

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLIV.

Nov. 7, 1879. } THE PERFECT PATTERN. { 1 Peter ii. 19-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."—1 Pet. ii. 22.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Heb. xiii. 1-13. Looking unto Jesus.
 T. James v. 7-20. The prophets for an example.
 W. John xv. 18-27. The servant not greater than his Lord.
 Th. 1 Pet. ii. 19-25. The perfect pattern.
 F. John xiii. 1-17. I have given you an example.
 S. Matt. v. 38-48. Bless them that curse you.
 S. Luke vi. 21-36. Kind to the unthankful.

HELPS TO STUDY.

The epistle from which this lesson is taken was written by the apostle Peter, apparently (chap. v. 13) from Babylon on the river Euphrates.

It is addressed (chap. i. 1) "To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." The "Asia" mentioned in this verse is not of course the Asiatic continent, neither is it what was afterwards called Asia Minor, for this last named territory included Bithynia and Cappadocia. It is supposed that in this passage, as well as in several passages in the Acts of the Apostles, "Asia" means only the region of Ionia of which Ephesus was the capital.

The special object in view in writing this letter seems to have been to give testimony to the truth of the doctrines of Gos. 1, in which these strangers had already been instructed by the apostle Paul. "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren," (Luke xxii. 32) was the final command given to the "apostle of the circumcision;" and now we find him strengthening the brethren by endorsing the teaching of the "apostle of the Gentiles." Peter then points out to those Christian strangers what sort of persons they ought to be if these doctrines were really true, and if they had actually received them, and "tasted that the Lord was gracious."

Although the passage which forms our lesson was addressed originally to servants (verse 18) it is applicable to all. Of all the modes of dividing this lesson which we have seen, we prefer that given by the "Westminster Teacher" as being the least forced. It is as follows: (1) *Patience in suffering*, (2) *Christ our Example*, (3) *Christ our Sacrifice*.

I. PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.—vers. 19-20.

The apostle makes a distinction in sufferings—a distinction which most people are very apt to overlook: (1) Suffering for our own faults, (2) Suffering for Conscience' Sake.

1. *Suffering for our own faults*. It is a common notion among the ignorant that the sufferings which people endure in this life—from whatever cause—will be made up to them, in some way or other, in the life which is to come. We are here taught that this notion is erroneous:

For what glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? How frequently do we find the hoary-headed, broken-down sinner, who smarts under afflictions resulting from his own disregard of the moral and natural laws of God, taking consolation to himself in some such words as, "I am a great sufferer; my sufferings will soon be over; I have been so much afflicted here that I think the Lord will not be very hard upon me afterwards." But the truth is that all the suffering that a mere human being could endure, not only in time but throughout eternity, cannot atone for one sin.

If suffering—even that which results from his own sins—should be the means of leading the sinner to repent and believe in Christ, then these sufferings would be of some value to him; but such a person would never regard his sufferings as meritorious or expiatory. Still more unreasonable would it be to regard the sufferings of the impenitent as of that character. The rain which helps the growth of the living plant, only hastens the decay and corruption of the plant that has no life in it.

This is all implied in the passage before us, but the special reference is to persons in subordinate positions suffering punishment for their faults at the hands of their superiors; and the persons directly addressed are professed Christians.

Our mere attendance at church or at Sabbath school is, so far, a profession of Christianity. None of us would like to call ourselves heathens. As Christians then, young or old, the teaching of the 20th verse to us is, that if we are found fault with or punished,—by our parents, our schoolmasters, our employers, or our God—for break of law or neglect of duty, we are to take it patiently; and for doing so, we are to arrogate to ourselves no credit or "glory."

2. *Suffering for Conscience' Sake*. The full elucidation and illustration of this part of the lesson would be the biographies of the Christian martyrs of all ages and of all lands; but it must not be forgotten that the principle enters into the conduct of ordinary life and that it is one of the severest tests of Christian character.

When the Christian finds the orders of his earthly master or ruler running contrary to the commands of God, then he obeys God and disobeys the earthly potentate; and when this course results in temporary loss or suffering he takes it patiently; he makes his appeal to his Master in heaven, and waits for "the times of restitution of all things:"

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience

toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. The word translated "thankworthy" in this verse is rendered "acceptable" in the 20th verse; and it is the same word that we have in Luke vi. 32: "What thank have ye." The word indicates that God appreciates such conduct, and will reward it. It is true that we can claim nothing from God on account of anything that we can do. No one can go beyond his duty. In Luke xvii. 10, the Saviour says to His followers, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." That is what we are to say; but that is not what God will say to us, if we do our duty; He will say "Well done thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21).

The word "wrongfully" in the 19th verse ought to be read with a strong emphasis. The suffering, to be acceptable, must be undeserved. Still more acceptable is it if inflicted for well-doing. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Daniel, Jeremiah, and many others, knew what it was to do well and suffer for it, and at the same time to take it patiently; but the apostle does not set any of these before us as examples, because he has an infinitely better example at hand.

II. CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.—vers. 21-23.

For even hereunto were ye called: They were called to suffering when they became Christians. Every follower of Christ must suffer, for He suffered. Christ is our example in all things. His character is the standard which is set before us to aim at, although we cannot reach it. Christ Himself is the true exemplar of Christianity. He is the original; all others are copies more or less approaching to the original. Here He is set before us as our example in suffering wrongfully and taking it patiently. He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. His steps lead through suffering. He went straight forward in the path of duty; no matter what it might lead to, He turned not aside; He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: He used no deception to shield Himself; He is a perfect example of honesty and sincerity with friends and enemies.

When He was reviled He reviled not again: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). He prayed for His enemies "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

He committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. The word "himself" is supplied by the translators. Some commentators think that the sense of the passage is that He committed His enemies to Him who judgeth righteously. He differed from ordinary martyrs in this respect among others, that whereas they were in the power of their enemies, He was not really in the power of His enemies. "Legions of angels" were at His call. And here the example stops for we are not called upon to give up our lives unnecessarily; and there must have been something more in the death of Christ than a mere example, as we shall see immediately.

III. CHRIST OUR SACRIFICE.—vers. 24-25.

It is scarcely possible for preachers and teachers to do too much in the way of setting forth Christ as "our example." It would be incorrect to say that there is too much of this done in the present day. And still the work is utterly useless unless He is at the same time set forth in another light—that of "our sacrifice." We need not attempt to imitate Him as our example unless we first believe in Him as the propitiation of our sins—the Saviour,

Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree: Here the sacrificial character of Christ's death is plainly indicated. This part of the lesson ought not to be run in along with the rest, but brought out very distinctly by itself. His life is presented as our example; but His death is shewn to be something more than an example. He "bare our sins," and that is something we cannot do for anyone. It was not merely as our example that He hung "on the tree" but as our Redeemer. An eminent old English writer says: "That Jesus Christ is, in doing and in suffering, our supreme and matchless example, and that He came to be so, is a truth; but that He is nothing further and came for no other end, is a high point of falsehood." The patience with which He endured His stripes is certainly an example to us, but the example would be entirely thrown away upon us were it not that by His stripes we are healed.

We needed an atonement; we needed an example; we have both in Christ. Is that all? No, we needed something more. The substitution might be effected, the sacrifice completed, the bright and perfect example placed before our eyes for our imitation, and still the whole human race would be as sheep going astray.

We needed one to be the shepherd and bishop of our souls: One to guide and feed us, one to oversee and care for us, and this we have in Christ. Without a Prophet to teach us by precept and example; without a priest to atone for us; what could we have done? But even with these how could we ever expect to reach safety without a King to subdue us, to govern us, and to be our leader in the day of battle? and this we have in Christ.

If He, then, is, or offers to be, all these to us, it is with the object, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: Sinners who become believers in Christ are regarded as "legally" dead, because He died in their room. They are also dying unto sin in so far as its commission is concerned; and they are living unto righteousness. When an opportunity to do evil presents itself those who are dead to sin should not do it, any more than a dead body would perform the acts of a living one; and when occasion offers

for the doing of good, those who are alive unto righteousness will be apt to shew some activity.

CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, having had placed in his hands by an East India missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy for the speedy and permanent cure for Consumption, Bronchitis, Catarrh, Asthma, and all Throat and Lung Affections, also a positive and radical cure for Nervous Debility and all Nervous Complaints, after having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, has felt it his duty to make it known to his suffering fellows. Actuated by this motive and a desire to relieve human suffering, I will send free of charge to all who desire it, this recipe, in German, French, or English, with full directions for preparing and using. Sent by mail by addressing with stamp, naming this paper, W. W. SHERAR, 149 Powers' Block, Rochester, N. Y.

Around the Table.

VALUE OF SMALL THINGS.

Though little I bring,
Said the tiny spring
As it burst from the mighty hill,
'Tis pleasant to know,
Wherever I flow
The pastures grow greener still.

And the drops of rain,
As they fall on the plain,
When parched by the summer heat,
Refresh the sweet flowers
Which drooped in the bowers,
And hung down their heads at our feet.

Though the drops are small,
Yet, taking them all—
Each one doing all that it can
To fulfil the design
Of its Maker Divine—
What lessons they give unto man!

May we strive to fulfil
All His righteous will,
Who formed the whole earth by his word!
Creator Divine!
We would ever be thine,
And serve Thee, our God and our Lord.

FOUR SERVANTS OF SATAN.

SATAN has a great many servants, and they are busy running about, doing all the harm they can. They ride in the trains; they follow the soldiers; they do business in the city; they go into the country; they enter houses and break open shops; they visit our schools. Some of their favourite spots are colleges and academies, where our boys are. Boys, do you hear that?

Indeed, they are very fond of young people everywhere. Some of Satan's servants are so "like roaring lions, going about seeking whom they may devour," that you are not much in danger from them, because you can keep out of their way. Some are so vile-looking, you would naturally turn from them in disgust; others are such fellows that you would not be seen in their company; and there are still others you would rather keep clear of, without exactly knowing why. You know they are not good, and that is enough. But all of Satan's followers are not so quick to show their colours. Some are cunning, and pretend to be a great deal better than they are, in order to deceive people; and they do deceive people horribly. It makes my blood run cold to think of it. I know four of them, and some of the mischief which they have done. I found out their names, and I want to put you on your guard against them, for they are very sly. They will make-believe to be your