

HOME PREACHER,
OR
CHURCH IN THE HOUSE

SIXTH WEEK

MORNING WORSHIP

OUR God and Father, who in Thine infinite mercy hast given us Thy Son as a propitiation for our sins, and Thy Spirit to deliver us from evil, to preserve us in holiness, and to keep us in perfect peace; grant that we may abide in Jesus through a constant in faith of Him, so as to walk worthy of Thee, who hast called us to Thy kingdom and glory! *Amen.*

HYMN, or *Psalm xlv. 2-6.*

GO, worship at Immanuel's feet;
See, in His face what wonders meet;
Earth is too narrow to express
His worth, His glory, or His grace!

The whole creation can afford
But some faint shadows of my Lord;
Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colours not her own.

Oh! Let me climb those higher skies
Where storms and darkness never rise!
There He displays His powers abroad,
And shines and reigns, th' incarnate God.

Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun nor stars,
Nor heaven His full resemblance bears:
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold Him face to face.

GENESIS XII. 1-9

NOW the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father' house, a land that I will shew thee: 2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4. So Abram

departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 7. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. 8. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. 9. And Abram journeyed, going on still towards the south.

GENESIS XIII. 2-4, 18.

AND Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai; 4. Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there

Abram called on the name of the Lord. 18. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built an altar unto the Lord.

GENESIS XV. 13-16.

AND he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: 14. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16. But in the fourth generation shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Prayer.

WE worship Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the only living and true God! Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven. We acknowledge Thee as the giver of all our mercies, temporal and spiritual, and desire to see habitually Thy love in them all, so that our temporal mercies may lead us to

Thyself. We thank Thee for our creation in Thine own image; for the gift of Jesus Christ to redeem us from all iniquity, and to bring many sons and daughters unto Thee. We thank Thee for the manifold sources of enjoyment thou hast opened up to us; for the days of peace and gladness we have had on earth, and for those whom thou hast given to love us and to be beloved by us. We thank Thee for our talents, and the opportunities afforded us for improving them to our own good and Thy glory. We thank Thee for Thy mercy in pardoning our sins, and for Thy grace in leading us to repentance and enabling us to enjoy a new life of peace in Thee, and of obedience to Thy will. Comfort, O God, all who mourn, by bringing to the knowledge and love of Thyself as their supreme good, their only rest, and their eternal reward. Prepare us every day for the day of chastisement, of death, and of judgment. When thou art pleased to take from us any of those blessings which we now so much enjoy, grant that being taught to know Thyself in them all, and to rest on Thy love which bestowed them, we may thereby be enabled to hold fast our trust in Thee, the unchangeable and all sufficient God, when we cannot trace Thee; and from the heart to say at all times, “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!” “Our Father,” &c.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O THOU who slumberest not nor sleepest, before whom our hearts are ever open, and to whom all our ways are known, grant that we, feeling our responsibility towards Thee for all we are and do, may without delay take heed to Thy warnings, believe Thy promises, and with reverence hear Thy voice; so that obeying Thee in the day of Thy merciful visitation of us here, we may be accepted of Thee in the day of Thy righteous judgment of us hereafter.

Amen.

HYMN, or *Psalm xc. 10-12.*

AS long as life its term extends,
Hope's blest dominion never ends;
For while the lamp holds on to burn,
The greatest sinner may return
Life is season God hath giv'n
To fly from hell, and rise to heav'n;
That day of grace fleets fast away,
And none its rapid course can stay.

The living know that they must die;
But all the dead forgotten lie;
Their mem'ry and their name is gone,
Alike unknowing and unknown.
Their hatred and their love is lost,
Their envy bury'd in the dust;
They have no share in all that's done
Beneath the circuit of the sun.

Then what thy thoughts design to do,
Still let thy hands with might pursue;
Since no device nor work is found,
Nor wisdom underneath the ground.
In the cold grave, to which we haste,
There are no acts of pardon past;
But fix'd the doom of all remains,
And everlasting silence reigns.

MATTHEW, XXV. 1-13.

THEN, shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took

no oil with them: 4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. 5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

HEBREWS, III. 7-19.

WHEREFORE (as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, 8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They do alway err in their heart; and

they have not known my ways. 11. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end: 15. While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18. And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

EPHESIANS, V. 8-17.

FOR, ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; 9. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;) 10. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12. For it is a shame even to speak of those

things which are done of them in secret. 13. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. 14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

SERMON VI.

“SLEEP ON NOW, AND TAKE YOUR REST.” -- Mark xiv. 41.

“THOU KNEWEST NOT THE TIME OF THY VISITATION.”

-- Luke xix. 44.

THESE words suggested to us as the subject of our meditation last Lord's day those momentous periods, which may be termed times of visitation, and which occur more or less frequently in the inner life of every man, when God is calling us, as it were, to awake out of our moral sleep, and to know the things which belong to our everlasting peace.

We then noticed the time when saving truth is revealed to the conscience, as constituting such a solemn crisis in our history; and we will now take for our thoughtful and prayerful consideration a few additional illustrations of the

same principle from the same texts: -- For example, *a time of temptation is a time of visitation*, when we are specially called upon to awake out of our sleep. It may be said with truth that every day and every hour contains in it elements of temptation, or means of trying our spirit whether it be of God. For as long as there is a right and wrong way of thinking, feeling, doing, speaking, suffering or enjoying, so long must every moment of our life afford an opportunity of our living and acting in the one state or the other.

Whatever, therefore, *tries* our spirit, and is an occasion given us to determine what our character really is, may be truly termed a time of temptation. But over and above this constant trial of our being in the sight of God, there occur in every man's history special seasons when, as it were, Satan tries to sift us as wheat, and when the trial will make manifest whether we are the wheat, or "the chaff which the wind can drive to and fro." There is no escaping those seasons. It is true that no man who knows himself, and the awful power of sin within him -- who abhors the evil and cleaves to the good -- will ever knowingly enter into or go in the way of temptation. He who does so is either a fool or a hypocrite -- he is either, from a proud self-reliance, ignorant of his danger from sin, or, if aware of it, has made up his mind secretly to fall by it. But the humble-minded sincere man will ever pray, with a deep sense of his weakness, "Lead us not into temptation." Yet God in His providence

does often lead us into circumstances which to us are full of danger -- when the weak points in our character may be assaulted with all the combined and subtle forces of evil -- when the attack may be made with daring suddenness, or under cover of deceitful delusions, and by means of most cunning wiles -- when nothing more is revealed than the right and the wrong, which, thank God! never can be concealed from an honest, truthful mind. For at such moments, even amidst the storm of passion when the attack is most vehement, the still small voice of conscience is heard, like the calm and authoritative voice of the commander in the midst of the battle, bidding us be firm, and obey our God. In such times of battle there is always a crisis. It may be very brief. Napoleon used to say that the tide of battle turned decidedly one way or the other generally in a few minutes. So it often happens in those life-struggles -- when the thought we indulge in -- the desire we cherish but for a moment -- the feeling with which we listen to the promises and bribes of iniquity tempting us to be traitorous and disloyal to our conscience and our Saviour -- when the single step we take to our right or left, in advance or in retreat -- may determine not only what we are, but also what we shall be for life, yea, for ever! These are, indeed, solemn times of visitation, when heaven and hell, peace or woe, are struggling for possession within the unseen battlefield of our own hearts, and when

victory or defeat will prove of infinitely greater importance to our liberty and well-being than any which have ever been recorded in the page of history. Oh! if a voice from the unseen -- from loving saint or guardian angel -- could address us at such a time as this, it might be in such words as these -- "Awake, thou that sleepest!" For if we are wrathful against the encroachments of sin, and take to ourselves the whole armour of God, and having done all, if we *stand*, then we shall come out of the conflict with a calmness of spirit, a thankfulness of heart, a peace which passeth understanding -- then shall we be stronger than ever, more able to endure, and more certain of being conquerers in the end. We shall realize within us a strength not of the flesh, but of the Spirit, which is a sure pledge of final victory; so that if, in the midst of conflict, we sent forth the almost despairing cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" yet after it we shall know that there is one who is "mighty to save," and the joyful acknowledgement will be heard, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" But woe be to us if temptation finds us in a careless, slothful state, and if we refuse to be roused from our lethargy and to watch and pray. Then may we fall, and never again rise! The slavery of sin may be found intolerable, but habits like an iron chain are wound around the soul, and hold it fast. The service of Satan may be found cruel and degrading, but

yet he will lead his victim through his own depraved will. The new nature by grace having been refused, the old nature of confirmed evil habits will have been contracted, and change no more. For the dread sentence goes forth, "Sleep on and take your rest;" and the lament is heard over the sinner, "O that thou, even thou, at least in this thy day, hadst known the things of thy peace! But now they are for ever hid from thine eyes!"

The circumstances in which the apostles were placed during the last evening they were with their Master before the crucifixion, afford a striking illustration of such a time of visitation. The Last Supper might naturally seem to us to have been a time when temptation was impossible. Can the fancy produce a sense of more profound repose and perfect peace? When did such a holy church meet together? And Jesus himself was there, revealing his glory with a fulness and grandeur never before witnessed. What prayers -- what promises -- what a pouring forth of love in word and deed! Can Satan intrude himself into such a paradise as this? Can temptation mar such a time of holy enjoyment? Can an evening so calm be the prelude of a day of storm? Alas! it was so. The Lord, who knew what was in man, and whose divine eye penetrated the unseen, made the amazing announcement that Satan desired even then to sift them as wheat. He revealed to their astonishment how the cunning attack would scatter them all, make one deny

Him, and another betray Him. Nay, He pointed out the traitor, Judas, and told the self-confident yet affectionate Peter, that ere a few hours passed over he would deny his Master, yea, deny Him thrice! Then came the scene already alluded to, in the garden of Gesthemane. It came with a work for the disciples to perform for another, that of watching sympathizingly with their Master, and it came also with a work to perform for themselves, that of watching the approach of a severe temptation. With reference to the neglect of the one, our Lord complained saying, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" But, with reference to the other, he affectionately warned them, saying, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit is willing," but that was not enough, for "the flesh is weak," and hence the question and command, "Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation!" Our Lord in mercy warned Peter especially to beware. "Simon," he said, "sleepest *thou*?" -- at such a time, and after all He had already said to him! But, alas! These divine warnings were neglected. And so Judas betrayed our Lord, and was lost for ever. Peter denied Him, and was saved by a hearty repentance.

Again, *a special opportunity given to us of doing good is a time of visitation.* Now, if in the history of every man there occur in God's providence seasons of peculiar temptation, so also are peculiar opportunities afforded to us

of doing some special good. There are works which the hand *findeth* to do, and which God seems to lay at our feet, by us to be accepted or neglected. It is not possible, nor is it necessary, to specify those works, they are so many and various. It may be given us, for example, to bestow charity, to manifest sympathy, to give advice, to write a letter, to pay a visit -- to do a something, in short, of apparently no great importance, but which we feel *ought* to be done by us, there and then. Upon such trifles as those the usefulness of our life, in God's sight, may turn. They are the fractions which, when saved by us, make up the wealth of years, and the treasures which are to last forever. If, by the grace of God we are habitually awake to a sense of our responsibility, and are not like men speaking and walking in our sleep, but earnestly dealing with the realities of things -- if we promptly accept of the work, whatever it be, which God thus gives us to do -- then shall we know in our own experience how small talents when improved rapidly increase themselves, and what a noble thing it is to live, and how every man will have work assigned him in the kingdom of God according to his capacity, and how he may be greatly "blessed in his deed." Upon the other hand, who can calculate the loss to the individual himself or to others, if, through selfishness or sloth, the opportunity is neglected, and the work left undone! If his ease, and not duty, is sought, verily he shall have *his* reward; but alas, if reward

it can be called, it is one bestowed not in mercy, but in judgment. That which he has will be taken away. His opportunities of receiving or of doing good will, through his own neglect, practically diminish until they are lost for ever, and the dread sentence is passed, "Sleep on, and take thy rest," thy sloth will be disturbed no more! As an illustration of this, consider the demand which may be made by a person in sickness, not only upon our sympathy, but our Christian counsel and thoughtful consideration. This person may be in the same house with us, and not only an acquaintance, but a friend, or relation. He is visibly dying. That body will soon be out of sight, and before a few weeks the immortal soul will begin its endless existence. In our conscience we have, perhaps, an overpowering persuasion that all is not well with his character; we may not speak of it to others, and fear almost to whisper it to ourselves, that there is something in his life which, if Christianity be true, hazards his eternal happiness. What is to be done? Can we do nothing? Have we not a word of truth to utter? Does not true love call for a deeper work than any mere kindnesses, attentions, or labours for his bodily health, however self-sacrificing? We say, perhaps, that we would give the world to do it, that there is that at our heart the utterance of which would be unspeakable relief; we feel instinctively that there is a something which this beloved object ought to know, to feel, to believe, to rest on, and that

this we have the means of giving. But we “do not like to do it;” we have “an unconquerable shyness,” -- a painful timidity” -- yet we will “try it, by and by, perhaps to-morrow;” and thus the work is left undone! While thus consulting our own feelings and likings, the time of visitation is rapidly passing away; the invalid becomes weaker, and the mind less capable of thinking, and the tongue loses its power of utterance, and the ear can bear no sound beyond the faintest whisper; the eyes are closed; and at last death -- awful death -- arrives, and the soul departs to give an account of itself to God! With him -- our friend -- the day of grace has ended; eternity has begun, and all its tremendous realities have opened upon his spirit. But our history and his can henceforth never more be separated, for we too must give an account of all we might have done, when the question is asked, “Where is thy brother?” Oh! as we noiselessly enter that silent chamber, and, hardly breathing, stand beside that silent body, or follow it to the grave, and leave it there till time shall be no more, might not our inmost soul quail at the consequences of our sloth, as a voice seems to address us from beneath the fresh sod, “Sleep on now, and take your rest; you would not be troubled by the living, and you will not be troubled by the dead!”

I would notice further, that *a time of affliction is a time of visitation.* We all feel it to be such. The affliction may

be a visitation of dangerous sickness or confirmed bad health to ourselves, or of a like sorrow to some one more dear to us than life itself; or when it may come in the form of death to those we thus love, leaving this world strangely empty to us; or our affliction may be the loss of money, and, therefore, of a thousand precious blessings which money can purchase, and which none despise; or worse still, our sorrow may be the visitation of sin -- laying hold of a friend, a brother, a child, a parent, a husband or wife, with his iron grasp -- touching them with his leprous and polluted hand, withering with his sirocco breath all that is fresh and beautiful, and smiting the soul with a corruption more foul and loathsome than that of the tomb. But whatever may be the sorrow, the time it comes to our heart or home, -- whether in the beggars's rags or in garments of rich mourning -- with the skeleton head of disease and death, or with the dreary look of the slave of sin -- is a time of solemn visitation. It tries our spirit. It weighs us in the balance, and decides whether we are of God or of the world. It searches us and reveals whether our peace is in God or in the creature; and if it finds us -- and who of us has not been so found? -- seeking the things of our peace where God has never placed them -- foolishly building on sand, vainly hewing out cisterns which are broken and can hold no water and spending our money for that which is not bread, and labouring for that which satisfieth not! -- oh! what a

visitation is this from the living God, to destroy all our refuges and sins -- to break up our delusions! and what a call to return to Himself -- to know Himself -- to cast our care on Him, and at once to build on Him, the rock, and to drink from Him, the living fountain -- in one word to cease the folly and shame of living in the perishable, and to learn the wisdom, and the strength, and the joy, of having God our Father as our never-failing, ever satisfying portion! O blessed day of sorrow, which leads a man to know the things of His peace before they are forever hid from his eyes! Then will the sufferer be able to exclaim, with Hezekiah, "what shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it. O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back."

But, at such a time, we may refuse to awake from our slumber. We may seek to evade the searching eye of God, and either faint under or despise the chastening of the Lord, but neither meet the purpose of our Father, nor be subject to Him as God. Or we may fall back upon the things which are left to us, and on these take our selfish and rebellious stand; or, with apparent bravery, try and master the sorrow by activity in business, by the excitements of society, by a

change of scene, and by faith in the power of time to heal the wound. But in all this there is no waking up to see the trial in its true light, by seeking God in it, and listening to His voice, and seeking first His kingdom and righteousness. The whole good of the trial is thus lost, for God himself is not found as the eternal good, peace and rest of the soul. And so the day of visitation passes, and the things of our peace are hid from our eyes, and the sentence is pronounced, "Sleep on, and take your rest!" "Why should ye be chastened any more? You will only sin more and more."

Once more -- *A time of prosperity is a time of visitation.* For we are tried not only when want assails us like an armed man, but also when wealth becomes an inmate of our dwelling -- not only when sickness comes with a look of pain, or old age with tottering steps, but when we possess robust health in joyous youth or in the strong repose of manhood -- not when bitter disappointments, like a chafing tide, foam against us and threaten to drive us, like foundering wrecks, upon the rocks, but when a favouring tide and fresh breeze, beneath blue skies and warm sunshine, send us onwards, with every sail set, on our prosperous voyage. Such a time is one of solemn visitation, in which we may know how true the Saviour's saying is, that it is "hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Yes! it *is* hard when we are thus rich in God's good

providence -- when all things go well with us -- then to possess the spirit of poverty and emptiness which prepares a man to enter that kingdom whose riches are all spiritual, and whose possessions and glory are God himself. Oh, it is not easy to enjoy all our temporal gifts as God wishes us to enjoy them, in consistency with the reality and the truth of things -- as immortal beings ought to enjoy them, not making idols of them -- as “wise men” ought to enjoy them, not perverting them to our ruin -- not making the the very means of our becoming more covetous, vain, proud, prayerless, godless, ungrateful to God, and unmindful of the Giver. No doubt, there are times when the most thoughtless man is compelled to acknowledge God’s goodness. He looks at his full cup with wonder. He thinks of all the punishment he has deserved, and contrasts it with all the mercies which he has received; and as he puts the cup to his lips to drink, he may indeed look up and say, “Thank God!” Some may do this seriously, feelingly, and some with the formality of a grace before a rich banquet, of which the speaker seems ashamed and disposed to apologize for even this approach to the scandal of being thought *really* grateful to God for such blessings. And thus what seems to be a sense of gratitude is often but gladness in the gift, without any grateful love to the giver *for His own sake*, and apart from that which He bestows. It is but the worship of self under the name of the true God. So it is not easy for us,

because we are so short-sighted, so unbelieving, so desperately enslaved by the things seen and temporal, to know the things of our real peace, and to cling to them in the day when visited by prosperity. Instead of saying, "Soul, love thy God, " we are more inclined to say, "Soul, take thine ease."

Now, if a man is so stupid as not to awaken to a sense of God's loving and righteous dealings with him -- to see how impossible it is that He who is so good and wise could ever bestow upon him mercies in order to destroy his soul, and make the receiver self-indulgent and godless -- to see the wickedness of thus robbing God of his gifts, and putting them to so base a use; if, in short, prosperity as well as adversity fails to make him know the things of his peace -- why think it strange that he should be righteously given up to the spirit of slumber, as he sentence is pronounced, "Sleep on, and take thy rest; thou shalt awake no more!"

Finally, *The time of death is a time of visitation.* Till then, repentance is possible, and salvation may be attained. But once that line is passed which separates time from eternity, the sins of the impenitent can never be forgiven, nor his soul be any more redeemed. Oh! what an hour this is, when God visits us for the last time on earth! He may send before Him messengers of sickness and pain, of slow decline or burning fever, to warn us of His approach; or He may come suddenly amidst the roar of the hurricane, or the

wild confusion of some dreadful accident; or at midnight, when all the house is still, the voice may be heard, saying, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him; this night thy soul shall be required of thee!” In any case, a visitation which ends our short history on earth, and begins our endless history elsewhere, and which fixes at once the character we shall bear for ever, is one inexpressibly solemn to us all. For to all it must come; a trite saying, and a common thought, yet expressing a fact which none of us can realize in all its awful reality! And how shall this time of visitation find us? Shall it find us like men who are awake, watching and waiting for their Lord, and ready “immediately” to receive Him? Shall it find us ready with the reply to His summons, “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus?” Or shall it find us asleep like the foolish virgins, and our hearts charged with surfeiting and drunkenness like the unprincipled servants? Shall the things of our peace be for ever concealed from our eyes, or be for ever revealed? Shall we sleep on, and take our rest in Jesus, to awake with joy on the resurrection morning, or shall we sleep on in the sleep of eternal death, and awake “among those whose damnation slumbereth not,” and who can sleep no more? “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life!” Amen. -- Editor.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

WHEN Abraham and Sarah his wife were both getting very old, there was born to them a little boy. They were very glad to have this child, not only because he was given to them in their old age, but because he had been promised to them by God, and their faith had been long tried. So glad were they, when their son was born, that they called him Isaac, that is, "Laughter." But as the boy grew up, I do not know that he answered much to his name. I think he was a quiet, gentle, thoughtful child, and as he became older, was fond of going away by himself, and musing in the fields. He was doing this when his father's faithful servant came home from Syria, bringing Rebecca with him, who was to be Isaac's wife. I tell you these things, because my story at present is to be about two little children -- twin brothers -- that were born to Isaac and Rebecca, and in the account of their lives in the Bible, the character of their father and mother comes out. Isaac, like many pensive retiring

persons, was not very firm: and Rebecca, of a stronger nature, though a good woman, was too managing.

The twin boys' names were Esau and Jacob. Not much is known of them when they were children. But by and by, their dispositions showed themselves. Esau was a bold boy, liked to ramble from home, and grew up to be a skilful hunter in the fields. Jacob was a quiet and cunning, said little, but thought and planned by himself. One thing he often reflected on. His mother had told him that God had made known to her, that though he was the younger, he was to get the birthright, that in Isaac's family meant so much. It meant that he was to be the father of a great nation, from which the great Messiah was to come. I do not know how far Jacob valued this last honour, but he thought it would be grand to get the dignity of the birthright, and be the head of all the family. Now this dignity belonged to Esau as the first-born. But one day, when he had been hunting in the fields, he came home faint with hunger, and going to his brother's tent, he saw a nice mess of pottage that Jacob had been preparing, and asked to have some. You at once think that Jacob would give it, would be glad to have food ready for his hungry brother. So he was, but he was wily, and thought he would not give it for nothing, and said, Sell me your birthright for it. Esau, thinking of nothing but his present need, agreed, saying, What good will this birthright do me, when I am like to die? That was

not right in him, to hold the great honour so cheap, and he deserved to lose his birthright for casting it so lightly away. On reflection, he was afterwards very angry with his brother for taking advantage of his hunger: but he should have been angry with himself, for not valuing more the right to be the heir of Isaac and Abraham.

Another thing made him angrier. His father was now getting infirm and blind through age, and was too fond of his son Esau, because he made nice dishes for him from the animals he caught in hunting. Now Isaac had got the great divine blessing from Abraham, and was about to give it to his son. So at this time he thought he would give it to Esau, and bade him go and get him savoury meat, and bring him to eat, and receive his blessing. Esau went, therefore, to hunt, that he might get a nice dish ready for his father. But his mother, who knew all along that God had said the blessing was to go to Jacob, thought in her heart that this would not do, and set herself to make up a plan for preventing Isaac's wish. So she dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes, and made him as like his elder brother as she could, and sent him in to his father with a mess of meat she had made from kid's flesh, to pretend that it was from the fields, and taken in hunting. Jacob was afraid he would be found out; but so cunningly had his mother managed matters, that although Isaac suspected from the voice that it could not be Esau, he was at last persuaded, and gave Jacob

the blessing. When the true Esau came in shortly after, Isaac saw that he had been deceived: but by this time he began to feel how he had been trying to give the blessing away from one to whom God had said it should go, and he trembled to think of his rashness; and although when Esau wept about it, he promised that he would have abundance of good things, as he would not take back the great blessing from Jacob. God did not approve all these wrong things, but his purpose would stand. Esau grew very angry indeed with his brother now, and resolved to kill him; and to show how dreadful a thing passion is, he resolved to kill him when his father died, which he then thought would be soon. So by his mother's advice, Jacob left home to go to his relations in Syria.

I cannot tell you here all that happened to him on the way, and after he reached his uncle's house. One thing only must be mentioned. The first night after he left home, he slept in the open air, as people often do in the east; and God came and spoke to him in a very beautiful vision. After that Jacob, whatever he had been before, knew God and walked in his fear, and God greatly blessed him in Padan-a-ram, where he stayed twenty years. But his early sins gave him great sorrow, even after that long space of time.

For when at God's bidding he was going home again, with his family and his flocks, having become a rich man, he was told that his brother was coming to meet him with four

hundred armed men. Of course, Jacob thought he must be coming to take vengeance on him for his tricks, and his taking away the blessing, and he was very much afraid. What do you think he did in his distress? He first prayed to God, then did every thing he could think of to soften his brother's heart, by sending him presents, and made arrangements to enable some of his family to escape, if Esau would still come on in his rage. But that was not all. He stayed behind the rest, to be alone in prayer. Then a strange thing happened to him. A man appeared, and wrestled with him all the night. In the morning Jacob struggled to hold this man, who was no other than the Son of God in the form of an angel, and the divine angel strove to get away. Of course, he could if he liked, for one touch of his put Jacob's thigh out of joint; but Jacob held him by faith, held him by his own word and that was pleasing to God, and he gave Jacob his blessing, and the new name of Israel, for his strong trust shown in prayer. Jacob knew now that his sins were forgiven, and that the blessing which he had stolen before was now really given to him by God. You may be sure, though he went lame on his feet the next day, he was happy in his soul.

Soon it appeared how, having prevailed with God, he had conquered man also. On came Esau, with his armed troop; but as he met drove after drove, and heard that Jacob had sent them as presents, his wrath began to melt away:

and when at last he saw his brother, and remembered how they had played together, and how they had father and mother yet alive that had loved them and watched over them, all his anger gave way, and the twin brothers fell on each other's necks and wept. Their meeting came in tears, not blood. So may all quarrels end! I think that was really the end of the quarrel between the twin brothers: for though we do not read much about Esau afterwards, we find that he met his brother again at the funeral of their father -- and if any bad feeling yet remained, let us hope it was then buried for ever.

Three things remember in connection with this story. *It is sinful to take wrong means to bring about a right end.* Jacob was to get the blessing, but his mother and he should have left it to God to bring it about in his own way. *The sins of youth often, even when forgiven, chasten us in after years.* Jacob felt that, when he cried for deliverance from his brother's rage. *In all troubles, prayer is the best resource.* Did not Jacob find it so?

QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE STORY.

1. Can you name parents in the New testament to whom a son was born in their old age?
2. What was the name of one of Christ's disciples who was a twin?
3. Who is it that was called a mighty hunter before the Lord?
4. What is Esau called in the New Testament for despising his birthright?
5. By what text in one of John's epistles could you prove Esau to be a murderer?
6. Where is the man who wrestled called God? and where is he called the Angel?
7. Can you name any other person, besides Jacob, whose prayer was stronger than many armed men?
8. What wise woman, by presents and soft words, made peace where bloodshed was intended?

ANSWERS will be found in Luke i.; John xx. 24.; Gen. x.; Heb. xii.; 1 John iii.; Gen. xxxii. and Hosea xii.; Isaiah xxxvii.; 1 Sam. xxv.

QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE LESSONS.

1. What did God declare himself to be to Abraham?
Gen. xv. 1.
2. What did God promise to Abraham? Gen. v. 5.

3. What was Abraham's son called? And how old was Abraham when this child, according to God's power and promise, was born to him? Gen. xxi. 3, 5.

4. Tell the story, in your own words, about Abraham offering up his son. Gen. xxii. 1-18.

Prayer.

O LORD, Thou art a God of truth. Thou hatest all deceit, and hast said that liars cannot dwell with Thee. Save us, O Lord, from all lying. Make us true in word and deed. Keep us in childhood from sins which should vex our souls afterwards. Help us to sow, not the seed of remorse for sin, but of gratitude and joy for mercies. Keep us from anger, strife, and hate. Make us loving in heart and speech and life. Hasten the day when all men shall love as brethren, and there shall be feud and war no more: for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

EVENING WORSHIP.

O LORD Jesus Christ! As the day is far spent, we beseech of Thee to abide with us this night; and grant that, whether we awake in this world or the next, we may be still with Thee. *Amen.*

HYMN, or *Psalm cxlv. 17-21.*

SUN of my soul! Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near:
Oh! May no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from thy servant's eyes.

When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,
Be my last thought, -- how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast!

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh
For without Thee I dare not die.

Come near and bless me when I wake,
Ere through the world my way I take;

Till in the ocean of thy love
I lose myself in heav'n above.

ACTS, VII. 1-8.

THEN said the high priest, Are these things so? 2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwell in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye dwell. 5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. 6. And God spake this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. 7. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8. And so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

HEBREWS, IX. 1-10.

THEN verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the Sanctuary. 3. And after the second vail, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; 4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. 6. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God: 7. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all

was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: 9. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; 10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

GALATIANS, III. 6-9, 27-29.

EVEN as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. 27. For as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abrahams's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

PRAYER.

WE worship Thee as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The heavens declare Thy glory. The whole earth is full of Thy glory. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge concerning Thee.

We worship Thee as Redeemer and Sanctifier of our souls, and for the gift of eternal life through Thy Son. We praise Thee that we are born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reserved for us who are kept by Thy power through faith unto salvation.

Giver of every good and perfect gift, we thank Thee for Thy most merciful providence in having given to us the Lord's Day, that we, resting from our ordinary labours, may enjoy the privilege of meeting together along with the Church of Christ for Thy worship. Lord grant that on this day we may ever worship Thee in spirit and in truth, for such worshippers Thou art seeking; that we may ever praise thee with joyful and thankful spirits; and that Thy word may dwell in us richly in all wisdom, being fruitful in good works.

O Lord, may we hold fast our confidence in Thy fatherly love to us through Jesus, in the forgiveness of sins, and in the gift of Thy Holy Spirit. Grant we may now enter into and enjoy these more abundantly -- a true Scripture Rest with Christ in Thee. Grant that as Jesus died and rose from the dead, we too on this day may die with him, burying the old man, rising with Jesus to newness of life. Finally, do Thou so help us, on this and on every day, to dedicate ourselves to Thy blessed service, and to work and worship according to Thy will; that ceasing from our earthly labours we may possess for ever the rest of perfect love, which yet awaits the people of God!

We this night retire to rest, praying Thee, most merciful Father, to forgive all our sins, whether of omission, or commission, all we have done or left undone contrary to Thy holy will. Grant unto us a hearty repentance, and sincere hearts to serve Thee. We thank Thee for our day's mercies, spiritual and temporal, and for all we have received from Thee and enjoyed in Thee, for Thou carest for us. Watch over us, and over all who are dear to us, this night. Comfort all who are in sorrow or anxiety; and may a grateful sense of what thou hast been pleased to bestow on ourselves prompt us to sympathize with and to relieve them. Hear us, Lord! And grant that when we awake we may be satisfied with Thy likeness! "Our Father," &c. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

The God of my rock in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;

The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.

2 Sam. xxii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Evening.

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed.

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Ps. xxxi. 1, 16, 17, 19, 20.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies.

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man:

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

Ps. xl. 4. Ps. lxii. 8, 9. Ps. cxviii. 8, 9.

Evening.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and dust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through or steal:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Ps. xxxvii. 3. Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33, 34.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

He that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat.

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Ps. lv. 22. Ps. cxii. 7. Ps. lvi. 3, 4. Prov. xxviii. 25, 26.

Evening.

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

I will cry unto God most High; unto God that performeth, all things for me.

God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

Ps. lvii. 1,2,3. Ps. lxiv. 9, 19.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.

Isa. xxvi. 3, 7, 8, 9. Ps. cxxx. 5, 6.

Evening.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes: but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Prov. iii. 6. Isa. l. 10. Prov. xvi. 1, 2, 3. Ps. cxliii. 8.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

For thy Maker is thine husband; The Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

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.

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Jer. xlix. 11. Isa. liv. 5, 7, 8. 13.

Evening.

Honour widows that are widows indeed.

Now, she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

The Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

1 Tim. v. 3, 5. Prov. xv. 25. Ps. cxlvi. 9. Ps. lxxviii. 5, 6.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward; Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.

Nah. i. 7. Mic. vii. 19. 1 Tim. iv. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 4, 5.

Evening.

Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

Prov. iii. 25, 26. Ps. xci. 9,10,11. Heb. x. 35.