

This has frequently been proved in the experience of those who have tried it. "I had it not been for the Sabbath, I have no doubt I should have been a man-a-long ago." This was said by an eminent merchant, and another who heard him went on to tell of another merchant, who, taking no Sabbath rest, was then in the insane asylum.

—*Péduet*. Physicians unite with moralists and theologians in testifying to the necessity of observing the day of rest.

4. Nehemiah, a noble example as a man of principle, who would never wink at evil. With what integrity and nobleness of soul he conducted himself from first to last.

5. Verse 18. Not only do men who pursue evil courses, transgress God's law, but they show themselves to be great fools. Before them are numerous examples of those who have pursued similar courses and have come to a bad end, and yet they will not be warned. "A single cat kindles the fire," but many men refuse to learn even from their own experience the folly of sin. Let us be wise and learn from the past, for from it come a thousand voices warning us against the transgressions of God's laws and encouraging us in the path of obedience.

6. Learn this lesson from the past: the men and the nations that have kept the Lord's day have prospered, and vice versa.

Feb. 16.—The Way of the Righteous.— Psalm i: 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv: 18.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

The significance of the Hebrew word for psalms is *praises*. Most of the psalms, though not all of them, are hymns of praise. This book "is justly esteemed to be a kind of abstract of the whole Scriptures; a general library, in which we may meet with whatever is requisite for salvation."—*Calmet*. It was divided into five books, ending respectively with the 41st, 72nd, 89th, 106th, and 150th psalms. Each of these books closes with a doxology.

"It is a tradition among the Hebrews and Christians, that Ezra is, if not the only, yet the principal collector of the Book of Psalms."—*Calmet*. And, if that is the case, he probably wrote the first—the *preface* psalm, and also the 119th, celebrating the beauty and perfection of the Word of God.

The psalms are the productions of various authors, writing in different ages. David wrote more of them than any else did, yet only seventy-two of the one hundred and fifty bear his name, and even of these, several appear to be the work of other hands. Twenty-eight psalms bear the names of other authors, twenty-five others have a heading, but no author's name, and the remaining twenty-five have no inscription of any kind, and are called "orphan psalms." These inscriptions are not to be implicitly trusted. We can only rely upon them when they accord with the contents of the psalm. The Septuagint version has many more inscriptions than the Hebrew. In it the 91st psalm is attributed to *Adam*.

Cowles points out the fact that the psalms were mainly produced at periods of religious revival. Our Christian hymnody is, in great part, the offspring of similar periods.

POETICAL CONSTRUCTION. We have many other examples of poetry in Scripture besides the psalms. The "word song," Gen. iv: 23-24, is the earliest. The true pronunciation and manner of reading Hebrew have long been lost. If rhyme or any regular metre existed in Hebrew poetry it is no longer discoverable. The chief characteristics of form that we can now perceive

in it, are *parallelism* or *duplication* of *phrases*, and a certain *rhythmical symmetry* or correspondence of the larger members or clauses. The parallelism is chiefly *synonymous*, as in Ps. vii, 4; Ps. ii, 1, ii, 4, &c., or *antithetical*, as in Prov. xiv, 11, and xv, 1. Observe the parallelism in the following examples:

*The desire of his heart thou hast granted unto him
And the request of his lips thou hast not denied.*

Ps. xii, 2.

It will be seen that the first members of these sentences are almost synonymous, the second members also agree.

The memory of the just is a blessing.
But the name of the wicked shall rot.

Prov. x, 1.

Here we have antithetical parallelism—the forms similar, the ideas antithetic.

EXPOSITION.

1. Blessed is the man. To translate the Hebrew more literally this would read, *O, the blessedness of that man!* i. e., how great is his blessedness. Now follows the description of the man and in this verse it is negative, telling what he does *not* do. There is supposed to be a gradation of thought in these three negative clauses. To walk through a burning house is exceedingly dangerous, none but the greatest fool would stand still in it, and to sit down in it would be certain death. The righteous man neither walks, nor stands, nor sits in wickedness, but shuns it altogether. He neither follows the voice of the ungodly, nor habitually lives as sinners do taking his stand among them as one of them, nor so completely sets himself to the devil as to settle down and feel at home in the seat of the scorner who only knows religion as a thing to make sport of.

2. Positive description of the man who is blessed. Delight. A very expressive word. The Hebrew verb from which *delight* is derived means "to bend, incline towards," and hence "to delight in." This man's mind turns to God's law as naturally as the leaves of a house-plant to the light. God's precepts and promises draw him, as a magnet draws steel, and delight him, as the will of a wealthy ancestor delights his heir. Meditate. We are not satisfied with the sight of food, we want to eat it, digest it, get the good of it by converting it into blood and bone and muscle. So with the righteous man in relation to the word of God.

3. In reading this verse, in order to bring out the richness of the simile, make a slight pause after "be," then make no other noticeable pause in the verse. "A critical journal has shown that instead of 'Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper,' the rendering might be, 'Whatsoever it produce shall come to maturity.'—*Spurgeon*. Take this reading and what a rich and beautiful verse it is! "And he shall be, like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in season and whose leaf shall wither not and whose fallow shall come to maturity." Tree. Righteous man often compared to a tree.—See Isaiah lii, 3; Jer. xvii, 8; John xv, 1. Planted as distinguished from one growing wild. By the streams that flow from God send his Spirit and his Word.—*Péduet*. That bringeth forth his fruit, etc. Here are enumerated the signs of a healthy tree. It is probably too fanciful to say that the fruit represents the righteous man's good works, the leaf, his professions, etc. It is rather intended to illustrate the truth, that the man, nourished by God's word, enjoys spiritual growth and prosperity; his heart is full of confidence and peace and hope, his life is regulated by God's law, his earthly experience helps to his growth in grace,

and what has been so well begun on earth will be completed in the better world. Certainly the righteous man does not always prosper as the world estimates prosperity (see Psalm lxxiii), but he prospers according to God's estimate of prosperity. The world would say Paul had made a failure as he is seen lying in that Roman prison awaiting execution, but see his own words in 2 Tim. iv: 6-8.

4. With the blessedness of the righteous the fate of the wicked is now contrasted. To bring out the contrast sharply, read, "Not so the ungodly; but they are like the chaff, etc." Ungodly. A true and comprehensive description of the wicked.—See Psalm xxxvi, 1; lxxi, 1; x, 4; Job xxxi, 14, 15; Ephesians ii, 12. The attitude towards God constitutes the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Contrast with the passages just referred to Psalm xxxi; xlii, 1, 2; xxxviii, 1; lxxi, 4, 2; lxxi, 1. Chaff which the wind driveth away. We use fanning-mills now to separate the chaff from the wheat. In former times when the grain was threshed it was exposed to the wind, which drove away the chaff. Chaff is worthless, must be separated from the wheat, and is so light that the wind drives it away. What a terrible illustration of the ungodly and their fate!

5. Therefore. Because of their character. There is a sowing and a reaping, and the latter inevitably results from the former.—Gal. vi, 7, 8. Stand, i. e., stand out, endure. The ungodly shall be judged, but will not be able to stand the test of righteousness and will be condemned. Nor sinners, etc. They should not be reckoned as belonging to the company of the righteous. The righteous and the wicked dwelt together. There his verse points forward to a separation.

6. Knoweth, i. e., approveth, loveth, and also watches over. God is holy and therefore loves holiness in His intelligent creatures. Shall perish. "It contains in itself the elements of ruin." The broad way leadeth to destruction.

REMARKS.

1. V. 1. Many think there is more happiness in sin than in serving God. To this we reply (a) that they have never tried God's service else they would not say so and therefore are not competent to judge; (b) God's word says the reverse as does also (c) Christian experience; and (d) it is blasphemy to say that the devil can make his servants happier than God makes His.

2. There is a progress in sin, walking, standing, sitting.

3. The safe way is not to tamper with sin at all.—Prov. iv, 14, 15.

4. V. 2. "I have no rest, but in a nook with the Lord."—*Augustine*. A nook.

5. The Christian does not read the Bible as a heavy task, but as his delight to do so.

6. It is necessary to cast about in our minds the Word of God if we would get its strength and sweetness.

7. To gauge the man who delights in God's law regulates his life by it.

8. V. 4. Sin works ruin as surely as fire burns and water drowns. Yea, fire may cease to burn and water to drown, yet sin must work ruin. Every natural law might be abrogated or reversed and God still remain God, "with no reflection on any of His attributes. But while God remains God, holy and just, sin must work ruin. If God were to bless the ungodly and impenitent He would deny himself, and that He cannot do.

9. If an unholiness were to enter heaven it would not be heaven to him, but he cannot enter. From heaven sin will be forever banished.

Feb. 23.—The King of Zion.—Psalm ii.

1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ."—Act. 2: 22.