

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXXV.

Aug. 29. } ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION. { Gen. xviii
1886. } 16-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb. vii. 25.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Gen. xvii. 1-14. The Covenant Renewed.
Tu. Gen. xvii. 15-27. Circumcision the Seal.
W. Gen. xviii. 1-8. Angels Entertained.
Th. Gen. xviii. 16-33. Abraham's Intercession.
F. Heb. vii. 7-28. Our Intercessor.
S. John xvii. 1-26. Christ's Intercessory Prayer.
Sab. 1 John ii. 1-10. Advocate with the Father.

HELPS TO STUDY.

The subject of our last lesson was "The Covenant with Abram," as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis.

In the sixteenth chapter we find part of the history of Hagar, Sarai's Egyptian bond-woman, and the record of the birth of her son, Ishmael, when his father, Abram, was eighty-six years old.

The contents of the seventeenth chapter are: a repetition of the promise, with the change of the name Abram (father of exaltation) to Abraham (father of a multitude), and of Sarai (contentious) to Sarah (princess); the institution of the rite of circumcision as the sign of the covenant; and the definite assurance of a son to Abraham and Sarah, with instructions that he should be named Isaac.

The eighteenth chapter brings Abraham before us in the character of host, entertaining what at first sight, appeared to be three wayfaring men, one of whom turns out to be the Lord (Jehovah), supposed to be God the Son in human form, and the other two the angelic ministers of His vengeance upon the guilty inhabitants of the cities of the plain. Here our present lesson comes in. Its topics are but two: (1) God's Purpose to Destroy Sodom Revealed to Abraham; (2) Abraham's Pleadings with God in Behalf of Sodom.

I. GOD'S PURPOSE TO DESTROY SODOM REVEALED TO ABRAHAM.—Vers. 16-21. A most important lesson—a lesson teaching the strictness of God's justice and the severity of His wrath against sin—was now to be conveyed to Abraham, to his descendants, and to all the nations of the earth that should afterwards be blessed in him.

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? The speaker here is the Lord (Hebrew *Jehovah*). Lest it should be supposed that the destruction of Sodom proceeded from "accident" or from "natural causes," God plainly declares Himself to be the author of it. He is "longsuffering and slow to anger" but there is a limit to His forbearance. To warn and deter others from following similar courses He inflicts punishment upon gross and flagrant violators of moral and natural law even in this life. Further, the sins of nations and other communities are punished here, for it is only here that these exist as such.

All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him. "It therefore was important," says the "National S. S. Teacher," "that he should understand God's dealings with nations. Though God contemplated blessing all mankind, it was not through abandoning all retribution for sin. Mercy was not to supersede justice, without repentance. It is a noteworthy thing that this judgment upon those ill-fated cities was executed by the Lord amidst thoughts of mercy for all mankind. It was, therefore, a necessity, and as such an exhibition of true love as was His sparing them up to this time."

For I know him. God knows everyone, but there is trust implied here. In John xv. 15, we find Christ saying to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Abraham was God's "friend" (Isaiah xli. 8; James ii. 23).

That he will command his children and his household after him. A knowledge of God's reasons for this infliction would assist Abraham in this matter. Here we find the great value of parental training recognized. The effects of a good man's training of his family pass down through many generations. In Abraham's own case some of these results have come down to the present day, even among those of his descendants who reject his faith.

The cry of Sodom. Has God been hearing the voices of earth ever since the blood of Abel cried to Him for vengeance? Do the complaints of the victims of oppression, of lawlessness and of licentiousness reach His ear? Does He hear the smooth words of the deceiver, the coarse laugh of the scorner, the foolish utterances of the drunkard, the almost incessant flow of profanity from the lips of so many thousands in the streets of our cities, towns and villages?—then, God is merciful and longsuffering, and the wonder is, not that some places have been destroyed but that others have been spared.

I will go down now. It was not necessary; the expression is of the class called anthropomorphic, or one in which God speaks as if he were a man, in order that men might understand Him. God knew the wickedness of the place, but the full extent of it must be revealed to Abraham and to Lot, and through them to others, by a final test which proved that no stranger could enter the city without being exposed to gross outrage.

II. ABRAHAM'S PLEADINGS WITH GOD IN BEHALF OF SODOM.—Vers. 22-33. Here we have a beautiful example of intercession—unsuccessful it must be called, and still not one of Abraham's six requests was denied. At each step he seems to become more and more convinced of the hopeless wickedness of Sodom; five times he reduces the number of righteous men which would suffice for its preservation, bringing it down to ten, and then he stops; no man can say that the place would have been saved if he had brought the number down to one, or made his request unconditional; to be wise above what is written is neither proper nor possible; all that can be said—and it is enough to encourage large petitions—is, that even in this case God continued to grant as long as the supplicant continued to ask.

The men turned their faces from thence: that is from Hebron, where Abraham dwelt, towards Sodom. "The men" spoken of here are the two attendant angels. Abraham stood yet before the Lord, who was the third One of his visitors. At the close of the chapter we find that this One went His way, not to Sodom, for a reference to the next chapter will show that only two came there.

Abraham drew near. See Heb. x. 19-22. This, though perhaps the most remarkable instance of mere human intercession on record, is not the only one. Some of the others are: (1) that of Judah for Benjamin (Gen. xlv. 18-34); (2) that of Moses for Israel on various occasions (Ex. xxxii. 1; xxxiii. 12; Num. xi. 2; xii. 13, xiv. 13; Deut. ix. 18); (3) that of Samuel for Israel (1 Sam. xii. 23); that of David for Israel (2 Sam. xxiv. 17); and that of Stephen for his enemies (Acts vii. 60).

The great Intercessor with God for men is the Lord Jesus Christ. See Isaiah liii. 12; Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1. He does not hamper His intercession with any qualification on the part of those for whom He pleads. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him."

SELF-LOVE.

BY F. W. FAULKNER.

Oh, I could go through all life's troubles singing,
Turning earth's night to day,
If self were not so fast around me, clinging
To all I do or say.

My very thoughts are selfish, always building
Mean castles in the air,
I use my love for others for a gilding
To make myself look fair.

I fancy all the world engrossed in judging
My merit or my blame;
Its warmest praise seems an ungracious grudging
Of praise which I might claim.

In youth, or age, by city, wood or mountain,
Self is forgotten never;
Where'er we tread, it gushes like a fountain,
Its waters flow forever.

O miserable omnipresence, stretching
Over all time and space,
How have I run from thee, yet found thee
The goal in every race.

Inevitable self! vile imitation
Of universal light—
Within our hearts a dreadful usurpation
Of God's exclusive right!

WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE LET COMMON SENSE DECIDE.

Many of the directions for regulating household labour are so widely dissimilar that young housekeepers find it difficult to judge which to select as the most reliable. We are surprised, in examining household magazines and receipt books to note the numerous conflicting statements coming, as many of them do, from those who stand as model managers and most reliable authorities.

Not many weeks ago a young and inexperienced but conscientious housekeeper came to us in the lowest depths of despondency. One of her "guides" described the mode of doing certain important things, as she thought, very sensibly and clearly. Another gave rules wide apart from the first. For instance, one advised in washing white flannel to make a strong suds in boiling hot water, leave the flannel soaking in it until the water is just cool enough to be used without burning the hands. Then wash and throw at once into a tub of boiling water in which a little bluing has been stirred. Shake up and down with a clothes-stick till cool enough to put through the wringer twice, snap, pull in shape, and hang on the line evenly, changing it on the line several times; then fold tightly, before very dry, for an hour, and press while damp, drawing it into shape while pressing. All very correct, we should say, except putting through a wringer. That injures flannel, in our judgment, making it hard and knotty.

But the next authority she consulted was very explicit in directing that flannels must be soaked over night in cold water, then wrung into a cool suds, rinsed in cold water, and if fair, left out over night to bleach.

This advice, we, for one, should most certainly object to, and feel that our flannels were yellowed, shrunk, and in every way greatly injured; and yet these directions were given by one who is recognized as good authority.

The young lady had the misfortune to spill some grease on a carpet. She flies to her books of instructions to learn how to remedy the disaster, and one tells her to lift the carpet, stretch it on a clean floor, pour on boiling water plentifully, and with a stiff brush scrub the carpet very thoroughly; pour on more boiling water and scrub again, then rinse, and wiping the floor dry, stretch the carpet on the line to drain, then nail it down while wet to prevent shrinking; raise all the windows, if a sunny day, and tying a coarse dry towel on a broom, go over the carpet many times to absorb as much of the water as can be done, changing the wet towel to a dry one often; then leave the carpet to dry.

Another advises snapsuds with ammonia, only raising the carpet to lay some old cloth underneath to absorb the grease. Then scrub the grease spot with this suds and, if needful to hold the colour, put in half a cup of beef's gad. As soon as the grease disappears rinse and with old soft cloths rub till nearly dry.

Another assures you that any quantity of oil or grease can be extracted from a carpet by laying dry buckwheat flour on the spot plentifully, and removing it to add fresh clean buckwheat flour as often as necessary. When the grease disappears brush all the flour off into a dustpan and the carpet will be as good as new—but, never wet the carpet to take out grease spots.

The first direction we think ruinous to any carpet but some old rag carpet, the second very good advice, but the third the best of all and entirely safe.

Now, mystified by many conflicting rules (and we have only given a small sample), what can an inexperienced housewife do? We know of no better advice than to let the good common sense, which in a true-hearted, sensible wife develops rapidly in times of responsibility, come to the front; not to discard rules that are laid down for a housekeeper's guide, but to weigh them calmly and accept or discard independently as careful trial of each shall determine. It is true that economy must be kept in mind, while allowing young, untried, common sense the privilege of experimenting, but with care little need be wasted. Some trials may not give satisfaction, but if one experiments on a small scale in matters of food there will seldom be a dish prepared that cannot be eaten with a degree of comfort. In cleaning, repairing, rejuvenating articles, try only a little spot at a time; or make a spot—which is better—on some old rag that will be no loss if thrown away. That will give a good chance of trying several ways before deciding which will be the most effective on that which cannot be thrown away.

But why should there be so many conflicting statements? We certainly know how it has originated in several instances. Many have written on household affairs who have never had practical knowledge. They see the workings only from the outside—the surface work. They do not know how much time or thought the mistress of this domain gives to the work, what mistakes are made, or what remedies applied to prevent the mistake being known. Sometimes mistakes in cook-books occur by accident. We recall a receipt in a cook-book that used to be very popular that will clearly shew our meaning. The dish was arrow-root pudding, and part of the direction read as follows: "To one pint arrow-root add half a cup of sweet milk; beat it smooth and free from lumps, till like cream!" Any cook, and most housekeepers, will understand the impossibility of following that direction and the utter absurdity of it. It would be impossible to even moisten a pint of arrow-root with only half a cup of milk. And many a young housekeeper has grieved over her lack of success when trying to follow this rule. We desire to comfort those young matrons whose mistakes arise often from no fault of their own, but from a lack of practical knowledge in those who attempt to teach; and we also would shew those who try to follow books as house-keeping guides that they must bring to their aid their own judgment and common sense in testing the lessons taught by the most able treatises on Domestic Economy.—Mrs. H. W. Beecher.

WHAT BOYS SHOULD BE.

First. Be true—be genuine. No education is worth anything that does not include this. A man had better not know how to read—he had better never learn a letter of the alphabet, and be true and genuine in intention and action, rather than being learned in all the sciences and languages, to be at the same time false in heart and counterfeit in life.

Second. Be pure in thought and language—pure in mind and body. An impure man, young or old, poisoning the society where he moves with smutty stories and impure examples, is a moral ulcer, a plague-spot, a leper who ought to be treated as were the lepers of old.

Third. Be unselfish. Care for the feelings and comforts of others. Be polite. Be just in all dealing with others. Be generous, noble, and manly.

Fourth. Be self-reliant and self-helpful even from early childhood. Be industrious always, and self-supporting at the earliest proper age. Teach them that all honest work is honourable, and that an idle, useless life of dependence on others is disgraceful.

When a boy has learned these things, when he has made these ideas a part of his being—however young he may be, however poor, or however rich—he has learned some of the most important things he ought to know when he becomes a man.

NONE will have their residence in heaven hereafter who have not their conversation in heaven here. None will be with the Lord forever, but those that find it their happiness for the Lord to be with them now.—Wm. Jay.