

who had all that heart could wish, we have before us one to be deeply commiserated, one of the neediest of the needy.

We often make mistakes in this matter; we see, as we imagine, want and poverty here, plenty and prosperity there. But could we look behind the outer veil we should see that there is one great need, universal except in those happy cases where it has been met and answered, and this is washing, cleansing from spiritual disease and spiritual defilement. We look upon a band of children, light-hearted, gay, sweet, and pleasant, as it seems. But inquire closer concerning them. One has a bad temper, and makes all at home miserable when she is there. Another cannot be trusted, another is idle, another proud and disagreeable. And even those who are called "good children" are, perhaps, forgetting God, living without him, guilty in his sight, and unforgiven. Let the teacher press home on each the question, How is it with you?

2. As a simple thing.

Naaman arrived at Samaria full of hope and of expectation. From the king of Israel he meets with no help, or even kindly direction. But as he stands at Elisha's door the message comes to him: "Go wash in Jordan." Could any thing be more simple? Here is no long pilgrimage to be undertaken, no hard course of self-mortification imposed, no toilsome works, no costly payment demanded. "Wash in Jordan:" the river is not far off; it is open to all; it is free.

So is the cleansing of the soul. It does not require wealth, learning, influence, ability to be cleansed. It is free to the pauper as to the millionaire, to the foolish as to the wise, to the little child as to the man. It is a very simple thing: wash and be clean. Not one who has ever heard the Gospel can say that it is not for him.

3. As a hard thing.

This simple thing was a stumbling-block to the great Syrian general. It was too humble a thing for a man of his rank and station. He expected that the prophet, in consideration of the greatness of his visitor, would come down himself to wait upon him, and perform a miracle in the sight of those around. And Naaman was willing to make handsome return for the service rendered. But to wash in Jordan—any beggar might do that! It could not be expected of him. And so he had nearly lost the cleansing, and gone home a leper, as he came.

Washing is just as hard a thing now to many. Downright wicked men want cleansing, of course; to that all will agree. But must a youth who bears an honorable name among his acquaintances, and the girl who is loved and admired by her companions, go through the same? Each one would, naturally, like to be all right in his standing before God, and his prospects for eternity; but to come to the cross of Christ as a sinner, that seems hard to him. Yet there is no other way. It is, "wash and be clean."

4. As an efficacious thing.

Was not Naaman a happy man when he came out of Jordan, with his whole body pure, and sound,

and healthy, "as the flesh of a little child?" He left his country a man under sentence of death; he returns to it full of life and vigor. The water of Jordan, on which he had at first looked with such disdain, has been to him "the power of God unto salvation" of his bodily life.

So with the cross of Christ, on which the pride and learning of this world look down with contempt. It is the only thing that can heal, the only thing that can save. There is the "fountain opened for sin and for all uncleanness." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

So far the application of the lesson is for those who are yet uncleansed. Is there any application for those who can say of that fountain, which cleansed the dying thief:

"There have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my guilt away?"

There is. While the cleansing was alone by the power of God, notice the part that others took in leading up to it. The captive maid was the first instrument in the Lord's hands. She was mindful of her master's great need, and lovingly and respectfully pointed out that there was a remedy. The Syrian king, though ignorant of the Power that could heal, gladly sent his favorite to seek it. The prospect pointed to the way of cleansing. The servants of Naaman realizing the gravity of the situation, interposed to allay their master's offended pride. Heathen king and servants, Israelite prophet and maiden, all had their happy share in the work. But happiest the two latter, who acted in full consciousness and understanding of the blessing. This is what the cleansed should do—mark the need of others, and strive to lead them to the fount of cleansing. Let the young imitate the little maid in her self-forgetting love, and her respectful earnestness. The passage tells no more of her. But can we doubt that she had her full and overflowing reward?

Bible Reading Lesson Analysis.

Naaman the Syrian. 2 Kings 5. 1-16.

1. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Prayer in the beauty and effectiveness of perfect and specific confidence. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Jas. 1. 6; Heb. 10. 22; 11. 6; Matt. 21. 22; 1 John 5. 14.

2. "By him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria." God's plan of working through instrumentalities. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." Isa. 10. 5; Hab. 1. 6; 2 Thess. 2. 13; Prov. 16. 9; 20. 24; Josh. 7. 14.

3. "He was a leper." Brilliant worldly fortune is often marred by extreme personal affliction. "And the priest shall look upon him, and pronounce him unclean." Lev. 13. 3; Job 16. 7-16; 2 Chron. 32. 25; 2 Sam. 12. 15-23.

4. "Out of the land of Israel a little maid." God's way of carrying the religion of Israel to the heathen through a captive slave. "And sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt." Gen. 37. 28; 41. 16; 50: Dan. 1. 3, 6; 6.