

in as good case as Joseph who resisted it. The sadly mauled moth wriggling out of the spider web will never fly the better for its entanglement; the bird escaping from the fowler's snare gains no new strength of wing; the fish breaking away in agony from the angler finds a hook in its mouth which adds little to the joy of life. Sin always leaves scars. It is good to be saved out of sin; it is better to be kept from sinning.

By Way of Illustration.

Verses 1 and 2. "Iniquity," "sin," "transgression." Iniquity means a falling out of the way. Life is pictured as a straight, clearly-prescribed path such as Bunyan saw in his vision; and every sin is a stepping aside. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life."

Sin signifies missing the mark. As a slinger when he threw a weapon might miss the object at which he aimed, so in sinning we are missing the object. Every man is born to a noble destiny. But he who lives in sin misses his destiny and misses his prize. Transgression means the overleaping of a boundary. Sin and iniquity may be partly due to weakness or ignorance, but transgression, "to clear a boundary at a leap or to push it down," is the work of an excessive and uncontrolled strength. They are the presumptuous sins which push aside the laws of God.

Verses 3-6. Conscience. We are told that at Gibraltar there is a sentinel with match in hand, guarding the entrance to the tunnel which leads out to the "neutral ground." If there were any insurrection in the garrison he could at once light the whole train and blow the tunnel up; and to insure watchfulness the sentinel is relieved every two hours. God has made everyone the keeper of his own heart habitation. Conscience is the sentinel. A conscience drugged, a conscience scared or smothered, leaves us at the mercy of any insurrection within or any snares from without. To enlighten our consciences and to strengthen them, God offers us his Spirit. What a crime it is to quench the Holy Spirit!

Confession. A German prince traveling through France visited the arsenal at Toulon where the gallies were kept. The commandant offered to set at liberty any slave whom he selected. In conversing with the prisoners the prince met with universal complaints of the injustice of their confinement. At last he came to a man who said, "I have been a wicked, desperate wretch. I deserve punishment." The prince procured his release.

Verses 7-9. Some students remember a scene in a village prayer meeting when Dr. Mark Hopkins, then over seventy years of age, said, "One tide bears in on me still, that I am a sinner, and my only hope is in the mercy of the Saviour." At the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dr.

A. J. Gordon's settlement over his Boston church, he said, "Do not praise me; I do not know what I may do before I am done with life." Such confessions not only indicate daily dependence upon divine strength, but they become a blockade against future sin, if uttered with an humble, trusting spirit.

Before the Class.

Indicate the time of the lesson—during the latter part of the period studied in the last lesson—a time when David seems to have been living in luxury and comparative ease while his army was winning victory in the field. Be sure that the class, unless children, understand what David's sin was. (If it is not best to discuss it in the class, it will be well to ask the members to read 2 Sam. 11 and 12 during the week before the lesson is taught.) Let the sin be seen in its strong contrast to the general tenor of his life, and show that it was less heinous in the light of those times than if it were committed today. At the same time let it be understood that he sinned against the express command of God and against his own conscience; and that because of his regal position it was especially harmful in its influence, and because of his religious leadership it gave "great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme."

Taking up the lesson text observe that as Psalm 51 is David's confession and prayer this is his song of praise for forgiveness. In it we find the story of his own experience and the lessons that he has learned and would teach to others. (1) In verses 1 and 2 we find the joyful outburst of a forgiven soul. (2) Verses 3 and 4 tell of his bitter experience during the year that he concealed his sin. (3) In verse 5 he tells of his confession and forgiveness. Now he turns from his personal experience to speak the words of warning and exhortation which a truly repentant soul must speak to those in danger of falling. (4) In verse 6 he exhorts the followers of God to pray to him before the punishment for their sins comes upon them. (5) Having in verse 7 expressed his trust in God, a promise of the divine guidance is given him in verse 8. (6) Verses 9 and 10 contain words of warning to the unreasoning and wicked. And (7) verse 11 is a final outburst of joy expressed in exhortation to all the righteous to rejoice in such a God of forgiving love.

Sin, punishment, repentance, confession, forgiveness, joy, are words that have not changed their meaning since the days of David. We can all understand his experience, and his words speak their lessons to our hearts. Seek to impress these thoughts upon the class. Enforce by the words of Christ and the apostles the truths that sin can be covered only by God; the penalty follows sin as effect follows cause; repentance and confession prepare the way for forgiveness; joy follows pardon; our sins should serve to guide others in the way of holiness.