

blessings of all our lives have come to us through God's denials, his withholdings, or his shattering of our hopes and joys.

We should never forget that the object of all divine culture is to sanctify us and make us vessels meet for the Master's use. To this high and glorious end, present pleasure and gratification must oftentimes be sacrificed. This is the true key to all the mysteries of Providence. Anything that hinders entire consecration to Christ is working us harm, and though it be our tenderest joy, it had better be taken away. In one of Miss Havergal's latest poems, she tells of one who had chosen the Master's service, but who could not yield the fuller measure that other lives could bring, because He had given her a charge to keep—

"A tiny hand, a darling hand, that traced  
On her heart's tablet words of golden love;  
And there was not much room for other lines."

Jesus wished her to do larger, wider work for Him, to gather not one gem, but many, for His crown.

"And so He came;  
The Master came Himself, and gently took  
The little hand in His, and gave it room  
Among the angel-harpers. Jesus came,  
And laid His own hand on the quivering heart,

And made it very still that He might write  
Invisible words of power 'Tis to serve'  
Then through the darkness and the chill  
He sent

A heat-ray of His love, developing  
The mystic writing, till it glowed and shone  
And lit up all her life with radiance new—  
The happy service of a yielded heart."

There is but one illustration of a discipline that is going on all the while in the lives of Christ's disciples. Prayer is not always heard, even when the heart clings with holiest affection to its most precious joy. *Nothing* must hinder our consecration. We must be set "free to serve," though they are the tenderest ties of our lives that hamper us, and must be cut to make us free. So it comes that oftentimes God can bless us only by suffering us not to have what we crave, not to keep what we cherish, not to do what we plan. In the end it will, no doubt, be seen that many of his richest kindnesses have come to us when it seemed to us that he was dealing very sorely with us. *S. S. Times.*

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, Feb. 27.

CHRIST HEALING THE SICK. Luke 5: 12-26.

GOLDEN TEXT:—And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Comment—22-26.

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

The incidents related by Luke between our last lesson and this are—our Lord's escape from Nazareth; His healing a demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum, and, afterwards, of Simon's wife's mother; His departure into the desert after an entire night spent in acts of healing; His refusal, after being found by the people, to return with them; His teaching by the lake of Genesaret; the miraculous draught of fishes; and the *call*—which Dr. Brown thinks was the third and last—of Simon and the two sons of Zebedee.

LESSON NOTES.

(12.) *A certain city*—one of the cities of Galilee, though which we are not told. *Cities* were not there, as with us, large and populous places; but small, and frequently walled, villages. *A man full of leprosy*—that is, one thoroughly infected; probably not permitted to come near or associate with those who were not similarly affected. (Lev. 13: 45.) Leprosy is a cutaneous disease, infectious, and after reaching a certain stage, believed to be incurable. *Fell on his face*—the attitude of humility and worship—and besought Him, saying, Lord

*if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Of Christ's ability to heal him this man had no doubt; but his faith had not yet risen to fully grasp the other, and even more difficult idea of His perfect willingness. Yet confidence in the former was sufficient to inspire a *hope*; at least of the latter.

(13.) Jesus recognized both the faith and the hope; and, gently responding to the trembling *if thou wilt*, He exclaimed, *I will, be thou clean!* None but God would dare utter such a word; and with what sublime self-consciousness of power did Jesus utter it. It is as though He had said—*You believe that I can, know thou, that I will!* And He (moved with compassion, Mark 1: 41) *put forth His hand and touched him*, &c. It must be borne in mind that the Levitical law made contact with a leper ceremonial uncleanness; (Lev. 13: 46,) but in a case like this, one utterly unknown and unprovided for under the law, there could be neither the imparting nor the receiving of uncleanness, since the touch of Jesus banished the disease forever. *Immediately*—The cure was instantaneous and real—the leprosy departed. Leprosy has always been regarded as a type of sin—*hereditary* and *infectious* both, *impure* to the last degree, and *incurable*, except by miraculous power. What could more aptly represent it?—And as the touch of Jesus in response to the leper's faith gave instantaneous healing; so sin finds its radical and only cure by direct and personal contact of the crucified Christ with the heart of the penitent and trusting sinner.

(14.) *Christ said I will to tell no man.* It is hardly reasonable to suppose our Lord meant to forbid the leper from ever telling what He had done for him; for in the case of the demoniac (Mark 5: 19) He enjoined the very thing He seems here to forbid, but rather that he should speak to no man at all of his cure, until after showing himself to the priest whose duty it was to examine him, and pronounce whether he was really clean or not. This was in conformity with the law (Lev. 13: 43-47), and the priest himself must be *first* to note and acknowledge the fact of his cleansing. In his great joy and enthusiasm this man afterwards "blazed abroad the matter" (Mark 1: 45) to such an extent that Jesus afterwards could not openly enter into the city; but his course seems to have been indiscreet rather than sinful. *Offer for thy cleansing, &c.*—in compliance, again, with the requirements of the law (Lev. 14: 1-32), the provisions of which Jesus required to be strictly observed (Matt. 5: 17).

(15.) Mark 1: 45 explains *how* this fame of Him went abroad, and that it was outside the city and in desert places that He met the multitudes that came to Him from every quarter. The necessity for this grew out of the enthusiastic zeal of the men He had cured of leprosy.

(16.) *Prayed.* The life of our Lord in the flesh was strictly a life of faith—absolute and unquestioning dependence upon His Father; hence, His much prayer. He was in the world, *to do and to suffer* His Father's will.

(17.) *Pharisees and Doctors of the law, out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem.* Whether this great meeting was by appointment or otherwise, we have no means of knowing;—we see in it, however, the extent to which Jesus had become an object of interest among the leaders of Jewish thought; and the fact that *the power of the Lord was present to heal them* (those who came for this purpose) should have disarmed their opposition, and convinced them that Jesus was really what He claimed to be.

(18, 19.) *Behold men brought, &c.* This man was *unable* to come by himself; consequently men brought him. Note the *faith* of those who brought him, and of him who was brought. *Taken with a palsy* (paralysis)—unable either to sit or stand. *In a bed*—utterly helpless. They could find no way by which to bring him in, because of the multitudes that crowded about the doors. So they went upon the house-top—"the flat, or terrace-roof, universal in Eastern houses," and, having removed the tiling of the roof (Mark 2: 4), they let him down, &c., into the midst before Jesus.

(20.) *When He saw their faith*—the exhibition of their faith. Nothing but the strongest faith would have persevered thus in bringing the object of its solicitude before Christ. He said unto him—*Man, thy sins are forgiven thee*—not may be, but ARE. His faith had laid hold of more than outward healing; it had gained the forgiveness of sin.

(21.) *Began to reason, saying* (mentally), *who is this speaketh blasphemies?* They understood Jesus as claiming to forgive sins; and reasoned rightly that none but God could do so. Had Jesus not been able to forgive sins, His words would have been blasphemous; but He proceeded at once to demonstrate His ability to do all He claimed to do.

(22-24.) *But Jesus, fully knowing their reasonings,—*Alford—*said unto them, why reason ye? &c. Whether* (which is easier to say, *thy sins, &c.*—or, *rise up, &c.* It is as though He had said—*it is as easy to say the one as the other; but if he that says the first cannot do the latter, you readily have no proof of his divine power. But I will show you that I am able to do the latter; that in order that you may know that (1) the Son of man HAVE POWER ON EARTH—to do the former, that is,—to forgive sins.* This is the argument with which He met their *reasonings*, and then—turning to the palsied man—*He said, I SAY UNTO THEE, arise; take up thy couch; go unto thy house.* These separate acts are here required, either of which, being performed, must fully establish Christ's claim to divine power; and, all together, furnish complete demonstration of it.

25.) *Immediately, as soon as the command was given—*he rose, &c., &c., &c.—*did all that Jesus had commanded, and one thing more—he glorified God,—gave God the glory of His cure.*

(26.) *They were amazed,—they glorified God,—they were filled with fear.* The argument Jesus had used, backed up by the proof of His divine power, was indisputable,—they could not help accepting it, and with a great outburst of praise mingled with fear, in view of the seen and felt power of God, they were constrained to say—*what?—we believe you are the Messiah—the second God?* No; they had no such word of confidence and trust—it was only *we have seen strange things to-day!*

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

Unbelief is the most obstinate of all our fallen propensities. Those Pharisees and doctors were amazed, terrified, and constrained to acknowledge the power of God in what they had seen, and yet we have no proof that one of them believed!

The faith of those who brought the paralytic man to Jesus is made prominent throughout the narrative as given by the three Evangelists. What a lesson to Christians to spare no effort in bringing perishing ones to Christ!

QUESTION SUMMARY.

(For the Children.)

(12.) What is *leprosy*? How does sin resemble it? See note. What did this leper do when he saw Jesus? What did he say? What was he sure Jesus could do? Was he quite sure He would do it? What did Jesus say? What did He do? What took place immediately? Was it any easier for Jesus to cleanse away leprosy than sin? Which of the two is the more dreadful? Why? *Are you as full of sin* as that man was of leprosy? Why, then, do not you fly to Jesus as the poor leper did? What did Jesus tell the leper to do first of all, after he was cleansed? Why? Because God's law required it. Did the leper afterwards tell a great many people? (Mark 1: 45.) Who came to Jesus? Why did they come? (16) Why did Jesus go alone into the wilderness? If Jesus had need to pray, have not you much greater need? Why? (17) Who came one day to hear Jesus, and to see His miracles? From what places? (18) What is *palsy*? Who brought the poor man? In what did they bring him? Why? (19) How did they get him in where Jesus was? What did Jesus perceive that they had? What then did He say? Were the Scribes and Pharisees pleased to hear Him say that? Why not? Because they thought He blasphemed—that is, when He said *thy sins are forgiven*, they thought He said a very wicked thing; because no one can forgive sins but God (22, 25). What did Jesus ask them? If Jesus could not make the man rise and walk, he could not, of course, forgive sins; but if He could do that He could do the other (24, 25). Did He make him rise and walk? What else? Name the four things the man did. How did the Scribes and Pharisees act when they saw it? What did they do? Why were they afraid? Because they could not help seeing that Jesus had the power of God. What did they say about what He had done? Do you think they believed on Him? Why?

ROBERT MOFFAT AND HIS MOTHER.

Several years ago, when the Nestor of African missions was in his seventy-sixth year, I had the great pleasure of spending a long evening with him. The veteran had addressed a large and enthusiastic meeting that evening, but his work, instead of exhausting, seemed only to have put him in good spirits. Story after story, illustrating rapidly the power of the Gospel, delighted his hearers, and, among others, these "When I was home the first time that is, in 1840—I preached in Newcastle, and was going home from church with the minister's wife. We met an old man, dressed like a minister, to whom she spoke and introduced me, but I did not catch his name. He seemed anxious to talk, but the lady said, 'Come to tea, and you'll have more time to talk to Mr. Moffat'; and he said with a strong Scotch accent, 'Weel, I'll see.' Sure enough, when tea time came, there was the old man, very frail and worn-out looking. He was sitting at one end of a long sofa, and I at the other, and he began to say, 'Your name, Mr. Moffat, reminds me of a worthy woman that used to come to my church long ago when I was minister at Carronbridge. She was a very godly woman, and she always brought her son with her, a boy with a curly black head. They came into my house sometimes for books and tracts. It's long since I left, near thirty years; but her name was Moffat, and hearing your name has put me in mind. I wonder what has become of her curly-headed boy by this time.' My heart was too full to let me speak a single word, so the old man said it all over again, thinking I was deaf. By this time I had got back my tongue, and said, 'You canna be Mr. Caldwell?' I think I never saw anybody more astonished than the old man was when he found I was the curly-headed boy. I had to tell him the shape of his potatoe and of his garden, and where the potatoes grew, before he seemed quite sure; and then he talked of my mother." Some one suggested that probably the man who had done so much for Christ in Africa, and was then handling the proof-sheets of a corrected revision of the Sechuana Bible, owed his conversion to his mother. "It was this way," said Dr. Moffat "When I was leaving home for Warrington to work as a gardener, my mother asked me to give her a promise. I wanted to know what I was to promise; but she would not tell me, and still insisted that I would promise. I was very loath to do a thing I did not know; but I loved and trusted my mother, and so, at length, I promised. 'Well,' said she, 'you'll read a portion of the New Testament, and pray for a blessing on it every day and wherever you may be.' I kept my word to my mother, and it was some time after that I was brought to the saving knowledge of Christ." "And did you then devote yourself to the mission work?" some of us asked. "No, that was later. I had gone in from the place I was working at to the town of Warrington to buy a book on a Saturday night, when I saw a placard about a missionary meeting. It was an old placard; the meeting was past but it fixed my thoughts. I went to the minister whose name was on the placard, and after I had knocked I would like to have run away. He introduced me to the London Missionary Society, and two years later (1822) I was sent out.' Eighteen twenty-two and eighteen eighty. How much between!—*Sunday at Home.*

Kind, loving is the hand that strikes,  
However keen the smart,  
If sorrow's discipline can chase  
One evil from the heart.

Caroline Fry.

He that hath light thoughts of sin,  
never had great thoughts of God.—*Dr Owen.*