

deafening . . . In less than a quarter of an hour every ravine and gully in the mountains was pouring down a foaming stream ; and soon afterwards a tremendous torrent burst down a little wady just below our tent . . . It was a grand but awful sight. It seemed almost impossible to believe that scarcely more than an hour's rain could turn a dry

desert wady upwards of 300 yards broad into a foaming torrent from 8 to 10 feet deep. Yet there it was, roaring and tearing down, and carrying with it tangled masses of tamarisks, and hundreds of palm trees. A few miles above, a whole Arab encampment was swept away and thirty persons perished, besides scores of sheep and other animals."

THE LESSON APPLIED

1. It sometimes takes discipline to bring us to a consciousness of sin. It would seem from our psalm that the psalmist had been sick, and that it was during his sickness that he really discovered his need of forgiveness. The psalmist is not the only one who has had that experience. Some people never take time when they are well to think about the things of the soul. Then sickness comes, and in the quiet of the sick-room they learn their need of pardon and of peace. It was the experience of a severe sickness which aroused St. Francis of Assisi from a life of idle pleasure, and awakened in his soul a desire for better things. It may not be sickness, but some other form of discipline which brings about this result. But, whatever form it takes, it is not too great a price to pay. We can never rise to a better life until we realize the horrible nature of sin. This psalm was a favorite with St. Augustine, and, writing of it, he says : "The beginning of understanding is to know thyself a sinner."

2. Without confession there can be no forgiveness. A father may be as desirous as possible of forgiving his child, but, for the sake of the child, he has to withhold the forgiveness until the child gives some evidence of being sorry for the wrong that he has done. The prodigal in our Lord's parable had to be willing to say : "I have sinned," before he could be restored to his former place in his father's house. An English writer puts it this way : "There is no arbitrary variation in the forgiveness of God. Whether He forgives a man or not, depends wholly and only upon whether the man is or is not forgivable." And no one is forgivable until he has made a frank and open confession of his sins. There is nothing to be ashamed of in confessing. The thing to be ashamed of

is the sin itself. But once the sin has been committed it is the manly course to own up.

3. God is the true refuge of the soul. That fact is brought out continually throughout the Bible, and especially in the Psalms. Sometimes God is spoken of as our shelter, sometimes as our strong tower, sometimes as the one who covers us with His shadow, sometimes as our shield and buckler, sometimes as the one who is round about us as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, sometimes, as in this psalm, He is our hiding place. This is one of the great comforts of our religion. When all else fails, we can still rely upon God. That has been the experience of all who have put their confidence in Him. As Oliver Cromwell once said : "I never found God failing when I trusted in Him."

4. God is our great teacher. He is the one who is to instruct and counsel us. We do not get all our education in school. All life should be an education, training us, preparing us for higher and better things. Sometimes we make a great mistake. We think of life as something which brings us joy or sorrow. But the real purpose of life is to bring us not joy or sorrow so much as experience and training. And God is our great educator. Carlyle recognized that fact. After he had labored hard at one of his books, the manuscript of it was burned by mistake. And this is what Carlyle wrote about it : "It is as if my invisible schoolmaster had torn my copybook when I showed it, and said, 'No, boy ! Thou must write it better.'"

5. God has made us higher than the brute creation. And we should act accordingly. And yet how often we act as if we were no better than the horse or mule which have no understanding. Indeed, it is sometimes