

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*First visit of Moses to Pharaoh, Exodus v. 10.*

V. 1.—Moses and Aaron stand before the King as representatives of their nation.—They were acquainted with court forms and rules, and knew when and how to approach the King. *Lord God of Israel*: this expression occurs here for the first time. His Name is a tower of defence to a nation.

V. 3.—Public worship had been neglected by the Israelites for many years. They asked the King to give them time to discharge their duty to God. They did not tell him of their intention to leave the country. They tried his temper by a mild request at first. They said only what God had put in their mouths (see chap. 3: 12, 18 and this legalizes what they said while it gives no sanction to the general habit of dissimulation.

V. 4.—“*Let*” here means hinder, prevent. The King treated them as demagogues, disturbers of the peace. The Israelites were his slaves and he was resolved not to give them religious liberty lest it should lead to civil liberty.

V. 5.—*Burdens*—hard work. V. 6.—*Task-masters*; Egyptians who were over them: *officers*, Hebrews who were over the slaves but under the task-masters.

V. 5.—Bricks were made in Egypt by mixing chopped straw with clay and drying them in the sun. This was the work at which the Hebrews were employed. They still lived in Goshen, but vast numbers of their able-bodied men were pressed in alternate gangs to do this work. Arabs and peasants are still subject to *forced labour* of this sort in Egypt. How could they “gather straw for themselves?” The Egyptian reapers cut off the ear of the corn and left the stalk standing. It was these stalks that the brick makers had to gather for their bricks.

V. 8.—*Tale*—number, lot, appointed quantity. Milton uses the word in this sense. “While each shepherd tells his tale, Under the hawthorn in the dale.”

V. 14.—“The officers were beaten;” these were the Hebrew officers who were each responsible for a gang of labourers. As the nearest fields were bare of stubble the people would have to travel farther and farther for it, in the hot sun, and thus they could not make the usual “*tale*” of bricks. *Beating* is still common in the East. The stick was the favourite instrument of government in Egypt as it is now in China. The person to be beaten is generally taken in hand by five. He is laid flat on the ground. Four hold him down, while the fifth plies the stick.

Vv. 20-23.—The interference of Moses thus led to increased trouble at first. But the darkest hour is before the dawn.

LESSONS.

1. We should boldly deliver the message with which God entrusts us, v. 1.

2. Ignorance of the nature, the grace and love of the Lord leads to the most fearful sins. Sinners disobey God, and insult Him just because “they know not what they do,” v. 2.

3. It is a duty of the first importance to worship God. But Satan, who holds sinners in bitter bondage, will make their tasks more trying when they first begin to chafe in his fetters. He will set them to make “bricks without straw.” This “brick-making” he will try to persuade them, is far more important than the service of God.

4. The yoke of Satan is greatly more dreadful than that of Pharaoh, and he is harder of heart than that cruel king. Let us not cry to him to let us go, but let us follow Christ to the land of true liberty.—“He is a freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves beside.”

5. When you *feel* the yoke of Satan heaviest then there is most hope of deliverance.

6. Let us not be impatient, like Moses (v. 22, 23) when the Lord does not give instant answers to our prayers. He is ever watchful over His people.

DOCTRINE.

The wicked hate the righteous, John xv. 19. 2 Peter ii. 8. Ps. lxxix. 4.

News of the Church.

Presbytery of P. E. Island.

This Presbytery met on Tuesday the 23d inst., in the Free Church, Charlottetown.—There were present Rev. Messrs. Crawford, Moderator, Campbell, Allan, I. Murray, Munro, Sutherland, Fraser, McNeill, Laird, Ross, Frame, Falconer, J. D. Murray, MacDougall and D. W. Cameron, Ministers; and Messrs. Robertson, John Clark and W. H. Hyde, Elders. The Rev. Mr. Roddick, of West River, Pictou, and Rev. Mr. Simpson of the Halifax Presbytery, being present, were invited to seats as corresponding members. After the reading and sustaining of the minutes of last sederunt, the Presbytery proceeded to a consideration of the matter, regarding which the Rev. Mr. Crawford and his session were cited to appear at this meeting, when the Moderator being an interested