

banished to Gaul, where they died in obscurity; and Salome herself is said to have met with a sudden and terrible death.

LESSONS :

1. A guilty conscience is itself a terrible punishment.

2. In religion, no external reformation is of any value so long as we do not abandon every known sin.

3. Sinners are often led by their associates into a depth of wickedness from which they would at first shrink with horror.

DOCTRINE :

One sin leads to another. Prov. x. 16; Prov. xii. 26; 2 Tim. iii. 13.

FOURTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Jesus walking on the sea.*—John vi. 15-40.

V. 15.—The multitude, who had just been fed by Jesus miraculously, believed him to be the Messiah; but they altogether misconceived the nature of his kingdom, and as they saw that he would not publicly lay claim to kingly authority, they wished to precipitate matters, and compel him to assume the throne. To prevent this he secretly departed. Matthew tells us (Ch. xi. 23,) that he spent the night in prayer. In his love for prayer, as in everything else, he was an example to his followers. Surrounded by enemies, and grieved by the selfishness and wickedness with which he everywhere came into contact, he longed for, and was strengthened and supported by communion with his Heavenly Father.

Vv. 16-21.—Mark says that Jesus instructed his disciples to go to Bethsaida, Mark vi. 4, 5. John states that they went to Capernaum. Both these cities were on the shores of the lake of Genesaret, the former on the east, the latter on the west coast. The disciples were already on the east side. They probably designed to go first to Bethsaida and afterwards to Capernaum, but the violence of the gale may have prevented them from reaching the first named place, and have driven them across the lake to Capernaum. Mark tells us that the wind was contrary, and they perhaps strove against it for a long time, hoping to reach Bethsaida; for when Jesus, walking on the sea, came up with them in the fourth watch of the night, that is, early in the morning, they had only rowed 25 or 30 furlongs, or a little more than three miles.—The Jews originally divided the night into three watches, but they adopted from the Romans the practice of dividing into four, each of which therefore contained about three hours. Jesus therefore came up with the disciples between three and six o'clock in the morning. There was not sufficient light to enable them to recognize

him, and they were seized with a panic, because, as Mark informs us, they supposed that he was a spirit. As soon as Jesus was received on board, the vessel appears to have been miraculously transported to its destined haven. It was on this occasion, as we learn from Matthew, that Peter, with characteristic impetuosity and self-confidence, asked permission to walk on the sea to Jesus. When he saw the waves heaving around him, his faith failed, and the supporting hand of his master alone saved him perishing. The story of these remarkable events, as given to us by the three evangelists, is one of the many proofs to be found in the gospels, that there was no collusion among them, but that each one described the occurrences which he saw just as they impressed his own mind. While their accounts often differ, however, they never disagree; and this makes their testimony, in the estimation of enlightened criticism, all the more convincing.

Vv. 22-27.—The multitude which had been miraculously fed by Jesus, finding that he had unaccountably disappeared, and knowing the place to which his disciples had gone, followed in vessels which left next day; and when they found Jesus at Capernaum, were anxious to know by what means he had come thither. Our Lord instead of satisfying their curiosity, directed their attention to their own hearts, and the motives under which they were acting, not from true faith, from mere selfishness.—They sought him not because his miracles proved him to be the Messiah, but because he had miraculously fed them and they hoped that the same power which had done this, would make them rich and great. He solemnly cautions them against that worldliness which is engrossed by the objects of time while it neglects those of eternity.—He does not intend that they should not labour for their daily bread, but that they should be still more diligent in seeking spiritual food—the doctrines of the gospel, which nourish the soul; the more precious part, as bread supports the body. This nourishment, enduring to everlasting life, he himself would bestow; and his miracles were the seals, or credentials which proved that the Father had sent him for this purpose.

Vv. 28, 29.—Impressed by this warning they ask what good works it was necessary for them to perform, for the idea of meriting salvation by his own performances, is usually the last delusion that the sinner abandons. Jesus informs them that the great work of God, which alone he required of them, was to believe in the Son whom he had sent, and to look to him for salvation.

Vv. 30, 31.—The sentiments expressed in the verses under consideration are so various, (compare 34, 41, 43) that we have