he was able and willing to supply all our needs. How often I have seen actual demonstrations of answered prayer! Indeed, it seemed that there was always more of praise and gratitude for blessings received than there was of petition for temporal things. Of course there were times of sickness, of death, of sorrow, and of trouble when we children could not see the answers to the earnest pleadings. Even then, however, our faith in a loving Lord was not destroyed. We rather learned from our parents' prayers the resignation, patience, and willingness to abide in God's will which strengthened our lives in later years.

Never will I forget an evening at home during vacation in my college days. Conversation drifted to the topic of personal salvation and I admitted that I did not know certainly whether my conversion in childhood was genuine or just a purely

emotional experience. Loving parents who knew God's Word and who understood their child's perplexities read to me passages to strengthen and enlighten me, and as we knelt in prayer in the family circle the last vestige of doubt and fear left my heart. From that time I can date my active service for God. No superficial religion could have ministered to my need in that hour. Nothing but faith in the sincerity of my parents' Christianity would have caused me to seek their aid.

With such a background, it was but natural that I should marry a man who loved and served the Lord. It was the natural sequence that our family altar was established the very first evening of our marriage. It was natural that together we should pray about our joys and sorrows and plans and hopes. It was natural, too, that our children should be given to God, dedicated even before their birth, and it followed naturally that they should find their Saviour through this sacred institution.

Someone asked me some years ago whether I thought the family altar really meant anything to young people. To satisfy my own mind, I decided to question some young people themselves! One reply from a college senior was to this effect:

When I try to estimate what our family altar has meant to my life, I do not know where to begin. It is responsible for making me seek a prayer-mate here in school. It is a thing of permanence in my memory, and I look back upon it as one of the chief factors in making me live for Christ today. It is still a source of strength, and when I know my family is praying together for me, I have courage for tasks I could not otherwise undertake.

EVENING IS BEST

HARRIET MARKHAM GILL

I like the evening best
When children say their prayers,
When little tousled towheads
Stumble up the stairs.
I like the birds' soft twitter,
The friendly sounds of night;
A hearth where cheery driftwood
Throws a ruddy light.

Another reply from a young married woman said in part:

Because of the influence of family worship in my parents' home, I yearn to make my own home after the same pattern.

Still another answer came from a girl in her late teens who said:

I always want my friends who visit me to share the experience of our family altar. Since knowing something about other homes, I have learned to realize and appreciate the blessing and power that has come to my own life because my parents gathered us daily for prayer and worship. I want other young people to feel this with me.

A daughter overseas and a son in the navy have frequently mentioned their reliance upon the prayers at home and have spoken of their longing to worship again at the family altar.

These instances are just some of the many which could be collected from young people who grew up in homes which observed this sacred rite. Therefore, I would emphasize the two main suggestions made above in this article.

First, begin the family worship hour, regardless of the size or age of the family. Begin it in humility and sincerity.

Then persevere in its observance. When obstacles arise to interfere (and they will!), then is the time to pray more earnestly. When there are periods of weariness which almost amount to a feeling of indifference, then is the time to pray. When temptations overtake us and our attitudes are such as to cause our families to wonder if we are fit to approach the throne of grace, then is the more important time to pray and be prayed for. The family altar is the one place to clear the atmosphere and make things safe and right again.

As has often been said, the problem of juvenile delinquency is really the problem of parental delinquency. When America's so-called Christians come back to God and love him enough to gather their families around them for worship and prayer, then will our young people be attracted and won to service for our King. Then will it be that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

True Greatness

as my mother lived it

Winnie O'Neil Perkins

The date was February 22. The teacher in a one-room country school, seeking to impress the importance of the day on her pupils, asked, "Today is the birthday of what great man?"

A small, black-haired girl replied, "I don't know what great man's birthday it is, but it is the birthday of a great woman." When asked who, the child replied, "My mother."

The teacher took it as the commendable admiration of a child for her mother, but the little girl was nearer right than she knew. Her mother was great, even though her fame was barely county-wide.

My first memory picture of Mother is a vivid one. I saw her running at top speed up the riverbank, shotgun in hand, pursued by a big, angry alligator. We were living on the Neches River in Texas; many alligators lived in the river. One day a huge fellow crawled up the bank in front of our house and lay there basking in the sun. Mother fired one shot from a double-barreled shotgun into his tough hide, and the wounded monster came charging fiercely toward her. She ran. We children were standing on the other side of a two-strand barbed-wire fence, and when she came running toward us, followed by that mad demon with long mouth open and scaly tail flaying, we were frightened. Mother outdistanced him so far that he became discouraged and turned back to the river. When she was teased about running from an alligator, with a loaded gun in her hand, she explained that she was running to her children to protect them.

Those years on the river must have been trying ones for her. With twelve children to try to keep track of, to keep from drowning in the river, from falling out of trees, from being gored by wild cattle or hogs, her peaceful moments must have been few.

There was no school close enough for us to attend while we lived on the river. Mother made and sold embroidered scarves, dollies, and yards and yards of crochet to buy books and clothes for the three oldest

girls, and they went to school in town. The education of the six younger children she took upon her own shoulders. She taught us to read, write, spell, and do simple problems in arithmetic. Every day we stood in line and had our spelling lesson and recited the multiplication tables. Our reading lessons were heard while she peeled potatoes, ironed clothes, or did the family washing. Sometimes we sat on the ground and read while she hoed the onion bed, gathered beans, or sprayed the potato vines. She knew each reader by heart and could catch and correct every mistake we made. I do not remember a time when I could not read. The first reading I recall was a lesson read to Mother to the rhythm of the washboard as she played a tune on it with a blue shirt.

Later we moved to a village where there was a one-room school which had a six months' session. The opening day was a momentous occasion for us. We arrived early, and the teacher began by asking all who had never been to school before to sit on the front seat. All six of us, our ages ranging from six to fourteen, went up—we had never been to school before. We were placed in the second, third, and fourth grades and held our own with the smartest. What we had learned we knew well, for our instruction had been thorough and exact. When our first short term of school was over, we were told that there would be no six months' vacation for us. Mother could not let our education go begging for such a long time, and we continued our studies. When the neighbors saw what we were doing, they asked her to teach their children also. She gladly consented, charging a dollar a month for each pupil. She felt that we would work harder and enjoy our lessons more if we had outside competition. The extra work this caused her was not considered.

Many unexpected luxuries were enjoyed because of Mother's genius for making money at home. One day friends were calling when she took from the oven a large

HANDS MARIE V. JONES

Hands were never meant to be
Ornaments.
Be they soft and pale and slender.
Strong or sturdy,
Hands are tender.
Molded firm with each day's living.
Hands like hearts
Grow strong with giving.

pan of golden brown loaves of bread. They remarked that, as they didn't know how to bake bread, they wished they could buy bread for Sunday dinner, but they were unable to do so because there was no bakery in the village. Mother offered to bake bread for them every Saturday, and she built up a fair trade and made many friends in this way. She always had fresh vegetables before anyone else, and sold many dollars' worth from her garden. The prices she charged would now bring a protest from the farmer's union, but then everyone appreciated her generosity. There was no laundry available and seldom any help to be hired. Often she did the laundry for a friend when sickness came into the home or when the friend was unable to perform this service for herself. The family vigorously opposed the laundry idea, but it did not cease until an employed daughter offered to pay her for not doing this type of work.

Mother's greatest work, outside the care of her own family, was in nursing the sick. Often people sent for her before they summoned the doctor, the standard procedure being, "Stop by Mrs. O'Neill's on your way to the doctor's and ask her to come over." She never turned down a request for help.

One morning at church, while mother was kneeling in prayer (she always knelt to pray) a commotion was heard at the door. A lady stood there wringing her hands and crying, "Mother is dying! Somebody come help us." All eyes were turned to my mother. Without a moment's hesitation she went. For two days and nights she stayed, nursing the neighbor across the danger line. Fifteen years later, when Mother sank to her well-earned rest, this neighbor was still alive, a testimony to Mother's nursing skill.

A destitute family into whose ranks a newcomer was expected had moved into our town. Kindhearted neighbors gave a shower for the mother. Each ribbon-tied package was opened and its dainty contents admired and exclaimed over. Mother sat still until the last gift was displayed—not one bore her card. She said, "I couldn't give a present, but I'll stay with her while she is sick." She gave the greatest gift of all. Her supply of neighborly love and willing service never failed.

For years Mother taught a Sunday school class of girls (including four of her own) whose ages ranged from ten to fourteen. The method of teaching them was to ask questions and have the class answer them. When the girls said that they did not know how to find the answers, Mother told them that she would help them if they would come to her home on Saturday afternoon. Every Saturday about a dozen girls would come with their Bibles and quarterlies, gather around the long dining table, and have the real lessons of life taught them. All the while Mother would be baking bread, perhaps a chicken, preparing the next day's dinner so that Sunday morning would be free for worship.

These Saturday afternoon sessions meant far more to the class than the Sunday ones. The girls were made to feel at home and could put off their stilted Sunday manners. They felt free to express their thoughts and opinions, and the teacher was thus able to untangle many a snarl in their growing minds. She drew them closer to her, and they learned to love her and to have great respect for her precepts and example. Sometimes, after the study period, she would take a flaky brown loaf of bread from the oven, slice and butter it, and pass it around.

Looking back over those years, I can see that she did not moralize much—she just taught God's Word and lived it. Her shining example shed light over all her teachings and made them live for her class and the world. Once during a revival the evangelist asked if anyone present had been saved without having had someone talk to him about his soul's salvation. I raised my hand. No one had ever spoken to me about this, but all my life I had beheld Mother's glowing illustration of Christian living, and I could not fail to grasp the lesson.

ALTAR FIRES

Recommended for Daily Worship in the Home

Prepared by Ernest C. Kolb
A NATION IN THE MAKING
First Quarter, 1946

LESSON FOR JANUARY 6, 1946

God's Concern for the Oppressed

Exodus 2:23-25; 3:1-12

Explained in Daily Readings for Wednesday and Thursday

Memory Selection: And he said, Certainly I will be with thee. Exodus 3:12.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31

Israel Oppressed—Exodus 1:8-14

8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour:

14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

Bright promises had been made to Abraham. His descendants should be as the stars for number, even as the dust of the earth; they should possess a wide and fruitful land; from him nations should spring; through him and his posterity should all the world be blessed. But the

prophecy had said more: there would be 400 years of slavery and affliction in a strange land. In today's reading we see that portion of the prophecy fulfilled. Abraham's descendants are in bondage, ruled by a king to whom they are hated foreigners. They must build treasure cities for him and must obey his cruel taskmasters.

Tonight we come to the end of a fateful year, a year of darkness lighted by heroic deeds and mighty achievements. Recent years have seen their share of lives made "bitter with hard bondage." New tyrants, like the old Egyptians fearing the avenging wrath of enslaved multitudes, have sought to save themselves by destroying others. Rigorous labor; and merciless cruelties have been the lot of many. As our hearts burn, for these we can feel more fully the ancient load of oppression in Egypt.

♦ Lord, let us feel the misery of all that are oppressed. Make us sharers of their burden, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1

The Birth of Moses—Exodus 2:1-10

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

3 And 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.

4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

5 ¶ And 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.

6 And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

7 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?

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

9 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.

10 And 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.

Every immortal soul is precious beyond all our earthly values; for this reason no man can tell the significance of any baby's birth. An obscure child can become a man of great strength, courage, compassion, persistence, humility, and faith, who reaches up with all his heart to know and do the will of God.

Today's account of the Egyptian king, blinded and hardened by selfishness, trying to destroy the baby Moses, reminds us of Herod's attempt, centuries later, to kill the infant Jesus. But Moses' parents feared not Pharaoh's harsh command, and the baby had an older sister to love him. What a blessing! Moreover, there was Pharaoh's daughter with her tender pity for the little fellow among the reeds. Because he was shielded by such love this baby was safe from the fate which befell many others who were born only to die or to grow up without opportunity. Let God be praised for all who give a child a chance to be his best.

◆ As the new year dawns, our Father, let us give ourselves anew to thee. We thank thee for the great Deliverer, Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2

The People Cry to God—Exodus 2:23-25

23 ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

It is an old story, written on many pages of mankind's tangled history: people in bondage sighing, crying, groaning. When a king dies, they hope for mercy from his successor; finding none, they cry out the more. And God, who is full of mercy, is not deaf to such a cry. He was only waiting for the oppressed people to turn from every empty hope to him.

There are cries wrung from human misery and sin that do not rise to God. They are hard, rasping cries, full of anger and cursing. They protest bitterly to all the world but lift no humble plea to God, the one real source of help. When men thus hard and bitter set out to save themselves by proud, impatient violence, God lets them try. The results, sad and terrible beyond all comprehension, are everywhere—devastation, death, blood-soaked soil, bleeding hearts. Oh, if only all who are ground under the wheels of brutal tyranny, insatiable greed, callous injustice, and crushing snobbery would cry to God for help!

◆ God of mercy and judgment, let all who suffer oppression cry to thee. Thou dost hear and save. Amen.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3

The Call of a Deliverer—Exodus 3:1-12

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

2 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside,

and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4 And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

7 ¶ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11 ¶ And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

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

How does a man answer when he hears God's call? Watch Moses. Like a man of mature sense and courage he investigated the flaming bush. At God's word he removed his dusty sandals, for this ground was holy. With instinctive reverence he hid his face, but his ear was keen for the divine voice. He heard God telling him, then a hired shepherd eighty years old, to go and stand before the mighty king of Egypt, claim his people's freedom, and lead them forth. He humbly protested his unfitness;

nevertheless, he set forth to do his Lord's bidding.

◆ We too, great Lord, stand on holy ground. Give us thy call and the grace to heed it. Amen.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4

The People Accept Moses and Aaron—Exodus 4:27-31

27 ¶ And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

29 ¶ And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

30 And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

31 And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

God may send a man, yet the people may not accept him as their leader. Moses had been cured of his youthful pride and was anxious on this point. The Lord overcame the difficulty in two ways: he empowered Moses to perform three miracles as convincing proof of his commission, and he appointed Moses' brother Aaron as his co-worker because he could speak well.

God had dealt directly and at length with Moses, but hardly at all with Aaron. Hence it was necessary for the brothers to confer before they should call the local Hebrew leaders together to receive the good news of coming deliverance from their bitter bondage. This done, the meeting was held. Aaron seems to have had no trouble repeating the message which God had delivered to Moses. With the joyful message ringing in their hearts the elders brought together a large assembly to behold the miracles which Aaron performed. With what gratitude and gladness did they learn that their long years of slavery were near an end! No wonder they "bowed their heads and worshipped." The leadership of Moses and Aaron was established.

◆ Help us, Lord, to accept the words of truth and salvation thou dost send through thy servants. Amen.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5

Pharaoh's Refusal—Exodus 5:1-9

1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

4 And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.

5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.

8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

9 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.

Egypt's haughty Pharaohs ranked themselves with the gods. It was dangerous to seek their doubtful favor. Yet Moses and Aaron, sure of their people's confidence, came boldly with God's message: "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." Pharaoh refused with a sneer: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?"

Thus does the high-handed tyrant, everywhere and always, handle God's message and his servants. What cares he for God or man? He will not be just or generous, curb vice, restrain the liquor traffic, remember little children, help the weak. God endures him—for a time.

◆ Lord, let us not exalt ourselves in any wise against thee, but rather obey. Amen.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6

Our Refuge and Strength—Psalms 46

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

One great truth, written for all troubled times, stands underscored in this selection from the Hebrew hymnbook: however great the confusion and distress about us, in God there is calm, security, and strength. We see here pictured two kinds of terrors which shake the souls of men to the depths. There are convulsions of nature—roaring tempests, lashing waves, mountains hurled into the sea. And there are nations which rage so that the earth is strewn with broken weapons of war—how true to our tragic days of worldwide destruction. But in the midst and over all is God to stabilize, gladden, rescue, and strengthen his own.

In the opening verse he is called "a very present help." That means he is near, available, easy to reach as a shelter from the storm. Twice, in the psalm's refrain, he is called "Lord of hosts." This means that he holds under final control all the forces of earth and heaven. Though all the world

should go to wreck and ruin, this God of ours, accessible and mighty, is our refuge and strength.

From their dark night of oppression the Israelites lifted their plaintive cry, and God heard. So it is with peoples engulfed in present miseries; he will hear.

◆ God of earth and heaven, storm and calm, let us rest in thee. Amen.

LESSON FOR JANUARY 13, 1946

God's Deliverance of the Oppressed

Exodus 6:6-8; 13:17-22

Explained in Daily Readings for Monday and Wednesday

Memory Selection: I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength. Isaiah 12:2.

MONDAY, JANUARY 7

God Promises Deliverance—Exodus 6:1-8

1 Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord:

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.

4 And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.

6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.

7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Messiah's Sufferings. Psalm 22:1-19

T.—Messiah's Delight in God's Will. Psalm 40:6-10

W.—Job Afflicted. Job 1:1-22

T.—Job Smitten with Bolls. Job 2:1-13

F.—Bewails His Burden. Job 3:11-26

S.—God's Concern for the Oppressed. Ex. 2:23-25; 3:1-12

S.—Eliphaz Rebukes Job. Job 4:1-11

to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord.

In Saturday's reading Pharaoh refused Moses' request for permission to make a three days' journey into the wilderness and punished the slaves' boldness by adding to their burden. When the quantity of bricks fell short under the new plan the Hebrew foremen were beaten. These tormented men protested to Pharaoh with amazing courage, only to hear that stony monarch repeat his heartless orders. Then the foremen turned upon Moses and Aaron with bitter reproaches. Moses, who had been learning to talk with God as men talk with each other, laid the matter squarely before him: "Pharaoh . . . hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Ex. 5:23).

God graciously renewed the promise to succor his groaning people. He assured Moses that he was bound by the long-standing covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give Canaan to their descendants.

Impatience and lack of faith may betray us into the folly of calling God unfaithful. But "he is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). He has proved it to believing hearts on innumerable occasions. We can depend on him. Can he depend on us?

◆ Save us, Lord, from doubting thy faithfulness. Our only true dependence is in thee. Amen.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8

Deliverance at Last—Exodus 12:29-36

29 ¶ And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.

30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

31 ¶ And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.

32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.

33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.

34 And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.

35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:

36 And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

As the God of righteous judgment "loosed the fateful lightning" upon a nation of oppressors, Pharaoh's heart remained hard. Rivers turned to blood, dust to lice; frogs, flies, hail, locusts, darkness and noisome diseases descended on man and beast; God's servant threatened, reasoned, pled; the proud man would not be moved. Finally came the unforgettable night. God passed over all who took shelter under the blood of an unblemished lamb while death struck swiftly against the first-born of Egypt's homes, from palace to dungeon.

Even for Pharaoh's stony heart it was enough, for heartbreak was in all his land. By night he summoned God's spokesmen and begged them to leave with all haste, they and all the Israelites, with flocks and

herds and other possessions. It was the hour of deliverance, when the God of Israel bared his arm and fulfilled his promise.

◆ Break our hearts, our Father, over every remaining slavery in thy world. Let us find true freedom, glorious and complete, in thy Son. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9

God Lead's Israel—Exodus 13:17-22

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

18 But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

20 ¶ And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.

21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

The Israelites were marching out to freedom. If they were ever to arrive it would be through careful organization and steady discipline. That must come by degrees. God knew that they were not ready to face the warlike Philistines; so, instead of going directly toward Canaan as they left Goshen, they marched southeastward toward the Red Sea and Mount Sinai.

Who could wisely lead such a host? Moses and Aaron? They could do their best, but over them, over all, "standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own" ("The Present Crisis," James Russell Lowell). God revealed his loving presence in the pillar of cloud and of fire. In their hearts his people must have known that since he was leading, every difficulty would be surmounted.

◆ Lead us on, loving God, in our homes, our churches, our nation, and our world. May we follow with confident hearts. Amen.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10

Crossing of the Red Sea—Exodus 14:26-31

26 ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

31 And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.

Before the Israelites could get away Pharaoh's heart froze again. He resolved to force God's chosen people back into bondage or to slay them. Terrified by his pursuing army, they complained against Moses and cried to God. Moses himself went to God, unafraid but seeking light. Faithfully, confidently he obeyed; and lo, the waters which had seemed a prison wall became a wall of protection, and the people passed through unharmed. All was well, save for the Egyptians. Having lived without mercy, they died without mercy, probably not recognizing in their calamity the mighty hand of God.

As individuals, churches, and nations, we come to our Red Sea—unbridgeable waters before us, the enemy at our heels. But God is there, knowing, caring, and ready to work wonders if we faithfully obey his will.

◆ Be it so, Lord, Let us obey thee and experience thy delivering power. Amen.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11

God Heals—Exodus 15:22-27

22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

23 ¶ And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

25 And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.

27 ¶ And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

The Red Sea crossed, the people's exultation was brief. The multitudes must press forward, young, old, weak, strong, with animals and personal belongings. They journeyed southward, between sea and mountain wall, three days without water. At Marah they found water, but it was undrinkable, bitter. Moses, reproached by the people, cried to God, and was told to "heal" the waters by casting in a certain tree. Refreshed, the host pushed on to encamp at Elim with palm trees and abundant waters.

Verses 25 and 26 show that in the grievous disappointment at Marah and in the quick relief granted, God is teaching a fundamental truth: he is healer and health giver as well as deliverer. God's people need bodily health and spiritual sweetness just as Marah's waters needed to be transformed. God makes plain the way to gain such wholeness: listen diligently to him, do right in his sight, heed his commandments, and obey all his statutes.

◆ We thank thee, loving Father, for all the health giving powers that flow from thee into our bodies and our spirits. Amen.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

God Feeds—Exodus 16:11-15

11 ¶ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.

13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

Four weeks had passed since the Israelites left Egypt. They were about half way to Sinai in that particularly desolate part of the desert called the Wilderness of Sin. Their supplies of food were being exhausted. They faced starvation—a condition about which we ourselves know little, although millions in recent years have died of it. People threatened with starvation develop vicious tempers, and murmurings, however sinful, are almost inevitable. The murmurings of the Israelites were really against God, for Moses and Aaron were only obeying his commands. And God did not grow angry. He had compassion on his people. Over and over he tested them, teaching them his goodness and power. In this instance he used natural laws and forces, which are his, expanding them by miracle to “rain bread from heaven” (v. 4). He would not let his people starve but would teach them to know him as their provider. ♦ Thou, Lord, art the giver of all good. We thank thee for bread and for the Bread of life. Amen.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13

Fear Not!—Isaiah 41:8-13

8 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9 Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief

men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

10 ¶ Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

13 For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

What a word for us and our distressed and suffering world! The message is especially significant for any Christian who wavers before the enemies of his soul, for any family that feels itself nothing in the world's proud eyes, and for any church hounded by foes who would destroy it. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: . . . I will help thee.”

But fear is everywhere. Millions tremble for their jobs, their possessions, their standing; for friends, achievements, character, eternal salvation, everything. Troops of fears enter every house, endanger every heart.

Our Master says, “Courage! I have conquered the world” (John 16:33 Moffatt). No Christian need quaver. Like Israel of old, he is God's servant. God holds his right hand. No difficulty or danger, present or future, can catch him unawares. He is with us to strengthen, uphold, inspire, and fill us with holy courage.

♦ Thou art with us, Almighty God, and we will walk unafraid. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Job Asserts Innocence. Job 6:24-30

T.—Bilhad Speaks. Job 8:1-14

W.—Job Asserts God's Power. Job 9:1-12

T.—Zophar Accuses Job. Job 11:13-20

F.—Job Asserts God's Wisdom. Job 12:13-25

S.—God's Deliverance of the Oppressed. Ex. 6:6-8; 13:17-22

S.—Job's Hope in God. Job 13:1-19

LESSON FOR JANUARY 20, 1946

Law Essential to Liberty

Exodus 20:1-17

Explained in Daily Readings for Tuesday and Wednesday

Memory Selection: I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. Psalm 119:47.

MONDAY, JANUARY 14

The People Agree—Exodus 19:3-8

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 ¶ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

Some six weeks after they had escaped from Egypt, the Israelites reached Mount Sinai. Ever since his call Moses had known that God would meet them there (Ex. 3:12). Here, during eleven months, God's people received a revelation destined to affect profoundly the whole world.

Moses, mediating for Israel with God and for God with Israel, ventured into the mountain. God called out to him, announcing a high message for the multitude. They were first to remember with what power and grace he had delivered them from bondage; then they were to say whether they solemnly agree to obey his voice. If so, they would be above all people his peculiar treasure. Moses faithfully conveyed God's offer and the elders assembled the congregation. With unanimous voice the people declared, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.”

How glorious a parable for us! By his mighty grace in Christ, God delivers us

from sin's bondage and binds us in a solemn agreement: with joyful consent, we are his forever!

♦ As thou dost call, Lord, we would yield our hearts. Amen.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15

Duties Toward God—Exodus 20:1-11

1 And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The first four commandments summarize our duty toward God: First, we are to worship him only, since he alone is God. Second, we are to worship no image, because God is infinite spirit. Third, we are not to rob his glorious name of power by vain use, as in anger, lightness, or hypocrisy. Fourth, we are to consecrate the seventh day to holy things, resting from common labors. Faithful fulfilment of these duties toward God, for us as for all men, is fundamental to real happiness, character, and usefulness. Underscore this: God's Commandments are to the individual, the pronoun is "thou," not "ye." His loving voice speaks to us one by one. Each person is expected to worship God only, to practice no idolatry, and to honor God's name and his day.

◆ Holy Father, let us accept thy perfect law in full obedience. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16

Duties Toward Man—Exodus 20:12-17

- 12 ¶ Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
- 13 Thou shalt not kill.
- 14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- 15 Thou shalt not steal.
- 16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
- 17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

We were meditating yesterday on one hemisphere of our obligation, our duties toward God as expressed in the first four commandments. Today, it is the other hemisphere, our duties toward our fellow men, as seen in the remaining six commandments.

The Fifth Commandment is in a world of its own, dealing with the dearest human relationship. Akin to the devoted reverence we all owe to God is the loving honor due our parents, through whom came our life itself and from whom, when we were helpless, we received protection, support, training, encouragement, and little kindnesses past counting. The other five commandments concern duties to fellow men generally: Regarding deeds (Sixth, Seventh, Eighth) we must not kill, be impure, or

steal. Regarding words (Ninth) we must not falsify concerning another. Regarding thoughts (Tenth) we must not wrongly desire what is another's. How simple and unarguable, yet how deep, how far-reaching, how sublime are the Commandments!

◆ Blessed Father, thou hast indeed shown us how to live, and we thank thee. Help us to keep every Commandment. When we fail, grant thy forgiveness through the sinless Saviour. Amen.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17

The Majesty of God's Law—Exodus 20:18-26

18 ¶ And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: For God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

22 ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24 ¶ An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Brief attention has been given to Sinai's heart-stirring grandeur. At the southeastern end of the plain, almost perpendicular granite cliffs lift their summits high. It was a fitting spot for the historic day. Prompted repeatedly by the Lord, Moses set

bounds lest any should press too close, touch the mountain, and die. The throng gathered before the mount in expectant wonder. God descended amid cloud, fire, and smoke to speak the majestic words of his Law.

The glorious majesty was not that of scenery or occasion, but was that of God himself, the majesty of his power, wisdom, truth, righteousness, and love. The laws he proclaimed take on some of that high majesty. Many laws which men make are worthless, framed without wisdom and administered without justice, but how different are God's holy Commandments!

◆ Give us solemn joy, Lord, in the majesty and righteousness of thy laws. Amen.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18

Love God and Neighbor—Mark 12:28-34

28 ¶ And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

This is our only New Testament reading for January. Significantly enough, Jesus went straight to the books of Moses (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18) to answer the question, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

Of the Ten Commandments eight are negative. This twofold commandment

which Jesus gave was positive and exceedingly far-reaching. It tells us, in effect, to be like God, for he is perfect love. As we fulfil the aspects of this command, since one who loves God with his whole being becomes a wellspring of brotherly love, we conquer sin and rise to unselfish service to God and man.

◆ Free us, Father, from hatred and from coldness. May thy love flow through us for the good of others. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19

The Fruits of Obedience—Ezekiel 36:25-31

25 ¶ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Here we behold two noble truths: God's overflowing mercy toward undeserving sinners and the wholesome, purifying sense of shame on the part of those who saw their villainess in the light of his grace. We for whom full day has come in Christ can rejoice that ancient Israel was given so bright a candle. His name be praised forever!

◆ We thank thee, great Father, for thy patient love and abounding grace. In us, too, may thy mercy bear fruit. Amen.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20

Quickened in Righteousness—Psalm 119:33-40

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

G. Campbell Morgan, world-famous British preacher, once said that whether a man be bad or mad or sad or glad, there is a psalm for his condition. Yes, there is a

psalm for these and many other moods of the soul. If you make today's passage your own you will find yourself reaching up to God and asking him to make you spiritually alive so that you will walk in his way.

Moreover, since turning away from folly and sin is the beginning of right living, you will pray to be delivered from the love of worldly things which have power to catch the eye, grip the heart, and steal the soul away from God. Thus you will be free from the reproach which you fear, the condemnation of all who take the downward road.

◆ Give us wisdom, Father, to walk in the right way, following Jesus our Lord. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Job Concludes. Job 14:1-17
T.—Job's Witness in Heaven. Job 16:1 to 17:3
W.—Job's Confession of Faith. Job 19:19-29
T.—Job Denies All Crime. Job 31:29-40
F.—Jehovah Speaks. Job 40
S.—Law Essential to Liberty. Ex. 20:1-17
S.—Job Worships Jehovah. Job 42

LESSON FOR JANUARY 27, 1946

Religion in a Nation's Life

Exodus 28:1; 35:4-9, 20-29

Memory Selection: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Matthew 4:10.

MONDAY, JANUARY 21

Moses Meets God on the Mount—Exodus 24:12-18

12 ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

13 And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

16 And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

17 And the sight of the glory of the Lord

was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

After proclaiming the Ten Commandments, God had called Moses unto Mount Sinai again and had given to him additional laws about worship, persons, and property. Idolatry had been repeatedly forbidden. Moses had carefully written down these laws as "The Book of the Covenant." In an impressive assembly it had been ratified as the people's solemn agreement with God and was sealed by sacrificial blood sprinkled on altar and people.

Again God called Moses unto the mount. For forty days and nights the consecrated man met with God on the height where the cloud hung low and his glory appeared as a devouring fire. This meeting was for the

purpose of giving to Moses the Commandments on stone tablets and also certain regulations concerning worship for the developing nation.

Let us meditate for a moment on two great matters. First, laws are not enough for a people's life; there must be adoring worship of the Most High. Second, men called by God to extraordinary devotion, reverence, compassion, courage, and understanding come close and mediate his loving will.

◆ Lord, stoop to meet with us and show us thy way for ourselves and others. Amen.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22

Offerings for the Tabernacle—Exodus 25:1-9

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,

4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,

5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,

7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

For God's lovely tabernacle of the wilderness days, precious materials in quantity and variety were required—valuable metals, rare stones, rich tapestries, fine woods, and all the rest. The tabernacle in all its materials, proportions, furnishings, and appointments was to symbolize God's unique perfection, and it would become his habitation. Willinghearted givers would make it God's house of beauty.

So it was then and so it should be now. But magnificent church houses can be built to glorify men rather than God. The loveliest house cannot be a substitute for love in the hearts of the people. More important than any house is warmhearted fellowship, yearning over the lost and the

backslidden, and sharing Christ's gospel with the needy world. But his house should fitly represent him, and he still invites willinghearted givers to make it do so.

◆ Dear Lord, let us make and keep thy house a place of beauty where love abides. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23

God's Appointed Meeting Place—Exodus 29:42-46

42 This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.

43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.

44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.

45 ¶ And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.

The tabernacle where God would meet his people was a four-sided structure with an enclosed court. Its smallness was compensated by rare beauty. The framework was acacia boards overlaid with gold. Over it were three coverings, the innermost of twined linen woven in blue, purple, and scarlet. A "vail" separated the larger holy place from the smaller holy of holies. In the court was the brazen altar where God would receive his people's sacrifices. In the holy place stood the gold-covered table of shewbread, fitting symbol of God's provision for man's need and of man's self-surrender to him; the seven-branched golden candlestick—his people, lamps fed by his spirit who were intended to light the world's darkness; and the golden altar of incense—ascending fragrance symbolizing worship from reverent hearts. In the holy of holies was only the ark of the covenant, overlaid with gold inside and out. The lid, called the mercy seat, was of solid gold. At either end it supported a cherub with wings outstretched and face lowered toward the mercy seat. Underneath in the ark, lay the tables of law. What symbolism!

God is justice, ruling us in mercy. What his law demands his love provides.

◆ We worship thee, Lord, in grateful love. Amen.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24

The Tragedy of False Worship—Exodus 32:30-35

30 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31 And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33 And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35 And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Moses went to meet God in the mount and spent forty days with him, while the people waited below. Days and weeks went by and it seemed that their leader would not return. What had become of him? And the God who worked such wonders through Moses—where was he? They could not see him, either. Emptyhearted and impatient, they turned from the unseen Lord to a worthless idol like those of neighboring pagan peoples. They worshiped the golden calf with indecent revelries. Aaron's challenge to bring their beloved valuables to make the idol had not deterred them. Trading all for nothing, they would pay big boot!

Is it only an ancient experience? Would to God it were! But millions still pay their all for nothing at all and miss the infinite riches. We are all in danger of putting some idol in the place of God. As likely as not it is property. Often it is comfort, often selfish ambition for worldly popularity or power. Nothing has the right to take God's place.

◆ Everlasting God, let no idol claim our hearts, but may we worship thee and not things that pass away. Amen.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25

Builders of the Sanctuary—Exodus 36:1-7

1 Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded.

2 And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:

3 And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

4 And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

5 ¶ And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.

6 And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

The tabernacle was to be God's house of beauty, a fitting habitation for his holy presence. It could not be built thus by profane, unskilful hands. God called Bezaleel to direct the work. He was a man filled with his spirit, of remarkable understanding and skill. He also called every "man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it."

Each man, woman, boy, girl, can build for God things which are beautiful and holy. Some of us can work on his house, drawing plans, mixing concrete, driving nails, laying brick, painting walls, fitting flooring, planting lawns, and beautifying his sanctuary in a dozen ways. People without skilful hands can keep giving until they have to be restrained from bringing their offerings. Our very minds and spirits are to be fashioned with skill, so that the en-

dowments we have from him may be wrought into lives of strength and usefulness. Our whole world is to be rebuilt after Christ's perfect plan.

◆ Help us, dear Lord, to build for thee with loving skill. Amen.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26

God's Presence in the Sanctuary—Exodus 40:34-38

34 ¶ Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

36 And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

37 But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

38 For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

"So Moses finished the work" (v. 33). The plan given him in the mount had been faithfully followed. On the small golden altar sweet incense had been burned, and on the large altar before the tabernacle sacrifices had been offered. The priests had performed the required washings, and the court surrounding the tabernacle had been properly enclosed. The people wondered whether God would bless the tabernacle and them with his presence and rejoice when he did. The cloud covered the enclosure and God's bright glory filled the tabernacle. Despite their grievous backslidings, his people were now assured of his presence.

Just as definitely is the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled to those who take the right way with him. "Lo, I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20)—that is his promise. It is for all who follow wherever his will leads them, near or far, sharing his gospel and spreading his teaching. They themselves are his temple, his living tabernacle. Upon them and in them his radiant presence abides. There may be many a steep hill to climb, many a dark valley to travel; trials may beset them. But all is well.

◆ O mighty Saviour, be with us every day. Amen.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27

Dwelling in God's House—Psalm 84:1-5

1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

These verses open on a note of praise and repeat it with variations. The writer is like a boy or girl away from a dearly loved home and longing to be there, for he shouts for joy with body and soul when his hunger is satisfied in God's house. If birds can build nests for their little ones under the eaves, surely worshiping souls can rest in the delights of the holy place. They will be singing God's praise without ceasing. Let a man who knows his weakness come and worship, and he gains God's strength for the toilsome road.

Not everyone feels this way about God's house. Some say, "What! Church? A dull place where a few old songs are sung to death and some easy-going preacher rambles along twenty or thirty minutes, aiming at nothing and hitting the same!" Well, perhaps there is such a church somewhere, but the soul that loves God and his house very seldom finds it. Whether we enjoy our bread depends mainly on how hungry we are. The soul that "longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord" is a soul on the way toward being fed and happy.

◆ Our Father, may thy house be filled with longing souls who find thee near and satisfying. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

- M.—Good and Wicked Contrasted. Psalm 1
T.—Prayer and Trust. Psalm 3
W.—God's Glory, Man's Dignity. Psalm 8
T.—A Citizen of Zion. Psalm 15
F.—God Our Refuge and Hope. Psalm 16
S.—Religion in a Nation's Life. Ex. 28:1; 35:4-9, 20-29
S.—God's Works and Word. Psalm 19

The Worth of Religious Anniversaries

Leviticus 20:7-8; 23:4-6, 15-16, 24, 27-28, 34, 39-44
Explained in Daily Reading for Tuesday

Memory Selection: The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psalm 126:3.

MONDAY, JANUARY 28

A Prayer of Trust—Psalm 4

1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

3 But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.

6 There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

The great Martin Luther, it is said, often sang himself to sleep with this song of David. Both Martin Luther and David were surrounded by enemies and doubtful friends, and both were frequently in trouble. Troubled by such men, embarrassed by their misdeeds, David comes to the one great Helper (vv. 1, 4, 7-8). In God he finds breathing space, quiet confidence, gladness, light. Regardless of all difficulties the trusting man can lie down and sleep, committed to God alone and secure in his care.

We do not sing the psalms, but we can make David's prayer our own. We can call upon God to hear us in his mercy and answer us with his all-wise blessings. We can ask him to show us the light of his face which is strong and tender. We can tell him that whether the crops from orchard,

vine, and field be scant or full, he himself is our chief joy.

◆ We will trust in thee, Lord, our mighty Friend. Amen.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29

A Feast unto the Lord—Leviticus 23:39-43

39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

God's people of old were taught to keep their souls joyfully alive to him by feasts commemorating his mercies. The seventh month was their sabbath month, opening with the Feast of Trumpets, moving on to the great Day of Atonement on the tenth day and the Feast of Tabernacles beginning on the fifteenth, an eight-day celebration. For this one week they would leave their houses and live in leafy booths in reverent remembrance of their pilgrimage to Canaan. The early grain crops were in; hence it was a harvest festival with praises to God for his bounties. He who had provided daily manna was to be recognized as the Giver of all good.

Their God is our God, fully revealed in the priceless gift of his Son; and we are pilgrims from birth to death, through time to eternity. We are thankful for all material blessings, yet we dare not tie ourselves to them. Christian pilgrims, by God's grace in Jesus, are delivered from the slavery of sin. Singing his praise, we journey gladly with him to our everlasting home.

◆ Throughout life's pilgrimage, blessed Saviour, let us rejoice in thee, grateful for thy goodness. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30

The Promise of Joy—Psalm 126

1 When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.

3 The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Tears and joy mingle here. The tears are those of the captive and of all who love him and of one who plants costly seed not knowing what may come. The joy is that of captives freed and of the reaper bringing sheaves of ripe grain from the field.

Our joy as children of God is not only in blessings already received but in our Lord's dependable promises. We are to be like him. We are to reign with him if we have endured with him. We are to see all earth's kingdoms his and every enemy overcome. We are to make glorious music with multitudes in the heavenly host. We are to see great harvests from our sowing—thirty-, sixty-, a hundredfold. These golden harvests will be the result of the living seed of Christ's gospel, of the fertile soil of human hearts, plowed by God with poignant longings, and of a sower who waters with tears the ground he treads.

◆ Lord, teach us to sow in tears that together with thee we may reap the joyful harvest. Amen.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31

The Preparation for a Feast—Leviticus 16:29-34

29 ¶ And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

30 For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.

31 It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the Lord commanded Moses.

The Mosaic sacrifices and offerings were an ABC answer to this question: How bridge the wide, terrible gulf between sinful man and holy God? The full answer could come only in God's Son, incarnate, sinless, crucified, risen, living, saving.

The Day of Atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, was the great day. All must refrain from eating and working. The high priest must lay aside his golden ornaments, bathe himself, and clothe himself wholly in spotless white. Thus prepared, he was to enter the holy of holies and make atoning sacrifices.

It was all a true, dramatic prophecy of our Saviour's redeeming work. He is the real high priest, spotless in his perfection, entering into heaven itself and preparing our way. He is the unblemished sacrifice also, slain and offered for us, taking away our defilement when we are bound to him through faith. The gulf is bridged in him. Sinners fall helpless at his cross. There boundless love makes us his forever. Oh,

that it may be so as we believe and surrender our all.

◆ Yes, loving Father! In Jesus our Lord we are thine forevermore. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1

A Call to Remembrance—Deuteronomy 32:1-7

1 Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

3 Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

5 They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

6 Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee; hath he not made thee, and established thee?

7 ¶ Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

At the time of today's reading, Moses was 120 years old. Soon he would pass beyond mortal sight. Before going to God he repeatedly addressed his beloved people, restated many laws, proclaimed some new ones, recounted God's leadings, issued warnings and prophecies, and pled for full obedience.

Moses called upon heaven and earth to hear while he extolled God's greatness and goodness. He reminded them that God, "the Rock," is perfect in justice, truth, righteousness, but that they, his children, had dishonored him. Instead of yielding loving obedience and service they had become a "perverse and crooked generation." They had dealt foolishly with him who had made and established them.

"Perverse and crooked generation!" What a mirror for our time and people! With God's full light in Christ, a far better light than the Israelites had, have we not done much as they did? In droves we have turned our backs on the Righteous One and have walked in our self-chosen, sinful way.

Such conduct leads straight to destruction for the individual and the nation. Let us remember his goodness and walk with him.

◆ Help us, Lord, to cleave steadfastly to thee. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2

The Lord at the Feast—John 7:14-24

14 ¶ Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Today's passage describes a sad scene. Crowds had come to the joyful Feast of Tabernacles, outwardly to glorify God. The Master came too, rightful Lord of Temple, of the feast, and of every heart. He came speaking God's truth, if only men would hear, seeking to glorify the Father alone, and showing men that they must be willing to do his will if they would understand his teaching. And how did men respond? They called him unlearned, a sabbathbreaker, and devil possessed.

Here is wholesome warning for us. When we come to worship, be it alone or with a small group or with a great congregation,

how important it is to have a humble spirit and an open mind.

◆ Lord Jesus, help us to receive thee and thy teaching with eager, open, responsive souls. Amen.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3

God of Earth—Psalm 65:1, 9-13

1 Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed:

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 10, 1946

The Disciplines of Experience

Numbers 14:11-24

Memory Selection: Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. Proverbs 3:12.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Sharing Burdens—Numbers 11:10-17

10 ¶ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

11 And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a

Not everyone has given the praise for earth's wonders to God, but the psalmist does. He is not thinking of the amazing power or the tireless constancy we see everywhere. He has in mind how God calls from his earth rich harvests of grainfields and fresh, tender grass for flocks at pasture. Water, rain, a thing godly farmers often prayerfully seek, is what the writer is especially praising God for, as in verses 9 and 10. God, by sending his "silver, tardy rain," settles furrows and softens ridges; he makes seeds put forth, plants grow, and crops mature. Hence the hills and the valleys raise their voices in songs and shouts of praise. So let us all. The earth is his and all upon it.

◆ We do praise thee, Lord of seedtime and harvest, for thy good and fruitful earth. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—The Shepherd Psalm. Psalm 23
T.—Entering Zion. Psalm 24
W.—Trust in God. Psalm 27
T.—Jehovah in the Storm. Psalm 29
F.—The Forgiven Son. Psalm 32
S.—The Worth of Religious Anniversaries. Lev. 20:7-8; 23:4-6, 15-16, 24, 27-28, 34, 39-44
S.—Jehovah the Deliverer. Psalm 34:1-14

nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

16 ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them;

and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

Moses had dreaded the burdens of leadership from the day he had stood at the burning bush. In today's reading his trials were particularly annoying. Moses cried out against his unbearable burden. The Lord mercifully directed him to choose seventy men of standing who would share his tasks.

Our whole world now is full of burdens to be shared. Desolating war has left millions of our fellow men too weak to carry their own back-breaking loads. Shame on us if we crawl into our narrow shells and leave multitudes, little children included, to starve and freeze. The ancient question is still asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The true answer is still an unhesitating "Yes, I am." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

◆ Make us, Lord, willing sharers of others' loads. Lead us to serve the people of all nations with all our strength, material and spiritual, in the name of him who bore the cross for us all. Amen.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Teaching Dependence upon God's Providence—
Deuteronomy 8:1-6

1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers.

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.

6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

See how God's people of old were dependent on him. He led and protected them through the lean wilderness years; he put them to searching spiritual tests, seeking to lift them high; he gave them food for empty stomachs; he taught them the power of his word; he kept clothes on their backs and strength in their feet; he gave them a father's chastening for wrongdoing that he might make them right.

We, too, are utterly dependent upon God for everything. Sun, earth, soil, rain, life in seed and animal, strength in wood and metal, air to breathe, truth to know, chastening for sin, grace, healing, forgiveness, goodness, love—all these belong to God and come to us from him. All our days we get from him everything worth while.

◆ Lord, teach us to understand and not forget that we are utterly without help or hope, in both body and soul, except for thee. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Chastening and Understanding—Proverbs 3:11-18

11 ¶ My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

13 ¶ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Chastening and understanding belong together by profound kinship, for wisdom often grows out of punishment well received. How winsomely do these verses make their appeal! They plead with the individual whom God punishes to take it rightly as coming from a father's heart. His anger is not fiery hatred, to be rejected and loathed; it is the pure indignation of a Lord who loves man deeply and who seeks his lasting welfare. By accepting, yea even welcoming, his reproof and punishment we find wisdom, a treasure more precious than rubies or anything else we eagerly desire.

◆ We thank thee, Father, for thy loving chastisements which warn and guide us and most of all for him who is our wisdom, our righteousness, and our salvation. Amen.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Thanksgiving for God's Mercies—Isaiah 12:1-6

1 And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and be not afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

5 Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Every thought in these exultant lines is rich with meaning for us today. We do well to emphasize one in particular. Religion is no long-faced, gloomy business. It is the most radiantly joyful way of life in the world. Naturally, it means sacrifice of some things we crave, but religion brings deliverance from sin, partnership with God in spreading his great salvation everywhere, and is joy and courage and strength. Thank God daily for such gifts!

◆ We do thank and praise thee, great Lord of our salvation. Thy mercies are a well of ever-abounding joy. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

The Meaning of Suffering—Hebrews 12:3-13

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

God's punishments are declared to indicate our sonship to him. Children who grow up without a father miss a father's discipline. We, being God's children, feel his punishing hand. Verses 9 and 10 present contrasts between human parents' discipline and the Heavenly Father's. They are fathers of the flesh, he of the spirit. They sometimes punish unwisely, not having full wisdom or goodness. He is all-wise, all-good, and punishes for our eternal welfare, that we may live "as partakers of his holiness." If we submit to the imperfect earthly parent, how much more to the perfect God! Another strong appeal is here for every friend of Jesus (vv. 3-4). We are

to consider how much heavier were his sufferings than any we must bear.

◆ Lord, help us to accept aright thy firm and loving discipline and to suffer willingly for thy sake. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Discipline Within the Church—I Thessalonians 5:12-22

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

The word "discipline" is not in these verses, but exhortations to practice it are abundant, for discipline is much more than punishment of offenders. Full discipline also involves teaching, training, guiding, warning, counseling, comforting, strengthening, and other forms of help which the strong give to the weak. Moreover, there is a spiritual atmosphere which promotes discipline by its presence or makes discipline nearly impossible by its absence. That atmosphere is described in nearly every verse of our reading.

Verse 14 brings the matter to focus. The unruly (disorderly) are to be warned; the feeble-minded (meaning especially the downhearted) are to be comforted; the weak (not sickly, but babes in faith, knowledge, etc.) are to be held steady while they grow stronger. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, . . . restore such an one. . . . Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:1-2).

◆ Give us more strength, our Father, by which we can help thy weaker ones. Amen.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10

A Prayer of Dedication—2 Chronicles 6:26-31

26 ¶ When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them;

27 Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.

28 ¶ If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies beset them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness there be:

29 Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house:

30 Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:)

31 That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

Today's reading comes from the Bible's longest prayer, Solomon's at the dedication of the Temple. Of more significance than its length, however, are its depth, richness, range, and exaltation of spirit. Again and again Solomon besought God to honor his house by hearing prayers made in it or toward it by penitent, honest worshippers.

The praying king foresaw the time when drought would afflict the land as righteous judgment upon Israel's sin. He also foresaw the terrors of famine, pestilence, siege by warring enemies, and various diseases. He prayed that when such should come God would heed his people's cry and cause them to walk in loving awe before him.

A prayer like that is certainly fitting for any dedicated house and every upreaching

heart. Sin is a fearful fact; so are God's righteous judgments upon it. But there are other blessed facts, his gracious gifts of repentance, prayer, faith, and forgiveness.

◆ Let all our hearts, Lord, be dedicated temples where thou dost forgive and abide. Amen.

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 17, 1946

The Responsibility of a Great Heritage

Deuteronomy 4:1, 32-40

Explained in Daily Readings for Monday and Wednesday

Memory Selection: He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. Psalm 111:4.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11

The Challenge of a Heritage—Deuteronomy 4:1-8

1 Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you.

2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

3 Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

4 But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

Deuteronomy consists largely of addresses by Moses before Israel entered Canaan. Today's reading is a sample. Moses had re-

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—The River of God's Pleasure. Psalm 36:5-10
T.—Safety of the Righteous. Psalm 37:1-10
W.—Sin Brings Sorrow. Psalm 38:1-14
T.—Thirsting for God. Psalm 42
F.—God Our Refuge. Psalm 46
S.—The Disciplines of Experience. Num. 14:11-24
S.—David's Cry for Cleansing. Psalm 51

minded the people of God's wonderful mercies. Now he challenged them to live up to their heritage.

We Americans have a noble national heritage. Our Constitution has become a model for others around the earth. Freedom from kingly tyrannies has drawn many to our shores. Our enormous wealth and power have exalted us in all eyes. Our dream of a social order in which every man may become his best constitutes an alluring goal for ourselves and the world. We have maintained an open Bible and liberty of worship. The challenge of a great heritage is unmistakably ours. Let us meet it with unwavering faith.

◆ Lord, give us hearts thankful for our heritage and grace to hold it fast. Amen.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

The Warning of a Heritage—Deuteronomy 4:15-24

15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

18 The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship

them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

20 But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

21 Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance:

22 But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee.

24 For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Here is Moffatt's vivid translation: "Now, be careful. . . . Beware, then, of depraving yourselves by carving an idol in the shape of any statue, either male or female, or like any beast on earth, any bird that flies, any insect crawling on the ground, or any fish in the sea; beware of looking up to the sky and then, as you see the whole host of heaven, . . . letting yourselves be allured to bend in worship" (vv. 15-19a). Be careful. To turn from the only God to any idol is the deadliest of follies. It invites destruction.

How foolish we shall be in our favored land if we imagine we need not beware of losing our heritage. Surely we must understand that by neglecting worship we surrender it, that by ignoring good laws we undermine them, that by denying justice to any, white or black, we endanger it for all, and that by idolizing self and things, we part with God.

◆ Great God of our nation and of all the world, let us take warning before it is too late for us to save our blood-bought heritage. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

The Promise That Endures—Deuteronomy 4:30-40

30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy

God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

31 (For the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.

32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

33 Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him.

36 Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;

38 To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.

Many people consider that a promise is not binding after it becomes old. Not so with God. Evidently it was more than 400 years from the time of his promise to Abraham to the time of the mighty deliverance from Egyptian slavery. God had told Abra-

ham, "I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). For generation after generation of hard bondage it might have seemed that the promise had been forgotten or annulled. But no, the faithful, covenant-keeping God had made it, and he meant it (Deut. 4:31, 37). The other verses tell how God carried out his promise.

◆ We praise thee, Lord, for thy faithfulness. Amen.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

The Days of Thy Youth—Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Old age and death claim over 200 words in today's reading, youth only six or seven, but all are addressed to the young, both in warning and in appeal. The time is coming, says the writer, when you will be weak, bowed, trembling, afraid, without appetite, and broken. Clouds will cover life's sky and the heavenly lights will cease to shine for you. You will have little energy for the things of God, being so occupied and burdened with the lacks, pains, inconveniences,

and dangers of old age. The time to acknowledge the Creator is "in the days of thy youth."

◆ Father, help boys and girls and all youth to remember and live for thee. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15

The Witness of a People—Joshua 24:19-26

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20 If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

23 Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 ¶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Joshua was 110 years old and was soon to die. Succeeding Moses as leader, he had directed the conquest of Canaan. Now he assembled the people at Shechem and challenged Israel to declare themselves positively for or against God. He and his house had made their decision. Three times the people witnessed their high purpose: "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

Stirring thoughts crowd our minds as we meditate on such an event. One good man's unshakable faithfulness moved a host to take their stand for God. Our fathers before us may have made a holy agreement with God. It is not enough; we must declare our own loyalty. Once does not suffice. We grow weak, unstable, unfaithful, unworthy. Then we need to come again to

our Lord, repenting our sins and renewing our vows.
 ♦ Blessed Master, we would renew our allegiance. Forgive, accept, and use us, we pray. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16

The Consummation of a Heritage—Luke 1:68-75

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

The voice of prophecy had been silent for four hundred years when God's angel Gabriel came to Zacharias and Mary with revelations which showed that the time of the Messiah had come. Glorious consummation of longings inexpressible! Both Zacharias and Mary exulted before God. They were celebrating the fulfilment of God's purpose, which was the crowning peak of their people's history and perfect fruitage of their heritage. Salvation from enemies, forgiveness of sins, light for the darkness—for all this our Saviour came. It remains his work through the years. Our task is to share the blessed consummation with the whole world.

♦ We praise thee, Father, in Jesus' name, for a share in bringing thy purpose to completion. Amen.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17

A Psalm of God's Mercy—Psalm 106:1-12

1 Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?

3 Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;

5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.

8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

This is one of the psalms praising God for his mercy upon ancient Israel, when she went astray. With us as individuals and with our nation God has been similarly patient and kind. Who has obeyed him all the way? Who has kept clear, in understanding and gratitude, the kindnesses of God? Who has not fallen into gloomy disbelief or even rebellious complaint? Does our nation always honor him for his measureless blessings? No, we have all sinned. And to too God has been "rich in mercy, for his great love" (Eph. 2:4), and has given us other chances.

♦ Let us think often, Lord, of thy unfailing kindness to us. With grateful hearts let us purpose to be true and faithful. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—A Divine Shelter. Psalm 61

T.—An Ideal Ruler. Psalm 72:1-7

W.—A Problem Solved in the Sanctuary. Psalm 73:1-14

T.—Mercy upon the Nation. Psalm 85

F.—Man's Short Life: God's Eternity. Psalm 90

S.—The Responsibility of a Great Heritage. Deut. 4:1, 32-40

S.—Security of the Believer. Psalm 91:1-10

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 24, 1946

Home Foundations for National Greatness

Deuteronomy 6:4-12

Explained in Daily Readings for Tuesday and Wednesday

Memory Selection: Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Psalm 145:2.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Walk in His Ways—Deuteronomy 30:11-16

11 ¶ For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

15 ¶ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

16 In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

In varying words, Moses repeatedly pled with his people to love the Lord their God and to walk faithfully in his ways. Some, perhaps, were saying, as people will, "If we only knew, we would do." Moses urged that there could be no such excuse for sinful deeds, saying that God's law was neither a hidden mystery nor was it far away. He had not kept it in heaven's height but had spoken it on earth. He had revealed it among his people, not beyond some impassable sea. They could talk of it with the mouth, feel it with the heart, and then do it. They were able to choose the way of "life and good" instead of that of "death and evil."

God has shown his way much more fully to us. We are to repent humbly of all sin and to "believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). Only when we are born again

by his grace shall we have the desire and strength to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4); to love our neighbor as ourselves and God with our whole being.

♦ Let every one of us choose, Father, thy way of life and goodness in Jesus, thy perfect Son. Amen.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Our Chief Duty—Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

2 That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

3 ¶ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord:

5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

There are points like this where the Old Testament bears ripe fruit. Man is to live in reverent fear of God, keeping all his commandments. Only thus will it be well with him. He is to heed most carefully the truth that God is one, not many, and that man's love and service are to be centered upon him. Each generation shall cherish God's law, talking of it night and morning, at home or away. Parents shall instruct their children diligently in his words. His truth shall guard the door of every house.

Upon the heart of these great truths, given through Moses' lips, Jesus our Lord stamped his divine endorsement. He lifted verse 5 to the heights. Deliberately answering a plain question, he gave the unassailable answer for us and for all: our chief duty is a devotion to God which claims all there is in us. We are to think, feel, choose, and act in love for him.

◆ Our Father, may we do our chief duty: love and serve thee with all our soul and strength. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Remembering the Lord of Life—Deuteronomy 6:10-17

10 And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

12 Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

13 Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

15 (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

16 ¶ Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

17 Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.

Moses, looking ahead a little, saw his people across Jordan in Canaan's fair land. After the hard years of wandering and poverty as people without a country, they would have "goodly cities, . . . houses full of all good things," wells, olive trees, and food in plenty. Would it be altogether good? Moses spoke a needed warning. Prosperity, particularly rich possessions provided by others' labor, can make men forget God.

This whole passage in Deuteronomy was dear to Jesus. From it he chose two sharp spears to fight Satan (cf Deut. 6:13 and Matt. 4:10; Deut. 6:16 and Matt. 4:7). There is not one of us who may not well search this and similar passages in God's Book for weapons against the same enemy. We all are in danger. When we lose ourselves in unimportant concerns, we ignore God. Here is our sacred warning, "Beware lest thou forget the Lord," the Saviour from whom alone our real wealth comes. No prosperity that separates from him is worth a grain of sand.

◆ Help us, great God, to remember that thou alone art our dependence, in thy Son our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Basis of a Happy Family Life—Psalm 128

1 Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.

2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.

5 The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

An eminent Christian teacher once told his students of his unusual courtship. He asked the lovely girl to take second place in his heart—first place, he quickly explained, was Christ's. She surrendered on these terms and became, in the psalmist's language, "a fruitful vine" by his side. Around their table and at the family altar were sons and daughters "like olive plants" of signal quality. The godly man's latter

years, when his wife had gone, were brightened by the sight of children's children growing up in their noble heritage.

The basis of such happy, blessed, family life is indicated in the first verse; it is the fear of the Lord. This fear is not the trembling terror of those whose father is an uncontrolled flame. It is the profound reverence, merging into love, of children whose father is really righteous. He is firm and fair, dependable and kind; he hates evil and loves to reward goodness. With such a God, father, mother, and children can be genuinely happy.

◆ Thou, dear Father, art the God after our hearts, righteous, firm, loving, dependable. Let our home rejoice in thee. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Christian Relations in the Home—Colossians 3:17-24

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

"Christ is all, and in all" (v. 11). His control belongs everywhere, and surely our homes are no exception. Where contacts are so close and continual, we doubly need his spirit if our words and deeds are to be right. Verses 12-17 show beautifully and comprehensively how his reigning presence works in compassion, kindness, humbleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness, joyful singing—all this and more. With such a spirit in control, what chance is there for harsh words, hateful attitudes, and hurtful deeds!

With just that spirit in mind, with Christ

reigning at the center, Paul deals with these intimate, delicate matters. The wife is to recognize the husband's primacy; the husband is to love the wife tenderly; children are to be obedient, servants likewise; and fathers are to refrain from exasperating their children. All these relationships are to be maintained, Paul emphasizes (vv. 18, 20, 22, 24), in loving submission to the Lord Christ.

◆ Lord Jesus, let thy spirit reign in this our home. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23

True to Home Training—2 Timothy 3:14-17

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them:

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Paul, Christ's faithful man, was approaching the end of his life. There was little more that he could say to anyone. His young friend Timothy doubtless had many years ahead of him, and for this reason Paul crowded into this letter much rich advice. He warned Timothy against wicked men, false teachers, greedy schemers (vv. 1-9). These deceitful villains would get worse and worse. Paul urged Timothy to be different, to live steadfastly in the sure truth he had known since childhood.

We who have grown up in Christian homes with the Bible always near will do well to heed Paul's counsel. The Bible has lost none of its truth, wisdom, and power. How we need them all! False teachings and false teachers still abound. The God-given gospel is inexpressibly precious. We are to hold fast to it while we welcome every fresh fact and insight granted through the Holy Spirit to humble, seeking hearts.

◆ We thank thee, Lord of all blessing, for Christian homes, parents, teachers, and thy saving truth. May we live constantly by all thy guidance. Amen.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24

The Word of the Lord—Proverbs 4:20-27

20 ¶ *My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.*

21 *Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.*

22 *For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.*

23 ¶ *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

24 *Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.*

25 *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*

26 *Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.*

27 *Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.*

This chapter emphasizes wise home training (vv. 1-4). The writer had been led in wisdom's way by his father. Now he offered guidance to others—"ye children" (v. 1), "my son" (v. 20). Real guidance it was, and it was beautifully expressed.

LESSON FOR MARCH 3, 1946

Entering and Possessing a New Land

Joshua 1:1-4; 23:1-11

Explained in Daily Readings for Monday and Friday

'Memory Selection: Thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Deuteronomy 8:10.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25

The Promise of God's Help—Joshua 1:1-9

1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to

If our home training is of this kind, life normally possesses fine quality. The divine words of wisdom given to our parents are for us too. Above all is God's final Word in his Son (Heb. 1:1-2). In Christ's stainless life, his incomparable teaching, his reconciling death, his glorious resurrection, and his endless saving power, we find God's way for us and strength to follow it. Only as the mighty Saviour makes our hearts right are we ready for "the issues of life."

◆ Lord, let us love and follow thy way, Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

- M.—Flourishing as the Palm Tree. Psalm 92
- T.—Psalm of Thanksgiving. Psalm 100
- W.—Praise for God's Mercies. Psalm 103
- T.—A Divine Ode of Creation. Psalm 104:1-14
- F.—The Excellence of Piety and Its Reward. Psalm 112
- S.—Home Foundations for National Greatness. Deut. 8:4-12
- S.—"The Best Book in the Best Bookcase." Psalm 119:1-16

stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Standing in Joshua's shoes any man would need such encouragement. Those powerful heathen tribes which had made the ten spies feel like grasshoppers were holding Canaan. For Joshua and his people, strangers to the land, to feel afraid, even dismayed, would be natural. But they were under God's orders to cross the Jordan and take Canaan. Joshua was told to gird himself in two ways for the task. He was to meditate day and night on the law already given through Moses, and he was to be confident that the living God would be with him.

The courage we so need for both the common day and the critical hour is to be had in the same manner. If we will steep our souls in Christ's commanding truth, and accept the promise of his presence, we can do all our duty, face every enemy, and win for God.

◆ Make us brave, Lord, in the assurance of thy presence and help. Amen.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

A Reminder of God's Help—Joshua 4:19-24

19 ¶ And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?

22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

23 For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:

24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.

What an event to memorialize! God had held back the Jordan while the Israelites

passed through on dry ground. Then by his command twelve picked men representing Israel's tribes brought stones from the river bed where the priests with the ark had been standing during the crossing. With these stones Joshua built a memorial at Gilgal, the camping place that first night in the new land. Looking upon this memorial, they would bow anew in reverent fear. And years later when children asked, "What do these stones mean?" their parents would have opportunity to teach them about the mercy and might of their God.

It is very fitting. God knows our proneness to forget. We need reminders of his power, authority, and love: one sacred day in seven; tithes and offerings; the Lord's Supper, reminder of his saving deed on Calvary.

◆ Remind us often, Lord, of thy saving help. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Remembering God's Promises and Warnings—Joshua 8:30-35

30 ¶ Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal,

31 As Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron; and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings.

32 ¶ And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

33 And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gertizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the

women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

Canaan had been entered; the memorial of the crossing had been erected; the Passover had been observed at Gilgal; Jericho had been wiped out; the conquest was well begun. What next? Remember that Joshua, on succeeding Moses as leader, had been told to observe the whole law as the way of success (Josh. 1:8). Now he proceeded to fulfil the instructions.

How good it is for a leader to be an obedient, God-fearing man! The godless leader or people will dash heedlessly ahead, not pausing to acknowledge the Lord of every righteous battle and every good victory. Worship is no less important than fighting; indeed, it is much more so. Whatever our battle or task, we ought to make sure we are struggling for God and right; and between battles and after victories we ought to come to him with thanksgiving and with prayer for more guidance.

◆ Let us pause, Lord, to remember thy warnings and promises. Amen.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Courage for a Hard Job—Joshua 14:6-12

6 ¶ Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

7 Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.

8 Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God.

9 And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God.

10 And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.

11 As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength

now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.

12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.

Years before, when ten of the spies had trembled before walled cities and giants, it was Caleb who had stood before the people saying, "Let us go up . . . ; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30). He was forty then; when he made his famous request, he was eighty-five, but his courage had not evaporated. "I am as strong this day as I was . . . give me this mountain."

How is it with us? When Hitler and Mussolini set out to dominate Europe and finally the world, they based their amazing self-confidence largely on the notion that the democracies had lost their nerve. They held that we could not stand against fresh, hard power. Immense mistake! But it could have been true. Let us beware of losing our grip, especially in things of the spirit. By God's grace, at all costs, let us keep our courage. It is indispensable for daily life and religion.

◆ Give us unflinching courage, Lord, to attempt the hardest task and do it with all our might. Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1

The Necessity for Fidelity—Joshua 23:1-13

1 And it came to pass a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.

2 And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:

3 And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you.

4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

5 And the Lord your God, he shall expel

them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you.

6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;

7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

8 But cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day.

9 For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong; but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.

12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

13 Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

Aged Joshua had earned the right to speak thus to his people. He had hewed to the line, keeping God's commands constantly before him. The people themselves had shown great fidelity. He warned them against presuming, however, on such a glowing promise as that in verse 5, and balanced it with the plain warning of verses 12 and 13. Their God required loyalty.

We have an infinitely greater Leader, leading us to his universal kingdom, calling us to be *semper fidelis* (always faithful). Having marked out the straight path, he would have us walk it in faithful love. We are to be his people, consecrated to him, not trapped and ruined by the world's enticements.

◆ Make us unwaveringly faithful, our Father, to thee and to thy perfect will for us. Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2

We Will Serve the Lord—Joshua 24:14-18

14 ¶ Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

17 For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18 And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwell in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.

Venerable Joshua, as death approached, called Israel to historic Shechem and led them to renew their declaration of loyalty to the only God. He sketched for them the dear, familiar story of God's great deeds of love and power. Having thus warmed their hearts, he challenged them to positive commitment.

Our deepest thanks surely go to the man who moved us to give ourselves to God. Let God's man, honest, brave, standing solidly himself, put the challenge straight. We arise by God's grace and commit ourselves to him.

◆ Thou, Father and Son and Spirit, art the one loving and mighty God. We will serve thee only. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 3

Depending upon God—Palm 20

1 The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions.

6 Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

9 Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call.

Around two verses especially, 6 and 7, let our hearts draw near. They express a sharp contrast between foolish people who put their trust in lesser things and wise people who depend on God for help. There are chariots and horses—strong weapons,

money, overflowing barns, bodily health, high position—all of which may disappear as a morning cloud; and there is "the saving strength" of God, the gracious power of a heavenly Lord who is love. All of us are choosing between these two ways. We walk by sight or by faith. We trust chariots and horses, or we trust God! Our destiny is bound up in our choice.

◆ Thou art our abiding dependence, Lord. Let us put our trust completely in thee. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING-UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Loving God's Law. Psalm 119:89-104
T.—God's Word Gives Light. Psalm 119:129-136
W.—Praising with the Whole Heart. Psalm 138
Th.—Nature's Hallelujah Chorus. Psalm 148
F.—Making Every Instrument Praise God. Psalm 150
S.—Entering and Possessing a New Land. Joshua 1:1-4; 23:1-11
S.—Empowered for Service. Acts 1:1-14

LESSON FOR MARCH 10, 1946

National Disaster and Deliverance

Judges 2:7, 11, 16-23

Explained in Daily Readings for Monday and Tuesday

Memory Selection: The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear. Hebrews 13:6.

MONDAY, MARCH 4

The Result of Disobedience—Judges 2:10-15

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 ¶ And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

Joshua, near death, had given his people pointed warning in the great assembly at Shechem: serving God meant consecration to him alone. That generation remembered and obeyed (Judg. 2:7, 10), but the new generation, without a vivid sense of God's presence and power, became corrupt. "And they forsook the Lord God . . . and followed . . . the gods of the people that were round about . . . and provoked the Lord to anger." God is wonderfully patient, and in carrying out his purposes he can long restrain his wrath. But men can go too far in disobedience, and when they do, they bring punishment upon themselves: their enemies despoil, overrun, and enslave them.

Some of us may call this "old stuff." We may conceive God as nerveless, spineless,

indulgent, letting sin proceed without hindrance or punishment. To conceive him thus is to assail his holy character; to act accordingly is to sow the wind; to go on ignoring his loving will is to reap the whirlwind. What generation has had a fuller opportunity than ours to know it! We have taken our ease. We have not loved all men and have not shared Christ's gospel with them; frightful destruction has fallen upon our world. "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7).

◆ Teach us, Lord, by our hard experience. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

A People Bent on Evil—Judges 2:16-23

16 ¶ Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord: but they did not so.

18 And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

20 ¶ And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

23 Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

These are ugly words describing uglier facts, and all this insistence on evil occurred in the face of strong influences toward godliness. God gave the children of Israel leaders of ability and character. He freed them from oppressors. He had pity on their groanings. Had they been reachable, his grace would have found them; had they been findable, his seeking love would have saved them. But when they proved incorrigible, his righteous anger was kindled and he gave them up to their own foolish, self-destroying ways.

God has never left himself without witness (Acts 14:17); that is, he has given light by which men may walk if they will. We are all without excuse for sin (Rom. 1:20). All that sacrificing love can do for us he has done, even to the extent of the cross. But he has made us free, and if we permit no holy influence to touch us, we go our downward way. God forbid! Let us set our hearts unswervingly toward him.

◆ Lord, "take away our bent to sinning," and lead us to live for thee. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

Obedience Brings Deliverance—Judges 7:19-23

19 ¶ So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

Gideon's band of 300 men could be trusted to be alert and brave; they knew that they

must also obey their leader implicitly or victory could not be theirs. But there is a more fundamental obedience: leader and follower must bow to God. In this Gideon is a model. He had proved himself God's man in dealings with the angel (Judges 6: 11 ff.) and in his bold attack on Baal-worship (6:25 ff.). He had followed God's leading in sifting his army. Now God would be glorified in his courageous, faithful few. The 300 are as obedient as Gideon. Terror seizes the Midianite host, the battle is swiftly won, and with it comes deliverance from cruel oppression.

Thus God's deliverance comes, every genuine, worthy deliverance. Paul, Luther, Lincoln—whoever he is, the leader is called by God and answers with a whole-souled surrender that makes him hard to resist. Courage, confidence, and power are his because he feels himself impelled by God's hand. Like-minded, God-honoring, and fearless men will gather round him, and some will stand by until deliverance is won.

◆ Lord, give us obedience, courage, and victory. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

Sinning and Repenting—Judges 10:6-16

6 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not him.

7 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

9 Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

10 ¶ And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

11 And the Lord said unto the children

of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

15 ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

The First Commandment had required that God be worshiped as the only God. Moses and Joshua stressed this commandment many times. But people bent on sinning showed slight regard for God's law. The one real God was not enough. They must have a collection of false gods, worshiped with degrading rites. Forsaking God, they ran after these heathen deities, and his holy anger burned. Hence they suffered heavy oppressions for eighteen years under Philistines and Ammonites, and the people cried out to God. For a time it seemed that he would not hear. But the people prostrated themselves, confessed their sin, put away false gods, and worshiped the Lord. Then God's "soul was grieved." He answered their repenting with his relenting grace.

Our "Christian" America has its false gods, too: Mammon, the money god; Lady Luck, the soul-destroying gamblers' mistress; Bacchus, the drink god; Ashtoreth, goddess of sexual passion, often exalted in movie, music, sensual dance, and grosser ways; Success, at any cost; Bigness, Popularity; Fashion; Power; Pleasure, often without concern for results. Jesus' word is unmistakable: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

◆ Lord, give us grace to repent and confess and do right that thou mayest bless us. Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

Rearing a Leader for God—Judges 13:2-14

2 ¶ And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

6 ¶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

8 ¶ Then Manoah intreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah: and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any thing that

cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

God will give his people that incalculable blessing, a strong leader. Today's beautiful passage tells how he once did it. Manoah and his wife were true partners. They trusted God and each other, and they pulled together for him. She quickly told Manoah of the angel's visit. He turned to God in believing prayer, begging to be told how they must rear the promised son. His prayer was heard. Since the son was to be a Nazirite—that is, one dedicated to God's service—the mother must renounce hurtful things. From the start, for his sake and the Lord's, and for the people's good, the leader must be unharmed and well trained.

Out of such a home, if anywhere, from such a godly partnership of husband and wife, the people's real leaders will come. Exceptions are possible, but the rule still holds—you can't make a silk purse out of a pig's ear. In a home where there is love and faith and prayer, and where submission to God and eager desire to learn how to bring up a child for him characterize the parents, children receive priceless training. We who know what it means by our own happy experience can never cease thanking God.

◆ In the name of thy Son, our strong Leader, we thank thee, Father, for a Christian home. Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

Turning to God in the Hour of Trouble—Psalm 107:1-9

1 O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

6 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

8 Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Today's reading pictures life's desert stretches with their hunger, thirst, and faintness. The troubled souls turned to God for help, and he led them forth by the right way. Out of that experience came the glad shout of the opening verses, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good. . . . Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." The passage closes with a beautiful description of God's mercy providing good things for the hungry, longing soul. Let all men praise him for his wonderful goodness!

Somehow, these lines, with a gay little tune, once slipped into a Christian song-book:

The world was made to live in,
And it just suits me.

Quite a difference between such rosy glee and Job's "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7); or the New Testament word, "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Optimism does have value; but trouble has a way of finding us. Our question is not whether we shall have trouble, but how we shall take it, what we shall do with it, and what it will do to us. If we are humble and trustful and let our souls be lighted with wisdom from on high, we can raise Bethels even out of our stony griefs. The place of trouble then becomes the house of God.

◆ Thou hast healing, Lord, for all troubles. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

The Condition of Security—Deuteronomy 30:15-20

15 ¶ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

16 In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

20 That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

This is our last selection from the book of Moses' farewell addresses. Moses knew that the end of his life was drawing near, and he pled with great earnestness that all the people would choose the way of life. With tremendous weight of truth, warmth, and plainness, he put the choice before them. Their choice would involve blessing or cursing, prosperity or loss, long life or short, possession of the land or exclusion from it, good or evil, life or death. In loyal, obedient love to God they would have security; in rebellion and sin they would have misery and ruin. The choice was before them.

Thus did God's spokesman bring God's call. Centuries passed. One day that "Prophet . . . like unto" Moses (Deut. 18: 15, 18) stood to declare the fuller truth, to law down the plainer challenge, to sound the higher call: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36).

To every man there openeth

A high way and a low,

And every man decideth

The way his soul shall go.

—JOHN OXENHAM

(Used by permission)

◆ Lord, let multitudes hear thy call and choose eternal life in thy Son. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Pentecost. Acts 2:22-42

T.—The Lame Man. Acts 3:1-10

W.—The First Arrest. Acts 4:1-12

T.—Delivered from Prison. Acts 5:17-32

F.—Deacons and Stephen. Acts 6

S.—National Disaster and Deliverance. Judg. 2:7,

11, 16-23

S.—Stephen's Death. Acts 7:51-80

LESSON FOR MARCH 17, 1946

Religion in Everyday Life

Ruth 1:8-17

Explained in Daily Reading for Monday

Memory Selection: Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Ruth 1:16.

MONDAY, MARCH 11

Sorrow Relieved by Loyalty—Ruth 1:3, 6-17

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

6 ¶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

In this first of five readings in Ruth we see Naomi shaken by sorrow upon sorrow. In foreign Moab, where famine had driven them, her husband and both sons had died. The loving wife and mother had become a childless widow and grief was her bitter

food and drink. She decided to leave her beloved Moabitish daughters-in-law and return to Bethlehem. After they had walked a distance together she pled with them to return to their mothers and to take other husbands. Orpah tearfully departed, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi. Her loyalty in love turned bitter into sweet.

Sorrow, like suffering in nearly every form, has many uses. Among them is its way of drawing torn hearts close together so that they may cheer and strengthen each other. And one's grief often tests another's loyalty. How glorious it is when the testing reveals the purest metal.

◆ Our Father who art loving and faithful, help us to mend broken hearts with our loyalty. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

Working for Bread—Ruth 2:1-7

1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

4 ¶ And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moab-

itish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Naomi was not simply a sad and childless widow and an aging woman tired from walking when she reached Bethlehem. She was also poor. She knew the anxiety over daily bread so common in all lands and times. And Naomi's lot was that of Ruth except that Ruth was younger, stronger, and more fit for work in a harvest field. So Ruth, accepting the humiliation of poverty, went to glean in the field of Boaz who was Naomi's husband's kinsman. Prosperous, kindly Boaz came out from town to the field and noticed Ruth gleaning after the workers. His interest was quick and keen, and he learned from the overseer who she was.

Some people have been too proud to work, but it is now generally recognized that work is a blessing and that all honorable toil is respectable. The fact that Jesus himself labored as a carpenter has done much to impress the world with the fact that work is honorable.

◆ We thank thee, Lord, for work and bread and for our Saviour's example in common labor. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

The Comfort of Kindness—Ruth 2:17-23

17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

18 ¶ And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

19 And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz.

20 And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to

the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

21 And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

23 So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.

Boaz's kind heart had opened to Ruth's need without hesitation. He had immediately invited her to go on gleaning in his fields throughout harvesttime and had forbidden the young men to annoy her. He had given her full access to the water jars, no small matter to harvesters, and had spoken appreciatively of her kindness to Naomi. Boaz invited her to eat with the other harvesters and had ordered the young men to let fall purposely handfuls of grain for her.

Blessed is the kindness of the God-fearing man to those about him. Their weakness turns to strength because of him, their bitterness to sweetness. And each one of us can be God's helper. Everywhere there are people whose spirits are withering and drooping. God will use our generous deeds and our kind words to make them happy and to move their hearts to praise him.

◆ For all kind deeds that lift our hearts to thee we praise thee, Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14

The Way of Goodness—Proverbs 13:1-7

1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

5 A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

6 Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

The book of Proverbs is crammed with concentrated wisdom. Most of the proverbs are disconnected, each having its own pithy subject. Yet, as in these seven verses, there is generally a contrast between the wise, good way and the foolish, evil way. For example, verse 1 pictures two sons; the wise one heeds his father's counsel, the foolish scorns it.

A large part of the time we waste could be spent very profitably in reading and absorbing such wise sayings. In some instances, such as verse 4 or 5, the meaning lies where all can see it readily. In other instances, like verse 2, the truth is harder to find and grasp. Doubtless this verse means that by speaking kindly and wisely we gain good standing and have ripe, pleasant fruit to eat; while those who deal in evil bring evil upon themselves and their fruit is unripe, distasteful, and nauseating.

◆ Father, let us follow thy good way. Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

Faithful to One's Duty—Ruth 4:1-6

1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:

4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must

buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

6 ¶ And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

Recall the remarkable description of courtship in chapter 3. Under Naomi's prompting Ruth had made clear to Boaz that she welcomed his evident interest in her—love at first sight, maybe. In her heart she was at his feet.

Naomi and Ruth, with Boaz's ready consent, agreed that unless the nearer kinsman should use his privilege and buy the family estate, Boaz would buy it. Fortunately, the nearer kinsman gladly withdrew and left the way open to eager Boaz, next of kin. Ruth was hardly more the heroine than was Boaz the hero. Estimable gentleman! Fit ancestor for a line of kings—from which, after the flesh, would finally come the King (Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32).

◆ Lord of all love, we rejoice that all events are under thy direction. Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

Love and Faith Crowned—Ruth 4:7-12

7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.

8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

9 ¶ And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

11 And the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel:

and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem:

12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

By the expressive old shoe ceremony, that unnamed kinsman of Naomi's family surrendered to Boaz any right he had to own the piece of ground. He was pleased; Boaz was delighted; and all who gathered at the town gate were in fine spirits. And Boaz did not let the important fact pass unnoticed: Ruth, the rose of Moab, the lovely young widow of Naomi's son Mahlon, was to become his wife. The foreign girl who chose Naomi's people and Naomi's God was rewarded with one of Israel's choice men for her own.

A family life rich in human love and crowned with the blessing of God is surely one of his most glorious gifts to the sons and daughters of men. What pains we ought to take to preserve it for ourselves. ♦ Crown our family life with thy favor, Lord—with love like unto thine own in Christ. Let no wrong attitude or deed come in to destroy. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

A Worthy Woman—Proverbs 31:10-31

10 ¶ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

18 She perceiveth that her merchandize is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

20 She stretcheth out her hand to the

poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

A woman truly worthy is pictured in the passage. How thoroughly wise and industrious she is! She keeps her household in order. She makes her labor bring in profits and finds satisfaction in her strength, work, and success. She does not toil for self alone. She is protecting her family from want in days to come. Better still, she blesses poorer folk with her gentle beneficence. And when she finds time to talk, it is with great sense and kindness.

Her husband is fortunate indeed in such a wife. All their life she is a treasure to him. Both husband and children accord her the praise she so richly earns.

♦ For mother, sister, wife, daughter, and all their love and labor, we thank thee, Lord. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Phillip. Acts 8:26-40

T.—Saul. Acts 9:1-16

W.—Cornelius. Acts 10:30-48

T.—Peter's Defense. Acts 11:1-18

F.—Peter in Prison Again. Acts 12:1-12

S.—Religion in Everyday Life. Ruth 1:8-17

S.—Paul a Missionary. Acts 13:1-12

LESSON FOR MARCH 24, 1946

Forces That Unify a Nation

I Samuel 7:1-8, 13-15

Explained in Daily Readings for Thursday and Friday

Memory Selection: Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. Jeremiah 7:23.

MONDAY, MARCH 18

A Good Woman's Prayer—I Samuel 1:10-18

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

No, a husband is not better than ten sons! (v. 8). Hannah was "in bitterness of soul," but not that acid bitterness which makes a hard spirit. Hers was no selfish petition. Besides her own heart's satisfaction she sought the service of God.

How far prayer surpasses mere begging for what we want! God knows infinitely better than we do what is best. He encourages us to ask persistently; he will even bear with complainings; but he yearns for us to submit to his will and to desire his glory. He rejoices in the prayer which offers to him that which is dearer than anything else. What could mean more to the world than that children should be asked of God, dedicated to God, and reared for God? If they are precious beyond imagining to us, they are even more precious to him.

♦ Lord, let our prayers be sincere and humble, seeking thy service above our own pleasure. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 19

A Little Child Serves God—I Samuel 2:10-26

18 ¶ But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

20 ¶ And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home.

21 And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

22 ¶ Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

23 And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

24 *Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress.*

25 *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.*

26 *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.*

The darkness of sin in Israel could hardly have been blacker. Eli's son, who served as priests, mediators between holy God and sinful man, had profaned their sacred office. Not stopping with graft and robbery (vv. 12-17), they descended to grossest immorality. Thus they had dragged the highest down to the lowest and had made religion a hissing in the people's sight.

Against that pitch-black night shone the life of the boy Samuel. By his mother he had been asked from God and given to God. Samuel himself took delight in God's service. People who observed him noticed his cleanness and devotion; God, who saw all, was pleased with him. "The child is father of the man." "Boys will be boys"? Yes—and, in so few years, men!

◆ Lord, lead us to fulfil our parents' dearest hopes and thine own holy purposes. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

God Speaks Through Samuel—I Samuel 3:10-21

10 *And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.*

11 *¶ And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.*

12 *In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.*

13 *For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

14 *And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house*

shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15 *¶ And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.*

16 *Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.*

17 *And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.*

18 *And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.*

19 *¶ And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.*

20 *And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.*

21 *And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.*

God spoke through Samuel and through many another prophet after him, men to whom he had given ears for listening, wills to obey, and tongues to speak. With that kind of ear, will, and tongue each of us in his measure can be a channel through which God's truth comes to others. We can exalt him. We can rebuke sin. We can be eager, honest, willing, and faithful. Thus the vision and word of God, so rare and so precious, can be shared more widely with his needy world.

◆ Lord, according to thy will let us receive and share thy truth. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 21

A Prophet Prays for His People—I Samuel 7:3-12

3 *¶ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*

4 *Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.*

5 *And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.*

6 *And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.*

7 *And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.*

8 *And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.*

9 *¶ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel: and the Lord heard him.*

10 *And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.*

11 *And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.*

12 *Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*

God's people had endured miserable subjection to the Philistines for more than twenty years. Samuel moved faithfully among them, facing every danger, explaining God's judgments, stirring the people to repent. The warlike Philistines, hearing that their Israelite subjects were rejecting their gods and had assembled to worship God, rushed to attack. Thereupon the people begged Samuel to cry unceasingly to God. In answer to his prophet's prayer, the Lord turned back the Philistines and gave victory to his repentant, worshiping people.

With Richard C. Trench we pray:

◆ Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!

Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 22

A Prophet Judges His People—I Samuel 7:13-17

13 *¶ So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.*

14 *And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.*

15 *And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.*

16 *And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.*

17 *And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.*

We may well think on the importance of having men of Samuel's quality in places of authority. Too many mayors, councilmen, judges, governors, presidents, and the like fail to give God his rightful place. The man to rule is the man of faith, prayer, moral energy, humility, thorough work, and efficient administration. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice" (Prov. 29:2). In government, as in everything, God—his truth, principles, will, and law—should be first.

◆ Lord, give us the enlightened will to choose only worthy men for places of authority. Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 23

A People Praising God for His Works—Psalm 111

1 *Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.*

2 *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*

3 *His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*

4 *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.*

5 *He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.*

6 *He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.*

7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.
8 They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

The world is full of praise of many sorts, and much of it is not true and worthy. By radio and newspaper we get lying praise of various poisons—cigarettes, beer, wine, and whiskey. A host of articles advertised in glowing terms are not what they are claimed to be. Some persons receive far more praise than they deserve. Consider the oily, scheming politician and modern stage and screen stars. But the all-glorious God also is praised by millions. We cannot make his praise too great. He is still the God of power, grace, providence, truth, righteousness, compassion, and redemption; and those who walk before him in godly fear are on the way to "a good understanding."

◆ Let us praise thee, great Lord, with all wisdom of heart. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

A People Remembering God's Mercies—Psalm 85

1 Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

Many of these verses are quite familiar. Whatever may have been the now unknown occasion of the psalm's composition, its thoughts are for everybody, everywhere and always. There are three main parts: thanksgiving (1-3), petition (4-7), and expectation (8-13). The thanksgiving is for deliverance from captivity, and restoration; for God's forgiveness, which "covers" sin; and for his turning from his fiery wrath. The petition is for God's help, that the people may turn wholly to him; for full cessation of his anger; for the quickening and increase of life and gladness ("revive us again"); and for a rich outpouring of his merciful salvation. The bright expectation is peace, salvation, glory, mercy, truth, righteousness, productivity, and walking in God's way.

Let us pray and live in the spirit of this psalm. Let us thankfully remember God's deliverance, restoration, and forgiveness. Let us seek not only relief from his just punishments but release from the chains of our own sins. Let us covet deep, genuine, and far-reaching revival. Let us pray in the joyful expectation that he will shower his best blessings upon us. What he did for the people of old he will do for us through his manifold grace in Christ.

◆ O God our Father, let us live constantly in the attitude of humble, thankful, expectant prayer. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Paul's First Sermon. Acts 13:16-39

T.—Paul at Lystra. Acts 14:8-18

W.—First Journey Ends. Acts 14:19-28

T.—The Jerusalem Council. Acts 15:1-11

F.—The Call of the West. Acts 16:1-16

S.—Forces That Unify a Nation. 1 Sam. 7:1-8.

13-15

S.—The Jailer Converted. Acts 16:10-34

Called to World Service

2 Chronicles 6:12-14, 18-21, 32-33; Isaiah 42:6-7

Explained in Daily Readings for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday

Memory Selection: Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Isaiah 43:12.

MONDAY, MARCH 25

God's Call to Abraham—Genesis 12:1-7

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 ¶ And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

Our readings for this last week of the quarter take us back to the call of Abraham and forward to the final glorious victory and reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. In today's reading we see the God of long, deep purposes dealing with a man of unusual obedience and faith.

Abraham heard God saying, "Get thee out . . . from thy kindred . . . unto a land that I will shew thee." A thrilling destiny is held before his eyes: he is to be famous, great, useful. From him will spring a mighty nation. Apparently without questioning, Abraham at seventy-five fares

forth under God's call and leading. With him go his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, into the land of promise. Nothing sought, nothing ventured,—nothing won.

Assured of God's companionship, we need not know the way. He knows every step of it.

◆ Teach us, Lord, to be completely obedient and to venture on by faith. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26

God's Covenant With Israel—Exodus 19:1-8

1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 ¶ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

Man reaches up to deal with God, and God stoops to empower man—two-way traffic, reciprocal action. If Israel will

be his people, he will be their God. How tenderly he drew them! He did not use compulsion. Instead, he gently reminded them of his previous great mercies: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." If they will do their part, he will exalt them as his "peculiar treasure . . . above all people," "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." With manifest enthusiasm and without delay they leaped to God's offer and entered the covenant, saying "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

As Christians we are bound to God in the new covenant which is signed in the blood of Christ, the God-man. (See Matt. 26:28; Heb. 10:29 ASV). Under that holy agreement we are his and he is ours. For us he has prepared "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 1:4). We, for our part, are to submit ourselves in loving faith, take up the cross, and follow him.

◆ How blessed it is, dear Master, to be bound with thee in our everlasting covenant. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

Pleading the Promise of God—2 Chronicles 6:12-17
12 ¶ And he stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands:

13 For Solomon had made a brasen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven.

14 And said, O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:

15 Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.

16 Now therefore, O Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way

to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me.

17 Now then, O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.

On February 10 we noted the great beauty and range of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple. Today we have another selection from that prayer. On his knees before God in the assembly's presence, Solomon pled the promise God had made to King David his father (1 Kings 2:4). He quoted the promise—that as long as David's descendants were faithful, the kingship would not pass from his family. Solomon's ardent prayer was that God would fulfil this promise.

The answer to Solomon's prayer had been far richer than Solomon knew or could dream. The Messiah, our Saviour Christ, is of David's line according to the flesh. He is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David" (Rev. 5:5). And "his dominion is an everlasting dominion, . . . and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14). God's promise to David is fulfilled a thousand times over in our matchless King on his eternal throne.

◆ To thee as King, O Son of God, we bow our hearts in joy. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

Praying for the Favor of God—2 Chronicles 6:18-21, 32-33

18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

19 Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee:

20 That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place.

21 Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place,

even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.

32 ¶ Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this house;

33 Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

These choice verses from Solomon's prayer present a noble idea of God and of his relation to the world of men. Observe the conception of God in verses 18-21. He is beyond the highest heaven, "yet to each loving heart how near." He sees; he hears; he considers his servants' petitions; according to his will he hearkens; and to truly repentant souls he grants forgiveness.

Then note verses 32-33. Israel is specially chosen, but it is for God's glory and the world's blessing. There is no narrow individual, national, or racial monopoly on God. His name, glory, power, grace, forgiveness, and redemption are to be known the earth around; and it is the sacred business of his people so to exalt him that all who will heed his loving call will be drawn to him.

◆ Thou, infinite Spirit, art Lord of all. Let us share thy love in Christ with all people. Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 29

The Mission of Israel—Isaiah 42:5-9

5 ¶ Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

8 I am the Lord: that is my name: and

my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

In this luminous passage from Isaiah we see God's servant not only as a bond of union between God and the Chosen People but also as a "light of the Gentiles." The one God, who created the heavens and the earth and marvelously set them in order and who gives life and breath, purposes that Israel's Messiah shall be the Gentiles' light. Israel's true mission is to bring forth this light for God and hold it aloft against the world's night.

How our hearts swell with thanks that in Jesus we see such a shining prophecy fulfilled. There is still darkness enough; many eyes have no vision of life's meaning and God's love; sin's captives are counted by tens of millions. But Israel's mission reached its peak in him who is David's "son" and the Son of God, and multitudes rejoice in his salvation.

◆ Eternal God, thy prophecies are sure. Grant us a share in speeding their fulfilment. Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

Divine Challenge and Assurance—Isaiah 60:1-3, 15-19

1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

18 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

19 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy

officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

This whole chapter (a poem in Hebrew) pictures an Israel lighted by God himself and so reflecting that light as to draw other peoples to him. In verses 1-3 we are reminded again of a world in deep darkness needing light. Israel is challenged to penetrate the darkness with the bright glory which has risen upon her. Seeing it, Gentile peoples and kings will come to God.

In verses 15-19 we find a fuller description of what it means to the nation to have God for her light. No longer is Israel a wife forsaken, a city deserted, but a most prosperous land.

Ancient Israel might indeed have fulfilled this description had she not rejected God's Son as Messiah, Saviour, and Lord. Now, however, the true Israel consists of those who accept him in faith (see Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-17). Upon Christians God's light shines; we inherit the challenge, the assurance, and the glory. Having seen the Light, we have the holy obligation to reflect him to the dark world.

◆ Lord, let us faithfully carry out the glorious mission thou hast given us. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 31

The Triumph of the Messiah—Psalm 2

1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

7 I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with fear, and with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all that put their trust in him.

Here is man's age-long battle against God. Heathen Gentiles and unworthy rulers brewed against his control. Kings conspired "against the Lord, against his anointed." God's rule cran their designs—off with it! But the mighty was not shaken by these puny efforts; driven to wrath, he decreed punishment and announced that his anointed would triumph over all enemies.

The way of wisdom is still the same. may have God's blessed Messiah as gracious king if we are willing, or may stubbornly resist his righteous authority. Then our vain folly returns upon in destroying judgment to hurl us into unlighted pit of gnashing teeth and wailing hearts. He is condemning Judge or deeming Lord; which, every individual must choose. Oh, that all would love and serve the mighty, seeking Saviour! All who follow him will share his perfect triumph.

◆ Lord Jesus, let us submit to thee, tremblingly, joyfully, in full trust and obedience. And may thy kingdom come everywhere. Amen.

BAPTIST TRAINING UNION READINGS

For Individual Devotions

M.—Paul in Athens. Acts 17:16-34

T.—Paul in Corinth. Acts 18:1-11

W.—In Ephesus. Acts 19:1-20

F.—Farewell at Miletus. Acts 20:17-38

S.—The Jerusalem Mob. Acts 21:26-40

S.—A Nation Called to World Service. 2 Cl

6:12-14, 18-21, 32-33; Isa. 42:6-7

S.—Paul's Defense. Acts 22:1-21