

For the Sabbath School.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XI.—MARCH 11.—GEN. XVIII., 17-21.

A Blessing to all Nations.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“All nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.—Gen. 18:18

The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? (v. 17). The language shows the honour put upon a man by the mighty God. But that is just the glory of the divine grace—its wondrous condescension. Abraham is lifted up by this one divine act, to a sharing of the very innermost counsels of God's heart. God dealt with him as a man deals with his most intimate, confidential friend. In one of the Psalms we read:

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,
And he will show them his covenant.”

The secret of the Lord means the Lord's confidence. In the margin it is “The friendship of the Lord.” So it was not for Abraham alone that the revealing was here made; it was for us as well as for him. Always the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He tells us himself that he will manifest himself to those who love him. “If a man love me he will keep my word; and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.” Therefore it is to those who love Christ and do his will that he will make known the secret things of his heart.

Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation. (v. 18) Out of this nation the Messiah would come in due time. Abraham was chosen as the father of this new people. The divine plan for his life was very clearly marked out. God has a plan for each and every life that he brings into this world. We cannot all be Abraham's. It is a serious thought that something of the God's plan in the blessing of the world is in the hands of each one of us, depends upon our being faithful. What a motive this gives for being loyal to God and true to our trust. For example, to every father and mother God entrusts the training of their children for him. If they are unfaithful and their children's lives are marred or come to nothing beautiful, they have failed God in their place.

All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. (v. 18). No other man has ever had the honour that was Abraham's, becoming the father of nations, carrying in his faithfulness that which has blessed all the earth. But in our measure every one of us may be a blessing, if not to all nations, certainly to many people. The Jewish people, with all their faults and sins and failings, sent blessing into all the old world.

For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him. (v. 19). His mission was not completed when he had lived his own life faithfully and earnestly. He was also to train his family aright, so as to set their feet in the paths of God's purposes. Many worthy men fail just here. They are good and saintly themselves, but they do not command their household after them in the way of divine law. Few things are sadder in life than the home where the parents are godly, but where the children, through lack of early training and teaching drift into the world.

That they may keep the way of the Lord.... to the end that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken to him. (v. 19.) First, Abraham was responsible for the commanding of his children after him in the ways of God. Next, his children must keep the way of the Lord, “to the end that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” That is, God's promises to Abraham regarding the future could not be fulfilled unless his children were faithful to their part of the Lord's plan. Only by keeping God's commandments can they secure the carrying out of the divine purposes and plans which began with their parents.

The Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto

me. (vs. 20, 21). God never punishes without faithful inquiry into the case. We too often form our opinions after hearing only one side of the matter. We are all apt to judge from only partial knowledge. Hence we are constantly doing injustice to others. We may take a lesson from the example of this case of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Christian Endeavour.

Daily Readings.

First Day.—Paul before the council.—Acts 23: 1-10.

Second Day.—Paul before Agrippa.—Acts 26: 1-8, 22-27.

Third Day.—Christ before Pilate.—Luke 23: 1-9.

Fourth Day.—Who made man's mouth?—Exod. 4: 10-16

Fifth Day.—“Not ye that speak.”—Matt. 10: 16-20,

32, 33.

Sixth Day.—“Our lips are our own.”—Psalm 12: 1-8.

Seventh Day.—Taming the tongue.—Jas. 3: 2, 12.

【PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, MARCH 18.—“Taming the Tongue,” Jas. iii; 2-12. As in the time of James so it is to-day, the tongue unsanctified is a most fruitful source of evil. Ruined lives, blasted hopes, lost souls, testify to the awful power of an untamed tongue. On the other hand many are the lives made glad, the hopes realized, the souls saved that witness to the irresistible might of a tongue used by the Holy Ghost. No man can tame it, says the apostle, but the Christ who bought it, can bring it into subjection to his own holy will. When you can measure the influence of a Spurgeon or a Moody, then you can measure the influence of a consecrated tongue. Reference passages:—Exodus iv, 10-12; Jer. 1, 6-9; Isa. i, 4; Psa. xvii, 3; lxxi, 24; cxli, 3; Prov. xxv, 11; Mat. xii, 36-37; Luke vi, 45; Eph. iv, 25, 29; Col. iv, 6; Jas. i, 26.

BRIEFLY PUT:—Capture the thoughts for Christ and the tongue will follow, 2 Cor. x, 5. Be neither tongue-tied nor tongue ruled, Rom. x, 10. Our conversation need not always be of grace, but it should always be with grace, Col. iv, 6. Season your speech with salt, not with spice, Col. iv, 6

Decided by No!

We take pleasure in publishing the opinion of one of our contributors in our recent post card symposium. Comment is unnecessary; they speak for themselves. The subject was, “Should Christian Endeavour Societies hold Secular Entertainments?”

Rev. M. Scott, Hull, Q., writes:—“No, for it is foreign to their aim which is Christian Endeavour and not secular endeavour. We do not ask an Agricultural Society to hold religious meetings. The members of the Agricultural Society can promote religion and the members of the Christian Endeavour can promote the secular in other spheres than their own and do it to better effect. The moment one institution attempts to do the work of another it has weakened in the principle which gave it existence. All this would not hinder the Toronto Exhibition being opened by prayer and the singing of the 100th Psalm any more than it would hinder the Christian Endeavour Society transacting its necessary business. When a locomotive leaves the rails it is slower than a waggon, and it is hard to get it back into position again. So let the Christian Endeavour stick to its principles or it will lose ground and have trouble to regain its peace.”

Miss Lizzie Ballard, Stratford, writes:—“No. In the (1) place they will retard Christian growth. (2) The Christian Endeavour is for the upbuilding of Christ's people and kingdom which is not of this world. (3) It will alienate the soul from Christ, robbing it of usefulness to Him. (4) It is an allurements from Christian duty. (5) We cannot serve both God and Mammon, we will either love the one or hate the other. (6) It may prove a stumbling block to the ungodly. If any man see thee which hath knowledge set at meat in the idols temple shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those things that are offered to idols.”