The National Democrat.
RAHWAY, N. J., AUGUST 28, 1880.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.
(Original from the New York Observer.)
August 29, 1880.

ABRAHAM'S DEBTS AGAIN.
Gen 16 16 16.

Golden Text. "Blessed (truly) is man (who) intercedes for (human) life." Job 7 : 20.

Central Truth. Intercessory prayer is a man's privilege.

Abram was now ninety nine years old, still dwelling in Hebron, and still maintained his high character as the "friend of God." He enjoyed now an more communion with God, and God visited him about this time and renewed his covenant with him. He also changed his name from Abram to Abraham. The meaning of the latter is father of a multitude, in token of the promise that God would make him the father of many nations.

As the patriarch sat one day in the door of his tent during the heat, he became aware of the presence of three strangers, to whom he constantly offered the rites of Eastern hospitality.

They seemed to him to be men, but in reality they were celestial beings in human form. After they had partaken of the hospitable attentions, they inquired for Sarah, his wife, who was at home. Sarah was behind the door, that she did not take a seat, and, unbidden by her present at dinner, the visitors, apparently a time for the fulfilment.

One of the leaders who had this interview with Abraham was doubtless the "Angel of the Covenant," through whom God spoke to the fathers, and who was the Jehovah of Moses and Joshua; for Jesus Christ, Mediator, who even before his incarnation, was the "angel of the covenant," "the angel of the light of the world." He, as God, is present in the assembly of his saints, and as claiming to Abraham the divine prerogatives to which Sodom, the reverence was very honorable to the patriarch, because it was a divine attestation to his holy character and his high favor with God. Had not God at once for him. So the Covenant Angel vouchsafed to Abraham the divine claim of omniscience that God was cognizant of Sodom, with a degree of attraction, to consummate which he was now on his way. The further communication made a deep impression upon Abraham, and indeed him to attempt a plea for mercy towards the guilty city. His intercessory was graciously received, and he went on in his plea, encouraged by his reception, until, beginning with the supposition of fifty righteous men, he finally found in Sodom, he actually succeeded in narrowing the angel of the divine vengeance down to ten.

The whole account of the conversation is very striking, and presents Abraham's kind and earnest spirit in a close light. He could not endure to think of the wholesale destruction that was threatened to Sodom, and he took courage from every instance of a favorable to his intercession, such as will allude more at God. Lands. And it is a wonderful illustration of Abraham's power with God that not one of his several petitions was denied. And if only ten right men had been found in Sodom, the guilty city would have been spared.

This is the first instance of earnest, urgent prayer of which we have on record in the Bible, and it is a prayer of a good man for a guilty city. Abraham had no sympathy with the people of Sodom. He knew their character, and it must have been abhorrent to him. But his great heart was pained at the judgment of their destruction, and he ventured to plead that they might be spared. No true Christian will ever endure the wicked even of wicked men. God does not rejoice in it. He has also too much to provide a way of salvation for even the vilest of sinners. Christians are not very conducive feelings even towards those who will not pray. They do not, and God does not, rejoice in the wicked does not rejoice in their suffering.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. Hospitality to strangers is a Christian duty.

The injunction, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers," is only a special application of the general rule, "Be kindly affectioned one to another." Hospitality was strikingly illustrated in Abraham's case.

2. God's people are on confidential terms with him.

Said the Saviour to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." A necessary relation like that of a binding involves no confidence, but the secrey of the lord's will "with him that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

3. Godly worshipers are the appointed limits.

It is a wonderful attribute, but men can exhaust it by long-continued sin, as did the antediluvian world. So did the cities of the plain. So did the whole Jewish nation. When God's mercy reaches its appointed bound nothing remains but judgment.

4. It is lawful and Christian to intercede for others.

We may pray the closer relation of God's people. The mercy of God's people is the reason why nations ought to pledge to us pray for the peace of our fellow-citizens.

All prayer must be offered in faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ.

5. The righteous are "the salt of the earth."

Wicked men and communities do not know how much they owe to Christian people and Christian institutions. If they did, legislators would not advocate the taxation of churches.

6. Abraham's visitors inquired after his wife, and were told that she was in the tent.

Quaint Matthew Henry remarks upon this: "The daughters of Sarah must learn of her to be chaste keepers at home. There is nothing gad by gadding." "Those are most likely to receive comfort from God, and the promises that are in their place and the way of their duty."

7. The righteous may sometimes be ashamed to be seen in the world, but God is not ashamed to them.

Judgment sometimes begins at the house of God. God's people of God need suffering for correction and discipline. They may get in the world, or they will never get it at all.

8. God delights in the prayers of good men, though it may not be according to his will, to give them always their requests.

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The National Democrat.

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