

entrance, but they were such a little thing, no one could suppose that any serious mischief would follow. Some years afterwards, this same thistle became the farmer's pest and plague. One glass will not harm, one throw of the dice will only amuse. One tiny, ungenerous scheme of revenge,—what great evil can come of it? Alas, many drunkards

are in their graves, many gamblers in the cells of the penitentiary, many homes are ruined and many hearts at lasting feud, because they did not recognize the full danger of a little sin, any more than the Scotchman foresaw the results of the introduction of a small package of thistle seeds to a new soil. Sin inevitably multiplies sorrow.

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the School.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars and Bible Classes

"Blessed" means "happy". This Beatitude may therefore be presented in the light of:

1. *The test of happiness*, vs. 1-5. Are we living in sin, or delivered from it? Bunyan's man, with a book and a burden, grew more and more unhappy as he came to understand the nature of sin. Sin is misunderstood when it is made light of. Explain the psalmist's distinguishing terms. "Transgression" is a "going away", "a departure from God". "Sin" is a "missing of the mark",—misdirected aim. "Iniquity" is "something twisted or distorted",—acting crookedly. Happy the man who is delivered from all this: whose burden is lifted from his back (as forgiveness signifies), John 1:29; whose faulty aims are "covered" over, Isa. 61:10; whose distorted actions are not reckoned against him, Isa. 44:22; who is "guileless", or sincere, in his determination to become right. The psalmist from experience has known both the misery of concealing sin (vs. 3, 4), and the happy relief that follows confession and penitent entrance into forgiveness, v. 5. Happiness is found, not in hiding sin, but in forsaking it, Isa. 55:7; 1 John 1:9.

2. *The source of happiness*, vs. 6, 7. This is found not in the sinner himself, but in the Saviour, 2 Cor. 9:15. The more a convicted sinner thinks of himself and his sin, the more miserable he becomes, Ps. 38:4. He cannot dwell too much on the grace of his Saviour, Titus 2:11. The psalmist is happy because he knows his Saviour to be: (1) so accessible (v. 6, first half); (2) so steadfast (v. 6, last

half); (3) so sheltering, v. 7. His "every tear sparkles like a diamond in the sunshine of pardon". In his security, songs of deliverance resound. No harm can overtake those who find refuge in Christ, Heb. 6:18. But how is all this found?

3. *The road to happiness*, vs. 8-11. Every pardoned sinner is happy in the promise of: (1) guidance (v. 8; John 14:5, 6; Romans 10:8, 9); (2) freedom, vs. 9, 10. Turn from sin and show that you are a free being, not driven by evil habits. You are no mere animal, unable to control yourself, v. 9. Get free, and keep free, from the sorrows of sinning, v. 10 (first half). Be happy in the merciful protection in which you trust, v. 10 (last half). Then you will have (3) joy, v. 11. Trust Christ to set and keep you free from sin, and the gloom of struggling with evil gives way to the gladness of the victorious life. John 15:11; Phil. 4:4.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

Begin with a talk about psalms. A psalm is a song, and the characteristic of a song is its gladness: make this clear. Then call for the title of the Lesson,—The Joy of Forgiveness, which is the key-note of this Psalm. Have the class examine the Psalm with a view of discovering that the first verse gives the key-note—"Blessed"; and that the closing verse re-echoes it: have this verse read and re-read, till the scholars catch the glad some note.

An informal, rather than a formal study of the Psalm, is the more likely to be effective,—children prefer to "pick up" a song by running over it and joining in as others sing it, rather than to sit down and work it out line by line and measure by measure.

First, who wrote this Psalm? David, after