



LESSON II.—OCTOBER 13.

Joseph in Prison.

Genesis xxxix., 20—xl., 15. Memory verses 21-23.

Golden Text.

‘But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy.’ Gen. xxxix., 20.

Lesson Text.

(20) And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound; and he was there in prison. (21) But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor, in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (22) And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hands all the prisoners that were in the prison: and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. (23) The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper. (1) And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. (2) And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. (3) And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. (4) And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; and they continued a season in ward. (5) And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. (6) And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold they were sad. (7) And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God, tell me them, I pray thee.

Suggestions.

The typical character of the story of Joseph has been recognized by most Bible students. Even those who are least inclined to recognize Christ in the old Testament are constrained to admit that many incidents in the life of Joseph present striking coincidences when compared with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was the beloved of the father; he was sent by his father to his distant and wicked brethren, bearing, as the gift of his father's love and care, bread and wine: instead of being welcomed by his brethren, he was hated of them; they plotted against his life, and in effect took it away, having first sold him for twenty pieces of silver; but God raised him up out of the pit, and highly exalted him upon the throne of Egypt, and made him 'a prince and saviour' to his brethren, who would have killed him. All this is very striking, yet it might have been mere coincidence if it had stood alone; but when we recall the same striking coincidences in connection with other old Testament characters—such as Abel, who was slain; Enoch, who was taken up alive to heaven; Noah, who provided an ark of salvation for sinners; and Abraham, who offered up his only begotten and well-beloved son; so on through the whole book—we are constrained to say, 'Surely the hand of God is in all these histories, and his providence has shaped them so as to give a living picture in type of the leading features in the life of Christ.' Not that the actors or their contemporaries saw to what these things were pointing, but that, looking back, we might see how all prophecy and history were pointing to Jesus the Lord.—From Dr. Pentecost's 'Bible Studies for 1894.'

When the Midianites brought Joseph to

Egypt they sold him as a slave to Potiphar, an official of the court. Here Joseph speedily rose into a high position in the household as he was found always trustworthy and reliable. While the other slaves did as little work as they could when their master's eye was over them, Joseph worked with the thought only of pleasing God, and by his faithfulness succeeded in pleasing his earthly master, too. But just when everything seemed to be going so well an awful temptation came into Joseph's life, a temptation which if yielded to would have ruined his whole life and shut him out entirely from fellowship with God. The temptation was sudden and enticing and oft-repeated, and only the grace of God, and the conviction that to yield once to this temptation would be not only a crime against his master, but a great wickedness and sin against God, kept Joseph pure and undefiled. Joseph was kept by the power of God. But God had more lessons to teach him. God was making Joseph into a strong character, a polished instrument to be used in shaping the world's history. The best instruments require the most tempering, sharpening, heating and cooling. The best gold is that which has been purified in the hottest furnace. The strongest souls are those who have trusted God through all the long years of discipline and trial and out of the crucible of suffering have come refined and triumphant.

The Lord God taught Joseph obedience by the things that he suffered, and though he had valiantly resisted the temptation to wickedness God allowed him to be put in prison on the charge of having committed it. But even in the prison Joseph did not give up his trust in God, and God made him a great blessing in the prison. Here as elsewhere he was faithful and reliable in all that he was given to do and the Lord made prosperous every thing Joseph put his hand to. Joseph might easily have become discouraged and disheartened when he was thrown into prison for the crime which he had not committed, but though there seemed very little chance of his ever getting out of prison, still he clung to God and worshipped and tried to please him, and all the time God was keeping hold of Joseph and preparing him for the great work he had for him to do in the world.

Joseph had been in prison some years, when one night Pharaoh's chief butler and baker, who had lately been cast into prison, dreamed each a dream of his own destiny but they did not know just what the dreams meant, so they were very sorrowful. When Joseph inquired into their sorrow, they each told their dreams. Then Joseph told them that only God could interpret dreams and that the chief butler's dream meant that in three days he would be restored to office. Joseph asked the chief butler to remember him when he got back to court, but for two whole years he was entirely forgotten.

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Oct. 13.—Topic.—Dark days and their lessons. Ps. 107, 1-15.

Junior C. E. Topic.

PREACHERS OF THE BIBLE.

Mon., Oct. 7.—A preacher of righteousness.—2 Pet. 2-5.

Tues., Oct. 8.—The forerunner.—John i., 15.

Wed., Oct. 9.—Peter the impulsive.—Mark xiv., 29-31.

Thu., Oct. 10.—The first martyr. Acts vii., 59.

Fri., Oct. 11.—Philip the evangelist.—Acts viii., 35.

Sat., Oct. 12.—The great apostle.—Acts ix., 15.

Sun., Oct. 13.—Topic.—Lessons from the Bible preachers. (Peter, Paul, John the Baptist, Philip, Stephen, etc.)

Win Sunday-School Scholars

No class of persons stands so near the door of the church as the Sunday-school scholars. So far as their outward lives are concerned, they are clean and exemplary. Many of them follow the habit of prayer learned at their mother's knees. They are familiar with the Word of God, and know of the steps necessary to salvation. Yet they lack the one thing, namely, the acceptance of Christ as a personal Saviour, together with

the public and complete consecration of their lives to his service. Superintendents should plan special meetings and conduct evangelistic services in the Sunday-school at least each month during the early part of the year. Many thousands of our choicest young people can be brought to a decision in this way.

Sunday-school teachers should realize that 'Jesus is passing by,' and this is the favorable moment in which to reap the harvest of years of seed-sowing. Seek personal interviews with your scholars, and urge them to an immediate decision for Christ. At this very beginning of the great revival, their influence should be on the side of the Master.—Pittsburg 'Christian Advocate.'

The Responsibility of Unpaid Service.

Every church has in it at least three or four men and women who give to its welfare as much time and thought and effort as if they were paid salaries for their service. Often the church treasurer is such a man, carrying into his church duties all the energy and business ability and accuracy that he displays day by day in his own affairs, only with a more scrupulous care, if possible, than he bestows on other matters. The church clerk often takes a pride in being a prompt correspondent and an accurate recorder. The volunteer organist, the choir, the ushers, frequently render service that is but slightly appreciated. There are sure to be some in the Sunday-school and other auxiliary organizations whose Christian work has all the vigor and thoroughness of their daily occupations. It is with full recognition of the sterling worth of these faithful ones that we inquire why they are so few.

Sometimes it is the trustees, who are willing to let the church finances get into a condition that they would never tolerate in the directors of any other institution. Frequently the lack of recognition of responsibility is manifested in connection with the Sunday-school. That is a fortunate superintendent who has not among his teachers at least two or three teachers who seem to have no feeling of responsibility for their work. They are good-natured and well-meaning and full of excuses, but they cannot be counted on. Sunday morning comes and they are away, without notice, without substitute. They forget the teachers' meetings and make other engagements which prevent them from coming, much to their regret, of course. Their teaching often shows lack of preparation, yet they fail to buckle down to the study of the Bible as if it were really their business. They accept the permanent status of amateurs and confess without shame their ignorance of elementary facts of biblical history or geography. Does some one say such people ought not to be teachers? But what if no better material is available? What if these teachers are capable of becoming efficient workers if they could only be made to see the importance of the task intrusted to them and the obligation resting upon them? The wise leader will prefer to arouse such teachers if possible rather than to displace them.

Not only Sunday-school teachers but many other persons charged with church duties occasionally need to be reminded that they are not conferring a favor on the pastor or the superintendent or anybody else by giving their services, but are simply bearing their share of the common burden in an organization which they voluntarily entered; and, more truly and fundamentally, doing what little they can do as unto Christ the Master. We believe that a tactful word to this effect would often change the whole spirit of a life. It is easy to drift into the notion that because we are not paid for some task in the church the task is to be lightly esteemed, as subordinate to personal, business and social interests. But few in church office are so far from Christ that a gentle reminder, in the right spirit, would not set them right. The wise pastor will occasionally preach a sermon, not on the demands which the church makes upon its members, but on the high honor and dignity of the unpaid service which members are permitted to render to the church, the community and to Christ.—'Standard.'