

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

From the New York Observer.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

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JUNE 15.—The Blessedness of Believers.—Romans 8: 28-39.

GOLDEN TEXT.—We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.—Rom 8: 28.

There is a wonderful contrast between the seventh and eighth chapters of this Epistle. The transition from the one to the other is like that from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from bondage to liberty, from the gloom of the night to the brightness of the day.

The entire chapter is full of the blessedness of believers; but the thought centers as it advances and culminates in these concluding verses. The "and," with which the passage opens, points to that which he is now to name as in some sense the crown of all the elements of that blessedness of which one can think. What is it?

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Note the comprehensiveness of the saying: "all things." We are not to suppose that the all includes our own sin, which is resistance to God's will, our delay to repent, our unfaithfulness or unbelief. The reference to "the sufferings of this present time" (18); to things which may seem to be against us. Not these alone, says the Apostle, but all things are not only not against us but for us. And how comprehensive that saying is! It includes the things we most dread and lament as well as those we welcome and delight in: losses, sicknesses, disappointments, defeats, privations as well as their opposites, our place and lot in life, all changes and events, the forces of the universe.

Observe the phrase "work together"; as if things were so many living persons planning and cooperating in the believer's interest. They are in partnership for his advantage. That circumstance of long years ago conspires with this one of to-day. We cannot see their mutual relation, but it exists.

Observe, too, the purpose of all this—for good; not our ease, or comfort, or glory, or fame, or success in business, or present riches, or the gratification of passion or pride, but our "good"; our trust, highest, enduring joy and well being. Further on we shall see more of what this is.

Nor should we omit to note of whom all this is true;—them that love God. This universe is arranged with reference to such as are in harmony with God's will; in alliance with such. Do not glide over this phrase, for it is very important. The "called here are the invited who have been moved to accept. It is easy to raise perplexing questions at this point. But this is needless. We can all tell whether we have heeded, as well as heeded, the divine call, whether or no we love God. That is the main point; a point of the highest and most enduring concern.

It might have been enough for the Apostle to stop here, but he has chosen to go on to unfold and further impress the glorious truth indicated. This he does by reminding us that the particular blessedness of which he is speaking is—

1. Assured by God's gracious and eternal plan (29-31).—It is "according to his purpose." Nothing is left to chance. And now that this has sinned, and fallen away from him, God's plan is to gather out from it a great, happy and glorified family. It is of that that the Apostle here speaks. First God foreknows, then he predestinates, calls and justifies, and finally glorifies.

Observe what the glory is, "to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brethren." Christ is that "image of a splendor" to which God would conform us, and a place in the divine family, with Christ as an elder brother, is the inheritance to which he would bring us. This, if we think how much it means, will seem to be what it is—the highest possible glory.

But now our temptation will be to turn aside, from the comfort and strength this revelation was intended to afford us, to endless, unprofitable, and fearful speculation as to how foreknowledge and free will are to be harmonized. Both are facts. Thoughtful men see this. The wisest have failed to explain them. We know we are free, and personally responsible. We are told that God has a wonderful purpose to bring many sons to glory, and that if we love him we are certainly of their happy number. It is enough to know simply this. Our concern now is to be sure that we love him. Our comfort now is that, loving him he is "for

us," and "if God be for us who can be against us." Again, this blessedness is—

2. Pledged by God's costly gift of his son (32-34).—The argument, presented in the form of a question, is brief but irresistible. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up also freely give us all things?" The allusion is clearly to the sacrifice on the cross. Note the phrases, "spared not," "delivered him up." It was a costly thing which God did on our behalf. The gift was the greatest in his power. His heart was in it. It was "his own son" whom he spared not, but delivered up.

But so great a gift, with so much love in it, is a demonstration that no lesser one will be withheld. If he did not spare that which was so costly, how "freely" will he give all else! Nor does the argument end here. Those, for whom he has done this, and who have by faith consented to it, are his chosen, elect, favorite ones. He has justified, pardoned and accepted them. Who shall now lay anything to their charge? The law cannot condemn them. Let foes do their worst, they are safe. All things are their allies. Yet again, this blessedness is—

3. Made certain by what Christ has done and is doing on our behalf (34-39).—With Meyer and some others, we may connect verses thirty-four and thirty-five. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us: who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Having expiated our sins on the cross Christ has risen from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God. He is there as our living Saviour in the place of power. And he is there as our representative, to intercede for us, to express his will in our behalf; "hand over all things to his church"—we are elsewhere told. From such love what can separate us? It is unchangeable; it is all powerful. He cannot desert us in our trials and perils. He wisely allows ill to overtake us, but is with us in the midst of them all. In life or death, in space or time, in this world or other worlds, there is no power able to separate us from might and love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord, which makes the final glory of believers sure; which makes it certain that by means of seeming ill as well as seeming good, he is preparing us for it.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- 1. The believers should never despair or repine under afflictions.
2. There is cheer and strength in knowing that our salvation does not depend on ourselves alone.
3. God's purpose will never save us if we do not ourselves repent, believe, and go on to obey.
4. From what God has done to save us we may see estimate of the value and peril of our souls.
5. If God spared not his son that so we might be saved, what ought we to do to save others?
6. God gives grace to help, as well as pardoning mercy, not reluctantly but "freely." Ask, and ye shall receive.
7. The blessedness of believers cannot be expressed by words, nor grasped in thought. God is for us; is earnestly for us; nothing but our own unbelief and sin can come between us and the promised glory.

The Swallows Nest.

The celebrated Baron Cuvier, when a young man, was tutor in a nobleman's family. His own room overlooked the garden, and every morning at break of day he opened his window to inhale the refreshing air. One morning he observed that two swallows had begun to build their nest in the very corner of his little window. The male bird brought the moistened clay in his beak which the female kneaded, and with the addition of some chips of straw and hay she built her little lodging with wonderful skill. As soon as the nest was finished they departed to a neighboring wood, and did not return till the end of twelve or fifteen days.

Also changes had taken place during their absence. While the swallows were laboring so busily in building a house, Cuvier had noticed two sparrows perched at a short distance, busily watching them. When the swallows went for their country excursion the sparrows took no pains to conceal their odious schemes; they impudently took possession of the nest which was empty, and without an owner to defend it, and established themselves there as though they had been its builders. Cuvier observed that the cunning sparrows were never both out of the nest: at the same time. One of the usurpers always remained as sentinel, with his head placed at the opening which served for a door and with his large beak interdicted the entrance of any other bird, except his companion.

The swallows returned in due time to their nest; and their surprise may be imagined at finding the nest, on which they had bestowed so much care, occupied.

and anger, rushed upon the nest to chase away the usurpers, but he found himself met by the formidable beak of the sparrow who at that moment guarded the stolen property. What could the slim beak of the swallow do against the powerful pincers of the sparrow, armed with a double and sharpened point? Very soon the poor owner, dispossessed and beaten back, retreated with his head covered with blood, and his neck nearly stripped of its feathers. He returned to the side of his wife, with whom he appeared for some minutes to hold counsel after which they flew away into the air and quickly disappeared.

The female sparrow came back soon after; the male recounted all that had passed, and both seemed highly delighted. Presently the female went forth again, and collected in haste a much larger quantity of provisions than usual; and after having completed the supplies for a siege two pointed beaks instead of one defended the entrance to the nest.

Cries, however, began to fill the air, and an assemblage of swallows gathered together on a neighboring roof. Cuvier distinctly recognized the dispossessed couple, who appeared to relate to each new-comer the robbery of the sparrow. In a little while two hundred swallows had arrived at the scene of conflict. Whilst the little army was forming and deliberating, the sparrows made not the slightest movement, but with their two large beaks steadily guarded the narrow entrance to the nest. The council of swallows continued to deliberate gravely; as soon as all were united they took flight, and Cuvier felt convinced they had given up the field, or rather the nest to the robbers, who had so fraudulently possessed themselves of it. Judge of his surprise, when in the course of a few seconds, he beheld a crowd of two or three hundred swallows arrive, and with the rapidity of thought, throw themselves before the nest, discharge at it some mud which they brought in their bills, and retire to give place to another company, which repeated the same manoeuvre. They fired at two or three inches from the nest, thus preventing the sparrows from giving them any blows with their beaks. The mud continued to thicken more and more on the nest, and although the sparrows made desperate efforts of self defence, their enemies soon succeeded in perfectly closing up the nest. But they had not yet done. They continued to carry up moistened clay till they had built a second nest over the very opening of the besieged one; it was raised by a hundred beaks at once, and then occupied by the dispossessed swallows. The dishonest sparrows paid for their theft with their lives. A sudden and a miserable end was theirs; teaching us—if we will be taught by this true and curious story about birds—that "honesty is always the best policy."

Drops From The Fountain.

MODERATE DRINKERS.

The poor drunkard does not chiefly support the saloons; he is too poor. The total abstainer does not support them. The "moderate drinker" is the man that keeps them in prosperity. If it were not for the support of the moderate drinkers, the traffic would soon cease. The old drunkards would die, and it is only out of a moderate drinker that you can make a drunkard.

LEGALIZING A CRIME.

If it is insisted that a man will drink, and no refusal to license can prevent it, the answer is plain. No law against theft prevents stealing, but it is a great gain that when men steal they thereby become violators of the law and are thus liable to be punished. If men will sell, let it be done against any legal sanction and let them become law breakers. There is a prohibitory law against counterfeiting, but men continue to counterfeit the coin of the country. Is it therefore best to legalize the business? Will such a law promote honesty?

THE PRICE OF SOULS.

Boys sold into slavery! For every \$1,000 raised by our government, by licensing the liquor traffic, one of our boys goes down to a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's hell. Are immortal souls bound to an endless eternity, worth only \$1,000 a piece? We would add, what does the government want with such money? Even Judas Iscariot threw away thirty pieces of silver which was the price of blood, and went and hanged himself. Will our grand government, admired of the whole earth, sell the heart's blood of its sons for money and then go down to anarchy and national suicide?

ABSORBERS NOT PRODUCERS.

The keepers of whisky saloons and dram shops produce nothing—do not earn anything, but support themselves and their families, if they have any, on the earnings of others. It would be better for the community to support such vendors of alcoholic drinks and their families in idleness by direct taxation, if they will not work, than to permit them to support their lives and

their families by making a large portion of the people poor and miserable, if not criminals by the sale of their liquors.—Judge Balcon's charge to Chemung (N.Y.) Grand Jury.

Throwing the Hatchet.

In the fourteenth century, the situation of public executioner to the city of Florence became vacant, and as it was a place of considerable emolument, there were three candidates. A day was appointed for public display of their several abilities; the first candidate with a knife, cleverly separated the head of the victim from his shoulders. He was outdone by the rapid stroke of the second, whose glittering broadsword struck terror into the hearts of the surrounding multitude. The third and least promising, held in his hand a short hatchet, and when the victim was extended with his head on the fatal block, approached him, in a low whisper inquired if he was a swift runner, and if he could swim well? On being answered in the affirmative, he desired him to spring on his feet and cross the river. The executioner then putting on a fierce look, swung his weapon around his head, but instead of making it descend on the devoted creature's neck, struck it with great force into the block! Shouts of execration rose from the crowd, and the trembling wretch, astonished at his wonderful escape, had nearly gained the opposite bank of the river, before any steps were taken to pursue him. He had scarcely, however, gone ten yards on dry land, when the executioner, taken steady aim, threw his hatchet with such effect, that the body continued running some time after the head was off! From this rather improbable incident, the common phrase of throwing the hatchet is said to be derived.

Bob Ingersoll's Home.

A RUSTIC PALACE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Bob Ingersoll, having recently obtained a half interest in Dorsey's ranch in Colfax county, New Mexico, is having himself a summer residence built out there for his family—a wife and two daughters—and their friends. The situation is one of the most beautiful in nature. The whole country is one, boundless and unbroken meadow. The estate proper consists of about 24,000 acres, in more than a hundred locations covering the springs that control the pasturage of more than a million acres. It is next to impossible to convey the proper notion of Western scenery to people familiar with the optical effects of our rarified atmosphere. To say that when the air is warmed by the sun, between the hours of 9 and 4 a cow four miles distant will look larger, though the outline of form will be indefinite, than ten paces off, is to assert that Eastern people (save perhaps a few on the coast) have not the data in their experience to verify. It seems impossible. To state that one can stand on the veranda of Dorsey's residence in the balmy morning and gaze across endless meadows, upon mountain ranges 150 miles away, and see the peaks towering into the clouds, is to endanger your credibility by an assertion that almost makes imagination faint. In such a country, in the midst of such scenes, in an elevated position, yet sheltered by solemn pines and gnarled and twisted cedars, will be situated the home of Ingersoll.

The house will be built of logs entirely, on a stone foundation, every log will have the bark scraped nearly smooth, but left on, and then the whole will be oiled. The rustic effects will be carried out by making even the window frames of alab, with the bark on, and all the doors will be of unique pattern. As for the windows, they will be of all shapes and sizes, those in no two rooms being alike, and stained glass will be liberally used. The floors, and such of the rooms as are not lathed and plastered, will be done in mountain mahogany and hard pine, two kinds of timber growing in the vicinity. No paint whatever will be used about the building, but all the woodwork will be treated with hot oil. The chimneys, of which there will be many, both in groups and scattered, will be of stone and red brick. Some will be inside and others entirely outside the house, as may best serve the effects in the general log-cabin design of the buildings. Every large room has a spacious fire-place for wood. With the exception of the octagonal room, which will be thirty feet high and have an observatory above all the buildings (it is not one building, but a numerous and grotesque jumble, all connected) will be but one story high. The roofs will be steep, semi-Gothic, painted gule red, which, with all the clustering gables and the chimney groups, will make a charming ensemble there among the green cedars and pines.

During the twenty-four days in which the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was in session in this city a considerable amount of important business was transacted. The action of the body was conservative. The three great questions, in the opinion of

members of the denomination not members of the Conference, were whether the terms of continuance of preachers in any charge ought not to be increased—if circumstances were agreeable—beyond three years; whether the power of the local Presiding Elders might not be changed so as to make them less autocratic, and to give to the ministers some little influence in the settlement of details concerning their own duties and comfort; whether the laity ought not to have a larger and more equitable representation in Annual and Quadrennial Conferences than is now allowed. These matters were simply thrown overboard. The claims of the laity [often related] were postponed for four years longer, at the end of which time a commission of one delegate from each Conference is to report to the next General Conference what ought to be done. The itinerancy is not to be meddled with, and the preachers' terms remain at three years. The Presiding Elders retain their superiority over the local clergy. Everything is to go on in the good old-fashioned way. Whatever disappointment may be experienced in consequence must be quieted down by the pleasing fact that there are five new Bishops.—Philadelphia Record.

A BLIND SPOT IN YOUR EYE.—There is a spot in your eye that is not sensitive to light, a part of the eye with which you do not see. The following directions for finding it are going the rounds of the papers, and may be new to most of our boys and girls. Shut your left eye and with your right look steadily at the cross below, holding the paper ten or twelve inches from the eye:

X O
Now move the paper slowly toward the eye, which must be kept fixed on the cross. At a certain distance the other figure—the letter O—will suddenly disappear; but if you bring the paper nearer it will come again into view. You may not succeed in the experiment on the first trial, but with a little patience you can hardly fail; and the suddenness with which the black spot vanishes and reappears is very striking.

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