

the sins of others, but people are not always so willing to acknowledge their own shortcomings. All the same, the sins of others are our own. The lives of those around us are mirrors reflecting our own faults. We should be honest enough to look squarely at them and own our partnership in the world's guilt. No set form of confession is binding upon us, and we have no "father-confessor" with a right to inquire minutely into our conduct, nor are there any questions we are obliged to answer; but we should be quite frank and specific in telling our evil deeds to God, who knows the secrets of our hearts. "O Lord, I was proud, I was angry, I was untruthful, it was my tongue that injured my brother and my hand that was lifted in defence of wrong"—it is this sort of confession that brings free and full forgiveness of all our shortcomings and transgressions.

Remember, I beseech thee, the word, v. 8. You enter a coal mine, and descend a slope whose roof is scarcely six feet high. On either side walls of coal but a few feet apart hem you in. Down the narrow passage you walk, half frightened that you will be suffocated, but surprised to find the air as pure as a thousand feet down as at the surface. On the way down you pass a panting engine pumping out the foul, and pumping in the fresh, air. So the strong, pure promises of

God are continually pouring into our hearts and expelling the distrust and fear that would otherwise poison our lives.

Whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand, v. 10. A child's finger pressing a button sets loose the mighty force

that hurls thousands of tons of rock into the air, and clears a passage for safe navigation.

In like manner, at the touch of faith, there comes from heaven the resistless might that sweeps away all obstacles to the redemption of men. It is not ours to redeem the world, but it is ours by faith to bring to bear upon this task the power already pledged to accomplish it.

Grant him mercy in the sight of this man, v.

11. God wants us to be definite in our petitions. It is true there may be some unwise requests, which, for our good,

He will not grant. The child may ask for a white powder, thinking it to be sugar, when it is really poison, and it will be denied him. But what is good, God will give. Adoniram Judson does not hesitate to write this testimony: "I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but it came, at some time, no matter at how distant a day; somehow, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised, it came." So was it with Nehemiah's prayer. God answered it in His own time and place.

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

As this is the first of three Lessons from Nehemiah, study what is said about him, chs. 1 : 1; 2 : 3. He was probably of the tribe of Judah and born in exile. He was courageous, God-fearing, of strong will and persuasion, and probably wealthy (see ch. 5 : 16-18). He was cupbearer to the king, a position of honor and influence, and became Governor of Judaea. He lived, a man of God, in the palace of a heathen king. To get a full account of the conditions in Palestine, read the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The people had

made progress commercially, ch. 3 : 8, 31, 32; 13 : 15, 16; but in other respects their condition was deplorable. The walls had been partly built under Ezra (Ezra 4 : 12), but in a recent attack they had again been destroyed. This was probably caused by Ezra's policy concerning mixed marriages, Ezra. 10 : 9-17. Note the Time and Place of the Lesson.

1. Consider the occasion of Nehemiah's prayer. A company of men, including his brother, had returned from Jerusalem. Nehemiah sought information concerning the progress of the work under Ezra. Their report was distressing, vs. 1-3.

2. Study the prayer, vs. 4-11. (a) Call out the great burden of soul. He mourned