

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON VIII.

Feb. 22, } GIVING AND PRAYING. } Matt. vi. 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."—Matt. vi. 6.

HOMR STUDIES.

- M. Matt. vi. 1-13. Giving and Praying.
- T. Ps. cxlii. 1-10. Reward of Almsgiving.
- W. Isa. xxix. 13-24. Being Seen of Men.
- Th. Ps. cxvii. 1-19. Calling for Help.
- F. Eph. vi. 10-21. Praying with all Prayer.
- S. Prov. xvi. 1-9, 18. Committing thy Ways to the Lord.

Sab. Luke xi. 1-13. Christ Teaching to Pray.

HELPS TO STUDY.

The Saviour's attack upon the empire of self is continued in the verses which form the subject of this lesson with an incisiveness well fitted to accomplish its overthrow.

It is still the moral law, in its spirituality, that He is expounding. That law, either directly or by implication, covers the whole ground of Christian duty; but the Jews misinterpreted it, and so shall we until we are guided by the Holy Spirit, and give heed to the teachings of the Son. These teachings possess a force and distinctness which makes it seem as if He were proclaiming a new law, which had never before been known or acted upon. But the principles here brought into such striking prominence are the same spiritual life-springs which animated the piety of the Old Testament saints. They gave, and that with acceptance; they prayed, and that with efficacy; and the fact that they did so, without such plain verbal directions as are here given to us, ought to incite us to piety and obedience proportioned to our privileges.

Christ's previous statement, that the righteousness of the Christian must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees is here well illustrated in some of its details.

The matter of the lesson may be arranged under the following heads: (1) *The Christian's Motive in Giving*, (2) *The Christian's Object in Prayer*, (3) *The Pattern Prayer*.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTIVE IN GIVING.—Vers. 1-4. The duty of giving, and that liberally, was taught in our last lesson; the Saviour now deals with the motive and manner of giving.

1. *How Not to Give.*—vers. 1, 2. In estimating a person's merit as a giver, men ask, How much did he give? God asks that also, but He asks another question as well, and that question is, Why did he give it?

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. These clauses must not be separated. It is not the act but the motive that is condemned. We are told that he who, from love to the Master, gives if it were but a cup of cold water, "shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42); but to all ostentatious givers it is here said ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

When a congregation, or a Sabbath school, or an individual, makes an unusually large contribution, it may be judicious for the purpose of evoking the liberality of others, if not to sound a trumpet, at least to insert a notice in the newspapers; but, take heed!

Hypocrites; pretenders. They have their reward; they are seen of men; that was all they bargained for; they cannot expect any further reward.

2. *How to Give.*—vers. 3, 4. The words let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth were used proverbially to express the utmost secrecy; and they do so with intense force; but they are not to be understood as contradicting the Saviour's command, uttered a few minutes previously: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. v. 16). The two passages must be taken together. The meaning then is that our good deeds are to be done in secret so far as our own credit is concerned, and at the same time with all the publicity which is necessary to make them serviceable in promoting the prosperity of the kingdom of God.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S OBJECT IN PRAYER.—vers. 5-8. Here again, it is the motive that is condemned and not the act; and here again to man's question (What did he do?) God adds the question, Why did he do it? Public prayer is not forbidden. The form of prayer given in this same chapter is a form of public, or at least of family, as well as of private prayer; otherwise it would have contained the words *my* and *me* instead of "our" and "us." But it is necessary even for Christians to take heed that they do not pray standing in the synagogues, or anywhere else, for the purpose of being seen of men and admired for their piety or their eloquence. The hypocrite loves, or prefers, to do so; but the true disciple engages in public prayer as a commanded duty, as an appointed means of procuring needed blessings for himself and others, and thus of advancing the Master's cause.

Use not vain repetitions. Prayer is "the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." It should be the honest expression of our present needs and desires, in so far as these needs and desires are such as God has promised to supply and gratify. How often it happens that boys and girls go on for years "saying their prayers" without ever really expressing a desire of their own hearts to God. A set form of words,

however good in itself, if only used superstitiously to ward off evil, is to us as vain and useless as the incantations of the idolater are to him.

The objection to printed or written prayers is that they are liable to be used unmeaningly. The kind of prayer called *extempore* is not, however, quite free from this same liability, for most people fall into the use of certain set forms and phrases to express the same oft-recurring desires and needs. The language of Scripture is always safe, if properly applied. But the main requisite is that the words, whatever their source, be used as vehicles of earnest thought and desire.

III. THE PATTERN PRAYER.—vers. 9-13. This is not a set form of words for Christians to use in prayer to the exclusion of other words. In Luke xi. the form is varied somewhat. Christ and the apostles used other words (Matt. xxvi. 39; xlii. 44; Acts i. 24, 25). It is a specimen, or sample, of what prayer ought to be—brief, concise, comprehensive. It comprises a preface, six petitions and the conclusion.

1. *The Preface.*—Our Father which art in heaven. The fatherhood of God in relation to man, consists not merely in the fact that God created man, but in the fact that God created man in His own image. The fall of man did not abrogate God's rights as Father, but it abrogated our claim as children, for in that fall the image or likeness was lost, or at least shattered and disfigured. But if we come to God through Christ, we are adopted by Him, are once and forever received into the number of His children, and have a right to all their privileges. Those who use this prayer are, so far, professing to come to God through Christ, and if this profession be true, the lost likeness will, by and by, be restored to its primeval beauty, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

2. *The First Petition.*—Hallowed be thy name. In Scripture the name of God generally means that whereby He makes Himself known; and in this petition we pray that everything whereby God manifests Himself in the world may be held in the highest respect and reverence by ourselves and others.

3. *The Second Petition.*—Thy kingdom Come. Here we pray that God may reign supreme, and that His right as King may be acknowledged, (1) in our own hearts, (2) in our immediate neighbourhood, (3) throughout the world.

4. *The Third Petition.*—Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Our praying to God for a certain object implies that we ourselves are doing what we can for the accomplishment of that object. God's will, as spoken of here, is contained in the Bible; and if we pray that God may be obeyed on earth, we ought to do what we can to circulate the Scriptures.

5. *The Fourth Petition.*—Give us this day our daily bread. The word translated "daily" might have been rendered *essential*, or sufficient for support. Sustenance for the soul is meant as well as for the body. Each new day requires more prayer and more "read."

6. *The Fifth Petition.*—Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. No one can sin against us as much as we have sinned against God. If God forgives our sins for Christ's sake, that will incline us to forgive others.

7. *The Sixth Petition.*—And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. This petition implies that we are doing all we can to keep out of temptation's way. It also acknowledges that we cannot conduct ourselves aright without God's care and keeping.

8. *The Conclusion.*—We ascribe to God the power to perform the things asked for, and all the praise and credit arising from their accomplishment, in the doxology: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, Amen.

Official Notices.

CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE OF B. N. A.—It would oblige the Faculty if churches or other parties requiring the services of students during the vacation would apply to me as early as practicable, that time may be given in which to make suitable arrangements. HENRY WILKES, Principal. Montreal, Feb. 2, 1880.

CANADA CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY.—So little money has yet been received for this year's grants to churches in Ontario and Quebec, that it cannot be known whether the next quarter's payments will be made, or whether there will be a deficit, as last year. This fact interferes with any possible calculation of affording the needful aid to the mission in Manitoba, and hence embarrasses the Committee having that matter in charge. If the contributions were sent forward promptly, that Committee would ascertain at once what they could or could not do. Montreal, Feb. 2, 1880. HENRY WILKES, Gen. Sec.-Treas.

LABRADOR MISSION.—Received in December: Cobourg Sunday school, \$5 50; Hamilton Sunday school, \$10 00; Ladies' Missionary Association, Zion Church, Montreal, \$5 99. In January: Sheffield, N.B., Church, \$4 00; Belleville Sunday school, \$2 00; Sunday school Zion Church, Montreal, \$30; Sunday school Workers of Zion Church, Montreal, \$8 00. B. WILKES, Treasurer. Montreal, Feb. 2, 1880.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

BIRTH.

On the 30th ult., the wife of Rev. Joseph Griffith, Hamilton, of a daughter.

PAUL'S DISREGARD OF THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE.

There are few writers who, to judge solely from their writings, seem to have been less moved by the beauties of the external world. Though he had sailed again and again across the blue Mediterranean, and must have been familiar with the beauty of those Isles of Greece

"Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung;

though he had again and again traversed the pine-clad gorge of the Asian hills, and seen Ida, and Olympus, and Parnassus in all their majesty, though his life had been endangered in mountain torrents and stormy waves, and he must have often wandered as a child along the banks of his native stream, to see the place where it roars in cataracts over its rocky course—his soul was so entirely absorbed in the mighty moral and spiritual truths which it was his great mission to proclaim, that not by one verse, scarcely even by a single expression, in all his letters, does he indicate the faintest gleam of delight or wonder in the glories of nature. There is, indeed, an exquisite passage in his speech at Lystra on the goodness of "the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein," and "left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." But in this case Barnabas had some share in the address, which even if it do not, as has been conjectured, refer to the fragment of some choral song, is yet, in tone and substance, directly analogous to passages of the Old Testament. And apart from this allusion, I cannot find a single word which shews that Paul had even the smallest susceptibility for the works of nature. There are souls in which the burning heat of some transfixing purpose calcines every other thought, every other desire, every other admiration; and St. Paul's was one. His life was absorbingly, if not solely and exclusively, the spiritual life—the life which is utterly dead to every other interest of the groaning and travailing creation, the life hid with Christ in God. He sees the universe of God only as it is reflected in the heart and life of man.—*Farrar.*

"GO ON, SIR! GO ON."

Arago, the French astronomer, says, in his autobiography, that his best master in mathematics was a word of advice which he found in the binding of a text book. Puzzled and discouraged by the difficulties he met with in his earlier studies, he was almost ready to give over the pursuit. Some words which he found on the waste leaf used to stiffen the cover of his paper-bound text book caught his eye and interested him. "Impelled," he says, "by an indelible curiosity, I damped the cover of the book and carefully unrolled the leaf to see what was on the other side. It proved to be a short letter from D'Alembert to a young person disheartened like myself, by the difficulties of mathematical study, and who had written to him for counsel. 'Go on, sir! go on!' was the counsel which D'Alembert gave him. 'The difficulties you meet will resolve themselves as you advance. Proceed, and light will dawn and shine with increasing clearness on your path.' That maxim," says Arago, "was my greatest master in mathematics." Following those simple words, "Go on, sir! go on?" made him the first astronomical mathematician of his age.

PAUL'S ROMAN CITIZENSHIP.

How St. Paul's father or grandfather obtained the highly-prized distinction, we have no means of ascertaining. It certainly did not belong to any one as a citizen of Tarsus, for, if so, Lydias at Jerusalem, knowing that St. Paul came from Tarsus, would have known that he had also the rights of a Roman. But far as was not a *Colonia* or a *Municipium*, but only an *Urbs Libera*, and this privilege, bestowed upon it by Augustus, did not involve any claim to the *Civitas*. The franchise may either have been purchased by Paul's father, or obtained as a reward for some services of which no trace remains. When Cassius punished Tarsus by a heavy fine for having embraced the side of Antony, it is said that many Tarsians were sold as slaves in order to pay the money; and one conjecture is that St. Paul's father, in his early days, may have been one of these, and may have been first emancipated and then presented with the *Civitas* during a residence at Rome. The conjecture is just possible, but nothing more.—*Farrar.*

TRAINING OF A JEWISH BOY.

At the age of five he would begin to study the Bible with his parents at home; and even earlier than this he would doubtless have learnt the Shema and the Hallel (Psalms cxviii. in whole or in part. At six he would go to his "vineyard," as the later Rabbis called their schools. At ten he would begin to study those earlier and simpler developments of the oral law, which were afterwards collected in the Mishna. At thirteen he would, by a sort of "confirmation," become a "Son of the Commandment." At fifteen he would be trained in yet more minute and burdensome *halachoth*, analogous to those which ultimately filled the vast mass of the Gemara. At twenty, or earlier, like every orthodox Jew, he would marry. During many years he would be reckoned among the "pupils of the wise," and be mainly occupied with "the traditions of the Fathers."—*Farrar.*

POPE LEO's brother at Rome has absconded, taking \$150,000 belonging to the vatican.