

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

SECOND QUARTER.

(Condensed from Delbert's Select Notes.)

Lesson VI. May 8. Ps. 84: 1-12.

DELIGHT IN GOD'S HOUSE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house."—Ps. 84: 4.

EXPLANATORY.

STANZA I. LONGING FOR THE HOUSE AND PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

1. How amiable. How lovely, how worthy of being loved! But the Hebrew is more personal: how dear to my heart! Thy tabernacles. The tabernacle or tent Moses made in the wilderness, a type of any place where God is worshipped. The plural, "dwellings," has reference to the sub-divisions and apartments of the sanctuary (as the courts, the holy place, the holy of holies). O Lord of hosts, Jehovah, who rule all the hosts of the universe, the multitude of beings and forces, organized and controlled, angels, men, stars in the sky, all created beings, all forces and powers of the universe—all under His control, and organized to do His will, so that He can make all things work together for good to them that love Him.

2. My soul. Myself as a living, conscious, personal being. That part of human nature which is the Hebrew writers appeared the most characteristic of personality. Longing. Literally, "hath grown pale" as with the intensity of feeling; while faintness is more exactly like "faintness," is consumed. For the courts of the Lord. The part of the building which was for the people at large. Soul, heart, flesh, denote the whole man, with every faculty and affection. Cry out. To shout as soldiers do when they cry out after a victory. "Victory! victory!" It notes a strong cry as a child cries when sadly hungry, for now every whit of the child cries, hands cry, face cries, and feet cry. Chryse translates it "ring out their joy," because their longing is about to be satisfied. "O Lord of hosts, Jehovah, who rule all the hosts of the universe," or "bright essence increase," or "power that makes for righteousness."

3. Yes, the sparrow. "the twitterer." The sparrow, "the twitterer," shooting like a ray of light, small common birds. Hath found her an house. If the sparrows were so numerous, persevering, persistent, bold and noisy in Bible times as at the present day, the comparisons in the Bible that are based on their various characteristics were among the most forcible that could be made. If the house of God afforded a shelter for the sparrow, then no human being could be too humble; if God cared for sparrows, then very much more for the poorest disciple. O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. This expression shows the personal application. In contrast with his own absence the psalmist, with a personal exaltation of feeling, recollects that even the birds enjoy the sacred place from which he is excluded, they unconsciously of his holy excellence, he pines for its sight.

The Church Home. Bunyan's House Beautiful, where the pilgrims were instructed and refreshed, is an almost perfect picture of a church home. Next to one's own home should be the church home. Everything about it should be homelike; the buildings, the Sunday-school room, the prayer room, should be as delightful as the family room at home. But that which makes a home is not the house, but the family welcome, the family spirit. Church members are brothers and sisters of one family, and they should take pains to make all newcomers feel at home. When a minister once preached on "the recognition of friends in heaven," a young man coming out of the church was overheard saying that he wished the next sermon would be upon "the recognition of friends on earth," for he had been worshipping there for three months, and no one had spoken to him. The church that makes all comers feel at home will prosper. The church that neglects strangers, that shows no home welcome, will in the end decline, and it ought to, for God does not want such churches multiplied.

4. Blessed are they. Plural. "O the blessednesses," as in Ps. 1: 1. He is blessed in every way, on every side. That dwell in Thy house. Not the merely occasional visitors, but those who have a home there, are blessed. They make a great mistake who imagine they get the full benefit of God's house when they run from church to church, or often stay away, and have no regular home. They will be still, i. e., always, continually, praising Thee. The very joy of life is to praise God. Those who dwell in God's house will have the spirit of praise, and they will always have an abundance of things for which to praise Him. Selah. Probably an interlude, where instruments playing alone burst into louder music, instead of the softer playing that accompanied the singing.

STANZA II. THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOUSE OF GOD. In this stanza the poet sees in his vision the people thronging the highways to one of their annual pilgrimages to the house of God at Jerusalem. The pilgrim band, rife in hope, forget the trials and difficulties of the way; hope changes the rugged and stony waste into living fountains. The vale blossoms as if the sweet rain of heaven had covered it with blessings. Hope sustains them every step, from station to station they renew their strength as they draw nearer to the end of their journey, till at last they appear before God, present themselves as His worshippers, in His sanctuary in Zion. Such seems to be the general scope of the passage.

5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee. The source of whose life, whose guiding wisdom, whose joy, is in God, and who therefore goes to God's house to "know His strength like the eagle's," "that he may run and not weary," in the ways of God's commands. In whose heart are the ways. Rev. Ver., in whose heart are the highways to Zion. The journey to Zion is in his affections and thoughts; he delights to go on that journey. Others with Kinchi and Professor Toy make "the ways" to be equivalent to "Thy way" (Prov. 16: 17), a godly manner of life.

6. Passing through the valley of Baca. "The valley of weeping," "the vale of

tears." Or Baca may mean "a balsam tree, dropping its tears of balsam," which grows in the hot, barren, sandy place where scarcely anything else can grow. The valley of Baca is some sterile valley, fresh verdure and beauty and fruits. The rain also. The gentle, early rain. Fillth the pools (common version). The hollows that can receive water. But the better translation of revision is "overeth it with blessings." The arid sleep is replenished in a flowery feast garment. The flowers of the inner landscape, faith, hope, and love. The meaning of the verse is, that the faith and hope and joy of the pilgrims make the sandy waste a place of fountains, and then (this is the divine side of the picture) God from heaven sends down the rain of His grace.

7. They go from strength to strength. From one degree of strength to another. So far from being exhausted by their journey, they actually gather fresh vigor, so potent is the divine grace with them. The progress of the godly soul is a never-ending progress. "The goal of yesterday is the starting point of today." Every one of them (without exception) appears before God. Reaches the end and object of His pilgrimage, the worship of God in His holy temple.

8. The psalmist now prays that such blessedness may be his. Note the four names of God in this verse, each one of which is an argument and assurance that his prayer will be answered. (1) O Lord. Jehovah, the everliving, personal, eternal God, the supreme Spirit, the source of life. (2) God. The creator of all things, and the governor of all. (3) God of hosts. The God who has all created beings, and all the forces of nature organized like an army to do His will. (4) God of Jacob. The covenant God, who has made precious promises to His people, and is able and willing to answer His people's cry.

STANZA III. THE BLESSINGS FOUND IN THE HOUSE OF GOD. 9. Behold, O God, our shield. Our defence against all enemies—sins, temptations, evil persons, dangers, sickness, trouble, and upon. Look graciously, favorably upon. The face of Thine anointed, i. e. King David. This following immediately upon the words in verse 8, "hear my prayer," favors the supposition that these words were written by the king. "Anointed" means "set apart by God for some special work." All God's children are "anointed" to some work or place to which God has especially appointed them.

10. For a day . . . better than a thousand. One day with God is better than a thousand elsewhere. One day of religion is better than a thousand of worldliness. One day of serving God is better than a thousand in sin. A day in the house of my God. The Korahites, for or by whom this Psalm was written, were doorkeepers of God's house. The margin has, according to the Hebrew, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold of my God's house, to receive the outer and more distant rays, is better than to have the utmost world can bestow. A taste of religion is better than a feast of the world. House, tents. The house is the Lord's tents are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a season only, God's house endures forever.

11. For the Lord God is a sun. Every latest discovery of science about the sun adds to his force and beauty of figure. God is the source of all spiritual life and power, even of that which we think sometimes to be our own. And shield. Our defence against every evil, every temptation, every danger. Will give grace and glory. Under the name of grace, all spiritual good is wrapped up; and in the name glory, all eternal good is wrapped up; and under the last clause, no good will He withhold, is wrapped up all temporal good. All together speak out God to be an all-sufficient portion.

Saved from the Pit.

BY H. E. MILLS.

One of the most successful teachers in the Oak Vale Sunday-school was Henry Barton, who had a class of little girls about the age of ten years. He was a whole-souled, high-minded man whom the community respected, and his little class thought there was no teacher quite equal to theirs.

Mr. Barton was a successful banker and old Deacon Smith often remarked, "He's too much appetite for greenbacks." Business often took Mr. Barton to Chicago, and on one such trip he spent an hour at the grain exchange, where new and strange sights met his eyes. From the balcony he saw below an excited, seething crowd. Fortunes were being made and lost every hour. He saw a large man throw his hat in the air with a shout and soon come up into the balcony, where a little group of friends crowded around him with congratulations. "That man," said a gentleman near Barton, "has just cleared thirty thousand on a big wheat deal."

There was a fascination in the place for the country banker, and on his next trip to the city he arranged to spend a half day at the exchange. From a favorable position he closely watched the quotations as every few minutes they were bulletined. Just to test his judgment he predicted to himself that May wheat would next be quoted at a quarter of a cent rise. In a few minutes that very advance was put on the board. Next he prophesied on corn, and much to his surprise it took a drop exactly as he had guessed. He had always held that gambling in stocks was the same as betting on a horse race, but somehow, face to face with the possibility of a fortune amassed in a day, the business was a different look and he did not think of it as gambling.

"Why shouldn't I get rich?" he thought. "Since I've been sitting here I could have cleared a thousand dollars on May wheat, or on that corn either." It was almost time for his train, so he left the fascinating spot carrying a desire for speculation from which he had always before been free. Going home he better nature gained the ascendancy, and he said to himself, "Henry Barton, I didn't think you had so little sense. If you could have laid your hands on a thousand dollars to-day you would have bought a lot of wheat that doesn't exist, and have like the gambler like the rest." This bit of conscience which he gave himself seemed to place him in the attitude

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he had always held toward options, but it did not prevent him from eagerly watching the market quotations in the daily papers, nor did it exempt him from a return of the speculation fever. Some weeks later corn took a steady advance. Every morning it would be about half a cent better. Son Barton must go to the city, and he could not get his mind of that rising corn. Saturday night found him at the bank, remaining on some pretext after the office force were all gone. Monday morning he must leave early for Chicago, and now a desperate struggle was raging in his breast.

"Take it, take it," said one voice. "Yes, but it's bank money," said the other. "What if it is? You'll return it in a few days." "What if you lose?" "But you won't lose. That corn will advance for at least a week longer. Everything indicates it."

"And are you really going to gamble?" "Gamble? Bah! Hundreds of good men are dealing in stocks and you might as well take advantage of your chances."

"What would people think?" "People don't need to think. This is part of my business and not theirs." "Yes, especially the stockholders of the bank! Of course it isn't any of their business."

"No, it isn't their business. I'm president, am managing this bank. If I lose I'll make it up from my salary." "But suppose you lose so much that you can't?"

"But I'll stop before that. Besides, I'm going to gain, not lose. Suppose there is a little risk, we always have to run something of a gamut whatever we do."

The improving voice kept silent while the other added: "Now make a bet for two thousand and if the outlook is unfavorable just bring the money home."

He wrote out the little slip, gave it to the bank's seal and tucked it into his pocket. His conscience began to raise some objections but he stifled its importunities and went home. He tried to study the Sunday-school lesson for the next day but the title, golden text and central truth all seemed a rebuke to him. At last, laying down the books, he said: "I'll just ask the questions in the Quarterly. That will be enough for to-morrow."

That night he dreamed of stocks and bonds and options. He seemed to be losing a large amount, but on awaking he thought, "Dreams always go by contraries, so this must be a good omen."

At Sunday-school his class were as glad to see him as though he had come with a light heart and not from a sense of duty. During the opening exercises little Nora White, the youngest member, a very sweet, confiding child, sat up next to him, where she seemed perfectly at ease. He crossed into the room with very little spirit, simply reading off the questions.

"What is our lesson about, Jennie?" "The Holy Spirit, Our Leader," she answered.

Other questions went round, and little Nora was asked, "What is it to be led of the Holy Spirit?" She thought a moment, then her face brightened and she replied, "It's always acting as though Jesus was right with us."

The next question he put to them all, "Do you know any one whom you think is now led by the Spirit of God?" One mentioned their minister, another Mr. Moody and another Mr. Spurgeon. Little Nora suggested some one. "When did you name Nora? I didn't understand," said the teacher, kindly.

She spoke still lower, but Mr. Barton caught the word as she timidly answered, "You." The child's reply came like a blow to the strong man. He led by the Spirit of God. Did that trusting little one really believe that he always acted as though "Jesus was right with him"? Then the real blackness of his heart stood out in awful relief against the purity which little Nora thought was there. A terrible sense of guilt took hold of him. It was all he could do to finish the lesson. He did not wait for the sermon. Hurrying home he paced up and down his room, the picture of the child's sweet face constantly before his mind and her words ringing in his ears. "She thinks I'm a saint," he said, "when really I'm about to become a tool of the devil. What if I lose and 'But you won't lose,' broke in on the other voice. Again the two nature within had a fierce struggle, but at length the forces which Nora had aroused and marshaled forth were victorious, and Barton cried, "O God, help me, forgive me, lead me."

Taking the draft from his pocket he put it into the fire, then he fell on his knees and in an agony of repentance he implored mercy and help. When he rose he went straight to the home of his pastor, a man whom he fully trusted, and told him the whole story. "I was afraid," he said, "that if I tried to refrain by myself the temptation would be too strong sometime." A few days afterward, when he returned from the city, he had not been near the pit. Some weeks passed when the papers came out one morning full of a big bank failure in a neighboring town. The cause of the trouble, so ran the reports, was grain speculation by the officers. On looking up the matter Barton found that for a long time they had been dabbling in stocks and were about even on their losses and gains, but on the very day when he had intended to purchase they had bought large options on corn, almost at once meeting a turn in the market. To cover this decline they had several times advanced large sums in the desperate hope of a rise, but the market kept on downward course until all they had invested was swept away and their bank a wreck. "Thank God," said Barton, "that I was saved from that whirlpool."

From that day he fully consecrated himself to God with his business, and ever since he has known the unspeakable blessedness of being led by the Holy Spirit.—Comp.

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