

Pastor and People.

GOLDEN GRAIN BIBLE READING.

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GOD THE GREAT FOUNTAIN OF GOOD.

A vision that blesses the heart is to see God as the giver of every good and perfect gift. Everything lies in his purpose and comes out of his hand. He distributes royally his good things, giving them to us richly to enjoy. He is not only liberal, He is lavish. Read these passages, and mark their truth!

God gives to all life, breath and all things. Acts 17.25.
He bestows on us richly all things to enjoy. 1 Tim. 6.17.
He giveth rain upon the earth; Job 5.10.
God puts wisdom in the heart of the wise. Exod. 31.6.
He gives grace to the lowly. Prov. 3.34. Jas. 4.6
He giveth power to the faint. Isa. 40.29.
He gives to men the true bread. Jno. 6.32
He imparts prosperity—increases. 1 Cor. 3.7.
He gives power to make wealth. Deut. 8.18.
He bestows rest from sorrow. Isa. 14.3.
He gives the bread of adversity. Isa. 30.20.
He avenges his people. 2 Sam. 22.48.
He gives to faithful men victory in their moral fightings. 1 Cor. 15.57.
He crowns all his work to true men with glory. Ps. 84.11.

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THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT.

EDITED BY M. H. C.

When the galley came into shallow water a boat was lowered from its stern and a number of dark faced men clambered into it. The boat then made towards the shore, not at the point where the young men waited but round a projecting rock to their right which hid the strangers from their view. Leon and Polydor rose therefore and walked inland so as to get round the rock and obtain a glimpse of the shipmen and their business. Before they had gone far however they were met by the men they were in search of, a band of desperate Moors armed to the teeth. Leon called out to them asking what they wanted and they answered him roughly in a strange tongue. Then as the cousins saw that the Moors meant mischief and as it was contrary to the teaching they had received to run away, they hastily snatched from the ground two rugged branches torn away by the wind from the trees and stood at bay. Immediately the Moors made a dash at them. The young Spartans laid about them well with their rough weapons, but alas! the branches soon broke in their hands and the next moment they were stunned with many blows, bound with cords and carried away. The African pirates made all haste with their victims to the boat and rowed rapidly to the ship. At once the sails were hoisted as the wind was fair from the north-east and the galley sped merrily before the breeze.

When Leon and Polydor came to themselves it was night. They found themselves upon a lower deck lying on their backs on hard boards with the blue star spangled sky overhead. The vessel in which they were unwilling passengers was cleaving the waves in its onward course and the wash of waters along her lower sides had a refreshing sound to the ears of the parched and fevered captives. In the morning they saw they were not alone. Many other youths and maidens, most of whom were fair of skin like themselves, were lying on the deck; and when daylight awoke them to a sense of their misery they began to bewail their unhappy fate. Polydor joined his lamentations to theirs and wished that he had never been born. But Leon, though as badly off as any of them and suffering from severe wounds on the head was too proud a Spartan to let people see what he felt, and too hopeful to be cast by any evil fate into the depths of despair. A Moor came along after a while with a basket of food and a large jar of water. Leon made signs to him to take the ropes off his arms that he might be able to feed himself and as he looked pleasantly at the man at the same time, the pirate not only took the ropes off his arms but removed them from his legs also, and did the same for Polydor at Leon's silent request. Many of the prisoners refused the food offered them, including Polydor, but when the Moor threw him his loaf Leon jumped up and caught it so cleverly that the man laughed goodnaturedly and ever afterwards brought his cheerful captive a double share. Soon after Polydor was very glad to pick up the food he had rejected and eat it though with angry scowls.

The ship was not long in reaching the shores of Africa. Then with land in sight all the way it skirted the coast, ever moving westward. Weeks passed away, dreary, miserable weeks, varied only by the changes in the weather and by the calls which the pirate captain was obliged to make at friendly harbours for the purpose of procuring provisions and water. At last when the captives thought they must surely have reached the world's end the ship passed through the Pillars of Hercules into what we now call the Straits of Gibraltar and came into port in the harbour of Tingis, now Tanjiers. This was a famous city, the last in the west, looking out upon the broad Atlantic Ocean which no ancient ship ever crossed. In fabled story it was said to have been founded by the giant Autaeus who was the Son of the Earth. Whenever Hercules

the great giant killer of the Old World, threw Autaeus upon the ground he rose with fresh strength because he had fallen into his mother's lap, so that the Greek hero was compelled to hold him up in his hands and choke him between Earth and Heaven. A Roman general who took the city opened the tomb of this giant and said that the skeleton he found in it was nearly nine feet long. A late Greek historian wrote that he had seen in Tingis a monument with the inscription "We are the men who fled before Joshua, the robber, the son of Nun." Many good historians think that this may be true. The whole region to the North of Tingis was one of romantic fable. There lay the great chain of the Atlas mountains which were said to hold up the sky. Among them or near their base were the gardens of the Hesperides where grew golden apples watched by a many-headed dragon. And farther west in the great ocean lay the Fortunate Islands or Isles of the Blessed, an earthly Paradise. It was no mean or barbarous place therefore to which the young Greeks had been brought by their captors.

All the captives were taken ashore and led to the slave-market with ropes round their necks as if they were so many cattle. Here was occasion for new lamentation on the part of Polydor. Happily however a Moorish merchant bought the two cousins and taking the ropes off their necks bade them follow him to his house. When they arrived there they were astonished to find such a place as they had not seen in all Laconia. It was a warehouse filled with goods from all quarters, Phoenician wares from Carthage and Utica, Greek manufactures from Cyrene, raw products from Spain, Etruscan fabrics from Italy with corn, oil, honey, leather, ivory, gold and steel from central Africa. The merchant had many ships upon the sea and many caravans of camels, the ship of the desert on land constantly exchanging goods among the nations. Strong men were wanted in this great storehouse to pack and carry and load and pile away, neat handed men to handle delicate goods and intelligent men to examine and assort the incoming cargoes and to deal with purchasers. The two cousins who knew nothing of commerce for which the Spartans had much contempt had to begin at the bottom of the ladder and act as simple porters. They had a very hard time of it. The other porters were either negroes from the south west or Iberians from Spain. No other Greeks were there. The young Spartans had indeed a chance offered them of bettering their position for the merchant partly by signs and partly by his own language of which they had picked up a little offered to set them over his Cyrenæan department, but alas! they had to confess that though gentlemen born, they could neither read nor write and that the only things they were judges of were horses, armour and weapons. So they had to stick to their loads and bear the abuse and contempt of the negroes and Iberians.

If Leon had been alone he could have got along well enough for he found it easy to make friends and to forget the insults of ignorant people. But he was continually dragged into his cousin's quarrels for Polydor returned his fellow-labourers' abuse with interest, imagined all sorts of slights that were never meant and was always running to the overseer or his master with some complaint. Everybody that knew him became heartily sick of Polydor. His companions and superiors had no mercy to show him, and even strangers in the streets, young men and boys, when they saw his gloomy face and suspicious look would pelt him with bad names and sometimes with mud and stones. Of course Leon like a good fellow took his cousin's part and so shared in all his troubles. A circumstance happened however that made an opening for something better. Leon was busy one day piling away some goods that a caravan from the interior had just brought in. Polydor and two negroes were unloading a camel and bringing the load to him. One of the negroes when he thought nobody observed him slid a small bag into his waistcloth. But Leon saw him and he knew from the size of the bag that it must contain gold or gold dust. He did not like to harm the man and yet he knew, heathen though he was that he should act honestly with his master and he also knew that he and Polydor might be charged with the theft. So, keeping his eye on the thief, he waited for a chance to tell the merchant. Soon the merchant came to inspect the load. He had been told what was in it and asked Leon for the little bag. Leon of course answered that it had not been given to him and the three porters denied that they had seen it. The merchant became alarmed and then angry, when Leon whispered to him telling where the thief had placed it. The man was searched and the bag found. It contained gold dust as Leon had thought but along with it were some precious stones which are rare in Africa and consequently of great value. Great was the delight of the merchant to get the bag back again and pitiful was the punishment of the negro.

In his joy the merchant asked Leon what he could do for him short of granting his liberty. Leon told him he and his cousin suffered so much from the porters and others that he would like if they could be removed from their company. Their master replied that if they knew anything of husbandry he would send them to work on his estate far away at the foot of the Atlas mountains where he wanted to send trustworthy men. Leon closed at once with this offer for he and Polydor understood field labour although they had done little at it with their own hands. Accordingly when the next caravan went south to obtain from the plantations corn and oil, grapes, oranges and dates the cousins accompanied it, and on their arrival set to work to cultivate the ground. The labourers

on the plantations were Moors, dark of skin indeed but with handsome features, very different from the Iberians and negroes. Leon got along well with them but in a short time Polydor began to quarrel. The whole world he said was in a conspiracy against him. Now it is very foolish for one man to quarrel with two hundred unless God's truth makes him do so; and this was what Leon told his cousin, although of course he knew nothing about God's truth as we have it. But Polydor would not listen, he went about sulking and scowling, blaming everybody that even looked sideways at him, not knowing perhaps that this was the way in which he looked at everybody. Soon the plantation became too hot for him. From words the Moors came to blows and as they were strong men Polydor was worse off than he had been at Tingis. Again Leon took his cousin's part notwithstanding he was in the wrong and suffered in consequence for all Polydor's folly and ill-nature.

One day Polydor had a quarrel with two Moors, brothers who were good workmen and in high favour with the manager of the plantations. They fell upon the young Spartan and would have killed or maimed him for life if Leon had not come to his rescue and beaten the Moors severely. The news came to the superintendent's ears and soon it was known all over the place that the two Greeks were to be publicly flogged for their offence. Leon and Polydor heard the report when they came in for the night; Next day the flogging was to take place and they who had never seen anyone but a slave punished felt that it were better to die than for a Spartan to submit to such degradation. That night while others slept they arose and fled, taking with them nothing but some barley cakes a large vine-dresser's knife and a spear head. They did not dare to go north for they would run the risk of being captured by their master's many servants and acquaintances. To go south or east would be to perish in the deserts. So they went westward for there they knew lay the great sea. Many long days they journeyed away from the mountain country of Atlas over sands and level plains towards the drowned lands about what is now called Cape Nun. Their barley, loaves or cakes were soon eaten and they had to beg from natives whom they met here and there. After that dates and other wild fruits were all their fare except when with their spear's head now fitted to a shaft they could kill some bird or animal and half cook it in the burning sand. For bread they sometimes found roots that were eatable and the grains of tall grasses. But they were free and at the thought of this even Polydor ceased for a while to grumble.

At last the two fugitives caught sight in the distance of the great western sea but how to get to its shore they could not tell for between it and them lay a great expanse of salt marsh and lagoon. Standing on the bank of the river just where it entered the sea of water weeds and canes they were delighted to see coming towards them a number of boats paddled by men like Moors. When the boats which were made of wicker work covered with skin came to land the men who were in them hailed their cousins in a language so like that of the Moors that it could be easily understood. The boatmen told Leon, for Polydor was so suspicious that he had gone behind a tree with spear in hand, that they were Canars from a place many miles to the north and that they had come to this marshy region because it was a good place for fish. Then they took him and his cousin to a log hut hidden among bushes where they stored the fish that they had caught and dried. These kind men also gave the fugitives some food and a large skin bottle for holding water, which was quite fresh a few miles up the river. In answer to Leon's questions they said that it would be useless to go to the south as it was a great sandy desert, and that if he chose to take to the sea he would find about twenty leagues to the west many beautiful islands inhabited by people of the same race as themselves. Polydor wanted to go north with the Canars who were about returning home with their dried fish, leaving their skin boats behind in the log house. But Leon reminded him of the punishment they had escaped from and of the certainty that they would be taken if they entered the north country through which their former master's caravans were constantly passing. For his part he said, he preferred to trust himself to the open sea and the tender mercies of the island people. Polydor sulkily agreed to go with his cousin.

The Canars gave Leon an old boat which could hardly be of any use for another fishing season. Some of the wicker work was broken in and the skin was hard and cracked in many places. But they showed him how to mend the frame and how to fill up the cracks in the leather with gum which flowed from trees growing near at hand. They also gave him some *tomzeen* or barely cakes and a few of their dried fish. Then while Polydor went up the river to fill the leathern bottle with fresh water and to gather wild fruits and roots Leon went to work at the canoe. The next day the Canars went home with the fruits of their labours and by the evening the boat was ready to go to sea. As soon as it was morning the cousins began their voyage down the river. It was not a pleasant one for in some places it led through great swamps full of water snakes and stinging insects and in others over sand bars where the water was so shallow that the canoe could hardly be poled over them. But at last they reached the open sea and passed the night on the last of the sand bars rocking about in their frail craft. All night Leon lay awake taking note of the western stars at every hour as they changed so that he might know how to direct his course the next night. Polydor slept, only turning about with a growl every now and then as he dreamt of some imaginary enemies.

(To be continued.)