

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON IV.—THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.—OCT. 25.

(Prov. i. 1-19.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."—Prov. i. 10.

TIME AND PLACE.—About B.C., 1000. Jerusalem.

ANALYSIS.—

The search for wisdom (v. 1-9).
 The beginning of wisdom (v. 7-9).
 The enticements of sin (v. 10-19).

CONNECTION.—In our last lesson our attention was directed to the fact that Solomon was not only a wise and prosperous king, but that he was a learned man, and that he was the author of many proverbs and songs, some of which have been preserved to us and are found in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Book of Proverbs contains, as is distinctly stated, some proverbs other than Solomon's, but there can be little question that the larger portion of them was written by him. Our present lesson is taken from the first chapter of the book, and the first verse should be regarded simply as the title of the whole book. The five verses that follow may be regarded as a preface, setting forth the chief purpose or scope of the book, viz., to convey to the young and immature, and to the wise also, the instruction of wisdom, justice and equity.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 1. "Proverbs."—A proverb is a short, pithy statement of some important practical truth. Of Solomon.—Not all the proverbs were written by him, but so nearly all that the book bears his name.

V. 2. "To know."—The purpose of the book is to enable such as are ignorant to gain the wisdom spoken of. Wisdom.—Piety, which is the truest wisdom. Instruction.—Or chastisement.

V. 3. "To receive."—Into the mind and heart. Justice.—In this place means right conduct in relation to God. Equity.—That which is right and just toward man.

V. 4. "Subtility."—Shrewdness and keenness of intellect. The simple.—The open-hearted and unsuspecting.

V. 5. "Will hear."—He who is wise will give attention to these things, and so increase in wisdom.

V. 7. "The fear of the Lord."—A reverential fear is meant. The beginning.—The foundation. Fools.—The opposite of the wise. They who despise wisdom and instruction are fools.

V. 8. "Hear the instruction of thy father."—This stands next in the way of wisdom to the fear of the Lord.

V. 9. "An ornament of grace."—Like jewels upon the person. Chains about thy neck.—Like the golden necklace, worn as an ornament.

V. 10. "Entice thee."—Persuade to sin. Consent thou not.—Do not consent to any form of sin.

V. 11. "Lay wait."—The proposal of a band of highway robbers.

V. 13. "Find all precious substance."—As the result of a course of robbery and murder.

V. 15. "Walk not thou in the way with them."—Not only do not consent to their enticements, but do not remain in their company. Keep away from them.

V. 17. "In vain the net, etc."—Birds see the snare and fly away. Men often are blinder.

V. 18. "For their own blood, . . . for their own lives."—The wicked injure themselves in the end more than they injure others.

V. 19. "Greedy of gain."—This desire of wealth is the motive that prompts to crimes of robbery and violence.

The design of the Book of Proverbs is to inspire a deep reverence for God, fear of His judgments, and an ardent love for wisdom and virtue. It is pre-eminently an educational book. The author assumes the character of a preceptor. He is a professor of moral and religious philosophy. In reading the last Psalms of David, one might be ready to conclude that religion is all rapture, and consists in nothing but the ecstasies and transports of devotion; but Solomon brings us to remember that we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and would therefore teach us to carry our religion, which is our guide for our conduct in life, into every detail of experience. Religion tends as much to make us discreet as devout; to make the face shine before men in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn toward God in holy and pious affections. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion. Solomon, the peaceable, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a prayer, which appeared to a wisdom and usefulness. This he generously used to bless the world.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

WORLD'S O. E. PRAYER CHAIN, SUBJECT FOR OCTOBER:—For Our Missionaries. Pray especially for those missionaries laboring in hard, discouraging, and perilous fields. Pray for the "volunteers," who are making ready to go to the front.

DAILY READINGS.

My Favorite Proverb.

First Day—A wise son. Prov. x. 1.

Second Day—A false balance. Prov. xi. 1.

Third Day—A soft answer. Prov. xv. 1.

Fourth Day—A good name. Prov. xxii. 1.

Fifth Day—A conceited man. Prov. xxvi. 12.

Sixth Day—A prudent man. Prov. xxvii. 12.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC.—WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BIBLE PROVERB, AND WHY? Prov. ii. 1-9. (A memory meeting suggested.)

A proverb is crystallized truth expressed in a form that is pithy and direct. As such it appeals to the soul, and finds ready lodgment in the mind. It is the common possession of man, and is of universal application. Poverty stricken, indeed, is the nation whose vocabulary is not enriched with proverbs, and whose national life is not fructified sufficiently to give to the world these maxims of its experience and varied wisdom. There are few more interesting subjects of study than the adages of different nations; for in them we find the racial peculiarities of the people, and the scintillations of their keen-wittedness. They bristle with brightness, and are suggestive of the practical bent of the human mind in embodying useful truths for the guidance of succeeding generations.

If this is true of the secular sayings of even the most uncivilized peoples, what ought to be said of that peerless collection of proverbs, ascribed to Solomon, in Holy Writ? Here we find a storehouse that is practically limitless, whence we may draw fitting phrases to apply to almost any subject that comes up for discussion. And Bible proverbs are not confined to the book of Solomon. We find throughout the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments a vast supply of the same wisdom, couched in matchless phraseology.

To select one favorite from so many is rather difficult, and we are so situated that several are equally favored, as we look from different standpoints. Experiences vary, and so our peculiar circumstances forced upon us certain truths. But for a general proverb, what is more inspiring than: "A good name is rather to be chosen than riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold?" To the temperance worker there is nothing more of a favorite than: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." A gloomy man should ponder over this: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones." A garrulous man should remember this proverb: "Even a fool when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." The contentious person should have for a favorite: "Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife." Or the following: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

The politician should learn this: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." The miser should remember: "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." The one who disbelieves in missions and outside benevolences would do well to consider that: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is to meet, but it tendeth to poverty." All should bear in mind that, "A good man obtaineth favor of the Lord; but a man of wicked devices will be forsaken."

There is no dearth of favorite proverbs, and there is no end to the variety. Each one must give his own reason why he thinks more of one than another.

Prov. 4:7, 23-27; 6:6; 8:15; 10:1; 11:1, 2, 4, 24, 25; 12:2, 24; 13:12; 14:29, 34; 15:16, 17, 33; 16:18, 32; 17:1, 22, 28; 18:21; 20:1, 11, 13, 14; 21:9, 23; 22:1, 6, 29; 23:21, 22, 25, 28; 27:1, 2, 5, 6, 20, 21; 28:1; 30:5, 8.

Many of us have to lament, not so much a want of opportunities in life, as our unreadiness for them when they come. "It might have been" is the language of our hearts, oftener than words of complaint and murmuring. God sends us flax, but our spindle and distaff are out of repair or mislaid, so that we are not ready to use them.

A holy life is the very gate of heaven. But let us always remember that holiness does not consist in doing uncommon things, but in doing everything with purity of heart.