

Vol. VIII.

FOURTH QUARTER, 1917

Number 3

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PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY PER QUARTER

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# Home Department Magazine

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
CONVENTION SERIES**

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PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD, SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, 161 EIGHTH AVENUE, NORTH, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE  
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ENTRUSTED TO REGISTERED MAIL MATTER MARCH 16, 1916, BY THE POST OFFICE AT NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, UNDER THE ACT OF MARCH 3, 1879

# LIST OF LESSONS

FOR

## Fourth Quarter, 1917

October 7—PSALMS OF DELIVERANCE.

LESSON PASSAGE, Psalms 88 and 126.

MOTTO TEXT—"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." (Psalm 126: 5.)

October 14—RETURNING FROM CAPTIVITY.

LESSON PASSAGE, Ezra 1: 1-11.

MOTTO TEXT—"Jehovah hath done great things for us; Wherest we are glad." (Psalm 126: 3.)

October 21—THE TEMPLE REBUILT AND DEDICATED.

LESSON PASSAGE, Ezra 3: 8-13; 6: 14-18.

MOTTO TEXT—"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise." (Psalm 109: 4.)

October 28—ESRA'S RETURN FROM BABYLON.

LESSON PASSAGE, Ezra 8: 15-36.

MOTTO TEXT—"The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good." (Ezra 8: 22.)

November 4—DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS (Temperance Lesson).

LESSON PASSAGE, 1 Kings 20: 1-21.

MOTTO TEXT—"Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off." (1 Kings 20: 11.)

November 11—NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 1: 1-11.

MOTTO TEXT—"Whosoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3: 22.)

November 18—NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER ANSWERED.

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 2: 1-11.

MOTTO TEXT—"Ask and it shall be given you." (Matt 7: 7.)

November 25—A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING.

LESSON PASSAGE, Psalm 108.

MOTTO TEXT—"Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (Psalm 108: 2.)

December 2—NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM.

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 4.

MOTTO TEXT—"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; What shall man do unto me?" (Heb 13: 6.)

December 9—ESRA AND NEHEMIAH TEACH THE LAW.

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 8.

MOTTO TEXT—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path." (Psalm 119: 105.)

December 16—NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE LAW OF THE SAMARITANS.

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 13: 15-22.

MOTTO TEXT—"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Exodus 20: 8.)

December 23—PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH.

LESSON PASSAGE, Malachi 3: 1-12.

MOTTO TEXT—"Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3: 2.)

December 30—REVIEW.—GOD'S KINGDOM IS AT HAND.

READ, Psalms 129 and 124.

MOTTO TEXT—"With Jehovah there is lovingkindness, And with him is plenteous redemption." (Psalm 130: 2.)

# Home Department Magazine

VOLUME VIII.

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## Clouds.

PHILIP B. STRONG.

Who guides those graceful cloud-ships of the sky  
Across the azure seas,  
As swift and sure upon their course they fly  
Before the freshening breeze?

Who tells them where to leave their liquid freight,  
The warm and welcome rain;  
There on the lordly mountain raised in state,  
Here on the lowly plain?

Who but that One who also orders all,  
And shapes thy life and mine?  
Who though a thousand changes may befall  
Doth rule with hand divine.

And He who guides yon keelless craft along  
With such unerring skill,  
Will He direct thy soul-ship's voyage wrong?  
Canst thou not trust Him still?

## Bible Study in the Home.

REV. W. JAMES ROBINSON.

A REVIVAL of sincere, earnest, reverent Bible study in the home will quicken every noble impulse in the hearts of the family circle. If we keep in mind the true aim of religious education as that of winning recruits to the kingdom of God and developing them for efficient service, the place of the Bible and its value will be manifest. No other book, or any number of books, is comparable in value to the Bible as a means of developing and directing lives for usefulness. Let us quickly rise above having Bibles in our homes and perfunctorily reading them because our fathers did; or using them as a kind of fetish, lest some evil befall us. Read it, study it, meditate on it, because it is God's revelation to us.

### THE CHILD AND THE BIBLE.

Children come into the world the very embodiment of helplessness. They have great capacity to receive, but none to discriminate, and their parents, or others having charge of them, must supply their necessities. Their wants are as truly spiritual as they are physical after they reach the period of mental development. They need the Bible to give them correct ideas of their social inheritance. No intelligent parent thinks of rearing a child in ignorance of his great country and her patriots and other great citizens. The study of history brings heroes into our consciousness so that we feel stimulated by

their deeds. The Bible makes us feel the pressure from the remotest periods and that we are partakers of the world's greatest movements in harmony with the noblest characters of the ages.

Since the King James Version was given to the people, no other book has so largely influenced our literature. It is impossible to read understandingly our great English and American classics without a practical knowledge of the Bible. Since our schools do not teach the Bible and the Sunday school has so little time for doing so, it is obligatory upon the home to do it. It has unsurpassed literary values all its own. It gives us an insight into the life of the most wonderful people in all history; and the unique place religion held in their lives. Considered only as literature, the Bible abounds in readings that will hold children as by a spell, and is the source of much of the best of our secular literature that we should read. Its phrases have an impressiveness that charms and embody the noblest ideals. As the child grows older, their meaning and richness will dawn upon him.

The Bible should be used specifically as a book of religion. Impress upon the children that God moved upon holy men to write it for us, and that it "is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter;

and that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us." Neglect on the part of parents at this point accounts for multitudes of human derelicts today.

#### HINDRANCES TO BE OVERCOME.

The secular, even the worldly and necessary, so grips our lives that we feel that we have very little time for the sacred. To be a Christian of the highest order requires corresponding will power. Family life should be conducted by programs just as rigidly as any business enterprise. In fact, there is no greater business than wisely directing the interests of a family. Many parents feel a strangeness, a source of unfitness, a chilling unnaturalness when they propose to the family that they read the Bible. This should be utterly destroyed. Remember that it is your heavenly Father's Book, given to you to be read, believed, loved and obeyed. You dishonor him in this strange feeling. The excessive tasks assigned by the schools hinder, but they should not be allowed to do so. No intellectual culture is at its best if the spiritual is neglected. At this point, be sure to give the Bible first place. But the greatest obstacle is parental ignorance of the Bible as a book, its doctrines and value in child training. This is hereditary. So is ignorance of many other things we have overcome; and if the parents of this generation will overcome this one obstacle we will build a new and very superior people. Wisely select appropriate passages and have different members of the family read them aloud. This will appeal to the children and solve the problem.

#### HOW SHALL WE DO IT?

**Parental example.** In this, as in everything else, the parents are under the most serious obligation to be worthy examples to their children. Give the Bible the same place in your life that you desire it to have in the lives of your children. Read it, study it, discuss it, obey it and love it because it is God's Book; and in no sense as a matter of compulsion. You cannot drive hearts to love by brute force. Children that are reared by this method will have received the best home can give in this particular.

**Use it wisely.** Many children grow up with an aversion to the Bible because parents fall at this point. Some handle it in such a manner as to make children feel it is something entirely separate from our ordinary life, and consequently they come to have an antipathy for it. As far as possible avoid using it so as to make it a source to which children must go to discharge tasks

as they do to encyclopedias in school. The exercise of poor judgment in using the Bible is responsible for many children avoiding it. When reading aloud, do it in the same manner and tone you would read anything else. It is unwise to require children to be as still as death and listen to a peculiar tone, with a funeral dirge echo, while the Bible is being read. Display real pleasure in pondering its pages. You can pay the Bible no greater compliment than to read it naturally. You cannot put your stamp on it, but if you come to it unblased it certainly will put its stamp on you.

**Find joy in its use.** Every normal child delights in hearing good stories and listening to appropriate readings. Where there are children, or even one child, there should be an hour for them when their culture has the right of way. Good stories have an inexhaustible value for educational purposes. No book surpasses the Bible as a story book for the children's hour. They will find real pleasure in its rhythmic passages, in the wonderful poetic flights of the great prophets and the imagery of the Psalms will hold them. They are very imaginative and will think it natural for the hills to skip and the big trees to praise God.

**Use it as a book of counsel.** Children learn very early to raise questions of rights. They soon develop standards of conduct and keen sense of justice. Teach them to go to the Bible for their answers and direct them in finding the right passages. The Bible is so manifestly just that it will appeal to them. Guide them in the study of the Proverbs, and tactfully have them read the great biographical sketches. There they will see men falling before, and others resisting, the greatest temptations, but be sure they understand why this is so.

**Use it in worship.** Worship should be as truly a part of the family life, and just as natural as its social diversions. Here the children meet their dearest loved ones, and there, too, is their dear friend, the Bible, holding the place of honor. Have the children take part in the reading. Be sure to select the passages wisely. The great heart-gripping ones should be used frequently so as to impress them indelibly upon the minds of the children.

**Helps.** In many homes there is a great gulf fixed between the Bible and all the rest of the literature in the home. This is deplorably outrageous. Surely each home can afford some of the many good books, papers, picture scrolls and magazines that aid in unfolding and impressing Bible truths on children's minds.

**Make the Bible accessible.** Just as soon as a child can read, furnish it with Bible stories; when it is able to read the Bible, give it one with good type and as much like other books as possible. Various versions will add to the interest one feels in the Bible. Get single parts bound alone. They are convenient and attractive.

#### SOME QUESTIONABLE PLANS.

Learning the number of letters in the Bible, the longest and shortest verses, the middle verse, and all such facts are of very doubtful value. Such things will likely make children think of the Bible as a peculiar museum of literary oddities. Catch questions, or such as are thoroughly mooted, raise doubts and in no way do any real good. Never think of the Bible as you do books, for purely social entertainment or the basis of games. It was not intended for any of these uses.

## If Mary Had Known.

If Mary had known  
When she held her Babe's hands in her  
own—  
Little hands that were tender and white as  
a rose,  
All dented with dimples from finger to  
wrist,  
Such as mothers have kissed—  
That one day they must feel the fierce blows  
Of a hatred insane,  
Must redden with holiest stain,  
And grasp as their guard on the boon of the  
bitterest pain,  
Oh, I think that her sweet, brooding face  
Must have blanched with its anguish of  
knowledge above her embrace.

But—if Mary had known,  
As she held her Babe's hands in her own,  
What a treasure of gifts to the world they  
would bring;  
What healing and hope to the hearts that  
must ache,  
And without Him must break;  
Had she known they would pluck forth  
death's sting  
And set open the door  
Of the close, jealous grave evermore,  
Making free who were captives in sorrow  
and darkness before,  
Oh, I think that a gracious sunrise  
Of rapture had broken across the despair of  
her eyes!

There is much detailed knowledge that has great value if not used as an end, but the basis for further study. Dates of great events, ages of the conspicuous characters, the names of the books in each Testament, and such other things. But the mere knowledge of these things is of little cultural value and have no ethical value whatever. What is desired is that the Bible may grip the heart so as to shape the life and determine the destiny. The Bible makes men as broad as all truth, as tender-hearted as human needs, as pure as mortal can be, as just as finite intellects can conceive, as honest as property rights can be determined, as helpful as their resources and as noble as sons of God. There is nothing beyond what it can do and nothing needful is left undone. It is the most worthwhile book ever produced. The mastery of it is the mastery of self, time and eternity.

If Mary had known,  
As she held him so closely, her own,  
Cradling his shining, fair head on her breast,  
Sunned over with ringlets as bright as the  
morn,  
That a garland of thorn  
On that tender brow would be pressed  
Till the red drops would fall  
Into eyes that looked out upon all,  
Abrim with a pity divine over clamor and  
hrawl,  
Oh, I think that her lullaby song  
Would have died on her lips into wailing  
impassioned and long!

But—if Mary had known,  
As she held him so closely, her own,  
That over the darkness and pain He would  
be  
The Conqueror hailed in all oncoming days,  
The world's hope and praise,  
And the garland of thorn,  
The symbol of mocking and scorn  
Would be a victorious diadem royally worn,  
Oh, I think that ineffable joy  
Must have flooded her soul as she bent o'er  
her wonderful Boy!

—L. M. Montgomery, in *The Watchman and Other Poems*.

## Praying Mothers.

MRS. NATHAN MAYNARD.

As I write these words a picture comes before me of a frail woman with earnest face, climbing the stairs to an upper room. Often holding to the banisters for support and trembling as she walked, causing her children to wonder why mother should go upstairs when she felt so badly. Sometimes it would happen that she was needed, and, going up to call her, the door would be found locked. It was not understood then why mother locked the door, but in later years, when she had climbed still higher, to the room prepared for her above, there came into the hands of one of her daughters a little book. On one page was written "the things I am praying for this year," and how many years there were, and how many prayers! On the opposite page would be the words, "Thank God, answered!" Or else, "God, in his wisdom, sees best to defer this answer," or, perhaps, the simple word, "continued." And the inmates of that home understood for the first time the secret of many blessings that had come to them—the answers to the prayers of this faithful, praying mother. Oh, not until the seals are removed from the book of life, will the world really know what the prayers of mothers have done for its salvation! Mothers, do you sometimes grow weary as you "wait on the Lord," and yet do not see the answers to your prayers? Do not despair. Be strong and of good courage. "Sometime, somewhere," you shall have your answer. Though the flesh wears and the heart grows faint, continue to climb the stairs to that upper room. *Do not let the key stay on the outside.* "And in due time ye shall reap—if ye faint not. Some writer has given us a new meaning to the words, "pray without ceasing."

Rather without "ceasings", that is, without great gaps in our prayer-life. We begin very earnestly to pray for a thing, but, receiving no definite answer, grow weary, and, finally, cease altogether. Oh, how we need the faith of George Muller, who, early in his Christian life, began to pray for five friends. Five years later, one of them gave himself to Christ. Ten years of prayer brought two more to the Saviour. He prayed on for twenty-five years and the fourth was saved. For the fifth man he was still praying, after fifty-two years, when he was called to lay down his work of intercession. He died believing that his prayer was heard. A few months later this friend also became a Chris-

tian. *Fifty-two* years of prayer without ceasings, for one soul! What sublime faith and perseverance! Should we not be ashamed of our faint-hearted appeals!

Oh, mother-heart! do not give up that wondering boy, the child of your many prayers. Not yours to know why God delays, only yours to cling to him like Jacob of old, until he bless you. . . . Among the many wonderful answers to a devoted mother's prayers we have read of none more touching than that of Simon Trenworth, who, after his conversion, became such a valuable soul-saver in the famous Bowery mission of New York. His home life in Ireland was of the most helpful kind; father, mother, brother and sister all being devoted Christians. But led off by wild companions, Simon became the victim of drink, and for several years he wandered from city to city, his footsteps dogged by the devils of drink, debauchery and debt. His father went in sorrow to his grave, but his mother and sister continued their earnest prayers, while the devoted brother, out of his hard-earned funds, paid all of his debts, and secured his passage to America, hoping that new scenes might lead to a new life. But the night after landing in New York he was beguiled into a saloon, drugged and robbed of every penny he had. Pitiful indeed was his condition. A stranger without a friend, no bed, no food. His experiences for the next six weeks were heart-rending. Half-clad and almost starved, he frequently planned to take his life when the thought of his mother would come to him, and as he thought of her prayers, hope would revive, but be quenched by another day of fruitless search for employment. At last one night, which he thought and hoped would be his last on earth, he wandered aimlessly down the Bowery. His attention was arrested by the bright light streaming through the open door of the mission. While the music of the singing warmed into life his feebly beating heart. On the window he read, in white letters, "Welcome; Come In." And he went in. Ah! the unspeakable wonder of a mother's prayers! Doubtless, at that moment, bathed in an incense of tears, they were ascending to the Father. And at last the answer was about to come. As he listened to the testimony of others saved from the very ruin which had overtaken him, hope sprang up. From his poor broken heart came the cry, "Lord, save me!" and with

the cry—the answer. From that night the new life began; first, steady employment, then self-respect, confidence, hope. He rarely ever missed a night at the mission, leading many poor, lost men to the Saviour by his earnest love and sympathy. But his early life had wrecked his health, and soon it became apparent that his life must soon pay the forfeit to sin. "Back home to mother!" he pleaded, and ere long a poor, shattered wreck was lovingly borne in his brother's arms from the boat to his home in Dublin. He was laid in his mother's bed; it was his mother who watched over him with loving touch the few days he lingered. Almost his last conscious words were, "There's no one like mother." Ah, mother, what if you had faint! What if your prayers had ceased! And mothers, do you know that as you pray thus earnestly for one, your prayer horizon becomes greatly widened. Other mothers' sons and daughters are added to yours. This is one of the blessed results of earnest prayer. We may begin at home, but

soon we are reaching out for the world. Jacob Chamberlain's mother carried her infant boy, as soon as she could rise from her bed, to her secret place of prayer. There she dedicated him to God as a foreign missionary. All through his college life she renewed the gift each year. When at his graduation he told her of his life-purpose, she told him of her life-prayer. She wanted God's call, not hers, to lead him. And, not satisfied with this beautiful sacrificial offering to her Lord, three more of her children were led into mission work through her prayers. At her funeral, the president of Oberlin College said that she had led to Christ and put into the ministry forty young men, most of whom became home or foreign missionaries. "He that saveth his time from prayer shall lose it; he that loseth his time in communion with God shall find it in blessing." Let us go away to the secret places, mothers. Let us live in prayer, that we may live in ennobling and enriching the lives of those whom God has entrusted to us.

## "The Strength of the Home and the Nation."

REV. W. THORBURN CLARK.

It is indeed an old saying that needs no repetition, that a stream can rise no higher than its source. The home is the source of the nation; and the nation can be no better than the homes of its people; for from them come the men and women who carry on its business, the voters who elect its lawmakers, and those very lawmakers who write the laws upon the statute books.

If the nation is to have high ideals, the home must have high ideals; if the nation is to be kept pure and strong, the home must be kept pure and strong. The strength of a country lies not in its wealth, not in its army and navy, but in its homes. Its very wealth may weight it down to extravagance, profligacy and destruction; its army and navy may be defeated, and prove no greater defense than a spider's web; but the homes, linked to God by prayer and praise and daily service, become the bulwark of a nation, which Satan, himself, cannot destroy. S. Trevena Jackson, in his interesting reminiscences of Fanny Crosby, in his "Story of Ninety-Four Years", quotes her as saying: "My mother and grandmother took pains that I knew the Bible better than any other book. All that I am or ever expect to be in literature or life is due to the Bible."

And he says: "I had just returned from the Burns country and told her of the cot-

tage in which Scotland's greatest songster was born. I talked to her of Ayr, of Alloway Kirk, and Dumfries. Then I read several of Burns' poems, finishing with 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. When she requested me to read again. When I reached the line, 'The priest-like father reads the sacred page,' 'That's what I mean,' she broke in with, 'the book must be read by the father in the home. A Scotchman once told me that his country was greatly enriched from the use of the Scripture around the fire-side. No Christian nation can be great which ignores the Sacred Book. Read me those lines commencing, 'Then kneeling down—' over again,' and her face gleamed as I did so:

"Then kneeling down to heaven's eternal King,  
The saint, the husband and the father, prays,  
Hope springs exultant on triumphant wing,  
That thus they all shall meet in future days.  
That ever bask in uncreated rays."

"I find in that verse," said Aunt Fanny, "the strength of the nation and the home; and I know that homes cannot exist long

as permanent places in uplifting the nation if heads of the families are prayerless. Neither can the nation rise to its highest with prayerless presidents. Our greatest presidents have been men with unflinching faith in prayer. The spirit in "The Colter's Saturday Night" must be carried out. "They round the angle, form a circle wide." The people of the United States must know if the home falls the church is shorn of its strength, the community crumbles, the state is unstable, the nation doomed. I am an optimist, who, through the light, sees the

danger point. If I could direct the reading of the home, I'd save the state. If I could bring the unseen Guest into the home and nation, as suggested by Dean Alford, I should be happy. Nothing of education or culture or breeding can take the place of Jesus Christ in the home—of Jesus in the heart. His presence alone can prevent selfishness having dominion, and where selfishness is, true happiness can never be found. But with the influence of the Master dominant all is well."

## To Parents and Patrons of the Sunday School.

WM. LUNSFORD, D.D.

PARENTS have a right to know what is being done with their children in the Sunday school, what is being taught them, and what we are trying to make of them. The endeavor of the Sunday school is to make men and women of those who attend, men and women of whom their parents shall be proud, and who shall be an honor to society.

To make the best types of men and women of the boys and girls to be found in the Sunday school, we must begin with the Bible.

Beginning there, we find that they need a Saviour, and that Jesus wants to save them. Jesus cannot use an unsaved person. Specifically speaking, then, Sunday schools are teaching and training children with a view to spiritual results, and the first step is to make Christians of them.

*In doing this, we are sometimes hindered.*

Parents who do not mean to hinder, often make it impossible for us to go a step farther with the child. Their motives are good, and they think, doubtless, they are acting wisely.

If a farmer were to occupy all his time in sowing the seed and make no provision for the harvest which he has a right to expect, we should think him bereft of reason. There are laws which govern the sowing and planting and development and reaping, too. We prepare the soil and sow the seed; he and by comes harvest and reaping time. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. There are well-defined laws. In teaching and training we sow the seed of God's Word, and the best soil we have ever found for this is the heart of the child. Then we think of the sustaining promise, "My word shall not return to me void."

That is the clear promise of God's Word. If, therefore, there are few conversions, the

trouble is not with the Lord of the harvest, but with those who are laborers in the harvest field. There is no reason why there should not be a constant gathering of young people into the kingdom.

As a matter of fact, however, we know that the process is often made slow and difficult.

Let us get at the heart of the matter.

In order to do this, there are certain propositions that I want us to consider together for a moment.

1. *When a child reaches the age of accountability, he needs Christ in order that he may be saved.*

We are all sinners, and all need a Saviour. "There is no other name given under heaven or among men whereby we must be saved."

This text, of course, applies alike to children and grown-up folks; that is, to children who have reached the years of accountability.

2. *We do not know just when our children reach the age of accountability.*

It is said that, in the Niagara River, there is a certain point called "Past Redemption", and that if one reaches and passes this point he is hurried onto the rapids, and the chances are against life being saved. We do not know at what age our children may pass this point in their lives.

3. *This being true, it is well for us to present Christ to them as a Saviour very early in their lives.*

It is said that the cannon ball, passing through the four-foot bore of the cannon, receives its impulse for the whole course it has to travel. And the statement has been made that the Catholic authorities have said,

"If you will give us your children for the first nine years of their lives, you can never win them away from us." It is, therefore, certainly true that many a child receives impressions before he is ten years old that determine the whole course of his after life. There is a young man this very hour in our Louisville Seminary studying for the ministry, whose father is one of the leading pastors of the South, and who baptized his boy when but seven years of age. The father at first was unwilling, and repeatedly ignored the child's desire to unite with the church, and finally yielded a reluctant consent, after being persuaded that the child understood.

4. *It is a dangerous and risky thing to put any hindrance in the way of a child's acceptance of Christ.*

It is a responsibility too grave to be borne by any of us.

Sometimes it is the minister.

A good Scotch elder was deeply concerned because his pastor refused to admit children into the membership of the church. He invited him to his house. After tea he took him to see a large flock of sheep put into the fold. The elder allowed the sheep to enter, but as the little lambs came up, he pushed them back with a heavy stick. The pastor was very indignant. He exclaimed, "What are you doing to the lambs? They need the shelter far more than the sheep." "Just what you are doing to the children," was the prompt reply. The object lesson did its work. Never again did the pastor attempt to shut out from the fold Christ's little ones. *Sometimes it is the parent.*

The wife of a prominent lawyer who had been under deep conviction for several days, gave the following account at a prayer meeting of her conversion: "Last evening my little girl came to me and said, 'Mamma, are you a Christian?' 'No, Fannie, I am not.' She turned and went away, and as she walked off I heard her say, 'Well, if mamma isn't a Christian, I don't want to be one.' And I tell you, my dear friends, it went right to my heart, and then I gave myself up to Christ."

Will you parents delay decision for Christ when you know that your course is imperiling other souls? There are those who will not come to Christ if they are not urged to do so in childhood. I have read that in one of the cities of New York, a minister arose in one of the meetings to say:

"Let me tell you of a playmate of mine, a little girl. There was a special meeting in the school of which we were both members; an appeal was made which resulted in my own conversion. This girl was even more deeply moved than I, but there being no one to lead her to a decision, she left the school. I met her years after in Paris; when I asked her if she ever became a Christian. With a sneer on her face that had once been wet with tears, she said, 'Why, I never think of it, and have not for years. I have clearly made up my mind that I shall never be a Christian.' What God may, in his mercy, do for her before her life's journey ends, I cannot say, but there was a time when, as a child, one touch of helplessness would have led her to a decision."

## In Bondage.

J. L. HARBOUR.

LAST year a woman of but forty years who had appeared to be in good health died suddenly. She was a woman of large wealth who had lived less than two years in a very beautiful new home most elaborately furnished. One of her near relatives said when speaking of her death while she was still a comparatively young woman:

"Poor Isabelle! I really think that it was her house that killed her. She was in such bondage to it. I believe that she spent sleepless nights planning this and that for it, and there was not a day that she did not discover that something must be changed. One floor was laid three times before it suited her, and then she discovered that the rug for this room did not harmonize in its

hints with the wood of the last floor she had laid. Although she had four maids, she was constantly being shocked by finding a little dust here and there and was constantly taking the maids to task in regard to matters of trifling consequence. A rug or a bit of bric-a-brac a little awry gave her a real pain, and she was the slave to the tyranny of trifles if ever anyone was. Her nervous system was wrecked, and I shall always feel that her big house that she did not need and not half of which she ever used had to do with her death. She was in bondage to her belongings."

There are others—too many of them. Some of them are to be found in our sanitariums, where they are unwillingly taking "rest

cures", or trying in some other way to recover from the effects of jaded nerves. They have been slaves to the tyranny of "things". Their very souls have been crippled and shriveled by this tyranny, and they have looked out on life with a very narrow range of vision. It is a curious commentary on the good sense of people when they spend hundreds of dollars accumulating "things", and then spend most of their time worrying over their possessions. I know a woman with a great cabinet filled with costly bric-a-brac and I have heard her say that sometimes she hardly slept at night because she was so "worried" lest thieves break in and steal her choice possessions, or a fire break out and they were destroyed before they could be carried out.

I have known of homes in which carpets and furniture and bric-a-brac took precedence of the children in the thought of the mother. I have known homes to which the children of the home could not invite other children lest they "muss things up", or "track in" mud or dust. I once visited a Japanese home of wealth, and was impressed by its beautiful and restful simplicity when compared to some of our American homes that suggest nothing more than some of the departments of a department store. It is a satire upon common sense when one sees some of the overloaded American homes to which their owners are in bondage. Such homes are not homes for the spirit. Often they are the results of false standards. If

Mrs. A. hangs up expensive draperies, Mrs. B. feels that she must do the same, no matter whether she can afford to do so or not. Those useless draperies must be acquired, even though one descends to the low estate of purchasing them "on payments", a form of senseless buying and furnishing that reflects little credit on those who resort to it. The most refined, the best bred and the wisest people I have ever known have always flaunted a "no surrender" flag in the face of fashion when it came to furnishing their homes and attiring their bodies. They have had their own standards based on their own incomes, their own tastes and desires. They have bought nothing because their neighbors have bought the same things. They have acquired an affection for their belongings that keeps them from having any desire to part with them, even when they have become "out of fashion". There is a great deal of truth in these words:

"A real housewife and home-maker grows to love her chairs and sofas and carpets. They are the dear, familiar face of her home, and she should not any more desire its flippant change than she should desire to give up the tranquil monotony of her life for the adventures and constant change of a Roman Rye."

The wife and mother who is in bondage to her home to the extent of being in a state of constant worryment over it can never be the wife she should be to her husband, nor the mother she should be to her children.

## Out of the Past.

SUSAN HUBBARD MARTIN.

Six had stopped over in the pretty little village for a day or so of sight-seeing on her way home from the coast.

"Why don't you go to the Sunday School Convention?" suggested the landlady, that morning as she brought in the bacon and eggs and steaming coffee. There are a good many delegates expected, and dinner is to be served in the church."

But she looked at the slight, beautiful woman with the silvery hair a little inquiringly. "Perhaps you don't care for Sunday School Conventions?" The woman with the silvery hair smiled.

"Ah! but I do," she cried, quickly. "I haven't taught in Sunday school for all these years without becoming a deep lover of them. I'll go gladly, and thank you for telling me."

She attended the morning session, and listened attentively. Once or twice she took

out her note-book and wrote down some statistics she wanted to remember.

Margaret Grayson was a power for good in her own community. She had taken this trip in the hope of recuperating better from a severe illness she had suffered in the fall. The change had done for her what her physician had been confident it would. She was going home completely restored to health to take up her work again. How glad she would be to reach home. It was springtime now. Already the blue birds were building under the eaves of the old porch. The snowballs and lilac buds were swelling. And she—she was going home to live—not die. God had spared her life and given her an extension of time to work for him. Well, she would try to live closer to him than ever before, because of his great mercy. And yet, she had had her trials. Her husband, the hero

of her girlish dreams, had been dead these many years. Her two sons, so dear to her, were married and in homes of their own. Yet she still found life worth while. With abundant means, she found her greatest pleasure in helping those who needed it. Even those closest to her did not know the full extent of her benefactions. A rare, fine woman was Margaret Grayson.

She walked slowly into the rooms adjoining the church where dinner was to be served. She had enjoyed the morning session very much. Among the many, busy women and girls arranging the long tables, she noticed a little, gray-haired man, bent and worn with years. He was busily engaged placing knives and forks beside each plate.

Margaret Grayson started and paled. She studied him longer. A moment later she went up and touched the little, bent man on the arm. He looked up, met the smiling, yet tear wet gaze of a woman with silvery hair.

"Don't you know me?" she asked, and her voice trembled.

The little, bent man dropped a fork noisily. "Margaret Grayson!" he cried, his face lighting with joy. "My Margaret! The girl through his goodness I won to Christ!" His voice faltered.

Weakly he sat down. "My old pastor!" said Margaret Grayson, bending to kiss him, regardless of all on-lookers. "My old, dearly loved pastor!"

"Do you remember," she added, "how long it has been since I saw you?"

The little, old, bent man nodded. "Thirty years this spring since I left Granby," he replied. "You were a young woman then. I performed your marriage ceremony, Margaret."

She smiled. "Could I ever forget that?" she returned. The old man looked at her.

"And, Robert?" he asked. "Robert is dead," she answered.

The little, bent man regarded her tenderly. "I need not ask how you bore it. You were always brave and spiritual. I ever felt your prayers upheld me in that parsonage of long ago. I wish—I have always wished there were more church members like you."

She looked at him with her bright, affectionate smile, and then it seemed to the old pastor that the years had suddenly dropped away. He saw himself in the old church at Granby. He saw her, the girl Margaret, not as she was now, but as she had been then, and the birds were singing in the elm trees

in the parsonage yard, and it was summer time. The tea table stood on the lawn. He brought himself back to the present with an effort.

"I hope I have grown and developed into your wish for me," she was saying. "I ought, since it was you who first led me to him."

He looked at her fondly. "I don't think you ever disappointed anyone, Margaret," he said. "But, tell me, how did you find me?"

"I have been ill, and was advised by my physician to take this trip," she told him. "By the merest chance I stopped over in this pretty little village, and I came over to the church to attend the morning session of this convention."

The little, old, bent man nodded. "I see," he said, gently. "But do not call it chance, Margaret. God led you here, to give me a glimpse of you before I start on my journey from which there is no returning. It makes me happy to see you again, Margaret."

He paused. "I wonder if you realize how we pastors as we pass from one church to another, cherish in our hearts the memories of our church members who have made our different pastorates so pleasant and so fruitful? You were one of these, Margaret. I could never forget you."

She smiled. "Nor could I forget you. Now, tell me of yourself, your wife, your daughter. Are you pastor here?"

The old man shook his head. "No, I am too old to preach any more. I just busy myself as you found me today, about the little things I can do. No one is left to me. Wife and daughter both are gone."

He sighed, and then he brightened up a little.

"But people are kind to me, Margaret," he went on. "The pastor of the church here lets me help him the little I can. I have a small room with people who are as good to me as they know how. If they fail in little courtesies and kindnesses, it is only because they do not realize what it means to be old and poor and alone in the world. I do not blame them."

Margaret Grayson took the old, trembling hand.

"And you no longer preach?" she asked. He shook his head.

"No, Margaret," he answered. A little silence fell between them, and in it a great desire sprang up in her heart. She

thought of her big, beautiful house. She thought of the guest-room, of the place at the table where there was always enough and to spare, of the abundant means God had given her. She saw the needs of her old pastor. Wouldn't it please him: this thought that had come to her? She looked at the white hair, the furrowed cheeks, the faded eyes, the old, bent shoulders, the faltering step. She thought of that long and faithful ministry that had so blessed the world. Now, in his old age he needed her. Was she going to let him remain with people who were not always kind, doing the little services he could, even to the laying of knives and forks about the table, since it was his no longer to do the big things? No, she could not!

She turned to him.  
"My old pastor," she said, gently. "It has been thirty-five years since I first sat under your ministry, but I received my membership into that heavenly kingdom through you. I have wondered about you many times. I have longed to see you, to listen again to your wise counsel, to get into touch with your wonderful faith, to benefit from your larger service. Now, that I have found you, I want to ask you this: Will you come home with me to live always? The house is large. You shall have a room and books and sunshine and the quiet hours you love. It will be a privilege to have you in my home, my honored guest, with enough and to spare. Will you not come?"

She faltered and stopped.  
The little, old, bent man stood there and stared. "You want me, Margaret?" he said.  
"Yes, you—my dear old pastor!"

He suddenly bowed his head. The sense of God's nearness and care for him overflowed his soul as a river. He thought of his squalid room, the unpleasant things he must needs submit to, the weary tasks he had tried to do. Could it be that he had found a way out? He looked at Margaret Grayson: at her steady, true eyes, the gentle kindness of her. He read in that sweet face nothing but grace and love, and the desire to be of use. He would be safe with her. She would never be unkind.

The tears were running down his cheeks. He could not answer her then, but he put out his frail, old hand and she took it in hers and lifted it to her lips. The compact was sealed.

As the train pulled slowly out, she turned: he sat beside her—her old, dearly loved pastor, and she his church member of thirty years before. He smiled.

"Out of the valley, Margaret," he said, tremulously, "to Mount Pisgah with you."

### Acknowledging One's Christmas Gifts.

CHRISTMAS is such a strenuous time that when it is over we are sure to be tired and almost eager to relax from the strain of shopping and selecting gifts for our friends. Then, too, the reaction from the excitement of the Christmas festivities always leaves us tired when the season is over.

One of the temptations to which we are prone to yield is putting off the acknowledging of our own Christmas gifts. It is such an easy thing to promise ourselves we will do it in a few days, and then to find those days lacking in opportunity for the fulfillment of our self-made promise.

Naturally, friends who have made an extra effort to send something to give us special pleasure are watching to hear whether their gift has been received or lost in the rush of Christmas mail, and also as to whether it has been pleasing to the recipient.

It takes but a few moments to write a card of appreciative acknowledgment. These should be purchased along with the Christmas and New Year's cards, so that they may be on hand for instant use. The joy of sending a gift is doubled by receiving a prompt acknowledgment, whereas many an individual has experienced a sense of resentment over the failure of some careless friend to acknowledge a present which has called for effort or distinct self-sacrifice.

A suitable New Year resolution is to determine to acknowledge all Christmas gifts within twenty-four hours after their receipt. It is courteous to mention the gift by name, not merely to say, "Thank you for your beautiful gift," as if dozens of cards, all just alike, had been prepared in advance and sent out in a perfunctory manner. If a friend has taken pains to make a gift individual for us, it is as little as we can do to acknowledge it in an individual way.

There is an old saying that "putting off an easy thing makes it hard, and putting off a hard thing makes it impossible". This is especially true in regard to social obligations. The Christmas spirit of "peace on earth and good-will to men" must be reciprocal to be perfect. It pays not to be negligent in this respect.

If we truly appreciate the thought which has prompted a gift regardless of the value of its material expression, it will not be too great a burden to say so. Ingratitude from a friend is a hard thing to bear. Christmas-time should offer no excuse for selfish thoughtlessness in delaying the acknowledging of one's gifts.—*Exchange*.

### Sympathy.

It aught in trouble gives the least relief,  
The thought is sweet that others feel our grief,

If only for a moment that they share  
Our weight of sorrow and our load of care.  
An angel's voice is Sympathy, and dear  
To aching hearts the thought that Love is near—

For each one treads this world of ours alone,  
And each must sometimes feel all brightness gone,

And dimm'd with care their sky.  
So always give sweet sympathy, and feel  
That as you give it you may help to heal.

—*The Quiver*.

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### The Joy of Giving.

THE handkerchiefs that Mrs. Lindsay had ordered monogrammed were so exquisitely embroidered that she gave an exclamation of delight when Madame Alphonsine showed them to her.

"Why, madame, they look as if fairies had done them!" she declared, as she bent over the dainty things.

"I am pleased that madame is pleased," Madame Alphonsine replied. "We do our best; it is our reward to be appreciated."

Mrs. Lindsay examined still more closely the exquisite work.

"I should so like to meet the woman who did this," she said. "I should like to thank her myself. Would you allow it?"

"But, yes," madame replied, quickly; "of a certainty. It would be an honor. It was Marie Ribot. She shall come."

That was the beginning. It was many months before Marie Ribot would permit even the beginnings of friendship; months more before Mrs. Lindsay felt herself really given the freedom of the tiny, spotless, two-room home where Marie Ribot lived with her adopted daughter. Marie was forty-four. Her thin face showed the marks of privation, yet she carried an atmosphere of joy that baffled her friends. What in the hard days of work, the meager pay, the endless contrivances necessitated by the "small, heart-breaking arithmetic" could bestow such radiance? It was Mrs. Lindsay's problem for months, and at last one day she learned the secret.

Marie, apologizing for keeping at work while she talked, was doing up a tiny jar of jam for a sick friend. From a store of wrapping papers she selected a white piece and cut it thriftily; from a box of string she choose a piece of green, tying it in a tiny

rosette; last of all, she picked a leaf of sweet geranium from a plant in the window and slipped it through the bow.

"What an artist you are, Marie!" Mrs. Lindsay exclaimed. "How did you learn it?"

Marie was silent a moment before she answered. Then, "From my grandmother. She—grandmother—talked always of the gifts of the good God—always giving, giving to his children. So those who had his love in their hearts must give, too. I was young, then, and impatient; and we were very poor. I cried, 'How, grandma, how can we give?' And she said, 'The heart that loves never lacks a gift. Look about you and listen, Marie.' So I looked and listened, especially to her. And I saw how people came to her, and always she gave and gave; and I saw that often what she had to give was courage, or faith, or kind words about another; and after the blindness dropped from my eyes, I saw that that was what people wanted most. Madame's kind words about my work—what was that but a gift? And then there are so many other things: bits of tin foil, ribbon, bright papers for the children—it is wonderful how they come—a leaf, a blossom. So the good God gives his children the joy of giving."—*The Youth's Companion*.

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### Beautiful Things.

BEAUTIFUL faces are those that wear—  
It matters little if dark or fair—  
Whose-souled honesty printed there.

Beautiful eyes are those that show,  
Like crystal panes where heart fires glow,  
Beautiful thoughts that burn below.

Beautiful lips are those whose words  
Leap from the heart like the song of birds,  
Yet whose utterance prudence girds.

Beautiful hands are those that do  
Work that is earnest, brave and true,  
Moment by moment the long day through.

Beautiful feet are those that go  
On kindly ministries to and fro—  
Down lowliest ways, if God wills it so.

Beautiful shoulders are those that bear  
Ceaseless burdens of homely care  
With patient grace and dally prayer.

Beautiful lives are those that bless—  
Silent rivers of happiness,  
Whose hidden fountains but few may guess.

—*Littell's Living Age*.

### Treasured.

There are so many things to make me glad:  
Remembered music, snow and daffodils;  
A one-day meeting with a barefoot lad  
With two limp-hanging fish (such pride he had)  
And once-trod foot-trails high among wild hills.

There are so many things to make me good:  
Easters, and Junes, and firelight reveries;  
And August shadows in a fragrant wood;  
And swimming in cool waters; oh, and trees  
That spoke to me as only comrades could!

There are so many things—each laughing day  
More sweet with little gladnesses has been:  
A friend's hand touching mine, a word to say.

A laugh to hear, a flower along the way;  
And memory to keep my treasures in!  
—Mary C. Davis.

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### Do Your Best.

When the days are dark and dreary,  
And the heart is sad and weary,  
Look to Him, keep sweet and cheery,  
Do your best.

Be the duties great or small,  
Though you falter, often fall;  
He will hear when'er you call,  
Do your best.

Give a loving word of cheer,  
Bear your burdens, never fear,  
He will strengthen, he is near,  
Do your best.

Look to Him in all you do,  
For some work he's planned for you,  
And be faithful, loyal, true,  
Do your best.

—Jewel Camp Poets, in the Advance.

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### Love's Self-Forgetfulness.

One of the safest tests of the intensity of our love for Christ is the degree of our self-forgetfulness. If we are truly devoted to Christ, we are little troubled by what other persons think of our words or actions; each word and act is realized to be for Christ's sake, not for men's opinions. It is told that as Alice Freeman Palmer was one day waiting in a hospital while her husband was be-

ing operated on, she noticed that the pillow on his bed was harder than that to which he was accustomed. Impulsively she rushed home in a street car, seized his own pillow, and rode back, the unwrapped pillow in her arms. When her husband afterward wondered that she was not embarrassed by the passengers' smiles at sight of the pillow, she realized she had not once thought of what people were thinking of her. Her love banished self-consciousness.

Why do we consider people's opinions of us, when we act from love of Christ? Whether speaking for him in prayer meeting, urging a friend to accept him, or refusing for his sake to do wrong, let us remember only him.—Exchange.

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### In Common Things.

Seek not afar for beauty. Lo! It glows  
In dew-wet grasses all about thy feet;  
In birds, in sunshine, childish faces sweet;  
In stars, and mountain summits topped with snows.

Go not abroad for happiness! For see!  
It is a flower that blossoms by thy door.  
Bring love and justice home; and then no more  
Thou'lt wonder in what dwelling joy may be.

Dream not of noble services elsewhere wrought.  
The simple duty that awaits thy hand  
Is God's voice uttering a divine command:  
Life's common deeds build all that saints have thought.

In wonder-workings, or some bush aflame,  
Men look for God, and fancy him concealed;  
But in earth's common things he stands revealed,  
While grass and flowers and stars spell out his name.

The paradise men seek, the city bright  
That gleams beyond the stars for longing eyes,  
Is only human goodness in the skies.  
Earth's deeds, well done, glow into heavenly light.

—Exchange.

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Let us remember that each day is ordered by Almighty love, and brings with it that measure of the bitter and the sweet which, according to the judgment of infinite wisdom, is most conducive to our true aim and welfare.—Krummacker.

## International Sunday School Lessons.

### STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LESSON 1.

OCTOBER 7, 1917.

### Psalms of Deliverance.

MOTTO TEXT.—"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." (Psalm 126: 5.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Psalms 85 and 126.

MEMORY VERSES, Psalm 85: 10, 11.

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#### Lesson Text.

1 Lorn, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of JS'cob.

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 Lorn, and grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the Lorn 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 Yes, the Lorn 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.

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

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

4 Turn again our captivity, O Lorn, 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.

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#### Popular Poems.

THE songs of the Hebrews, classified in the book of Psalms, are the most popular religious poems of the world. Let me give you a distinction right here, which is broadly true and well worth keeping in mind. In the prophets, we have God's message to Israel; in the Psalms, we have Israel's reply to God. They are rich in the language of penitence, gratitude, love and adoration. This old hymn book of Israel is a treasure house of quotation, for sermons, prayers, and all discourse on the deep things of spiritual life.

The eloquence of the human soul has never risen higher than in these devout Hebrew meditations. Have you not often felt how aptly your own thoughts and longings are expressed in these sacred poems? They voice our noblest sentiments and aspirations to-day, and so become our response to God as well as Israel's. Read them more, beloved, for they will assist you up to the high places of real communion with God.

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#### Historical Connection.

This 85th Psalm clearly fits into the historical situation we are now studying, but it is impossible to say who wrote it or when.

1 When the Lorn turned again the captivity of Z'ion, we were like them that dream.

After all, it signifies little who was its author or when it was composed. The vital question is, does it give right views of God? Does it express the truest and purest sentiments of the human heart? If so, then it is for all men and for all time. I have long since learned not to worry about questions of authorship and date in the Bible. God's truth and love have no date. Suppose we knew not the author or the date of "How Firm a Foundation," or "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," would that fact make the great hymns less precious to our hearts? My soul feels the touch of God in these hymns of Israel, and finds in them the "green pastures" and the "still waters". No, they do not need dates or certified authorship any more than the starlight or the light of the sun. Thank God, they are timeless, like gladness, laughter and love! When you run on a fountain in the desert, weary and athirst, you never think of inquiring when it burst forth from the sandy waste. It is God's bounty for you; stoop and drink. Let the geologist figure on the question of origin. The prophets exercise a perpetual, benign influence on the hearts of men, and the same is true of that eloquent tenderness and power that breathes in Psalms.

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#### The Analysis.

There are three thoughts in the psalm. First, thankfulness. God has ended the captivity of his people and brought them back to their own land. He has taken away his anger and forgiven their iniquity. Second, penitence. The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance. The unbought mercies of sovereign love humbles sinners in the dust. Turn us, O God of our salvation. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Third, self-dedication. I will hear what God the Lord will speak. His people will consecrate themselves to his service, and will not return to their folly. Let this resolution be registered in every soul. Here, Lord, I give myself to thee. In a faithful obedience, I would walk before God. This is the climax of saving grace. God wins his people to moral harmony with himself. His righteousness and peace kiss each other in the dedicated human heart. In this troublous time, may you and I enter into this blessed experience.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Psalm of Deliverance. Psalm 86.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"His salvation is nigh them that fear him."

What does that mean to us, now and here? Just this: God's goodness is round about us like an atmosphere, that we may learn to be good, as he is good. His righteousness shines like a sun on our minds and consciences, that we ourselves may become righteous as he is righteous. His love envelops us that we may drop all our enmities and become imitators of God. This is salvation. Don't fancy that salvation is merely escape from an objective hell, and entrance into an objective paradise. It is subjective transformation into the likeness of his son. How much real salvation is reflected in your daily life and mine?

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Thanksgiving for Deliverance. Psalm 126.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"We were like unto them that dream."

When God broke the bars of their prison, it seemed too good to be true. So it ever is to a distressed soul, when glad news comes. Thus a mother feels when she takes to her bosom a dear son or husband returned from a terrible war. God fills his world with his goodness, and all of us receive constantly the assurances of protecting, delivering and guiding grace. All things are yours. He maketh all things to work together for our good. Let us not forget his mercies and become the sad victims of fear. He will fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues with singing.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Prayer for Deliverance. Psalm 120.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"In my distress I cried unto the Lord."

He is always the center of the world's we. It is the day of affliction that weakens the sense of helplessness and puts us on search for God. He uses the sharp points of pain to goad his children to his presence. Millions of broken hearts besiege his throne today. This old world was never so full of fiendish savagery and human misery as it is today. The attitude of us all to life is deeply changed in this deluge of sorrow. We lift up our weak hands to thee, Lord. Deliver us from cruel and brutal foes. May the great Umpire of peace win the rulers of the earth to truth and righteousness.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Keeper of Israel. Psalm 121.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"The Lord shall keep thee from all evil."

He is the home of the soul. In him we live and move and have our being. If we are set to do his will, and to abide in his presence, no moral disaster can reach our souls. Our character is safe. But what of the physical ills and tribulations of life? Do his children escape them? Far from it. Even Jesus was a man of sorrow, due to the wickedness of men. But in all his sufferings, God kept him from the deeper evils of sordid character. Not immunity from the ills and burdens of the earthly pilgrimage, but spiritual security, is his great pledge to his people.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah, the Protector. Psalm 125.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"The Lord is round about his people."

We have got to accept the view that God is chiefly concerned about the moral and spiritual character of men. He makes the wrath of man contribute to his praise. The calamities that the wrath of man works, turn men to the bosom of God. He is sun and shield to the good; he is the consolation of desolate Israel, the sweet refuge of his unhappy children. A new heaven and a new earth is our Father's plan. It is to be filled with righteousness first, then comes the resultant peace and happiness. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Redeeming Love. Psalm 130.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"O Israel, hope in the Lord."

The poets of Israel saw into the heart of things. Their faith was in God, the eternal, the righteous, the loving One. They grasped the thought that redemption does not primarily refer to deliverance from political and social woes, but from all personal and social iniquities. They saw that most of the world's misery springs from sin, and that the energies of God's love are bent on the destruction of that evil principle. Come unto me; take my yoke upon you, and I will give you rest. Moral harmony with God is the eternal condition of enduring peace and happiness.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Thanksgiving for Divine Goodness. Psalm 145.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Thy Lord preserveth all them that love him."

This is a superbly eloquent poem, lofty in thought and beautiful with reverence and spirituality. How does the Lord preserve us who trust in him? By drawing us to the practice of his virtues; by winning us to admiration and love of his character; by inclining us to walk in his commandments. This identifies us with the divine life, and safety, security, preservation, follow as a matter of course. Love of God, obedience to God, is the same thing as "hid in God", or "partakers of his nature", and thus it is that we are preserved, kept in the hollow of his hand, safe as God himself.

#### LESSON 2.

OCTOBER 14, 1917.

### Returning from Captivity.

#### MOTTO TEXT.—

"Jehovah hath done great things for us; Whereof we are glad." (Psalm 126: 3.)

LESSON PASSAGE, EZRA 1: 1-11.

MEMORY VERSES, 2, 3.

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#### Lesson Text.

1 Now in the first year of Cy'rus king of P'ers'ah, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of J'ere-m'iah might be fulfilled, the

Lord stirred up the spirit of Cy'rus king of P'ers'ah, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cy'rus king of P'ers'ah, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at J'c-r's'ah-l'm, which is in J'd d'ah.

3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God he with him, and let him go up to J'c-r's'ah-l'm, which is in J'd d'ah, and build the house of the Lord God of Is'r'ah'el, (he is the God,) which is in J'c-r's'ah-l'm.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jê-rû'sâ-lêm.

5 ¶ Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Jû'dâh and Bôn'jâ-mîn, and the priests, and the Lâ'vites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Loan which is in Jê-rû'sâ-lêm.

6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

7 ¶ Also Cy'rûs the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Loan, which Nêb-û-châd-nêzâr had brought forth out of Jê-rû'sâ-lêm, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cy'rûs king of Pêr'siâ bring forth by the hand of Mith'rû-dâth the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shêsh-bâz'zâr, the prince of Jû'dâh.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives.

10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shêsh-bâz'zâr bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Bâb'y-lon unto Jê-rû'sâ-lêm.

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#### Bondage Broken.

It was in 586 B.C., that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, burnt Jerusalem. Exactly forty-nine years later, in 537 B.C., Cyrus, the Persian king, sent the exiles back to rebuild their ruined city. He was the most remarkable king and conqueror that ever arose in the far East. In twelve years he overthrew three strong kingdoms—Media, Lydia and Babylon—thus winning the dominion of the world for Persia, during the next two hundred years. Babylon falling in 538 B.C., he instantly reverses her national policy of deporting conquered peoples, and opens the door of return to their native lands. Many nations besides the Jews had suffered this refinement of cruelty. Israel hailed the liberator as the messenger of God. Cyrus said, "Go home, restore your city and temple and I will give you aid." Those who chose to remain, and most of them did, he required to make liberal contributions to the

enterprise, in beasts, silver and gold. Joyously, in the spring of 537 B.C., a company of 4,200 set out on the long journey. Cyrus put in their hands 5,400 golden and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple. In October they gathered on the sacred spot, amid the desolate ruins, and offered sacrifices in a tumult of thanksgiving. May, following, the foundation stones of the new temple were laid. Most of them made homes in the neighboring districts, to raise crops for the support of the new community.

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#### God's Messiah.

That is what Isaiah calls Cyrus. He was a wise, kind and tolerant ruler. God used him for great ends that Cyrus dreamed not of. "Thou hast not known me, but I have girded thee." God knows all the sons of men, and often makes them the unconscious instruments of his love and power. All captive peoples were permitted to return to their native land, but political motive was at the basis of his liberalizing policy. By it, he plans the strengthening of his empire. Egypt, the only remaining world power, was hostile to him. A clash with her is inevitable in the near future, so he will strengthen the Palestinian border by setting up vigorous communities, bound to him by gratitude and honor. Thus Jehovah hatched him to the car of a mighty providential purpose, using him in the preservation of the great idea and mission of his chosen people.

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#### A New Spirit.

Outwardly and inwardly a remarkable change has been wrought on Israel. She comes home with a new aim and a new spirit. The furnace has burnt idolatry out of her heart. In the prison house she has caught another vision of God, and vowed re-consecration to his service. In the history of religion there has been no more significant crisis than this period of the exile. It purified Israel and refitted her for her spiritual mission. She is done with the game of empire. The new community is reconstructed on the basis of religion. Henceforth she is to be the representative of the righteousness and love of the only sovereign God. This the spiritual element, the best part of David's kingdom, will not perish from the earth. Round the precious old faith, a little priestly government will be organized. Its temple shall be a house of

prayer for all nations, and the people shall be a light to the Gentiles. Israel's mission is universal; she is God's missionary to the whole world.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Exiles Comforted. Isaiah 40: 1-11.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

There is a speechless pathos in the little flock standing among the wrecks of their once fair city. God drew near, with tenderest assurances of love and heartening promises of coming good. How did he come? In the great intelligent faith and undimmed courage of the prophet. He is God's spokesman to God's people. He interprets God to his generation, and communicates the divine will. God's method of getting at the minds and hearts of men is through high thinking and pure living. The holy prophet studied God and men, lived the divine life, and pressed it by word and example on his fellows. He reflected God's pity and good cheer.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Mighty God. Isaiah 40: 12-18.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"The nations are as the drops of a bucket."

The almightiness of God was a much-needed lesson at this very time. The ruin of their nation had been accounted for on the theory of the weakness of Jehovah. The former generations had not referred the national loss to their own sins, but to the indifference or feebleness of Jehovah. It seemed to them that the gods of the heathen had been too strong for their God. That view was hard to overcome in the minds of a materialized, unspiritual people. The prophet instructs them in the nature of the pure and omnipotent Jehovah. He cannot save those who blindly and obstinately live in sin. He saves the obedient.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Divine Helper. Isaiah 40: 19-31.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"He giveth power to the faint."

The doctrine of the spirituality of God has always been slowly and imperfectly received. The Jews wanted physical protection and comfort. This was the pervasive view of all the world. The age-spirit was groveling and dark. Ideas of inward purity, nobleness

of character, likeness to the holy God were simply absurd and repulsive, on the low levels of common Hebrew living. The blessed prophet! What a lonely lot he had, and what a heart-breaking task! Yet he cried aloud: "The mighty God will help the men and women who want to follow on to know him, and serve him."

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Divine Purpose. Isaiah 42: 1-8.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"A bruised reed shall he not break."

Here the prophet encourages his people with a view of the wonderful patience of God. Sin has broken you like some foot of a beast has bruised the weed. He will not cast you out, as the farmer might do with the crippled plant. He will hold you up for the knitting of your soul's nerves and the toning of your wounded character. The smoking flax he will not quench, but will blow on the hidden spark until it bursts into flame. The patient God will lovingly fondle every feeble longing for a better life. Trust him just as you are, trust him now.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Chosen Deliverer. Isaiah 44: 24-45: 7.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"I will raise up the waste places thereof."

Bad children can destroy the happiness and good name of a home. The one ornament left in it is the patient, recovering love of the parents. Should they cast off sons and daughters, kill affection and abandon them to destruction, it would be the unnatural and completing disgrace of the household. But parenthood cannot make this terrible plunge. It must hold on to the unworthy, just because it is love's nature to cling and suffer. Our Father—God—cannot let his sinning children go. How dreadful a thing it is to sin against God pleading love.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Divine Redeemer. Isaiah 49: 14-26.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Can a woman forget her sucking child?"

Here is Isaiah's beautiful effort to give impression of God's unfailing love. Profoundly has he insisted on his essential righteousness and holiness. That might easily become a source of discouragement

to men, made conscious of their moral repulsiveness to God. That is felt by Isaiah. Now he teaches the wonderful parental love of God. You have wounded and grieved him by your sins, but you still are his children. He knows your helplessness. Look to him, commit your poor souls to his care, and he will fold you to his bosom.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Return from Captivity. Ezra 1: 1-31.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Who is there among you of all his people?"

LESSON 3.

OCTOBER 21, 1917.

## The Temple Rebuilt and Dedicated.

MOTTO TEXT.—

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise." (Psalm 100: 4.)

LESSON PASSAGE, EZRA 3: 8-13; 6: 14-18.

MEMORY VERSES, 6: 14, 15.

Lesson Text.

8 ¶ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jĕ-rŭ'sā-lem, in the second month, began Ze-rŭb'ba-bĕl the son of Shĕ-Āl'i-ĕl, and Jĕsh'ŭ-ā the son of Jĕ-zĕ-dā-k, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Lĕ'vites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jĕ-rŭ'sā-lem; and appointed the Lĕ'vites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord.

9 Then stood Jĕsh'ŭ-ā with his sons and his brethren, Kād'mĕ-ĕl and his sons, the sons of Jŏ'dāh, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Hen-Ā'dāb, with their sons and their brethren the Lĕ'vites.

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Lĕ'vites the sons of Ā'sāph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of Dā'vid king of Is'rā-ĕl.

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Is'rā-ĕl. And all the people

This was Cyrus' edict of freedom. The Jews were getting on well, and some were prosperous. No one was obliged to return. With half a chance, the Jew is thrifty wherever he is. Cyrus had his own reasons for wanting them to go and rebuild Jerusalem. As a rule, only the poorer ones went. The well-to-do who remained had to give camels to carry goods, and also sums of silver and gold. Certainly they ought to have done it cheerfully, and likely enough they did. If you do not go as a missionary, truly you should help sustain those who do. Rich and poor must help the kingdom of God.

shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Lĕ'vites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Ze-ch-ā-rĭ-āh the son of Id'do. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Is'rā-ĕl, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Dā-rĭ-ŭs, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Dā-rĭ-ŭs the king.

16 ¶ And the children of Is'rā-ĕl, the priests, and the Lĕ'vites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Is'rā-ĕl, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Is'rā-ĕl.

18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Lĕ'vites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jĕ-rŭ'sā-lem; as it is written in the book of Mō'ses.

### Reconstruction.

AFTER our great war of 1861, we had a long period of huddling up the run-down farms, schools, churches, homes and general business of the South. A time of reconstruction like that fell to the returned Jews, but they had a more serious task than ours. David's descendants took a leading part in the work. Sheshbazzar was the appointed governor, and Zerubbabel, his nephew, had charge of the masons and carpenters. With great energy he pushed the work. In the year 520 B.C. he becomes governor of the province. Now, there were remnants of Jews in Judæa, and heathenish people lived in Samaria, brought in by Assyrian deportations, 200 years before. All these inhabitants were angered at the coming back of the exiles. Deceitfully they offered Zerubbabel sympathy and help, but he shrewdly suspected, and declined. Then they went into open hostility and gave no little trouble. Nearly always there is somebody to get in the way of a good enterprise.

### Type of Government.

Kingship is not restored to David's house; the old Judæan state is not to be revived. Judæa is to be simply a Persian province presided over by a governor appointed by the monarch. Her political importance and power are ended. A new type of local government, under a priesthood, is introduced. Henceforth it is to be a priestly nation, in which religion and not politics is to be the predominant interest. In its keeping is intrusted, by the providence of God, the richest, holiest treasure of this world. It is a new spiritual community, whose supreme duty is to preserve the oracles of God and cherish the old-time religion. This survival of Abraham's and Moses' work is due to the mighty faith and labors of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Never forget that the prophets of Israel were the grandest men of the ages.

### Beginnings.

The first necessity was the settlement of families in homes on the territory adjacent to Jerusalem. Here, doubtless, arose the trouble with the poor people whom they

found in the land. It is estimated that only one-tenth were located in and near the ruined city. Zerubbabel's tireless energy soon housed the people, and then the rebuilding of Jerusalem began. The temple was the first concern. Before the workmen began, there was a solemn service of national reconstruction. The trumpets blew the signals of the old feast of tabernacles, and the day of atonement, in October 537, and with deep emotion the little band sent up adoration and thanksgiving to the God of Abraham. By the following May contracts had been made with Tyre and Sidon for cedar from Lebanon. Then the laying of the temple's foundations gathered another assembly, and an indescribable scene followed. At a word from Joshua, the priest, cymbals clanged, trumpets pealed, and the multitude sang, "He is good, for his mercy endureth forever." It was the birth-hour of a spiritual nation.

### The Consummation.

Poverty, the vastness of the work, and the interruptions of adversaries made progress slow. Over many discouragements and delays, the invincible Zerubbabel pressed his task. The eloquent appeals to the people by the prophet Haggai, was an indispensable service. Exactly twenty years after the cornerstone laying the temple stood complete, 516 B.C. In the hearts of the aged ones, the joy of dedication was dashed by the painful contrast between the new temple and the old. Haggai comforts: "Brethren, the outward splendor is less, but this temple shall surpass the former in spiritual glory." Jesus walked in the latter.

MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Foundation of the Temple Laid. Ezra 3: 1-13.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Fear was upon them, because of the people of those countries."

Religious undertakings rarely have smooth sailing. Difficulties arise, somebody objects; it is not the right time, it is going to cost too much. A new church is needed. One does not like the plan, another objects to the location, and so on. Fortunate if you have a Haggai and a Zerubbabel to make the thing go. There are optimists and pessimists in nearly every congregation. Progressives and conservatives, aggressive liberal souls and obstructive, stingy souls. Thank heaven for the former class. They are the dynamo of the church; without them it would die.

**TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Difficulties Encountered. Ezra 4: 1-6.

**TUESDAY'S VERSE.**—"They weakened the hands of the people of Judah."

The poor, thriftless people wanted no new vigorous neighbors, such as these, who have arrived from Babylon and settled in and around the heaps of Jerusalem. It is the old human envy and selfishness that resents all forms of competition and rivalry. These people were not building up the desolated country, and they did not want anyone else to do it. Their offer of help was only a trick, designed to block the enterprise. Failing in that, they send accusations of disloyalty to the Persian king. It was a stupid failure. God was in the work; his servants were in it.

**WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Renewed Exhortation. Haggai 1: 1-11.

**WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.**—"Is it a time for you to dwell in your celled houses?"

Sixteen years have passed since the temple work began. For years, not a stroke has been made. On account of enemies the people have lost heart, and turned to their personal concern. They are busy building and adorning their homes, cultivating their orchards and vineyards and tending their flocks. Haggai appears to waken their consciences. He brings the king's word, reaffirming the decree of Cyrus. With stinging reproof and eloquent appeal he sets the people on the work. This was 520 B.C. In four years the temple was finished. A resolute preacher is worth more than gold.

**THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Building Operations Resumed. Ezra 6: 6-12.

**THURSDAY'S VERSE.**—"Let it be done with speed."

This encouragement had been secured from Darius, the king of Persia, and with it Haggai could clear away all objections to resumption of the work. Moreover, the king wrote, that if anyone interposed any more difficulties or obstructions, he should be hung on a beam taken from his own house. This killed the opposition of enemies and cleared the way to the long-delayed consummation. You can't build without good workmen; you can't build without hearty support of the people; you can't build with out the wisdom and courage of noble leaders. Let it be done with speed.

**FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Builders Encouraged. Haggai 2: 1-9.

**FRIDAY'S VERSE.**—"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."

The noble Haggai saw into the future. He spoke for God to the people. They felt deheartened over the inevitable inferiority of this temple to the one Solomon built. The prophet stirred Zerubbabel's heart with the message from Jehovah. The glory of this house shall be greater than the former. This is the Lord's doing. Faith springs up in all hearts and all hands are laid with holy enthusiasm on the work. Though we build in poverty, yet we shall build wiser than we know. Do your best, and God will add himself to your striving and bring glory to your achievement.

**SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—New Blessings Promised. Haggai 2: 10-23.

**SATURDAY'S VERSE.**—"I, Zerubbabel, I will make thee as a signet."

As encouragement, Haggai tells the people of the favor of God that will rest on them when they give themselves to the building of the temple. To the brave and self-sacrificing Zerubbabel, he gives strongest expression of God's approving love. A signet-ring, or seal-ring, in ancient times, contained a person's signature and was much prized and carefully guarded. God says, "I will make Zerubbabel my signet-ring." This beautiful compliment from the prophet was well deserved. The preacher should look for chances to bestow worthy praise. It helps.

**SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Temple Rebuilt and Dedicated. Ezra 6: 13-22.

**SUNDAY'S VERSE.**—"The Lord had made them joyful."

How good it is to look on the finish of a great task, and yield oneself to emotions of thankful gladness. With imposing ceremonies the temple was dedicated to God. It came in the passover week, and the joy of recent deliverance from Babylon blended sweetly with the gladness of the ancient deliverance from Egypt. It is the Lord's doing and the remembrance of it makes the heart strong. Why build the temple before the walls of the city? Because religion is first. It is the deepest concern in human life. Reverence for God is a wall of protection, better than stone.

## LESSON 4.

OCTOBER 28, 1917.

## Ezra's Return from Babylon.

**MOTTO TEXT.**—"The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good." (Ezra 8: 22.)

**LESSON PARAGRAPH, EZRA 8: 15-36.**

**MEMORY VERSES, 21, 22.**

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## Lesson Text.

21 ¶ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of A-hu'vā, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

24 ¶ Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Shere'biyah, Haseh-ū-bi'ah, and ten of their brethren with them.

25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Is'ra'el there present, had offered:

26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;

27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drama; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Le'vites, and chief of the fathers of Is'ra'el, at Je-rū-sā-lem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord.

30 So took the priests and the Le'vites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Je-rū-sā-lem unto the house of our God.

31 ¶ Then we departed from the river of A-hū'vā on the twelfth day of the first

month, to go unto Je-rū-sā-lem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

32 And we came to Je-rū-sā-lem, and abode there three days.

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## Slow Progress.

The record stops with the dedication of the temple, and we have not one word about Jerusalem for the next 57 years. Conditions took an unfavorable turn, the religious enthusiasm of 516 B.C. did not last. Luke-warmness and indifference set in, in the old human way, and religious duties were slighted. Population increased, humdrum life went quietly on, and the few spiritual ones felt themselves quite helpless. Cyrus' political policy was meeting with much more success in erecting a barrier against Egypt than was the devout plan of establishing a solid basis for religion. Jehovah's cause flickered low. This unrecorded period was not empty of issues vital to the world. The life of Old Testament faith hung in the balances. A very high order of intellect and moral heroism was needed for this emergency, and these qualities were supplied in Ezra, the priestly scholar, and in Nehemiah, the noble layman.

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## The Crisis.

The Jews of Babylon were living comfortably in enjoyment of commercial prosperity and religious freedom. They had interest in the Jerusalem mission, but not enough to go. Alarming news began to come from the west. Depression and moral decay threaten the life of the Judean enterprise. Material prosperity is small, and social customs and manners are growing lax. The city wall is not built, and intermarriages with their neighbors is bringing in idolatry like a flood. The little commonwealth is in peril of being swallowed up in a heathen mass, and the faith of the prophets is sinking in a foul eclipse. This news startled Ezra. He must go to the rescue. He secures the king's consent, calls for volunteers, and starts on the dangerous journey. This was 458 B.C., just 79 years after

the arrival of the exiles in Jerusalem. The king offered military escort, but Ezra said nobly, "No; we will commit ourselves to the protection of our God."

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#### Ezra's Dismay.

The grand man is overwhelmed at the situation. He rends his garments, tears his hair and beard, and sits silent in the presence of the people, until the evening hour. The multitude gathering around him, catch the contagion of his humiliation and sorrow, and vow to submit themselves to his reforming plans. The broken-hearted grief of the good is better than denunciation for calling wrongdoers to repentance. Why do we not learn that fact? I know nothing feebler than harshly scolding sermons and parental threatening.

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#### Reformation.

The king's commission makes Ezra the ruler. He strikes instantly at the mixed marriages, demanding the putting away of every heathen wife, with her children. This was the hard, grievous necessity. This was the most distressing, dangerous evil threatening the extinction of the nation and its religion. Ezra reminded them that idolatry was Judah's ruin a century and a half ago. Shall the Lord's people draw on themselves a second time the destroying anger of God? He saw in the mixed marriage, the supreme obstacle to restored nationality. The painful work of separation began, full of complexity, difficulty and heartbreak. Come ye out from among them. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Pitiful was this surrendering of fathers, mothers and children, but the demand was inflexible. After all, the success was but partial. Ezra compelled religious services, remitted taxes as seemed appropriate, and appointed local judges. His coming was a tremendous shock to the old slack and easy-going degeneracy. It required a strong hand, a resolute will and an assured faith in God. The discipline was severe, but it was imperative, if Israel is to fulfill her divinely appointed mission.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Ezra the Scribe. Ezra 7: 1-10.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord"

The Jewish body in Babylon was strong in wealth and marked by literary activity and theological studies. It maintained loyalty to Jehovah, and was invaluable as a support to the Jerusalem mission. Ezra was a godly man, a combination of scholar, priest and ruler. The Spirit of God led him to offer himself to the work of rebuilding Jerusalem. It was a beautiful act of self-sacrifice. He studied the situation and felt that the sinking cause must have help. Who will go for us? "Here am I, send me." In the same way, God is calling men and women now. Situations of human need press on you and me. They are God's summons to go and help.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Generous King. Ezra 7: 11-20.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"Do after the will of your God."

The Persian king, of course, was not so much interested in the Jews' religion as in the building of a strong friendly state against the borders of Egypt. It is a curious instance of political policy combining wholesomely with the interests of pure religion. Gladly the king endorses the devout plan of Ezra, encourages a free-will offering from his people, and makes himself a large contribution in gold and silver. It was a significant compliment by the Persian throne to the trustworthiness and capacity of the Jewish people. Never has there been on earth a more vigorous, intellectual, brave and efficient stock. All honor to Abraham's children.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Provision for the Temple. Ezra 7: 21-28.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Blessed be the Lord who hath put this in the king's heart."

Artaxerxes (464-424 B.C.) was singularly kind to the Jews. Heathenism never rendered a higher tribute than his to the religion of the one God. He crowned Ezra with honors: (1) All Jews in Babylon were free to go with him; (2) he has authority to investigate all matters in Jerusalem; (3) to draw on the king's treasury; (4) to remit all taxes of priests and Levites; (5) to appoint judges for the courts; (6) to confiscate the goods, imprison, banish or put to death anyone who did not obey the law of God. This last was a dangerous power, easily abused into persecution, and Ezra's spiritual insight and justice never exercised it.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Preparation for Return. Ezra 8: 15-23.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers."

Jewish writers put Ezra next to Moses in great service and honor. A learned scholar in Hebrew history, he was intensely devout, sternly resolute and practical. He declares his confidence in the protecting God, and determines to live up to his faith. Great dangers of robbery and death lurk along the way, and a Persian guard would be useful. "But," says Ezra, "we will trust the invisible guard of Jehovah's presence." In the caravan were 1,500 men, besides women and children. It is estimated that they carried two million in money and treasure, which increased the journey's peril. Wonderful courage of faith!

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Return from Babylon. Ezra 8: 24-36.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"The hand of our God was upon us."

The journey was made safely, and Ezra's faith in God was justified. His practical religion commended him to the high respect of his heathen king. What benefit to talk about the values of faith in the invisible Jehovah, if you do not put it in practice? Act upon your faith and preach about it less. The best way to impress your religion is not by logical explanation and demonstration, but just to live it. You know, Jesus saves sinners. It is a glorious fact, but your best proof of it is living his life every day. Our Christianity needs support in the practical godliness of the men and women who profess it.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Ezra's Prayer. Ezra 9: 5-15.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Give us a little reviving in our bondage."

Moved by zeal and statesmanlike intelligence, he wants to put a new life into the Jerusalem mission. He would give new ideals by adding a fresh band of earnest believers. On arrival, he finds abuses and discouragements in excess of all expectation. It takes a man of iron will and mighty faith to lay hold of a situation like this. First, he takes hold of God by prayer, and his long weeping petition greatly moved the hearts of the people. Revival began with the leader's prayers and tears. He sees a dark moral slavery in Jerusalem. With God's help it shall be broken.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Promise of Reformation. Ezra 10: 1-12.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"We have trespassed against our God."

All confessed the sin of marriage with heathen neighbors. Ezra says: "Dissolve them; return wives and children to their own people." A divorce court is set up in the city, which runs three months, till the sorrowful, stern work is done. Every man was summoned to appear, on pain of confiscation of property and excommunication, that his domestic relations might be investigated. The old faith and separateness must be maintained at whatever cost of suffering and heartbreak. This course was the iron necessity of the times, and it was the painfulest work Ezra ever performed.



## LESSON 5.

NOVEMBER 4, 1917.

## Defeat Through Drunkenness.

(World's Temperance Sunday)

MOTTO TEXT.—"Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off." (1 Kings 20: 11.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 1 Kings 20: 1-21.

MEMORY VERSE, 10, 11.

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## Lesson Text.

1 And Ben-hadad the king of Syr'ia gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Sā-mār'ā, and warred against it.

2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Is'rā'el into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad,

3 Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.

4 And the king of Is'rā'el answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.

5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children:

6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away.

7 Then the king of Is'rā'el called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.

8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent.

9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.

10 And Bēn-hādād sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more

also, if the dust of Sā-mār'ā shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

11 And the king of Is'rā'el answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.

12 And it came to pass, when Bēn hādād heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city.

13 ¶ And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Is'rā'el, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Is'rā'el, being seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Bēn-hādād sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Sā-mār'ā.

18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these you men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syr'ians fled; and Is'rā'el pursued them: and Bēn-hādād the king of Syr'ia escaped on an horse with the horsemen.

21 And the king of Is'rā'el went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syr'ians with a great slaughter.

## Dangerous Foe.

The division of David's kingdom bore bitter fruit. Each part was enfeebled against warlike people round about, who were smarting under defeats inflicted by David. The Arameans were a powerful tribe from the Euphrates valley, who began to move toward Palestine about the time of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt. Their first act, after the division, was the recapture of Damascus out of the hands of Israel. Then they took more of her territory. It was one of the disgraces of the time, that the king of Judah, with the treasures of his palace, hired these aliens to attack Israel. There was an almost continuous hostility between the two kingdoms. Such was the situation when Ahab became king. No wonder that he wanted to strengthen himself by marriage alliance with the king of Tyre. Probably more than half his kingdom was torn away by the terrible Arameans. His father, Omri, had checked their invasion, and had improved the conditions of his country. Still the impending peril hung on Ahab's borders, and right manfully did he meet the demands of the hour.

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## Final Outrage.

Benhadad, king of the Arameans, lived in the recaptured city, Damascus. Seized by the lust of conquest, he resolved to subjugate all Israel, blotting out Ahab's kingdom and annexing it to his own. Here is a supreme national crisis like that in the earlier days of Philistine invasion. Benhadad's armies swept over all the land and shut up Ahab and his small force in Samaria, his capital. The northern kingdom looks death in the face, the hour of doom is about to strike. Said the insolent invader: "Deliver to me your silver and your gold, and your wives and your children." As a price of peace Ahab consented to the degrading terms. A consent so promptly given emboldened Benhadad to demand further that his soldiers should have the privilege of plundering the homes of the city. This heathenish infamy and inhumanity has been foully duplicated by invading hordes in our day, who, with amazing effrontery, at the same times, call themselves Christian. Ahab refused; then said the insolent foe man, with a great oath: "The dust of your city is not enough to fill the hands of my soldiers." This was designed to cow Ahab as containing a hint of the mighty multitude of the healegers. To this, Ahab made the famous rejoinder: "Let not him who is girding his

sword boast himself as he who is putting it off." Benhadad set his battle in array.

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## The Victory.

Ahab's valor revived and he resolved to fight against the desperate odds with an army of fewer than 8,000 men. They fled out of the city, formed in line of battle and began the advance on the enemy. Then occurred one of the silliest, insane military orders ever given. The over-confident and contemptuous king instantly told of the attack. "Take them alive, whether they come in peace or war." Don't fight them; take them alive! Has the king lost his senses? wondered his soldiers. Has our general turned fool? That is exactly what has happened. Flushed with certain victory, he has drunk himself into imbecility. With his officers, he has been carousing all night and all day, drowning reason in strong drink. Liquor fought for Israel that day. Her army struck the foe, threw all into disorder, and the Arameans fled in panic and overwhelming defeat. Liquor defeated that invasion, but no thanks to it. It is the foe of all men. It undermines their health and robs them of their brains.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—An Arrogant King. 1 Kings 20: 1-10.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"O King, I am thine, and all that I have."

Such was the tame and cowardly reply to the arrogant demand of Benhadad. Ahab confesses defeat and submits to vassalage. Liberty is lost, and Israel bows her head in a new bondage. The vainglorious haughtiness of the victor overreached itself. Flushed with excess of wine, he makes the still more humiliating demand that the city be opened at once to his plundering troops. Ahab was not ready to descend to this depth of national degradation. His drooping manhood revives and sends back refusal. The outrageous insult could have originated only in a drunken brain. He had a kingdom in submission, and lost it.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Defeat through Drunkenness. 1 Kings 20: 11-21.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"Take them alive."

Supercilious self-conceit, stimulated by large draughts of liquor; converted a really able monarch into a drivelling idiot. Inflated egotism is the biggest fool on the

planet. In its self-idolatry and its answering contempt for others, is hid the potent cause of his inglorious fall. The despised people have dangerous powers, that vanity entirely overlooks or ignores. This has been the fatal weakness of the German mind. It has mightily exalted itself and despised others. The bane of self-idolatry is its utter incapacity to measure the weight and capacity of others. "Take them alive," is the insane advice of the liquor demon.

WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Helpless Through Wrongdoing. Isaiah 2: 5-17.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Their land is full of idols."

This is Isaiah's terrible indictment of Judah, his native land. Kings, princes and people have all gone away from God and turned each to his own way. The awful apostasy offends and grieves his devout and patriotic soul. The indignation of Jehovah burns, and the nation's ruin impends. He will bring desolations on the land and humble the pride of his sinning people. Then the blind idolaters will fling their impotent idols to the moles and bats, and betake themselves to unavailing flight. Too late, they will find the lying vanities, contemptible and worthless. God alone is the strength and security of his people. Thy kingdom come.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Curse of Dissipation. Luke 15: 11-16.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"And no man gave unto him."

Such is the loneliness, degradation and want to which the life of a prodigal leads. The deluding spirit of worldliness whispers: "Live in luxury; listen to the sound of voluptuous music; linger over the wine, and run riot with vile companions. Yes; get away from the dullness of home and church, and well-behaved people; see the world and have a good time." Many are the sons of rich men and poor men, who have listened to this witching voice of hell, and have gone down into the depths. Never was there a truer saying than this: "Whatsoever a man sows that also shall he reap." Prodigal, come home!

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Joy of Restoration. Luke 15: 17-32.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"I will arise and go to my father."

This is the first good speech the prodigal has made. He has come to himself; he is at last in his right mind. Note, there is not one, enough interested in him to ask him to stay. The companions in sin leave him as lightly and heartlessly as they caroused with him. True friendships are not made on the low levels of life. He begins to think, and that is the starting point of recovery. One only hope remains, the pity of a wronged father. He resolves to try. "I will arise and go." How precious the welcome; how surpassing far the expectations of the offending son! I regard this the greatest parable of our Lord. The whole of the gospel is concentrated in it.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Woe Upon Excess. Isaiah 5: 11-17, 22-24.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Hell hath enlarged herself."

Another one of Isaiah's thunderbolts. He refused to keep his mouth shut before the shameless excesses of his king and the court, the princes and the people. Indolence, wine, banqueting, wholesale immorality and injustice were the degradation of a nation, specially commissioned of God to establish pure religion in the world. Yet all this while, these rioters counted on the protection of God against foreign invaders. They thought him bound to keep his nation safe, no matter what its moral character may be. It is like the view of some today, that God will take us to heaven when we die, however much we insult him here. Bad living is hell. Hell is here now—so is heaven.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Righteous and the Wicked. Psalm 1.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"His leaf also shall not wither."

This psalm is a large, comprehensive look at human life. It sums up the good and evil forces at work that shape a man's destiny to blessedness or misery. It announces the righteousness of God as the true ideal for men, and the honest pursuit of it, the one eternal condition of happiness. He shall prosper, he shall live nobly and everlasting peace shall be his portion. Fear God and keep his commandments, is the whole wisdom of human existence. Over against this is the ungodly life, which a man may choose if he will, but in that choice he takes all evils that ruin character and fix destiny in desolation.

## LESSON 6.

## Nehemiah's Prayer.

NOVEMBER 11, 1917.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3: 22.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 1: 1-11.

MEMORY VERSE, 11.

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## Lesson Text.

1 The words of Nĕhēmĭah the son of Hĕchĕhĭah. And it came to pass in the month Chĕsĕlĕu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shĕsĕhĕn the palace,

2 That Hĕmĕnĭ, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Jĕdĕh; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jĕrĕsĕlĕm.

3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jĕrĕsĕlĕm also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 ¶ And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

5 And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Isrĕĕl thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Isrĕĕl, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Mĕsĕs.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Mĕsĕs, saying, *If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:*

9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and thy strong hand.

11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

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## Nehemiah, the Layman.

In Lesson 4 we made acquaintance with the great Ezra, the chief maker of Judaism. We have studied the solemn religious crisis that brought him from Babylon and the vast human service he did in a painfully delicate and dangerous situation. A silence of thirteen years falls on his work, and in 444 B.C. Nehemiah steps on the scene. His office, as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes was one of honor and confidence. He is a lover of Jehovah and his people; an attractive, gifted man of action; versed in the ways of the world, and well suited to meet difficult situations. His combination of strength and grace, generosity and religious zeal make a striking personality. He is a unique layman in Hebrew history, performing services of incalculable value to that religious reconstruction which results in Judaism. A later Jewish writer passes on him this fine eulogium: "He was a man of good and righteous character, and very ambitious to make his own nation happy; and he hath left the walls of Jerusalem as an eternal monument of himself."

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## Bad News.

It is the year 444 B.C., and affairs are going ill in Judĕa. As there was a constant correspondence between Jerusalem and the Jews in Babylon, the unhappy tidings came to Nehemiah in the palace. Returned brethren said to him: "Our people are in great reproach and affliction; the wall of Jerusalem is also broken down; and the gates thereof are burned with fire." He sat down and wept, fasted and prayed. Confessing his own and his people's sins, he implores that the heart of the king may be moved to allow

himself to go and labor for his brethren. The king, seeing the sorrowful countenance of his cupbearer, inquired: "What is this sorrow of heart?" On explanation, the king said: "What is your request?" "I want to go to Judah," was the reply. Instantly the king gave him materials for building, an escort of cavalry and a commission as governor of Judah. Without Persia, Jerusalem would not have been rebuilt.

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#### Foes.

Arriving at Jerusalem, Nehemiah inspected the ruins by night, then, making known his mission and encouraging the people to build the walls in spite of troublesome enemies. It is most likely that Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem were governors of their several peoples, by appointment of the Persian monarch. These men were bitter opponents of the reconstruction of Jerusalem, and had heretofore thwarted efforts at building the walls. Egypt, who had recently freed herself from Persian rule, doubtless had much share in this obstructive work. You remember Persia's wise political policy in seeking to establish on Egypt's frontier this sturdy Jewish stock.

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#### Intensive Building.

Nehemiah had twelve years' leave of absence. There was inspiration in his presence, and the walls went up rapidly, in spite of hindering foes. They tried ridicule, then cunning, then force, then they stirred up difficulties in his camp. But internal and infernal avarice was the worst peril. His own well-to-do citizens, by oppressive usury, had spread discontent among his poor workmen. They were sternly rebuked. The wall was finished in fifty-two days, September 25, 44 B.C. What Ezra began, Nehemiah finished. October 1st a great assembly gathered in Jerusalem. Ezra read the Law of Moses, Levites explained it, and all broke into loud weeping. It was a sacred jubilee in Judah. October 15th the feast of tabernacles was celebrated. October 24th was a great day of repentance and prayer. This was the real birthday of Judaism; one of the most important days in the history of religion. At last Israel's faith has a home. All honor to the layman—Nehemiah.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Nehemiah's Prayer. Nehemiah 1: 1-11.

MONDAY'S VERSE—"Both I and my father's house have sinned."

At the bottom of this man's life is faith, and the spirit of prayer. This little book that bears his name is a delightful and stimulating witness of the power of these two qualities. We do well to enrich our own minds and hearts in its pages. With true instinct the prayer begins with ascription of sovereign glory to God. Naturally follows by suggestive contrast, confession of sin, and humble appeal for forgiveness. Then a turn to remembered mercies, and thanksgiving, culminating in a petition for the favor of the king. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." It was a fervent, believing, effectual prayer. Lord, teach us to pray. Thy kingdom come.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Moses' Prayer. Numbers 14: 11-19.

TUESDAY'S VERSE—"Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people."

Moses, the abused and maligned, was never more self-forgetful and Christ-like than on this occasion. Threatened with stones, he answered with prayers. He accuses not the poor sinning multitude, but, in pity, appeals to the offended Jehovah. He becomes their advocate in a grandly disinterested and fervent intercession. You and I are not fit for leadership if we are not patient and forgiving. Why not sympathize with God, who has been more sinned against than ourselves? Moses based his appeal on the honor of God, there being no other ground on which to rest. For thine own name's sake, forgive us, O Lord!

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—David's Prayer. 2 Samuel 7: 18-29.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE—"There is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee."

David's grateful heart was set on building a house for the glory of God. Nathan, the prophet, told him it was not the divine will. With what beautiful submission the king bears of his disappointed hope. "It was well that it was in thine heart," says the loving, fatherly God. We get credit for all the good we want to do, when his providence blocks its accomplishment. Noble David loses not interest in his dream, and does all he can to make the temple assured under the hands of his son. In reality, it is more David's temple than Solomon's.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehonaphat's Prayer. 2 Chron. 20: 5-13.

THURSDAY'S VERSE—"Our eyes are upon thee."

It was a time of great peril in Judah. A large army of confederate foes from the south was threatening the destruction of Judah. The good king, in prayer, deals with all the goodness of God to this people, in the past. Thou art the God of our fathers, the God of heaven, and the ruler of the earth. He pleads the precious promises of God to the children of Abraham. We cry unto thee in our affliction. Our enemies come up against us. O God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that come up against us; neither know we what to do. Our eyes are upon thee.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Hezekiah's Prayer. Isaiah 37: 14-20.

FRIDAY'S VERSE—"O Lord, our God, save us from his hand."

This prayer arose to God in those frightful days, when the Assyrians were crushing the little nations along the Mediterranean Sea. We have seen frightfulness more heartless and fiendish in our own day. The invader's armies were nearing Jerusalem. There was not any human help against the terrible foe. King Hezekiah lays the case before God. "Hear, O Lord, his reproaches against the living God. Thou art the God of the whole earth. Now, O Lord, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only."

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Daniel's Prayer. Daniel 9: 4-19.

SATURDAY'S VERSE—"I prayed and made my confession."

Do you note how God's ancient servants identified themselves with the unworthiness of their people? A sense of social unity possesses their minds. It is as though each one felt that if he had been better, his brother would have been better. There is truth in this conception. The individual's sin may be laid in part at the community's door. All have sinned. Daniel feels that "my people's sins are my own." If there is evil in your church, take part of the blame. "Be not as the hypocrites are." Said Daniel: "While I was speaking, confessing my sin, and the sin of my people, Gabriel touched me and said, 'I am come to give thee skill and understanding.'"

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Prayer for Jehovah's Return. Psalm 132: 1-10.

SUNDAY'S VERSE—"Let thy saints shout for joy."

It is thought that this psalm was composed for the dedication of Solomon's temple. By David's "afflictions" there is most likely an allusion to his earnest anxiety, unabated by trials and disappointments, for the settlement of the ark, and the erection of a permanent sanctuary. David put honor on the ark, as the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and the pledge of the exercise of his power in behalf of his people. The prayer is a lofty expression of faith in the fidelity of God, in fulfilling his promises to his servants. God will tabernacle with them, and all his saints shall shout for joy.



## LESSON 7.

## Nehemiah's Prayer Answered.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Ask and it shall be given you." (Matt. 7: 7.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 2: 1-11.

MEMORY VERSES, 5, 6.

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## Lesson Text.

1 And it came to pass in the month NISAN, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence.

2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto JUDAH, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me: and I set him a time.

7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into JUDAH:

8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertaineth to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

NOVEMBER 18, 1917.

10 When Sîn-bâl'ât the Hôrôn-ite, and Tô-bî'âh the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of ISRAËL.

11 So I came to Jerûsâ'lem, and was there three days.

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## Call to Service.

It was the call of helplessness and trouble in Judah. Human want and affliction, far off or near-by, is God's call for your service. Do you believe that? You certainly do, if you have the mind of Christ. Nehemiah had that mind and he did not hesitate to lay down an honorable office in the palace, comfortable and well paid, to undertake a hard and dangerous task. He had had news from Jerusalem about 444 B.C. Her walls were torn down and her gates were burned; her citizens were on the verge of despair. Ezra had followed his reforming work with efforts at strengthening the defenses of the city. The walls he built were torn down by impudent foes, and the condition of the colony's affairs was simply desperate. Here is an unmistakable appeal to the moral nobility of Nehemiah, and without hesitation the self-sacrificing response registered itself in his heart. Let this fact grip our minds, that we are now dealing with one of the most attractive figures in the history of Israel. Here is an unselfish, consecrated soul, who, by the energy of his character, can lift nerveless and discouraged men to the level of his own idealism and enthusiasm. Israel's manhood did not soften by the rivers of Babylon. For more than one hundred years it was the support of the holy enterprise, begun in 537 B.C.

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## God's Help Implored.

Giving himself, he can, with true consistency and sincerity, ask for divine aid and guidance. It is impertinence and irreverence to invoke God's blessings on people, when we ourselves lend not a hand. Think of asking him to convert the heathen while we neither go nor give! Said Nehemiah: "I beseech thee, O Jehovah, hear my supplication."

lication for Israel, while I confess our sins, which have scattered us abroad. Gather us again on thy holy hill, for we return to thee. Give success to thy servants this day, and incline the king's heart to grant thy servant's request." The royal consent to the plan was indispensable. Ezra's cause is hopelessly lost without immediate assistance, and that is absolutely dependent on the king's favor. Nehemiah is by no means assured of it, and that pivotal point becomes the burden of his patriotic prayer.

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## God's Answer.

He showed true courage by daring to appear with a sad face before the absolute tyrant of the Eastern world. "I took up the wine and gave it to the king. He said, 'Why is your countenance sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart.' Then in great fear, I told the king the cause of my sorrow. He said, 'For what do you make request?' I prayed to God, and said, 'That you would send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers, that I may rebuild it.' Then it pleased the king to send me. I having, at his demand, set a time for my return. I then asked him to give me passports for the journey of 1,500 miles, and also written authority to finish the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. The king granted me this according to the hand of my God, which kindly cared for me." Nehemiah's heart is glad and duly thankful. He finds himself provided with royal privileges, and credentials, and is eager to be on his way. The king has made him governor of Judah. Armed with civil power, and backed by the Persian throne, the great man departs with an honorable escort, which failed not to impress his importance on all. News of his coming reached the Samaritans, and gave them anxiety. Sanballat, their governor, and Tobiah, a half-Jew, his supporter, determined to continue their efforts at frustrating the rebuilding of Jerusalem. They dream not of the energy, courage and resourcefulness of the new governor.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Nehemiah's Prayer Answered. Nehemiah 2: 1-8.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence."

These personal memoirs of the patriot here are regarded the best historical record in the Old Testament, shedding clear, contemporary light on this most important pe-

riod in the development of Judaism. They light up the events that preceded and followed. At this time the province of Judah was about twenty miles square, the least desirable territory in Palestine. Of all the remnants of the nations of Palestine, the Jews were the weakest and most hated. They were ringed by treacherous, merciless foes. But for the friendly Persian throne, and the transcendent abilities of Ezra and Nehemiah, the feeble community would have perished.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Nehemiah in Jerusalem. Nehemiah 2: 9-20.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"And they said, let us rise up and build."

His competency shows itself from the start. First, he gets hold of the situation. He does not depend on the reports of others, but himself studies it at first hand. He reserves his secrets until he has seen the city, in a lonely inspection by night. Next, he calls a meeting of the leaders and proposes the building of the walls, and the removal of reproach. He recounts to them the goodness of God to him, the favor of the king, and the commissions he bears. His speech kindled an instant enthusiasm, and the unanimous voice was: "Let us rise up and build." New hope and courage sprang up, and so they strengthened their hands for the good work.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Moses' Prayer Answered. Numbers 14: 20-35.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"I have pardoned according to thy word."

In the absence of all other grounds of appeal, Moses had called on God, for the sake of his own honor among the heathen, to spare his people the doom their sin had merited. Jehovah feels the nobleness of his sensibility to his good name, and, moved by his own eternal pity, he yields to the petitions of his servant. Moses' second appeal was to the undeserved mercy of God. He would not consider for a moment the advancement of his own family, by the destruction of the sinning people. No, let me perish with them, if the divine wrath may not be averted. That is the spirit of Christ! Disasters bring out the pure gold of character.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Prayer Answered. 1 Chron. 20: 14-19.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"Be not afraid nor dismayed."

The king was in deep alarm over a great invasion of his country. He throws himself and his people into the arms of Almighty God, in an importunate prayer. The answer came: "Be not dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. Go ye down against them. You shall not need to fight; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord. Fear not, go out against them, for the Lord will be with you. Jehoshaphat bowed his head to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord." The invaders were destroyed.

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Hezekiah's Prayer Answered. Isaiah 37: 21-32.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"I will put my hook in thy nose."

The terrible Assyrians destroyed many nations in the west, and now they threaten the life of Judah. Sennacherib is loudly boastful of his victories, and warns Jerusalem of her certain doom if she resists him. Hezekiah falls before God, imploring help. God answers through his servant, Isaiah: "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. . . . For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." The angel of the Lord smote the Assyrian camp, and 185,000 men perished.

LESSON 8.

## A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

MOTTO TEXT.—

"Bless Jehovah, O my soul,  
And forget not all his benefits." (Psalm  
103: 2.)

LESSON PARAGRAPH, Psalm 103.

MEMORY VERSE, 8-10.

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Lesson Text.

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Daniel's Prayer Answered. Daniel 3: 10-17.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"I am come forth to give thee skill and understanding."

Daniel, oppressed in the gloomy times of the captivity, fed his soul on the prophecies of Jeremiah, which promised the restoration of Israel. His prayers ascended daily for their fulfillment. He says that, one evening, he saw the vision of Gabriel flying swiftly. It was the hour of evening prayer, and the angel touched him, saying: "I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved." The angel gave assurance that Israel's spiritual mission in this world should not fail, but triumph over all adversaries.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Return. Psalm 132: 11-18.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"I will make the horn of David to bud."

The horn was an emblem of power and glory; the lamp was an emblem of joy and prosperity. In the sorrows and tribulations of the centuries, in the often defeated hopes and disasters of the nation, the Jews began to put a spiritual meaning into the old promises made to David and the prophets. The better souls began to see that Israel was not destined to physical and material power and glory. Then what does God mean? There is something great in store, for God does not trifle with his people. They saw it with growing clearness that God means the glory of goodness and service.

NOVEMBER 25, 1917.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Isra'el.

8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

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Psalm 103.

TAKEN broadly, there is truth in the striking distinction: the prophets give God's messages to man; the Psalms express man's response to God. The psalm we now study stands conspicuous in our collection of the ancient Hebrew poems. Probably the 23d Psalm is the most universally popular, but this one certainly follows as a close second. It begins with the note of individual thanksgiving, and rising gradually by melodious stages, it passes into the orchestral burst of universal adoration. One person's experience of the goodness of God is generalized into an infinite benevolence that embraces all creations in all places of his dominion. The poet is a sunny optimist, dwelling on the father-like nature of God, and reflecting

on the multitude of his mercies. He looks on the bright side of human life, and finds its explanation in the localized presence of a divine, parental and universalized love. His kingdom ruleth over all. Each one of us lives in his bosom, dear as the apple of his eye, and the special object of his care. This wholesome tone and spirit bears along the eloquent passages, as beautiful ships are borne on the bosom of a flowing river. Do you wonder why you love this Psalm? In your sweetest religious mood it utters forth to God the feelings of your own humble and thankful heart. The psalmist, like you, had sampled life's troubles, and had found in God the balm for all his cares. His meditations are so beautifully conceived and expressed that it is impossible to suggest how the work might be improved. He helps our hearts in these sad days of war and desolation. He sings of God and his fatherly acts, his loving kindness and tender mercies, his unfailing pity, his unchanging grace and everlasting glory. Beloved, our lives are hid in God. Nothing shall be able to separate us from his love. Therefore we will cultivate the grace of gratitude and crown him with praise and thanksgiving.

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Explanatory Notes.

1. "All that is within me." "Every thought, faculty, power; the heart with all its affections, the will, the conscience; in a word, the whole spiritual being."

2. "Forget not all his benefits." Not any one of them.

4. "Destruction." The pit, including the grave and sheol.

5. "Thy youth." Thy youth or thy life. "Like the eagle." The eagle retains its vigor to a very old age.

6. "All that are oppressed." God's justice is unlimited, like himself.

7. "His ways. His acts." Thoughtful Moses grasped the nature of God. The unlearned mass were lessoned by what God did.

11. "High above the earth." Only the greatest distances in the universe can suggest the infinite mercy of God, or the completeness of his forgiveness.

13. "Upon them that fear him." Three times this phrase is used (11, 13, 17), reminding us that it is only the penitent believer who really profits by God's fatherly mercy.

14. "Knoweth our frame." Our weakness. He remembers, and will apportion to it his discipline and his grace.

15. "An grass." Man's frailty is forcibly contrasted with God's everlasting mercy.
17. "Unto children's children." Agreeable to the promise in the second commandment. But personal holiness is implied.
19. "Hath prepared his throne." The majesty and glory of God, deepen the sense of the greatness of his condescension.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Psalm of Thanksgiving. Psalm 103: 1-11.

MONDAY'S VERSE—"Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Thankfulness is the strength of the soul, its healthiest tone, and one of its most generous activities. It ranks higher than petition. You feel the truth of the statement. God welcomes the requests of his children; he gladly listens to the voice of trustful appeal, and yet the pure note of thankfulness does strike a loftier range of feeling, giving to the Father a finer need of honor. It is a gift to God, in contrast with seeking a gift from God. Let us learn religious optimism from this ancient poet. We are resolved, now and here, to count our mercies more and put more gratitude and praise into our prayers.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Lovingkindness. Psalm 103: 12-22.

TUESDAY'S VERSE—"To such as keep his covenant."

Our Father is a great lover. He lives in and cherishes all his works. All life is of and by and from him, and love is its energy and beauty. This elemental, divine life in man, God cultures into his own perfection. His covenant is written on every soul. It is our very nature and destiny to be good. We are made after his image, and God-like living is sublimest duty and privilege. To such as keep the eternal covenant obligation, that is, those who return to him faith and love, to them he is able to give larger and larger measures of blessedness and peace. He puts all excellencies into our characters, just as we will permit him to do it.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah the Creator. Psalm 104: 1-12.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE—"They sing among the branches."

The poet has a lovely sympathy with nature. This world is our Father's house; he made it and all things therein. His handiwork, in land and sea, is beautiful in form and color. He cares for his beasts and birds and flowers. In the voice of the birds, this poet hears a tribute of praise to their Creator. Let rocks and hills and trees, and all that hath breath praise his holy name. To him all creation is an orchestra, set to serene its mighty Maker. Shall not man, his noblest creation, join in the sounding chorus? We, too, must clothe him with majesty and honor. This is the true optimism, this is the true idealism. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Lord of Nature. Psalm 104: 13-23.

THURSDAY'S VERSE—"He watereth the mountains from his chambers."

God's loving power made the mountains and the plains, and sent the fertilizing showers. All these are servants of God, whose office it is to minister to the comfort of his living creatures. The birds and the stork, the wild goats and the conies, and the young lions eat at his banqueting table. Over all man is constituted lord. This poet has eyes to see the spiritual. He goes behind secondary causes to the great first cause. God in all and through all is his happy discovery. Nature is eloquent to him of the glory of God. Why may not you and I see nature with a poet's eyes? Browning truly says the poet sees, the poet knows. Jesus was a poet.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Preserver of All Things. Psalm 104: 24-35.

FRIDAY'S VERSE—"I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live."

This poet is a thinker, his thoughts sweep through all the field of nature; he is profoundly impressed with its orderliness, its beauty and its preservation. Who but a mighty, loving God could have ordained it? The fool, in his heart, says there is no God. You can't prove the existence of God. You intuitively recognize him. How can you prove what is already present to consciousness? In logic the syllogism begins with the larger proposition and ends with a smaller conclusion. What greater proposition than God? How can God become the small end of a syllogism? No, thinking begins with God. In the beginning . . . God!

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Divine Mercy. Psalm 116: 1-9.

SATURDAY'S VERSE—"Gracious is the Lord and righteous."

These poets write out of personal experience. These are not fine-spun theories and speculations; they are soul certainties, based on what has been seen and felt. There is a good God in the world. He is the companion of his children, happy in their presence, and in the manifold displays of his fatherly love. There is a joy in God, like to that of an earthly parent, growing out of his daily comradeship with loving sons and daughters. Don't think of him merely as Maker, Sovereign and Judge, but as Father. That is his deepest, richest nature. Say, "Our Father, which is in heaven."

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Faith and Gratitude. Psalm 116: 10-19.

SUNDAY'S VERSE—"I will pay my vows unto the Lord."

This good man, meditating on the goodness of God, inevitably felt the impulse of gratitude and love. He made solemn vows to live in harmony with this heavenly Friend. It is positively degrading to receive benefits and feel no sense of thankfulness and obligation. The goodness of God creates answering obligation of trust and service. You and I have recognized our duty and made holy vows. The vows bind our souls. He will not be trifled with. Through Christ he opens the door to a divine life in himself. We have openly confessed him before men, now let us pay. It is no exacting; it is our own best life, and the glory of his Saivourhood.

## LESSON 9.

DECEMBER 2, 1917.

## Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem.

## MOTTO TEXT.—

"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Heb. 13: 6.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 4.

MEMORY VERSES, 17, 18.

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## Lesson Text.

7 ¶ But it came to pass, *that* when Sān-bāl'āh, and Tū-bī'āh, and the A-rā-bī-āns, and the Am'mon-ites, and the Ash'dō-dites, heard that the walls of Je-rū-sā-lēm were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wrath,

8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Je-rū-sā-lēm, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Jō'dāh said, The strength of the hearers of burdens is decayed, and *there* is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 ¶ Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which* is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to naught, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Jō'dāh.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands

wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

19 ¶ And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

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#### The Great Layman.

I do not think due honor is paid to this unselfish, heroic patriot. Because there is nothing on a grand scale in his career, his extraordinary merit is inadequately recognized. His chief work was building a wall around a city, and that seems no remarkable performance. But it surely was, when you consider its imperative necessity and the obstacles standing in the way. Building that wall was a supreme test of courage, tact, high leadership and competent manhood. He shines like a star in the record of Hebrew achievement; he ranks with Judah's noblest sons in the service of mankind. Without that wall, Jerusalem is powerless to fulfill her mission, because her religious and civic life are constantly weakened and frustrated by malignant foes. She must have a wall of defense, or suffer the certain extinction of her glorious light. Ezra's reforming work in religion must be supplemented by the safeguarding bulwark of Nehemiah.

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#### Enemies Challenged.

Get in mind the political situation. Strong neighboring communities, grown up before the exiles returned, claimed a general proprietorship of Palestine. They had for leaders Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. These people did not want another strong community established in the land. They themselves were strangers, who had been exiled to Palestine, under the policy of the long-dead kingdom of Assyria. Having rooted themselves, they liked their western home, just as the Jews had learned to like theirs in Babylonia. They know the history of the

Jewish stock and how it once dominated Palestine in great power. You can understand the feelings of dread arising at the prospect of this strong race fastening itself in the land behind the high walls. Naturally enough, it was resolved that the walls shall not be built. Besides, they have been outraged only recently by Ezra's divorce policy, which ostracized, religiously and socially, all of their sons and daughters. That insult rankled in their bosoms, and so these heathen and semi-heathen folk fiercely vowed that walls shall not be built round about Jerusalem. Such was the grave condition confronting the enterprise of Nehemiah.

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#### Swift Work.

In the community itself were half-hearted citizens who had no interest in the wall. It is always so. But the man and the crisis have met. The wall *shall* be built and that right speedily. All depends on the courage and capacity of one man. Behind him is the favor of God and the endorsement of the Persian king. No man in Jerusalem knows his plans. Through several nights he rides secretly around the walls, to get knowledge at first hand. On the third day after arrival, he calls together priests, rulers, nobles and chief citizens and discloses his purpose. The three enemies heard of it at once. The work of spies. The work began on the instant. He set families to building, each in front of its own home. See the cunning appeal to self-interest. Priests built over against the temple. The three adversaries scoffed and threatened, but up went the wall. Nehemiah put his grand spirit in the people. The enemies attacked the workmen with swords. Nehemiah armed parts of each family with swords, spears and bows, while the others piled the stones. Everywhere the great Jew went, cheering workers and defenders. Sleepless diligence reigned. No man took off his clothes. Rush the work; strain every nerve! In fifty-two days the wall is finished. Praise the God of Israel! Put a crown on Nehemiah!

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Precautions. Nehemiah 4: 7-20.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Our God shall fight for us."

There was the leader's faith in God. A good cause shall not perish. Here is a classic example for church workers. What

a church yours could be with the enthusiasm of Nehemiah! No getting around it, the pastor must think and plan and project. He must have conference with, and the cordial support of, leading members. Doing something for God and the people is what gives real respectability to a church. Is your church a blessing to the community? Is it doing a service to society? How many of your members would have worked on that wall, or stood up to defend? Let each stand in his own place and serve God.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall. Nehemiah 4: 1-6, 21-23.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"The people had a mind to work."

There was something in the manner and bearing of their new governor that begot confidence. He won the people and workers through the walls. The adversaries came and flung taunts into their faces. "What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they make an end in a day?" That last question seems to imply a compliment on the energy with which they set to work. The insults did not intimidate or relax the workers. Perhaps it served to strenuous exertion. The swiftness of the performance astonished themselves and their enemies. The people had a mind to work.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Usury Abolished. Nehemiah 5: 1-13.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"We have mortgaged our lands."

Human selfishness never looks so mean as when men take advantage of public distress to enrich themselves. Wealthier Jews put up the price of bread, and the poor had to mortgage their little property to buy life's necessities. They were a miserly, heartless, traitorous set of thieves, really more dangerous to Jerusalem than outward foes. The cry of the poor angered Nehemiah. The discontent put in danger the building of the walls. He sternly rebuked the inhumanity and made the extortioners promise to release the pledged possessions of the poor. So he won the popular heart. Thank God for such a governor.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Nehemiah's Unselfishness. Nehemiah 5: 14-19.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"I have not eaten the bread of the governor."

In the Persian empire, the dues of the government were paid partly in provisions. Now, Nehemiah, on account of the distressed state of the people, would not take from them the usual allowances to which, as governor, he was entitled. That reminds us of Washington, who led the armies of the Revolution eight years, and refused to receive from the colonies a dollar of salary. Here was moral greatness. It is better to give than to receive. Nehemiah virtually gives his own life to his people, and asks nothing but love and gratitude in return.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Wicked Plot. Nehemiah 6: 1-9.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"I am doing a great work."

These enemies, finding that the walls were certainly going up, resolved to defeat the work by treachery. They will try to get Nehemiah into their power outside the city and kill him. They send a courteous message to him, and ask a friendly conference in the plain. Of course he understands their deceit, and declines, with another message, alleging pressing business. I am doing a great work and cannot come down. Three more invitations came, with like result. A fifth letter came, open, contrary to usage, charging him with the purpose of rebellion against Persia. "Come, let us confer about that." No, Nehemiah shuns the plot.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Nehemiah's Fearlessness. Nehemiah 6: 10-19.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"For they will come to slay thee."

One of his assistants on the wall was hired to play a Judas part against him. Shemshai is the villain's name. Sanballat and the others had hired him to betray his governor to death. This wretch had shut himself up in the temple feigning the fear with which he proposed to infect Nehemiah. "Let us hide in the temple, for they will come in the night to slay thee." Hear the brave reply: "Should such a man as I flee? Who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him." He was a stranger to fear.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Unseen Helper. Zech. 4: 1-10.

**SUNDAY'S VERSE.**—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The meaning of this great passage is this: The greatest successes of life are not external but internal. The armies of nations and the combinations of intellectual forces are relied on by men to effect great things

in the world. Not so with God. The best support of men, the power of noblest achievements in this world, is God's invisible Spirit. Men do their greatest work in carrying out the plans of God, and in doing so, need only to be girded and guided by his Spirit of wisdom and truth and righteousness.

## LESSON 10.

DECEMBER 9, 1917.

## Ezra and Nehemiah Teach the Law.

## MOTTO TEXT.—

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
And a light unto my path." (Psalm  
119: 105.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Nehemiah 8.

MEMORY VERSES, 2, 3.

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## Lesson Text.

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose;

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up;

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

9 ¶ And Nehēm-ġāh, which is the Tirshāthā, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

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## Dedication.

NEHEMIAH'S great work is done. His astonishing energy has secured Jerusalem and saved spiritual religion to the world. He was a pacifist, but he believed emphatically in the necessity of preparedness against inhuman foes. Only enemies and traitors were displeased at the building of the walls. When a congregation finishes a new church, they want the pleasing ceremonies of dedication. That service followed the completion of the walls in the fall of 444 B.C. Through August and September the work had been rushed, and on the 25th of September the joy of the people expressed itself in two processions on the wall, one led by Nehemiah, and the other by Ezra. Starting from a point on the west side, they moved in opposite directions, and met on the east side right against the temple, the whole heaven resounding with the sound of trump-

ets and the songs and shoutings of the people. Together they fled into the temple and gave thanks unto God.

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## Teaching the People.

Nehemiah retires to the background, and Ezra, the learned priest, ascends a pulpit. To their credit the people ask to hear the word of God. That makes preaching a delight. Before a large assembly in the street, October 1st, Ezra unrolls the scroll of the law of Moses. It was their Bible. Many had never seen it before. Their religious ignorance was dense. Six morning hours they listened, spell-bound, to the reading of Scripture. It was a time of patriotic glow and deep thankfulness, a most opportune season for sowing the Word of God. For seven days this service held, running from six o'clock to noon. Spiritual famine was relieved.

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## Interpretation.

Thy word is sweeter than honey. Whose face does not lighten up at some new opening of the meaning of Scripture? "Our hearts burned within us." A large group of intelligent men spoke to the multitude, in groups, explaining what Ezra had read, causing the people to understand the law. Lifting up their hands, they answered, Amen, Amen. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. On one of these days a new emotion swept the hearts of the assembly. An awful impression of sin was created, and they burst into uncontrollable weeping. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Ezra and Nehemiah begged them not to weep, but rather to rejoice at the forgiveness and wonderful goodness of God. Rather let us make merry. Go sit down to joyous meals in your homes and send something to cheer your poor neighbors. Religious emotions that do not turn us to practical religion are worthless. Help God to take care of his needy ones.

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## October 24, 444 B. C.

The blessed dedication revival ran for a month. On the second day was observed the feast of Tabernacles. Hearing it commanded in Moses' law, they went joyously forth, gathering branches of olive, myrtle, palm and thick trees to build booths on their roofs, as it is written. There was great

gladness, and day by day, unto the last, Ezra read out of the book of the law. The closing service was on the 24th of October, a day of repentance and prayer. We may say that this was the epochal birthday of Judaism. Ezra put the whole people under oath to support the Book of the Law. These two wonderful men, Ezra and Nehemiah, had brought the nation to spiritual resurrection. At last the purest religion on the earth has a home of its own in the land that God swore to give unto the fathers. Its ends are not political, but spiritual, and hence it will endure forever.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Ezra and Nehemiah Teach the Law. Neh. 8: 1-12.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"All the people gathered themselves as one man into the street."

Jerusalem is a new city. Kings, wealth, pomp and splendor are gone; priests, poverty and simplicity prevail. No palaces, no army, no independent state. Israel is now only a religious community in a Persian province. The old national hopes are dead, but the ideals of Abraham's faith and Moses' law still live. Disasters have brought her nearer to God, who maketh all things work together for good. It took tribulation to bring his people to appreciation of himself and his word. So Ezra read long hours, the teachers explained, and the people heard with a solemn delight.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Goodness. Neh. 9: 1-15.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"The children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloths, and earth upon them."

October 24th, 444 B.C., was the Jewish "4th of July". The month of glorious revival closes, inside the new wall. The New Jerusalem starts on her career, clothed in humble garments, but under great vows of consecration to God. Her purpose is to keep the fire of true religion forever burning on her holy hill. Pathetic is the contrast with the former magnificence and show of power, but the little flock has a strength in God, unknown in the times of splendor. It will endure until Jesus comes, four and a half centuries later, to find it degenerated into Sadduceism and Pharisaism.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The People's Ingratitude. Neh. 9: 16-25.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE—"Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them."

On the great day of repentance, confession and reconsecration, October 24, 444 B.C., the teachers recounted the story of Israel from Abraham down to that day. The martyr, Stephen, in the Book of Acts, before the Sanhedrin, pursued the very same line of remark. In the lips of these men, however, the recital was an humble confession to God; in Stephen's case it was a terrible indictment, addressed to the persecuting council. The confession of long national ingratitude and rebellion humbled the people in the dust, and they pledged a new life of obedience.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Covenant Renewed. Neh. 9: 26-38.

THURSDAY'S VERSE—"Therefore thou deliveredst into the hand of their enemies."

"In the time of their trouble, they cried unto thee, and thou hearest them from heaven. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee." Such is the dreary, uniform story. They delighted in the divine gifts, and forgot the Giver. "For thy great mercy's sake, thou didst not utterly consume them. Behold, we are thy servants this day." Now, in the land given unto their fathers, they are servants to Persia's king, subject to heavy burdens of taxation, and without hope of liberty. Yet, for all this evil of heathen domination, we loyally and lovingly renew our covenant with God to give him a faithful obedience.

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Law of Jehovah. Psa. 19: 7-14.

FRIDAY'S VERSE—"Sweeter also than honey."

Here is the finest tribute to the excellences and powers of God's Word to be found in the Bible. Just notice the variety of names the poet applies to it: Law, Testimony, Statutes, Commandment, Fear, Judgments. These multiplied terms are designed to indicate the wealth of its meaning to men.

Look at its effects: It restores the soul in times of depression; it gives light to the open-minded; it rejoices the heart; it solves perplexities; it never changes; it has no error; its values are beyond thought; its rewards to the obedient are too great for calculation. It is the one Book of all this world today.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Blessedness of Law Keeping. Psa. 119: 1-16.

SATURDAY'S VERSE—"I will delight myself in thy statutes."

This psalm seems to be the language of one who has been in deep affliction on account of faithfulness to God's truth. Rarely did a true prophet or devout servant of God escape pains and tribulations in all the life of Israel. The people's spiritual standard was high, but woe to the man who proposed to hold his nation and his neighbors to its requirements. All assented to it, but rare was the individual who took it seriously and conscientiously. See how men are hated today who insist on righteousness in trade and politics. Decent citizens say, unctuously, "preach the gospel and let the demons of injustice and corruption alone!" Yes, preach the gospel.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Eulogy of the Law. Psa. 119: 97-112.

SUNDAY'S VERSE—"O, how I love thy law."

It is the most educative book on earth, because it reveals the majesty of the One Holy God, and the greatness of man, who is made in his image. It shows how men may rise up to the glory of divine perfection through faith in Christ and obedience to his will. When Daniel Webster wanted to make a great speech, he read Isaiah to get a lofty pitch for his thoughts. The great masters in sculpture, painting and music got their noblest themes from the Bible. The stories of most of the mighty men of history are in the Bible. The best men who have served their generations during the past twenty centuries drew their inspirations from the Bible.

## LESSON II.

DECEMBER 16, 1917.

## Nehemiah Enforces the Law of the Sabbath.

MORNING TEXT.—"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Exodus 20: 8.)

LESSON PARAGRAPH, Nehemiah 13: 15-22.

MEMORY VERSE, 17, 18.

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## Lesson Text.

15 ¶ In those days saw I in Jê'dâh some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jê-rô'sâ-lêm on the sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Jê'dâh, and in Jê-rô'sâ-lêm.

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Jê'dâh, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Jê-rô'sâ-lêm by profaning the sabbath.

19 And it came to pass that when the gates of Jê-rô'sâ-lêm began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jê-rô'sâ-lêm once or twice.

21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.

22 And I commanded the Lê'vites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

## One Hundred Years.

NEHEMIAH has the courage of a prophet, the zeal of a reformer, the swift performance of the lightning, and the devotion of a saint. Never is there a hint of indecision or weakness. His is one of the finest reputations in the Old Testament, and his little book is esteemed the best historical record bearing on the reestablishment and re-peopling of Jerusalem. Nearly one hundred years had passed since Zerubbabel began the enterprise in much weakness. Progress had been intermittently slow. The energetic competency of our great layman consolidated the community, organized its forces, walled it against foes, purged it of un-Jewish elements and set it forward in a vigorous career of 400 years. He took a vacation and went to Babylon, and on return, 432 B.C., began a rigid enforcement of Moses' law. "He impressed the stamp of his spirit upon Judaism for all time and forced it to follow the course he had marked out. But for the energy of Nehemiah the whole history of humanity would have run an entirely different course."

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## Be Ye Separate.

1. Familiar courtesies of intercourse with heathen and semi-heathen must stop. This is the necessary, good old Jewish puritanism. A fawning priest had given Tobiah, an Ammonite, lodging in the temple. Governor Nehemiah hurled the man out of the city. All aliens must get out, and they did.

2. Mixed marriages were sternly forbidden. The pure blood of Abraham shall not be adulterated; the family shall be walled against moral infection. The half speech of Ashdod shall not be heard in the sports of the children on the streets. The son of the high priest married a daughter of Sanballat. "I chased him from me," is Nehemiah's brief statement of the penalty. Remorseless thoroughness was the word. That racial exclusiveness holds to this day.

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## Keep the Sabbath.

On return he found trade and farming activities in full blast on the Sabbath. Stop

it? Of course he did. He built a fence around the holy day, that no trader or farmer or huckster could climb over. "I testified against the law-breakers." Deuteronomy was his law book, and he took it seriously. Religion, to him, was not simply a round of pious ceremonies. He comforted the officials, and demanded that they enforce the law. That is where laxity creeps in, in your town and county. Think of a contemptible town marshal or county sheriff winking at blind tigers. Send Nehemiah after them. The Sabbath rabble of trades-people about the gates vanished. That Sabbath strictness had degenerated into an intolerable burden in our Lord's day. He, too, sanctified it, but abolished the absurdities. The day of rest is rock-based in human nature's need, as well as in God's ordinations. Our infringement of it would worry Nehemiah, and he would worry us.

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#### God's Forsaken House.

He found the temple services practically abandoned. Are the priests and Levites responsible? No, and yet they are working on their farms for a living. The law forbids that. What is the matter? The people, in their penurious meanness, have refused to pay their tithes to support the temple worship. The religious orders can't afford to starve, and here are your unopened doors and silent sanctuary. Does Nehemiah act? Assuredly. He reads the law book of Israel, reproaches delinquents, levies a poll tax and gathers tithes. Services resume. What a governor! He committed Israel in covenant with God to (1) separation, (2) Sabbath keeping, (3) pure marriage, (4) support of religion. He was a great man, an ideal layman. What kind of a layman are you? He was humble, absolutely unselfish, a defender of the poor, an honest, fearless servant of God, an ornament to humanity, and a blessing to the civilized world.

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**MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Nehemiah Enforces the Law of the Sabbath. Nehemiah 13: 15-22.

**MONDAY'S VERSE.**—"I contended with the nobles."

On return, 432 B.C., he saw some treading wine-presses, bringing in sheaves, lading asses, carrying all manner of burdens into Jerusalem. Heathen from Tyre sold fish and all manner of ware to the children of Judah.

All this on the Sabbath! What does he do? Denounce the laborers and traders? Not a bit of it. He denounced the officials. They are the responsible ones. Sworn to enforce the law, they have guiltily ignored their oaths of office. Their descendants are with us today. They take their salaries from the people and give a scant protection in return. Nehemiah deals with real law-breakers, the men really to blame. All praise to brave officials, all contempt for the cowards.

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**TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—The Sabbath Law. Exodus 20: 8-11; Deut. 5: 12-15.

**TUESDAY'S VERSE.**—"Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt."

None are more prone to become tyrants than those who have been slaves. It was important, as the people were soon to be masters of Canaan, to keep them in mind of their former hard servitude, and of their duties to their dependents. The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy servants, nor thy beasts, nor the stranger within thy gates. For, in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested on the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. The Sabbath was made for man, and its proper observance is indispensable to the welfare of mankind.

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**WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Sabbath Observance. Jeremiah 17: 19-27.

**WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.**—"Then will I kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem."

Flagrant violations and profanations of the Sabbath afflicted the soul of weeping Jeremiah. He loved God, he loved his people, and he did his utmost to hold them to a divine obedience. If anything is true in this life, doing the will of God is the supreme law of security and happiness. The gross desecration of the Lord's day was the common sin of rulers and people. Tearing down its sanctity meant also an incoming tide of all kinds of implety. The land had forgotten God and was ripening for destruction. Wickedness is a traitor, it rots the manhood of a people, and invites the enemy to an easy victory.

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**THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Sabbath Blessings. Isaiah 56: 1-8.

**THURSDAY'S VERSE.**—"Blessed is the man that doeth this."

The Sabbath is urged on the reverence of the people by all the holy prophets. It is not simply a cessation of labor; it is of great and permanent importance to the maintenance of religion among men. Religion is the deepest element in the soul, the holiest interest in the life. The success of life is achievement of character pleasing to God. The Sabbath pause in the rush of the world's activities gives opportunity for meditation and worship. Abolish the day, turn loose all the irreverent passions, and society plunges into godlessness. The brakes are taken off, and descent is swift.

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**FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Spirit of Sabbath Observance. Isaiah 58: 1-14.

**FRIDAY'S VERSE.**—"Call the Sabbath a delight."

There is such a thing as observing the forms of the Lord's day and missing its spirit. Pharisees had a rigid observance, and yet lost its sacred meanings. They made it tyrannize over man, and killed its soul. They made it look repulsive. That excess of rigidity was about as disastrous to religion as a total non-observance. Love of the day is vitally related to the love of God. The sanctities of it are to be transposed to all days. It means, in a high spiritual sense, the sacredness of all time. All days are equally holy with God, who demands the living sacrifice. A preserved Sabbath keeps this fact forever impressed.

**SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Cure on the Sabbath. Luke 13: 10-17.

**SATURDAY'S VERSE.**—"All his adversaries were ashamed."

The blind guides of Israel hampered the saving work of our Lord with their hide-bound Sabbath orthodoxy. Literalism and externalism were the bane of Judaism. Nehemiah's good work has gone to seed. Devotion to a system had extinguished all human sympathy and delivered men into hostility to the helping God. When a man's creed makes him indifferent to the claims of ordinary human kindness and pity, it has well-nigh transformed him into a devil. Yes; they were honest and conscientious. Made sincere hypocrites by missing love to God and man and exalting their own views.

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**SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Lord of the Sabbath. Matthew 12: 1-13.

**SUNDAY'S VERSE.**—"How much is a man better than a sheep?"

They would pull their sheep out of a ditch on the Sabbath, but Jesus must not pull a man out of the clutch of disease and pain. They were unconscious of heartless stupidity and inhumanity. Showing mercy to men is better than preserving a false and pitiless interpretation of God's law of the Sabbath. I am Lord of the Sabbath. Preserve your shallow and profane explications of its meanings; I invert your cruel order, and subordinate it, as a servant of man, rather than his master. There is no better way of keeping it than by doing good to the children of sorrow and affliction. To them, this was blasphemy. He ought to die.



## LESSON 12.

DECEMBER 23, 1917.

## Preparation for the Messiah.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3: 2.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Malachi 3: 1-12.

MEMORY VERSE, 1, 2.

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## Lesson Text.

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.

6 For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

7 ¶ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

8 ¶ Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a

blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts.

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## The Book.

The title, "Malachi," means "my messenger", and can hardly be the name of the prophet. Scholars say the author is unknown, but the fact does not affect the worth of the message. It was written about 430 B.C., according to learned opinion, just after Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem. The contents are in entire harmony with the moral and religious conditions then existing in Judah. The unknown prophet shows a fiery zeal for a purified Judaism, and maintains an unabated confidence in a coming One, who shall appear suddenly in his temple, to purify the sons of Levi, and to be a "swift witness" against the sins of the people. "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings". This was the sustaining hope of all Israel's noble prophets, as they fought against overwhelming odds. In a burning passion, our prophet gives himself to the support of Ezra's and Nehemiah's reformation.

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## Denunciations.

1. He attacks the ignoble priests who degrade the services of God's house by allowing the people to bring for sacrifice animals that are sick, lame and blind. Like bold Nehemiah, he begins with the men "higher up". "You leaders are responsible for reverence and common honesty in the ceremonial of our holy religion. You have put insult on God. You offer polluted bread on his altar. You are appointed to teach the people in religious duty, not merely to officiate in ritual, and you have taught them to violate it. God will send a curse upon

you and make you contemptible." Pretty plain talk to priests.

2. He attacks the rich for inhuman greed. "You oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless." Such men are the most dangerous criminals of society. God will smite them with the indignation of the people. It takes a brave man to throttle the lordly idolaters of unjust mammon, in any age. I can fancy them saying, "Why doesn't this preacher preach the gospel, and let business and politics alone?"

3. He attacks the people for their covetousness. You covenanted with Nehemiah to pay your tithes for the services of religion, and you have not kept your vows. You have robbed God. Even this whole nation has robbed God. You are cursed with a curse. He was old-fashioned enough to think a church member ought to pay his debts to God. How would you like a sermon in your church from this preacher?

4. He attacks the continued practice of intermarriage with the heathen, and the increasing custom of divorce. Each of these evils contributes to the rottenness of Hebrew society, and he spares not. You marry the daughters of strange gods; you deal treacherously with the wife of your youth. God hates both sins, and he will cut off the guilty man who commits either one. Malachi is the lightning stroke needed by a foul social atmosphere, always and everywhere. It is not popular preaching. But he was not all denunciation.

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## Tender Appeal.

He is not Israel's enemy. He wounds to heal. Come back to God, O my erring people! God's love calls to you. His unchangeableness is ground of mercy and the penitents' hope. Return unto God, and he will open the windows of heaven and pour out upon you untold blessings. He comforts the faithful who have suffered for their steadfast devotion. Speak, one to another, comfort your hearts. God's cause cannot perish. Turn the eye of faith to the "Coming One".

And so closes the last book in the Old Testament. It will be sunrise by and by.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Preparation for Messiah. Malachi 3: 1-12.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"He is like a refiner's fire."

Jehovah works to train and uplift his people. Let his priests teach the Scripture and

live it, not satisfied with observing rites and forms. This is the bane of priesthood through the ages. Preaching, opening and enforcing God's Word, is the supreme function of priest and prophet. Out of priesthood have sprung the vilest evils and dangerous perversions in the whole field of religion. They have deceived and oppressed the people, pretending to occult and mysterious spiritual powers. The Catholic priest makes men think that his manipulation is the only way of salvation. It is an erroneous superstition, an insult to intelligence, an outrage on the gospel.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—God's Redeeming Love. Jeremiah 31: 1-9.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"For I am a Father to Israel."

"Yes, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The love of God makes the strongest appeal to the human heart. The penalties of sin utter loud voices of warning, and the preacher has to get motives from them, for the better life. But stronger far, is the motive drawn from the patient, suffering love of God. My sin strikes the Holy One. I have wounded the tender heart of my Father. A boy's sin brings him loss and shame. He may barden himself in willfulness. Thought of the pang he has put in the innocent heart of a mother is more apt to melt him. If love does not move him, appeal has gone to its limit.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Happy Restoration. Jeremiah 31: 10-20.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"I will turn their mourning into joy."

There is something morally sublime in the strong but weeping calls of his people to a decent life before God. There were plenty of priests active before the altars, and men were thronging with their offerings, but religion was dead. The ordinances were maintained, but immorality and ungodliness reigned. The shallowness and stupidity of the outward show sickened the heart of Jeremiah. He taught religion as an inward reality of heart and conscience, which shows itself in a godly walk and conversation. How they hated him. Yet the brave man proclaimed the forgiving love of God to sinners.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Compassion. Jeremiah 31: 21-30.

**THURSDAY'S VERSE.**—"The fathers have eaten a sour grape."

Jeremiah says that the day of this lying proverb has passed. "Our teeth are on edge because our fathers ate sour grapes." The meaning is, "If we are sinners, we can't help it; we got our natures from our parents. We are not responsible." This is an old lie, very comfortable to wrongdoers. "We did not make ourselves; we can't be held accountable for the sins of our forefathers." Jeremiah explodes the falsehood, and presses home the fact of personal guilt and personal responsibility. You have heard men repeat this flimsy plea.

**FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—The New Covenant. Jeremiah 31: 31-37.

**FRIDAY'S VERSE.**—"I will put my law into their inward parts."

Here is a great lesson in spiritual religion. Exterior piety, in the ordinances of religion, by itself, was a sham and a delusion. Priests and people resting in the outward ritual were practical heathens, having the forms of godliness without its power. The prophet, weary of vain shows, strikes into the heart of the matter, declaring the forms worthless without the inner reality of a loving, obedient spirit. The essence of religion is in the state of the heart. It is the character of the man that appeals to God. His law must live in the thoughts, feelings, motives and purposes of men.

**SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Future Blessedness. Jeremiah 33: 1-11.

LESSON 13.

DECEMBER 30, 1917.

## Review.—God's Redeeming Love.

### MOTTO TEXT.—

"With Jehovah there is lovingkindness,  
And with him is plenteous redemption."  
(Psalm 130: 7.)

READ, Psalms 123 and 124.

### God's Album.

THE Bible is God's photograph album, showing the pictures of his servants from Abraham down to Jesus of Nazareth. The

**SATURDAY'S VERSE.**—"Jerusalem shall be a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth."

Think of it. This optimism, this quenchless love of Israel, was written in a dungeon in Jerusalem. The rulers were trying to crush their only citizen who dared to point them to their hope in God. Sin is destroying the city, and Jeremiah is punished as a criminal for saying so. What a great soul was that. Insuppressible, he writes in his call, urging repentance on his people, and singing of the happiness and glory that God will send on the city. No wonder it is written that the guilty world was not worthy of men like this. Jesus went this way, and died an optimist.

**SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—The Sure Covenant. Jeremiah 33: 12-26.

**SUNDAY'S VERSE.**—"In those days shall Judah be saved."

When the Lord, our Righteousness, shall live in the hearts of his people, then Judah shall be saved. His promise is sure, his covenant cannot be broken. The blessed God shall rule on the earth; it shall not become the kingdom of darkness. Good is eternal and evil is transient. The succession of day and night cannot be abolished, and just as absolutely sure is the relation between the redeeming love of God and a regenerated, happy Jerusalem. What magnificent faith in God in the darkest day of his life! The logic is good, if the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Increase our faith.

Lord teaches faith, unselfishness, courage, patriotism, humility and love in abundant biography. He knows the intense human interest in personality; so, instead of discussions of subjects, he gives the story of a life illustrating those subjects. By all means, then, study his immortal picture gallery. Don't talk to me about faith; rather tell me about a great believer. Don't discuss courage; give me the story of a hero. Please don't bore me on "education", but introduce me to a great educator. That is God's way. Folks are more interesting than themes.

Tell your preacher about this. Yes, he can give you a better sermon on Nehemiah than on "consecration". God wants to teach us by photograph, and his book is full. Why not take the hint?

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### The Restoration.

Moses organized Israel's commonwealth, in which religion was to have and did have the chief place. Elijah preserved the organization against Ahab's destructive idolatry. One service is just as necessary and honorable as the other. Zerubbabel and Nehemiah did the great work of restoration. With their stories, running from 537 B.C. to 430 B.C., the Old Testament closes. Restoration was wrought under the Persian authority, favored and aided by the kings, as a measure of political policy. Without Persia the building of Jerusalem was impossible.

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### Zerubbabel.

Doesn't he make a noble picture? All the qualities of fine manhood shine in his face. God means you and me to see the model of character, which he desires in us. God's album is not for entertainment, but for moral suggestion and stimulus. He was of David's line, and possibly thought it might be the divine purpose to make him king in Jerusalem. It was not to be. David's family, in him, disappears from history. He nobly volunteered to rebuild the temple in the days of Israel's weakness and poverty. The Persian governor of Syria, Tattenai, raised objections and reported to the king. The king looked up the court records and found Cyrus' commission authorizing Governor Zerubbabel to build, and sent back this quieting warning; that if any man make more difficulty in this matter, he shall be hanged on a beam taken from his own house. Haggai and Zechariah were his invaluable helpers in pushing the temple to completion. To them belongs a large credit in the erection of Zerubbabel's temple.

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### Nehemiah.

Seventy years after the dedication of the new temple this noble cupbearer of the king comes, a governor, to build the walls, without which there can be no strong city. Magnificent layman! Look at him, brethren, in the pew. Answers his own prayer for a wall? Yes, "let me build it." Chilled by

the cold reception of the local priests? Yes, but unmoved. Unwelcome, too, to jealous heathens in Palestine? Yes, but not dismayed. Do they try to frustrate him by ridicule? Then by threats? Then by treachery, and last by hired traitors in his own camp? He rallied his inefficient forces, put his indomitable spirit in them, and in fifty-two days the almost impossible task was done. It was a masterly performance. He had the energy and stroke of Stonewall Jackson. Look on that face. See determination, tact, energy, insight and devoutness written on it. He is not a priest nor a prophet, but a noble layman, and the peer of illustrious Jews. He a Nehemiah. That is God's whisper as you gaze on him.

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**MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Returning from Captivity. Ezra 1: 1-11.

**MONDAY'S VERSE.**—"His God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem."

A new sun rose on the Hebrews when Cyrus broke the yoke of Babylon. God used the heathen king. The then most important human interest was the rebuilding of the temple on Mount Zion. It did not seem so to men of that day. It was a political move on the part of Cyrus, but on God's part it was a link in the scheme of world redemption. Volunteers responded, and off they went to found a new holy city. Strange that the religious hope of the world hangs by that caravan of poor Jews now camping in the desert, now shouting and weeping among the wrecks of old Jerusalem. It is even so.

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**TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Advent of the Messiah. Matt. 2: 1-12.

**TUESDAY'S VERSE.**—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

It is 430 years since Malachi made the solemn forecast of the Coming One. He wrote out of a decadent age, when idolatry darkened the world, and the Abrahamic faith flickered low. But in the heart of Jews in every age there lived a deathless hope, an invincible faith in God. Realization dawns in the birth of a babe in Bethlehem. The power of God and the wisdom of God is folded up in infancy and sheltered in a manger. Why not in a palace? The mass of the human family lives in poverty's vale, and the Redeemer's lot is cast among them. He identifies himself with the lowly, that he may win them the easier.

**WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Ezra's Return from Babylon. Ezra 8: 21-32.

**WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.**—"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him."

516 B.C. the returned Jews dedicated the new temple, then a sudden silence of fifty-eight years fell on the story. Conditions were bad, no progress was made. Ezra, the scholar of his day, determined to give himself to the task of strengthening Jerusalem. There was no wall for protection, there was no vigorous life, civic or religious. Free social intercourse with the heathen led to intermarriage and consequent idolatry. That was the moral disease that destroyed Jerusalem 130 years before. Bravely he began to root the evils out, but it was only a half-won battle.

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**THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Nehemiah's Prayer. Neh. 1: 1-11.

**THURSDAY'S VERSE.**—"Grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Does he believe that God can incline the king of Persia to favor the plan to build walls round Jerusalem? True. The king's friendship for Nehemiah was one way of doing it. His heart is touched at the sad countenance of his cupbearer, and instinctively he wanted to remove the cause. Then the old national policy, instituted nearly one hundred years before, exactly harmonized with the request. Friendship, pity, policy moved the monarch to let his servant go. God's providence had brought about these facts. Make known all your wants to God. Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you.

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**FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Nehemiah's Prayer Answered. Neh. 2: 1-11.

**FRIDAY'S VERSE.**—"So I came to Jerusalem."

"Name the time you wish to be absent," said the king, and he did so, the king con-

senting. Then he asked the king for passports through intervening provinces, and also an order to get timber in a certain Palestine forest. That, too, was promptly granted, along with a commission as governor of Jerusalem. God's favor is on him; his prayer is answered in full. Persia's approval is on him. The strong, determined man will do the rest. The churches need laymen like Nehemiah. Do you know anyone like him?

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**SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall. Neh. 4: 7-21.

**SATURDAY'S VERSE.**—"None of us put off our clothes."

The story of this immortal layman is one of the most inspiring in the Old Testament. No man can read it and not feel that he must be stronger and nobler. Building that wall required the finest qualities in true manhood. There was not a slip or break in tact, courage, patience or resolution. As reformer, twelve years later, he was relentless and stern. His pity for separated husbands, wives and children could not change his policy for the purity of Jewish religion against the perils of idolatry.

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**SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.**—Nehemiah Enforces the Law of the Sabbath. Neh. 13: 15-22.

**SUNDAY'S VERSE.**—"I commanded that the gates should be shut."

There was the beginning of Jewish strictness of Sabbath observance. The rules multiplied until, in our Lord's time, the day had become a burden. The abuse of the holy day offended Nehemiah. The gates of the city, which had been standing wide open for traders on that day, were suddenly closed, much to the confusion and anger of many. But it had to stand, and the people behaved themselves accordingly. Let officials enforce the law or resign.

## OCTOBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
...	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	...	...	...

## NOVEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
...	...	...	...	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	...

## DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
...	...	...	...	...	...	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<del>23</del>	<del>24</del>	25	26	27	28	29
<del>30</del>	<del>31</del>					

Calendar

1917

## Master of My Boat?

I owned a little boat a while ago  
And sailed a Morning Sea without fear.  
And whither any breeze might fairly blow —  
I'd steer the little craft afar or near.

Mine was the boat, and mine the air,  
And mine the sea, not mine a care.

My boat became my place of nightly toil,  
I sailed at sunset to the fishing ground.  
At morn the boat was freighted with the spoil  
That all my conquering work and skill had found.

Mine was the boat, and mine the net,  
And mine the skill and power to get.

One day there passed along the silent shore,  
While I my net was casting into the sea,  
A Man who spoke as never man before;  
I followed Him—now life began in me.

Mine was the boat, but His the voice,  
And His the call, yet mine the choice.

Ay, 'twas a fearful night out on the lake!  
And all my skill availed not at the helm,  
Till Him asleep, I wakened, crying "Take,  
Take Thou command, lest waters overwhelm."

His was the boat, and His the sea,  
And His the peace o'er all and me.

Once from His boat He taught the curious throng,  
Then bade me let down nets out in the sea,  
I murmured, but obeyed, nor was it long  
Before the catch amazed and humbled me.

His was the boat, and His the skill,  
And His the catch, and His my will.

—J. A. Richards.