

Home Preacher, or Church in the House

FOURTH WEEK

MORNING WORSHIP

FATHER of Mercies! Give unto each of us here present what is best for us; cast out all evil from within us; fill us with all good and grant us true wisdom and spiritual understanding in the knowledge of Thyself, that so we may be fruitful in every good work, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm cxxx.*

To Thee I come, a sinner vile;
Upon me, Lord, vouchsafe to smile!
Mercy alone I make my plea;
O God, be merciful to me!

To Thee I come, a sinner great,
And well Thou knowest all my state;
Yet full forgiveness is with Thee;
O God, be merciful to me!

To Thee I come, a sinner lost,
Nor have I ought wherein to trust;
But where Thou art, Lord, I would be;
O God, be merciful to me!

To glory bring me, Lord, at last;
And there, when all my fears are past,
With all the saints I'll then agree,
God has been merciful to me!

GENESIS VI. 7-17.

And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air: for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. 9. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. 10. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11. The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence. 12. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. 13. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I

will destroy them with the earth. 14. Make thee an ark of gopher-wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. 15. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of; The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. 17. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

GENESIS VII. 1, 5-7.

And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 5. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. 6. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. 7. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

See also verses 11-13, 17-24; and chap. viii. 1, 15-17.

Prayer.

O GOD, the Father of lights and the Fountain of fulness!
All our springs are in thee. In thy light alone can we see
light, and from the treasures of thy love and goodness alone
can all our various needs be supplied. Blessed are they that
dwell in thy house, and who in the nearer presence behold
the shinings of thy glory, and feel the rich fragrance of thy
grace. Blessed are the angels above. Blessed are the people
below who know the joyful sound. Yea, blessed is that
people whose God is the Lord.

O Lord our God, what folly and sin have we been guilty
of in forsaking thee, the fountain of living waters; and how
has our sin become our punishment, as we have stood beside
our broken cisterns that could hold no water; as we have
wandered in our darkness and poverty away from thee!

O Lord, we know that the pleasures of sin are but for a
season; that in departing from thee we go into a far country,
where we soon begin to be in want; that in following
vanities we forsake our own mercies.

But blessed be thy name for the long-suffering that has
borne with us, and for the rich grace whereby we are
recovered and restored. Beneath and around all our poverty
thou hast put thine own wealth; and beyond our utmost

wanderings has gone thy preventing hand, that we might not perish for ever. And now we would buy of thee gold tried in the fire. Endow us, Lord, with as much as we can receive of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Put on us white raiment that we may be clothed, and anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we may see. Make the conviction deep and strong in us that our sufficiency is of God, and that we can do all things through Christ strengthening us. Let the peace which passeth all understanding keep our heart and mind through Jesus Christ. Let that sweet harmony flow on through our successive days. Let our souls rest for ever under the shadow of the cross; and from that high vantage-ground of peace and safety let us behold all things else. May the glory of the whole world be dim to us now “by reason of the glory that excelleth.” Knowing a Saviour’s love, and cherishing the hope of His immortal glory, may we be the less solicitous about the changing aspects of these present things. May we learn in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content. When temporal things come to an end, may we behold only the vanishing away of that which our souls had rejected as a portion: when eternal things come into view may our faith claim them as her own.

We gratefully acknowledge, O Lord, thy kindness to us in the past. In joys and sorrows that have come and gone we see thy hand, we hear thy voice, even now. Thy

dealings have all been good. And we know that the future, all dark to us, is manifest to thee. We would go to meet it in thy strength. We would entirely trust ourselves to thine unerring wisdom and thy tireless love. The Lord our God will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.

The future of this great world, also, we commend to thee. Thou lookest down upon all its toils. Thou knowest its bitter sorrows. Thou art very pitiful and patient, even in view of its sins. But how long, O Lord? Roll away the darkness. Hasten the dawn of the better day. Let the early morning rays which we behold grow speedily into brighter shinations. Let the sure promise be fulfilled that all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. “Even so come, Lord Jesus.” *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O GOD, thou hast spoken unto us graciously, and therefore we, although unworthy, may speak unto thee boldly. We humbly ask at this time the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that we may rightly understand, and purely love, and willingly

obey thy most holy Word, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, or *Psalm lxxiii. 23-26.*

WHY should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days:
Great Comforter, descend and bring
Some tokens of thy grace.

Dost thou not dwell in all the saints
And seal them heirs of heaven?
And wilt thou banish my complaints,
And show my sins forgiven?

Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood;
And bear thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God.

Thou art the earnest of His love,
The ledge of joys to come;
And thy soft wings, Celestial Dove
Will safe convey me home.

ISAIAH LXIII. 7-19.

I WILL mention the loving-kindness of the Lord and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. 8. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. 11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him? 12. That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? 13. That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? 14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name. 15. Look down from heaven, and

behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory:
where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy
bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained?
16. Doubtless thou art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name
is from everlasting. 17. O Lord, why hast thou made us to
err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?
Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine
inheritance. 18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it
but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy
sanctuary. 19. We are thine: thou never barest rule over
them; they were not called by thy name.

See also 2 Cor. i. 12-24.

SERMON IV.

“WHO HATH ALSO SEALED US, AND GIVEN THE EARNEST OF
THE SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS.” -- 2 Cor. i. 22.

“WHO hath *also* sealed us.” He hath done something else,
as we see in the former verse. He hath “stablished us”
--rendered us firm and steadfast “in Christ.” He hath also
“anointed us,” giving us grace of consecration and spiritual
qualifications for divine service. The radical idea is, that

God gives to believing the grace of constancy and perseverance, so that they hold on their way toward complete and everlasting salvation. The same idea is certainly continued under this image of sealing. But it has at the same time some distinctive characteristics of its own, instructive and beautiful, on which we may meditate for a little with some profit: --

I. OWNERSHIP. -- Those who have the seal of the spirit are, in this way, claimed as God's own property. "Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

We must not forget that God makes a much larger claim than this. He says, "*All souls* are mine." No man can rightfully hold property in himself. There is not a man on earth, who does not, every day afresh, receive from God his powers, affections, possessions, circumstances -- himself, in fact. That is true. But then, alas! It is equally true that a man of himself, does not see and confess that. The *natural* claim of God on man is valid and good, but it is not acknowledged. If a man had a clear eye, he might see written on the brow of every morning, written that all men may read it there, "Ye are not your own." He might see it still more clearly every time he looks in a mirror. The reflected image of his own face, shining with lights which

only God could kindle, ought to send the message right home to his heart, "Ye are not your own." But alas! How many men see their own faces a thousand times, without perceiving in light, or line, or expression, any mark of the ownership of God! A man looks, and sees -- himself; then thinks, not consciously perhaps, yet with a terrible certainty -- "Myself: proprietor -- myself. I am -- my own. I must take care of myself: no one else will. I must live to myself: there can be no higher end."

Thus God's *natural* right, although inherently valid and good, is actually, owing to our sin, quite inefficacious. Therefore he makes a *super-natural* right. He constitutes a new claim of peculiar strength and tenderness. He buys and wins us back by the most marvellous expression of love and sorrow that has ever been known. We are "the *ransomed* of the Lord." Christians are his "*purchased* possession." "The Lord's portion is his people, and Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." How is the recovered property marked as his own? *By the sealing of the Spirit*. In one view it may be said that he has *many* marks. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" in many ways. Yet in another sense he has only this *one* mark -- the sealing of the Spirit -- because this is the concentrated expression of all the others. All the other marks constitute this one. It is not repentance, and faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and peace, *and* the sealing of the Spirit. But rather, it is the sealing of the Spirit in, and

by means of, these things. These are like the separate impressions produced by different parts of the one broad seal. In this way, we can reason from any part of true Christian experience directly up to the ownership of God. In all we feel, in all we do as Christians, we see the proofs that we are his. A pang of penitential grief is the sealing of the Spirit. A triumph of faith over sense, or an *act* of faith, although not very triumphant, is the sealing of the Spirit. A breath of holier love is the sealing of the Spirit; and all our purer thoughts and our larger affections, and our better purposes, - these are all worked up into one harmonious impression, which makes the seal of God. Grand thought! that we have thus, in all that is Christian within us, the marks of divine ownership - the very seal of God! If this does not dignify our life, it is difficult to see what else can do it.

Ah! to belong to him. To be owned of him! To have written upon our souls the impress and signature of this high claim of love and right! Is not this the very height and grandeur of earthly life?

If the old clansman would shout his chieftain's name in battle, and whisper it even in death; if the soldier of our own day is fired to heroic deeds by the thought that he belongs to a certain regiment which has covered itself with glory on blood-red fields; if every worthy son and scion of a noble house *feels* himself to be ennobled in the very name he

bears, and strives to live so that *his* name may be reckoned in the long lineage of fame: shall not the sons of God -- ransomed with blood, and sealed with the Spirit -- walk worthy of their ownership and their high calling? Living, let us live unto the Lord; dying let us die unto the Lord; living and dying, let us be the Lord's.

II. VALUE. -- A seal is not put to a useless thing. The seal of a house, a corporation, a city, or a kingdom, is not seriously affixed to a thing which is unimportant and useless. The great seal of this country is for great uses.

So, God's great seal of grace indicates great reality and worth in those souls on which it is impressed. This worth is not merely the inherent worth of the soul itself. That, of course, is implied; that is the central and perpetual thing. A human spirit is essentially so great a thing, that the whole world would not be enough to give in exchange for it. But it is not the soul, simply *as* a soul that is sealed, in whatever state it may be, but a soul *with grace in it*. A soul containing holy principles and gracious affections -- *that* is the thing sealed. God thus bears witness to the great worth of his own work in the heart. He says, by the sealing of the Spirit, "This work of mine in human souls is so rare and precious, that I must not expose it to the tempests and chances of this sinful world without some indication of its worth. I must show *where* I have been especially working. I must tell what I have been doing. I must give at least

some glimpses of the costliness and beauty of that gracious work I am working here.” And so he puts his seal -- his great seal of the Spirit, telling to all who can understand, that the very richest and most valued part of all his earthly property is his own work of grace in and for living souls.

A soul in grace, and growing in that grace, has, as it were, the whole economy of redemption reproduced and living in itself. Such a soul is the latest fruit of God’s eternal thoughts and counsels. Beams of the eternal light are shining there, and thrillings of the everlasting love are there, and fulfilments in part of eternal purpose, and previsions of eternal joy. Christ is there in all the phases of his life, from the cave in Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary. That soul “knows him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” has in itself the living germs of all his perfections, the moral fruits of his whole mediatorial work, the proofs of his continued intercession, and the foreshadowings of his everlasting glory.

Then is it not well to put a signifying seal on such things as these? And when the seal *is* thus put surely, my brethren, we ought to ponder much and prize very highly the rare and exceeding worth of what is thus sealed.

Compare this “kingdom of God within us” -- I shall not say with anything *material*, such a comparison were quite beside the mark, but -- with other things of the higher and

better kind, things mental and moral among men, you will find that it is peerless and alone. Shakespeare's noblest inspirations, in themselves, are not equal to a Christian's humblest thoughts when he is thinking in the Spirit. A philosopher's clearest distinctions, his most considered and fundamental principles, are not equal to a Christian's practical "discernings" of good and evil. A soldier's grandest efforts in planning or fighting a battle, are not to be compared with those lowlier victories won every day by the following of Jesus faithfully in the field of common life, and registered by the angels in "the heavenly places." And all the loves and links of home and social life, although they are very precious and dear, are yet far inferior to that love which lifts up the soul to an unseen Saviour, and makes an unseen place our real and eternal home.

Yes!

"This *is* the thing of greatest worth,
The whole creation round;
That which was lost in Paradise,
That which in Christ is found."

A soul in grace is the noblest thing on earth. It is the one thing which God seals. He does not put his seal on man's strength, or on woman's beauty, or on soldier's courage, or on statesman's triumph, or on artist's skill; nor on any intellectual qualities; nor on any moral attainments: He puts

it on the soul that is living and striving in the faith and love of Christ.

Let us then value above all things else God's work of grace in us, and for us; and let us show that we value it by carrying it on. We are not to sit and gaze in satisfied complacency. We are to arise and work. We are co-workers with him -- working out our own salvation while he "works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure."

If a house half-finished -- of perfect proportions and beautiful in design, but still only half-finished -- were made over to you in gift, what would be the highest proof of appreciation and gratitude which you could return to the donor? Would it be to visit and look at the half built-walls every day? Would it be to watch the deepening weather-stains, the widening rents, the bowing walls? Would it not rather be this -- I will arise and build: I will carry out the design and finish the purpose, and bring forth the top-stone with shoutings; and my friend shall see that his gift is my delight."

In no other way can we tell God how truly and gratefully we appreciate the preciousness of his work in our souls, than by carrying on that work in his strength, until at last -- days of failure and imperfectness all gone by -- it shall shine out in the full splendor of celestial completeness in heaven.

III. DESTINATION. After all, a seal among men is but a temporary thing. It is not *intended* to endure forever. The letter reaches its destination; the will is read after death; the casket comes into new hands: in each case the seal is broken. Before the time for breaking it comes it is held sacred; *when* the time has come there is no more hesitation. The seal in this way always points to some future day, occasion, place, or time. It never means eternal secrecy. If there were anything which a man would wish *never* to be known, opened, or used, he would not seal, he would destroy it. In that case he would let the fire seal it with its consuming flame; or the sea in her unfathomed depths. A seal points always to a future day. So does the sealing of God by the Spirit. It points steadily on to "the day of redemption."

This is brought out strikingly by the phraseology of the text. The apostle does not say simply that he hath given us "the Spirit," but that "he that given us the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts." Whatever of his influence we have, is the pledge and assurance of still more to come. *That* again will be the promise of still more beyond -- and so on, in measures ever growing, until there shall come a day of full salvation. All this is expressly implied in the language used. This word "the earnest" would be quite misleading if such were not the idea. It is a mercantile term. It is properly that part of the purchase-money which is paid in advance,

as a security for the remainder. Now we know that our salvation is not a thing of bargain and sale. It is a free gift -- “without money and without price.” The gratuitous nature of salvation comes out in this very text. He hath “*given*” us the earnest of the Spirit. But it is given according to fixed principles. It is not an arbitrary and capricious thing -- given to-day, withdrawn to-morrow. “The gifts of God are without repentance.” He gives, and allows us to plead what we then have as the warrant and argument for expecting more. “He giveth more grace.” He gives, and then says, “To him *that hath* shall be given and he shall have more abundance.” He gives and says, “That is so much paid -- a small part of the blessedness and glory of a full redemption I am giving you now: it is little compared with the fulness and brightness of that which is to be revealed; but although little in itself, it is great in its relations and issues; it is a living germ which will blossom and fructify through the long summer of eternity.”

This is a subject apt to become trite because we have occasion to speak of it so often, our real knowledge of it is yet very little. We often speak of the great future. Living in a fading world, how can we *but* speak of the world which will never lose its bloom! Hasting ourselves, like very shadows, through a fleeting life, how can we but think and talk of that life of permanence and beauty to which we are going? And yet of exact knowledge how little we possess!

We take the help of all the analogies and prefigurations of this life. They do help us up to a certain point, and then we are left to imagination and to God. If we take, *e.g.*, “the earnest” of this world which we see issuing in full payments, we get *some* help in conceiving the relation between present grace and future glory, yet there is evidently a difference in the cases. The earthly symbols are too narrow and feeble to express very much of the grandeur of the heavenly life.

Take one flower in its blossom state on one of the days of mid winter, or one of the chill days of early spring -- the only flower you can find in all the woods, in all the gardens around -- that is truly nature’s “earnest.” And when in four or five months *all* the flowers are blooming and all the gardens are gay, that is nature’s willing, glorious payment, of what was promised in the earnest of the dark wintry day.

Or take the green blade -- the *only* one that can be seen in all the field above the red mould -- that is the earnest to the farmer of all the rich plenty of the harvest day. And when that day shall come -- when the corn is yellow, and the reapers are many, and the gleaners are satisfied, and the wains are loaded, and the garnerers are filling, and the stacks of the farm-yard are multiplying, and the beakers are brimming and song greets the glad morning, and sleep reigns through all the restful night -- that is the payment in full of the promise made in the one tender blade of the field.

The difference, no doubt, is very great in those cases, between the first and the last -- between the earnest and the payment. Ah, but the difference is far greater between the beginnings of grace and the fulnesses of glory. All the flowers on earth could not bloom into the meaning of that; nor all the corn-fields express, let them wave in what richness they might, the full ripeness of sanctified souls on the day of redemption!

Think of *the time* that God is taking for the full ripening of spiritual holy souls, before he proclaims their day of redemption come. 'Tis six thousand years since the first earnest was given, and there has been no full payment yet. We have had nothing *but* earnest during that time. No full flowering, no yellow ripeness, on this earthly field; nor has perfect harvest come yet in heaven. Sometimes on the bed of death, we see just a gleam or two of what seems the heavenly beauty. A soul in passing away from us casts back by reflection some of the first glories of the land of lights. But these things are soon over, and then we are left with the cold clay and silent death. That parting gleam was but another earnest, and no more.

Now what must the full payment be when God takes so long a time before making it! What "the glory that is to be revealed," when the revelation is kept back so long! Time is always an element with God in the production of greatness. Months, three or four, will raise a perfect flower out of the

bud which is the earnest. As many years will not do the same, it will take as many centuries, to the sapling of the oak or the cedar. Ah, but when they are made, how grand! When those slow centuries have come and gone, what trees of God they are!

Then what, again we say, must that work be in its perfection, the earnest of which was given in Eden, the fulness and glory of which no man has *yet* seen? No man has yet seen a man, as the man will be on God's day of redemption. God's men are walking here in disguise. You see their outward forms, but you know not what the substance of the manhood will be "when that which is perfect is come." They are guarding now the treasures of their spiritual life as they pass quickly through the perils of this night of time. But they are all hastening to one place -- to the place where the Saviour has promised to meet with them! to reveal them to themselves! to one another! to a wondering universe! They are all speeding on to one great day, "the day of redemption," for which they have, now, "the earnest in their hearts."

Little as that earnest may be in itself, how inestimably precious does it become when we view it as the promise of all that glory to come! Your peace is often ruffled, but it is the true beginning of the eternal rest. Your song is often low, and interrupted at times by groans and sighs, yet at length it will rise to the loud hosanna. Your love at times

seems to catch the chill of winter, and you *cannot* make it burn; but that same love *will* burn until it becomes vehement and pure enough to mingle with the loves of the seraphim. Your steps now are sometimes well-nigh slipping and your eye grows dim with darkness as you try to scan the future way; but you are going along the good old way where the myriads of God's saints have had their earnest, and at length you will come to the place, and that before long, where the full payments are made; where the "good measure is given, pressed down and running over" into each man's bosom; where "cities" are given as wages, and "crowns" as gifts. Where the kings are robed, where the conquerors have their triumphal entry, where the sons and daughters are at home!

"Quench not the Spirit." "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God by whom ye are sealed." "Live in the Spirit." "Walk in the Spirit." Flee from scenes of strife and sin. Listen to the still small voice. Yield to the gentle drawing. Cherish the pure thought. Breathe out the holy longing. Welcome the hour of prayer. "Enter into thy closet." Multiply thus "the earnest" and you will correspondingly enhance "the glory." Let God dwell in you now, and you will dwell with him for evermore. -- Alexander Raleigh, D.D.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE

THE CHILD JESUS

VERY long since, -- between two and three thousand years ago -- there was built on the banks of the river Tiber, in Italy, a little city, to which was given the name of Rome. A brave and hardy tribe dwelt in it. They had very often quarrels with their neighbours, and generally conquered in the wars they waged. As they grew in numbers and strength, they extended their conquests, till at length they had fought and beaten down every power that would stand against them. They had gone into the far east, and had sent their arms westward, even into our own island. Indeed, the whole world then known might be said to be under their sway. Among other lands, that of the Jews had been subdued by them. At the time when that thing happened I am now going to tell, but here was still a king of that nation on the throne, but he was only there by the good-will of the Romans, and under the name of an ally, was, in truth, a subject of the great Roman emperor. The name of the king was Herod, and he was a very cruel, though bold and clever prince. He would stop at nothing, however bloody and base, if he thought it needful to help him to his own selfish ends. The Roman emperor's title was Caesar Augustus -- so

called to set his grandeur. One of the months of the year still bears his name.

While the power of Rome was growing up to the strength of a giant, God was making ready another power which was at last to break it in pieces. He told his prophets in Israel to say to the people, that in due time there would be born to them a King who would reign over all the earth. The people were very glad of this, and longed for the time; but most of them made great mistakes as to the kind of king God was to send them. For he was not a king who would spread his power by arms and war, but by truth and love. The prophets said that he would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, and gave some marks by which the time, when it drew near, would be known. So, in the reign of Augustus Caesar, there was great hope and much talk about the coming of this king. And, indeed, God's hour for doing what he had promised had come.

So, one night as some shepherds were out in the fields, watching their flocks, and perhaps conversing about this very hope which so many people were fondly holding, they were suddenly alarmed by finding a very bright light shining round about them. It was as clear as if the sun had come back again to the highest sky; and there was something about the shining that was grander than the sun's. It was the glory of God himself. In the midst of the light there was seen the form of a bright angel, and you

cannot wonder that the shepherds were filled with fear. But soon they heard the angels voice, saying, Do not be afraid: I am come with great glad news to you -- news for all Israel and for all the world. For this day there has been born in the town of David, a Saviour -- God's anointed -- who shall be Lord of all. Go and see; and let this be the sign that my words are come to pass; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. So soon as the angel had said this, behold, there was a great throng of angels seen up in the air, and they began to sing a song in praise of God. The song they sung was this -- "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; goodwill to men." I suppose the kind words of the angel and the sweet song of his companions would soothe the fears of the shepherds; but, I think when the song ceased, and the glorious light went away, they would hardly be able to speak to each other for a time. At last, however, if they were dumb with wonder at first, they began to say, "Let us go and see this great thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." They did not doubt at all, that what had been told them by the angel would be found just as he stated. And so it was; for when they came to the place shown to them, they saw the babe lying in a manger, and his mother Mary, and her husband Joseph, beside him. You may be sure they looked with strange glad feelings at that child, and told Joseph and Mary what the angels had said about him. Next

day, too, and afterwards, they spoke to all they met about what they had seen and heard, and the people in the neighbourhood were filled with wonder. Some did not know what to make of it, but pious persons believed that God had sent a Deliverer to Israel, and they praised God for it.

But now I must tell you how Rome and her great emperor came to have to do with the birth of this promised king. I have said that he was born in Bethlehem; but his mother, Mary, and her husband did not live there. Mary staid in Nazareth, and it was there that an angel visited her, and told her that she should be the mother of a babe, whose name was to be called Jesus. How then did she come to be at Bethlehem when the child was born? In this way: Caesar Augustus wanted to have a grand census of his empire, that he might know how many subjects he had, and many more things about them, so he made a decree to have it done. It was to be done in Judea, as well as elsewhere, and in that country every one was to be enrolled in the city of the family he belonged to. Now Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem, for they were descendants of David the king, and that was his town. They had to travel, therefore, from Nazareth south to that place; and when they reached it, there were so many people about it that they could get no room in the inn, and had to go to a stable for shelter. There the Lord was born. There the shepherds saw him, laid in

the crib. Shortly after, Mary and Joseph went to a house in Bethlehem, staid there for some months.

While they were staying there, a great stir happened in Jerusalem. Some wise men, called Magi, had come from the far east, and had been asking where the newborn King of the Jews was to be found. They said that one night in the sky they saw a star, which they knew shone to tell them that this king was born; and that they had left their own country, and come a long way that they might see him, and worship him. The news was carried to King Herod, and he was very frightened about it. He knew that there were prophecies telling that a great prince would come, and he feared that he would lose his throne. So he hatched a dark plot to get the child killed. That was his way; if anybody seemed to stand in his path, he would kill him. Therefore, he must have this child murdered. The plan he took was this: he sent for the scribes and learned men among the Jews, and bade them tell him where the Christ they looked for was to be born. They answered him that the prophet Micah had plainly said he would be born in Bethlehem. Herod next sent privately for the wise men, asked them at what time they had seen the star, pretended that he was very anxious to see this king himself, and to worship him, and asked them to go to Bethlehem, and when they had found the child, to come back to Jerusalem and bring him word. So the wise men went, not suspecting that the

wicked king, who all the while was lying and plotting to have the child's life. I am sure that the wise men, when they went to Bethlehem, would have taken any pains to find Jesus, but they did not need; for the star they had seen in the east appeared to them again, like an angel's lamp, and guided them to the house. They were very glad when they saw the star again, and went into the house over which it stood still, and saw the child they had come so far to hail as king. In the presence of Mary, his mother, they fell down and worshipped him, and opening their scribes, made him costly presents of gold and spices. Then they went back to their own country; but God having told them in a dream not to go back to Herod, they took a different road from that through Jerusalem. When Herod found this out, he was full of rage, and sent out some of his rough soldiers to Bethlehem to kill all the little children in the place, and round about it, under two years of age. He thought to make sure of killing Jesus among them; but God, who knew his bad heart, told Joseph to take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there till he would be told to come back. So the cruel tyrant was baffled after all, though he filled Bethlehem with wailing. Yet do not be sorry for the little slaughtered babes -- they are with Jesus now.

And where is he? On his throne in heaven. The child born in Bethlehem is now Lord of all, and will, by and by,

come to judge the world. For long before he appeared this was written of him, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE STORY.

1. Can you name some other cities, that, like Rome, were the seats of great empires?
2. Do you know a prophecy about a new kingdom that was to destroy the iron power of Rome?
3. Can you find a text showing that pious people were looking for redemption at the time that Christ was born?
4. Can you name any shepherds in Old Testament times who had heavenly visions?
5. Do we read anywhere else in Scripture about the angels praising?
6. What other child, about the time that Jesus was born, had his birth and name foretold by an angel?
7. Find a prophecy of ancient Scripture, which the Romans conquering Judea showed about to be fulfilled.
8. Who, besides the shepherds and the Magi, did homage to Jesus when a babe?

9. What death did the King Herod die?
10. Find a text proving that Jesus will come to judge the world.

FOR answers to the foregoing, consult (Nahum i, Jer. li); Dan. ii., vii.; Luke ii. (Gen. xxxi.; Exod. iii.; 1 Sam. xvi); (Job xxxviii.; Rev. v.); Luke i.; Gen. xlix.; Luke ii.; Acts xii.; 1 Cor. v.

QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE LESSONS.

1. In what state was the world immediately before the flood?
2. What was the character of Noah? Gen. vi. 9.
3. In what respect will the second coming of Christ be to the world what the flood was? Mat. xxiv. 38, 39.
4. In what way is the world again to be changed? 2 Peter iii 7.
5. What effect should these prospects have on us? Mat. xxiv. 42; 2 Peter iii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 16.

EVENING WORSHIP.

GOD of Peace, defend and keep us in Thy fear and love.
Give unto us the true knowledge of Thyself; the pardon of
all our sins; health of body; the sanctification of our spirits;
Thy peace while we live, and the salvation of our souls in
the day of our Lord Jesus. *Amen.*

HYMN, or *Psalm lxi. 1-4.*

O LORD, I would delight in Thee,
And on Thy care depend;
To Thee in every trouble flee,
My best, my only Friend.
Oh! That I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil!
To credit what my Saviour saith,
Whose word can never fail!
He that has made my heaven secure,
Will here all good provide;
While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want beside?
O Lord, I cast my care on Thee;
I triumph and adore:
Henceforth my great concern shall be

To love and please Thee more.

MATTHEW XXIV. 37-42

BUT as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. 39. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, the other left. 42. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

1 THESSALONIANS V. 1-9.

BUT of the times the season, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2. For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and

they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. 8. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation. 9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter II. 1-14.

BUT there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. See also veres 4-14.

Prayer.

O GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! We approach thee in His name, and by the new and living way which He hath opened and consecrated.

In thus naming the name of another we condemn ourselves. Holy Father, we confess our guilt; we desire to feel our shame; and to realize the ruin into which our nature has fallen. We would make our sinfulness our sorrow, even as it was deep and bitter sorrow to Him, “who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” We mourn because we have pierced Him. We have also grieved thy Spirit, and slighted thy fatherhood and love. There is no health or soundness in us. God be merciful unto us sinners. According to the multitude of thy loving-kindnessess, blot out our iniquities.

Blessed be thy name for the message of forgiveness, and for the glad tidings of a full salvation by Jesus Christ. “We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy grace.” There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Deliver us, therefore, we pray thee, from the strokes of law, and from the torments of fear, and from the stings of conscience, and from the stains of guilt. Let thy salvation be full in us, and strong, and pure. May our faith in Jesus be very simple and entire, that our peace may be like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. May our repentance be unfeigned and without reserve; and may our acceptance of the gospel be without gainsaying. “Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief.” Overcome all our doubts by more evident manifestations of

the truth; and all fears by the incomings of thy love. Out of distance, help us to “draw nigh,” and casting away from us the spirit of bondage and fear, may we henceforth obey the filial impulse and cry, “Abba, Father.”

Let thy good Spirit dwell in us evermore, according to our Saviour’s promise. May He take of the things that are Christ’s and show them unto us. May He lead us into all truth, and confirm us in all goodness, so that we shall live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and be spiritually minded, which is life and peace. So may we be set apart as living temples, to be filled with thy presence and praise. So may we be sanctified and kept from the evil. So may we be sealed unto the day of redemption. O Lord, we have as yet but *the earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts, and often, to ourselves, that earnest seems but small. Break not the bruised reed; quench not the smoking flax. Unto us who have, although what we have through our own fault, is so little, let there be given, that we may have more abundance. Perfect that which concerneth us, and so have us in thy holy keeping, that we may grow in grace as long as we live here, and then stand in the everlasting glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let all who are dear to us be numbered among his true people, and led by the footsteps of the flock, until they come to the wide and safe pasture-land of heaven. Shepherd of Israel, shield and keep them and us through the perils and

storms of this earthly time, and grant us to meet all together in thy kingdom to praise thee for full redemption.

Take unto thee thy great power and reign. Subdue the people under thee. Extend thy kingdom. Reveal thy glory. Tell the glad tidings by Holy Scripture, by tongues of men, by ministry of angels, and by the gracious strivings of thy Holy Spirit, among all peoples and in every land, until all flesh shall see the salvation of God. And all we ask is in the name of Christ. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY

Morning.

**The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious,
long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,**

Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.

Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

For he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7 Neh. ix. 17. Ps. lvii. 10. Lam. iii. 32, 33.

Evening.

And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

For this is as the waters of Noah unto me:

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

Isa. xxx. 18. Isa. liv. 7,8,9,10.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, all ye upon him while he is near:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Jer. xxxi. 20.

Isa. lix. 1.

Isa. lv. 6, 7.

Evening.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindness; for they have been ever of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Ps. vi. 2, 4. Ps. xxv. 6, 7. Ps. lxxix. 9. Ps. xc. 14.

WEDNESDAY

Morning.

Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Ps. cxliii. 8. Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. Isa. i. 18 Isa. liii. 6.

Evening.

The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou giveth them their meat in due season.

Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

Ps. cxlvii. 2. Ps. cxlv. 14, 15, 16, 18, 19.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.

And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

For we were bond-men; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage.

Neh. ix. 17. Ezra ix. 8, 9.

Evening.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And hope maketh not ashamed.

Tit. ii. 11.

Rom. v. 1, 2 3, 4, 5.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God;

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

2 Pet. iii. 18.

1 Cor. xv. 10.

2 Tim. i. 8, 9.

Evening.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Heb. xii. 28 Gal. vi. 7, 9, 10.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace,

Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Heb. xii. 15 2 Thess ii. 15, 16, 17. James i. 19, 20.

Evening.

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Hos. xiv. 2. Rom. xi. 21, 22. Rom. xii. 2. 2 Cor. vi. 1.

