

**SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**

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By

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

THE BASAL BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE WORLD A SPIRITUAL SYSTEM.

CAN WE BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY?

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

IS THE WORLD GROWING BETTER?

THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

A WONDERFUL NIGHT.

A WONDERFUL MORNING.

SCENES AND SAYINGS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

A SUMMER ACROSS THE SEA.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

THE TRUTH ABOUT MORMONISM.

THE MEANING OF EDUCATION.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY.

THE CITY OF TWELVE GATES.

JESUS AS JUDGED BY HIS ENEMIES.

THE MAKING AND MEANING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

IMMORTALITY IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN THOUGHT.

OLD FAITH AND NEW KNOWLEDGE.

OUTFITTING THE TEACHER OF RELIGION.

WHAT DO PRESENT DAY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE?

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, ELEVEN ANNUAL VOLUMES.

SNOWDEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS
EVANGELICAL AND UNSECTARIAN
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, IMPROVED
UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1932

BY
JAMES H. SNOWDEN

ELEVENTH
ANNUAL VOLUME

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1931

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BY T. MOREY & SON

The Bible as a Book of Religious Teaching

The Bible is not only a great textbook of religious education, but is also a book of religious teaching, not only setting forth the principles but also illustrating the art of such teaching. It is never a book of mere doctrine or theory or speculation, the work of secluded thinkers and dreamers, but is written by practical men who are down in the thick of human affairs and have practical ends in view. Even its first chapter on the creation is not written for scientific explanation and instruction, but for a religious purpose in showing the creative presence of God in the grand cosmic process. Its history is recorded to teach the lessons of divine providence and human experience, and the poets and prophets of the Old Testament and the writers of the New were great practical teachers, never thinking of literary aims and rhetorical expression, but of meeting present emergencies and social and national needs. So we go to the Bible not only for materials of our teaching in religious education, but also for guidance and illustration in the art itself. And again the book is surprisingly modern. With all our advances in pedagogy we have not advanced beyond this book, but rather find ourselves going back to it for the best methods in this art. May we so study it as to find that "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

BOOKS TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW

A NEW COMMENTARY ON HOLY SCRIPTURE

EDITED BY CHARLES GORE

The Macmillan Company, \$3.50

This new one-volume commentary is the work of Anglican scholars of eminent authority in the Biblical world, and contains many general articles on the Bible with detailed comments on important verses. It is a library or condensation of the results of the modern study of the Bible and will be of great value to Sunday School teachers who wish to keep in touch with such study.

THE MAKING AND MEANING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: ITS BACKGROUND, BOOKS AND BIOGRAPHIES

BY JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Macmillan Company, \$1.50

This book tells how the New Testament was made and what it means. It sketches the Hebrew, Greek and Roman background out of which it grew, briefly explains each book in it, outlines the life of Jesus and of Paul, and brings it all home to our business and bosoms with illuminating interpretation and application. It shows us what a surprisingly modern book the New Testament is and makes good for it the claim and distinction that it is the most interesting as it is incomparably the most valuable book in the world.

OUTFITTING THE TEACHER OF RELIGION

BY JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Macmillan Company, \$2.00

The teacher of religion needs to be outfitted for his task as certainly as the miner and the sailor; for he is appointed to mine the rich treasures and sail the deeps of God's Word. This book undertakes to supply him with the necessary outfit by setting forth, in the First Part, the principles of religious education in nine chapters, and the Second Part in eight chapters treats of the principal methods of teaching, concluding with chapters on the Sunday School and on Week-Day Religious Education. Each chapter is supplied with a list of suggestive questions and topics. The book aims to be concrete and practical and suggestive.

WHAT DO PRESENT DAY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE?**BY JAMES H. SNOWDEN***The Macmillan Company, \$2.50*

This volume contains one hundred questions and their answers covering the main facts and doctrines of our Christian faith and life. They are not all equally or vitally important, but they are such questions as are now up for discussion and evaluation because they are giving trouble to many sincere believers. The brief chapters are not intended for professional scholars but are for general readers and especially for young people who are only interested in plain answers. Since it is hoped that the volume may be used as a textbook for study classes in Christian doctrine and life and with this end in view, a list of questions and topics for further discussion is appended to each chapter.

PREFACE

These lesson expositions follow the subjects suggested by the International Lesson Committee for adults and young people and the intermediate and senior grades. The treatment can be adapted by the teacher to all grades down through the junior and primary. The Bible text used in this volume is that adopted by the International Lesson Committee, the American Standard Edition, which as a more accurate translation serves in itself as a textual commentary in many points. The use of this copyright text has been specially granted for this volume by Thomas Nelson and Sons, its authorized publishers.

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**SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST QUARTER

We begin the new year with the Gospel by John as our guide.

The outstanding characteristic of the Fourth Gospel is that it stands apart from the synoptics in contents and teaching and spirit.

In general it describes the Judean ministry of Jesus, in contrast with the synoptics which are more concerned with the Galilean ministry and it is also contrasted with them in that it is more subjective while they are more objective in their attitude towards Jesus. John himself was the most intimate disciple and personal friend of the Master and was able to report and interpret his most spiritual and vital teaching and reflect his spirit most fully.

The characteristic words of his Gospel are light, life, truth, and spirit.

The Logos or Word is the light that becomes the life of men, and eternal life in the Fourth Gospel very largely takes the place of the Kingdom of God in the synoptics.

“God is spirit” (4:24), together with “God is light” and “God is love” of his First Epistle (1:5 and 4:24), is the sunlit summit of John’s teaching.

John is the philosopher and mystic and poet among the disciples more than the practical Matthew and objective Mark and systematic Luke, so that his Gospel is in some degree colored and tintured with his own subjective thought and spirit. The historical element is subordinated to the spiritual, and the spiritual is deeply dyed with the mystical. So close is John to Jesus in intimacy that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between what is the teaching and words of the Master and what is the comment and interpretation of the disciple.

At any rate John takes us further into the heart of the mystic teaching of Jesus and immerses us more deeply in his spirit than do the synoptics.

xviii INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST QUARTER

The Fourth Gospel, being so much later than the synoptics, falling at the end of the first century, A.D., is largely supplementary to them and supplies the theological and philosophical and spiritual interpretation of Jesus that in some degree may be due to long reflection and loving remembrance and deep meditation.

It is therefore the most vital and precious of the Gospels and will ever nourish believers on the very Bread of Life and reflect the Light that is the Life of the World.

May we so study it as to see and walk in this Light and Life.

THE IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES COURSE

for 1932

FIRST QUARTER

THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

(The purpose of the Gospel of John, as stated by the writer himself, is "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life through His name." While this is held as the keynote of our study, the Quarter's lessons also offer an outline of the entire Gospel in its historical aspects, and it is hoped that, in the older classes, the book will be read at home and summarized in the teaching.)

Aim: To bring the pupils to a deeper appreciation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and to win them to acceptance of Him as their personal Saviour; also to strengthen the faith of those who already trust Him and to quicken their zeal in winning others to Christ and in accomplishing His purpose in the world.

LESSON I—JANUARY 3

The Son of God Becomes Man

Lesson: John 1:1-18.

Golden Text: *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.* John 14:9.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 2:5-11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Seeing God in Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Fact and Meaning of the Incarnation.

Lesson Text: John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.

8 He was not the light, but *came* that he might bear witness of the light.

9 There was the true light, *even the light* which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

13 Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

15 John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me.

16 For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

LESSON PLAN**Introduction.**

1. ***A Wonderful Word***
2. ***Life That Is Light***
3. ***A Man Sent from God***
4. ***How the Word Was Received***
5. ***The Glory of the Word***

The Gospel by John sets forth as its special point of view and object that Jesus is the Son of God, and in these pages his divinity blazes forth and he shines as the light of the world.

The first eighteen verses are the prologue or introduction and with a few masterly strokes the writer sketches in outline the picture he is going to paint in detail.

God manifested in the flesh as the Light of the world, received by some and rejected by others—this is the story that will be told and that we are to study.

This prologue sets forth Christ in his eternal relation with God and thus places in its forefront his divinity and equality with the Father. The first paragraph or even sentence of a book is often a critical one, at once catching or cooling interest, and never did a book start off more arrestingly and grandly than the Gospel of John.

1. A Wonderful Word

The story begins at the beginning. We are always interested in beginnings and never feel satisfied in any line of study until we get down to roots and back to origins. Biography begins before birth and a complete story of any life would start in Eden. Science is largely a search for beginnings, shooting its imagination back to molten planets and fiery star-dust, and the supreme problem of philosophy is the First Cause.

The Bible begins at the beginning with its sublime declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

John leaps back to the same beginning and there finds the Word.

A word is an expression of the soul, or the soul expressing itself. The term (logos) was employed by the Greek philosophy to express the rational principle or creative force of the world, deity expressing itself in creation.

The word was thus already shaped to John's use and served his purpose of expressing God manifesting himself.

Christ is the matchless Word that reports or expresses God to us as an eloquent word reports to us the soul of an orator; or as a word is a window through which we see into the mind of another person, so Christ is the great splendid picture-window, glorious with the many-colored radiance of eternity, in which we see the image of God; he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

In this primal beginning the Word already was.

Christ himself did not begin at the beginning, however far back it may be pushed, for he already was in existence. The eternity of the Word is here asserted.

There is in Christ a divine nature that never began to be, for it antedates all beginnings and is eternal.

What, then, was the relation of this eternal Word to God? "The Word was with God." The Word was not identical with God, but was with him as a separate personality, the Greek preposition implying intercourse and fellowship.

The trinity is here beginning to bud out of the mystery of the Godhead.

In the beginning God was not an absolutely single and solitary Being, for this would lead us back into a pantheistic impersonal Being or blind fate.

The relation of the Word to God is further expressed in the bold and startling statement that "the Word was God."

The real divinity of Christ is here asserted in express terms.

The meaning is not that the Word is the one eternal Godhead, for this would have been differently expressed in the Greek, but that the Word is of divine nature and rank. There is thus a distinction in the Godhead of God and the Word, and yet these two in a deeper sense are one.

This complex constitution of the Godhead is further unfolded in Scripture in the Threefold distinction of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Such a complex person is to us a mystery, and yet it is faintly reflected in our own personality in which one spiritual nature manifests itself as thought, sensibility and will.

The first sentence of John's Gospel, like the first sentence of Genesis, is thus a tremendous utterance, destroying at one stroke many errors concerning the nature and rank of Jesus Christ and declaring the glorious truth that he is God. If this is launching us out on the deeps of a great mystery in the beginning of our study, there is no escaping mystery and we must sail the same sea whatever is our voyage of study.

2. Life That Is Light.

Having told us what the Word was, John next tells us what the Word did. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." This announcement puts no undue strain upon our faith after we have accepted the first declaration.

This divine deed simply matches the divine Word as the proper exercise of his power.

As the Word is the manifestation or expression of God, all the purposes of God are executed through him. "There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (1 Cor. 8:6).

The eternal Christ, or the eternal God in Christ, is thus the creator of the universe.

All the stars are but the condensations of his breath, everything the telescope or microscope reveals has felt the shaping and finishing touch of his hand, all the intelligence in the universe is his thought, all its beauty is his artistry, and all its power is his will. The eternal Word spoke and his words became congealed and crystallized into worlds. The universe is a mighty mirror in which we see reflected the power and wisdom and beauty of our Lord.

It pours richer meaning into the world, it puts a new splendor on the very grass, when we view nature as the work of the eternal Christ and remember that everything we see and use has been made by his hand.

This creative energy was not mere blind power, but it was life and was the source of life in all living creatures.

The life that breaks into infinitely varied forms in all living creatures and manifests itself in root and leaf and flower, in claw and tooth and wing, in eye and brain, that mantles the earth with verdure and crowds it with joyous creatures, all germinates and blossoms out of the infinite Life in the eternal Word.

This life creeps up into men and bursts into light, intellectual and moral, in reason and conscience.

Every human soul is a tiny tendril from the life of the Word. All the light of reason and conscience that shines in the world comes from the Sun of Righteousness. Every truth is but a splinter from his mind, every virtue is but a gleam of his glory.

This light has ever shone in the darkness of human ignorance and sin, striving to scatter and burn it away with its brightness, but the darkness has ever failed and refused fully to receive it.

Earth is a tremendous battlefield on which two kingdoms of light and darkness meet in terrific shock and strife, and we are now in the midst of this battle.

Are we receiving or refusing this light?

3. A Man Sent from God.

There is a sudden change in the point of view and the writer introduces a man sent from God whose name was John.

The divine plan of the world cannot proceed far without linking human agency into its divine processes; God must have man.

Every man is sent of God on a mission, and his business is to find this work and do it with his might.

John came as a witness to bear witness of the Light; he was not the Light, but only a reflector of it. The sun must have the assistance of the moon to throw its light upon us by night, and even to light us by day it must have the help of millions of minute particles in the air that bend and diffuse its light in all directions.

John the Baptist was such a particle reflecting the glory of the divine Sun of Righteousness.

How useful and beautiful he was in his own proper place, how glorious he shone as a light-reflector, but how quickly would he have paled had he posed as a light-giver. The moon is beautiful in its orbit, but let it not try to wheel into the central place and shine by its own light, much less let not the mote that sparkles in the sunbeam think to outshine the sun. John knew his bounds and ever kept in his orbit around the Sun of Righteousness.

Our mission is to catch the light of the glory of Christ and reflect it through the world.

We shall shine resplendent as long as we revolve around him, but we shall lose our usefulness and beauty if we drift away from his presence.

John bore witness to the light that all men through him might believe; he shone, not to attract attention to himself, but to draw the gaze and the faith of men to Christ.

So are we to live that men, seeing our good works, will forget us and see the beauty and feel the attraction of the Lord Jesus.

4. *How the Word Was Received.*

How was the Word, thus made known by the witness of John and of all the disciples, received? "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not."

More profoundly pathetic words never were written.

The Word found no welcome in his own world; the creature did not recognize the Creator; children had no joyous greeting for the Father; the very inn in the town where he was born had no room for him, and the world and the very church shut their doors against him! The Lord Jesus walked this world that he had fashioned into form, he sat weary and thirsty by the water that had fallen as a drop out of his hand, he looked into the faces of his own people who had been trained for ages to receive him, and seldom did he meet with kindly recognition and reception: generally he encountered refusal and rebellion and at last met with a violent death.

Was not this a tragedy beyond human conception? And still he is ever coming to his own, yearning and striving to woo and win his children unto himself, and still he meets with many a repulse and rejection.

Yet his patience fails not, his love never loses its warmth and eagerness, but ever is he striving to present himself to our human world so as to disarm the prejudices of men and show them that he is their best Friend.

5. *The Glory of the Word.*

John again turns to the mystery of the incarnation and gives a closer view of it.

"And the Word became flesh"; eternal Spirit and human flesh were fused into one personality—this mystery we can never fathom, any more than we can fathom the like mystery of the union of our own spirit and flesh.

The incarnate Word "dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

John beheld this glory with his very eyes, for he tells us of "that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, that our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

All the first disciples and apostles bear witness to this personal vision and experience of the risen Lord, and they have transmitted their testimony unto us.

Yet "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:28).

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What are some of the distinctive characteristics of the Gospel by John.
2. What is a "word," and what use does language fulfil?
3. How can we know for what mission we are sent into the world?
4. Why is Christ not more widely and fully welcomed in the world today?
5. In what ways can we reflect the glory of Christ?

LESSON II—JANUARY 10

The First Disciples

Lesson: John 1:19-51.

Golden Text: Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world: John 1:29.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:4-12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What It Means to Follow Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Bringing Others to Christ.

Lesson Text: John 1:35-49

35 Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples;

36 and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).

42 He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be

called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

43 On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him; Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. John and Jesus.**
- 2. The First Two Disciples.**
- 3. The First Converts Bring Others.**

4. Jesus Finds Philip.**5. Philip Finds Nathanael.****6. How the Kingdom Started to Grow.**

John passes by all the early years of Jesus and steps at once into the opening scenes of his ministry. While Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness, John the Baptist was conducting a revival meeting down in the Jordan valley and the multitudes were thronging to his preaching.

At length the ecclesiastical authorities up in Jerusalem thought it was time to look into the affair, and they sent a committee down to investigate. The committee questioned John closely as to who he was, but with beautiful modesty and humility he "confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ," and he declared, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, **Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet.**"

At this point Jesus returned from the wilderness to the Jordan and again came into the presence of John.

1. John and Jesus

As the Baptist stood with two of his disciples, one of whom was Andrew and the other doubtless was John the disciple, he pointed them to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Jesus as yet had wrought no miracle and delivered no discourses, he had given no sign of his divinity and had not unsealed his lips as to his mission, but he was stamped with such lofty spirituality and heavenly grace that John discerned in him the Son of God.

Here is a prophet in the full tide of success and popularity pointing his disciples away from himself to another just rising above the horizon

He could see the coming man and knew how to retire before him gracefully.

John was now the central figure in Judea and all eyes were turned to him in expectation. It seemed that a splendid crown was just within his grasp. Why not seize it and be himself the Messiah? Very plausible reasons would play around his mind why he should do this very thing. Yet he deliberately rejected it and placed this crown upon the brow of another.

He appreciated the solitary and supreme greatness of Jesus and cast his own crown at his feet. "He must increase," he said, "but I must decrease."

Few are they that can thus quench their own light before a rising star.

In pronouncing him the Lamb of God John revealed Jesus as the final fulfilment of the old dispensation. The paschal lamb, that had so long stained the altar with its blood but could not wash away sin, had accomplished its pictorial prophetic purpose in preparing the way for the true Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

The ideas embodied in type and symbol, psalm and prophecy were now realized. The shadows of the Old Testament have vanished, and we live in the full light of day.

2. The First Two Disciples

The two disciples turned from John and followed Jesus.

They were not so attached to their old master that they could not follow a new and superior teacher.

"The Lamb of God" would be the fulfilment of their highest hopes, and they resolved to become acquainted with him.

Jesus turned around and asked, "What seek ye?"

This question is a test of conduct and character and its answer is a self-revelation.

What a man seeks shows what he is, reveals his inner nature and affinities. The savage seeks to kill and rob, the scholar seeks truth, the dissolute man seeks dissipation, and the saint seeks holiness.

When one seeks Jesus he discloses an inner disposition and impulse after the highest goodness.

The two disciples answered, "Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou?" Jesus answered, "Come, and ye shall see." This conversation was natural, easy and courteous. There were no pompous formalities to be observed, but these men met on the simplest terms of human friendship.

Jesus would have us come to him in the same confidence, and he has given us free access to God himself.

The two disciples accepted the hearty invitation and abode with Jesus that day. From ten o'clock in the morning until the evening shadows fell, Jesus and Andrew and John engaged in earnest conversation concerning the Messiah and his kingdom; and when they separated Jesus had bound his first two disciples to himself with cords of faith and fellowship that never broke.

There was no revival meeting or religious excitement in connection with these conversions, but in the privacy of a personal interview these men gave their hearts to Christ. It is not necessary to engage in public preaching and sway great audiences in order to save men: a private word may be equally effective in drawing a soul into the kingdom.

“Come, and ye shall see,” is the invitation and promise of Jesus.

He does not ask us to follow him blindly on mere authority, but to try him out and accept him on the ground of investigation and experience. He would have us test his gospel and judge it by results.

3. The First Converts Bring Others

Jesus gained the first two disciples himself, and now these disciples started out to win others. Andrew found Simon his brother and brought him to Jesus. If John found his brother James at the same time the number of the disciples doubled the first day.

Andrew, full of joy at his discovery, hastened to his brother with the announcement, “We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).” That was glad news to a Jew, and Andrew could not keep it to himself but immediately imparted it to his brother; and “he brought him to Jesus.”

Jesus found Andrew, Andrew found Simon: this is the way the kingdom grows, each converted man finding the next man.

Jesus began the process, and his own disciples carried it on. As the Father sent him into the world, so he sent them into the world, and thus Christians are Christ continued and multiplied.

Andrew found his brother, and kinship and friendship are natural ties of connection along which the gospel still works. Ties of blood are powerful cords for drawing others into the kingdom.

God does not mean that these ties, which are so strong and sweet in this world, should be sundered in the next world.

But kinship and friendship are not immortal until they are bound up in the bundle of life with Christ.

Jesus looked upon Simon with searching insight and said, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter.)" Peter means rock and the new name described the new nature that he was to receive through his fellowship with Jesus. Unstable and impulsive on the surface, there was lying deep in Peter a bed of rock that became a foundation of solid steadfastness in the kingdom of Christ.

There are too many Christians of clay: Christ wants disciples of rock.

Andrew remained an obscure disciple, while Peter began to burn with brilliance and became conspicuous and forever famous, the one brother revolving around the other as a mere satellite and known as "Simon Peter's brother."

Yet it was the obscure brother that drew the brilliant brother within the attraction of the Sun of Righteousness and thus made him luminous. We may not be flaming apostles and shining lights ourselves, but we may draw to Christ others that may become great leaders in his service.

4. Jesus Finds Philip

On the next day Jesus started for Galilee, that he might attend a wedding at Cana, and on the way he fell in with Philip and said unto him, "Follow me." Philip joined the little company of disciples and thus it grew as it passed along the public road. Wayside happenings are often links in important events in life.

All are not brought into the kingdom in the same way, by the same means and with the same experience, but there are differing means and methods and every conversion is stamped with some personal individuality.

"Follow me," is the invitation Christ gives to every one and is the tie by which he would bind every disciple to himself.

5. *Philip Finds Nathanael*

Again the process of one convert finding another started. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

This speech shows that Philip was a student of his Bible and knew what to look for in the Messiah, and he found these marks fulfilled in Jesus.

But this announcement, which sprang from a heart of joy and was so full of good intention, instantly struck a snag and stirred up prejudice in Nathanael's mind. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he incredulously inquired. He was from Cana (John 21:2), a neighboring village, and doubtless shared in the prejudice that one town often entertains against a rival town. So he met the gladdest announcement that could come to a Jew with the rebuff, "Do you mean that the Messiah could have come out of that disreputable town of Nazareth?"

Prejudice in its myriad forms is still one of the greatest obstructions in the way of the gospel.

Prejudice against the Christian faith on account of its difficulties and mysteries, against the church on account of the inconsistencies of its members, many are the objections a biased mind can raise against the call of Christ.

Had Philip undertaken to argue this point with Nathanael he might have been beaten in the argument; at least he would probably only have confirmed Nathanael in his prejudices. But his simple answer was, "Come and see."

Try this Messiah for yourself.

Nathanael acted on the reasonable proposal and, after a brief interview with Jesus and a personal experience of his fellowship, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art king of Israel." What no amount of controversy could have done, seeing for himself did do.

This is still Christ's own proposal for the solution of all our doubts and difficulties and prejudices about him. Fellowship and obedience are ever the way out of these into clearness and sureness of faith.

Let us honestly go to Christ and try his doctrine and way of life, and we shall know that he is of God and accept him as our Lord and King.

6. How the Kingdom Started to Grow

We thus see how the kingdom began.

It is instructive to study how Jesus started his work.

He did not begin and carry on his ministry, as we might have expected, with a great spectacular program and campaign. He did not go to Jerusalem, the civil and religious metropolis, and there build a huge tabernacle seating five or ten thousand people and preach to packed audiences. On the contrary he went into obscure parts of the country and engaged in his work quietly and privately, trying to keep down excitement and avoid crowds.

It seemed that he would rather sit down and talk with one man or woman than preach to five thousand.

All growth takes place by gradual accretions. It is thus that the kingdom of God comes. As the process of crystallization proceeds though a liquid atom by atom, as a tree grows cell by cell, so does the line of conversion move through the home and community and across the country and around the world.

As Jesus found Philip and Philip found Nathanael, so are we each one to keep adding soul to soul, link to link in the lengthening chain of his kingdom until it binds Christ's first to his final coming.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. What was John the Baptist's mission in relation to Jesus?**
- 2. Why did Jesus try to keep down excitement and avoid crowds?**
- 3. What are the chief arguments for Christianity?**
- 4. How should we strive to lead others to Jesus?**
- 5. Show how the principle of growth applies to the progress of Christianity.**

LESSON III—JANUARY 17

Jesus and Nicodemus

Lesson: John 3:1-21.

Golden Text: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16.

Devotional Reading: I John 5:1-5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Beginnings of the Christian Life.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The New Birth.

Lesson Text: John 3:1-16

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew.

8 The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and

whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?

13 And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, *even* the Son of man, who is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

15 That whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Visitor by Night.

2. How Was He Received?

- 3. A Perplexed Rabbi.**
- 4. A Teacher of Authority.**
- 5. A Splendid Utterance.**

The first inquirers that came to Jesus were fishermen, rough men who were used to ill-smelling fishing nets and boats and a stormy sea and were expert in profanity. Presently came a visitor of a different class, a rabbi and a scholar, a doctor of divinity who stood high in the church, and a man of wealth and social standing. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews, a position of great honor and influence. He was a Pharisee, the most exclusive sect among the Jews, and therefore a man of conservative and extreme orthodoxy.

Altogether he was one of the most distinguished men in Jerusalem, at the farthest remove from the rustic Galileans and rude fishermen who first sought an interview with Jesus.

Jesus attracted men of all classes and conditions, and on an ever wider scale is his own prophecy being fulfilled that if he be lifted up he would draw all men unto him.

On this occasion Jesus had only one hearer, but with him one soul was a great audience, and he preached to him one of his greatest sermons.

1. A Visitor by Night

This eminent man came to Jesus by night. The night visit has been used against him as implying timidity, if not something worse, and yet this is only an inference and may be wrong. Possibly the night visit was a matter of convenience and perhaps also it would have been dangerous for one of his class to visit Jesus openly in the day as already the young Galilean prophet was falling under the suspicion of the Pharisees. He could also plead that he was only seeking light and therefore was justified in first making a private investigation.

Yet it must be admitted that Nicodemus impresses us as being more cautious than courageous and expert in that prudence that is the better part of valor.

But in the end he did come out into the open and that after the crucifixion, the most dangerous time to ally himself with the Galilean.

The surprising fact, however, is that he was willing to visit the Nazarene at all. Jesus was already making bold attacks on existing institutions, and the Pharisees, the very pillars of the established order, were alert to resist and suppress any reform or reformer.

Nicodemus by his visit showed that he was a candid inquirer and was open-minded towards a new teacher and new truth.

What drew him to the young rabbi? "Rabbi," he began, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus, then, had been an observer of the miracles of Jesus and had been so profoundly impressed by them that he drew from them the conclusion that their author could be none other than one come from God.

His faith did not go so far as to grasp the divinity of Christ, but he did perceive his divine mission.

The signs that Jesus has wrought and is still working are convincing evidence that God is with him. His miracles of might and mercy, his character and conduct, his death and resurrection, his stately march down through the centuries, his kingdom now rising in every land, all these are proofs that he is one come from God.

The candid examination of these signs will start faith growing in our minds and will draw us to him for further light.

2. How Was He Received?

How did Jesus receive this distinguished night visitor who came into his presence paying him such deference and flattering him with such a splendid compliment? Was he overcome or even impressed by the dignity and high station of his visitor and did he bend to him "the subtle hinges of the knee?" Did he hasten to open the door of his kingdom and let this wealthy and influential rabbi in on his own terms?

No! He showed no consciousness of the personal dignity and social standing of his guest, paid no attention to his fine compliment, but he met him with the bold and brusque declaration that a man must be born anew or he cannot see the kingdom of God.

This seems to throw a light into the mind of Nicodemus. He doubtless thought that with his position and power he would be readily admitted

into and welcomed to a high place in the society which the new prophet was founding. And what a splendid convert and powerful accession to the cause of the young Galilean would have been this wise and wealthy ruler among the Jews? How gladly would he have been received by any human leader?

The temptation of Jesus did not end in the wilderness, and this perilous thought may have visited him on this memorable night.

But Jesus peremptorily insisted that this rabbi and doctor of divinity must be born anew and no more relaxed or lowered the requirements of his kingdom for this distinguished visitor than he did for illiterate and profane fishermen.

The kingdom of God is no respecter of persons and all must enter through the same strait and narrow way.

This kingdom is not founded on outward position, but on inward disposition. It is not a matter of wealth or wisdom or even of morals, but of a new heart.

Christ did not come to gild human nature and make it look respectable, but to cleanse it and fill it with new life.

3. A Perplexed Rabbi

The learned rabbi was sorely perplexed. He ought not to have been, for the Old Testament tells of a new heart, and the rabbis had a saying that a convert is "like a child newborn." Yet this wise teacher of theology revealed his ignorance of his own Bible by expressing surprise at the new birth as a physical impossibility, as though Jesus had proposed a gross material absurdity. Jesus explained that a man must be born of water and the Spirit.

The Spirit is the inner cause of the new birth and the water of baptism is its outer sign.

The inner change is secret and invisible, but it expresses itself in outer signs and fruits, of which baptism is one. This may have been a hint to his night visitor that no secret discipleship was permissible.

Jesus now proceeded to connect this principle of a new birth with natural law.

It was not an arbitrary and foreign element that he was bringing into the world, but only a deeper application of a necessary natural law. Like begets like is the general principle of which the new birth is a special and supreme instance. Flesh can beget only flesh, and it takes spirit to beget spirit.

This proves the hopelessness of developing a saved man out of a lost man by natural processes.

Higher life can reach down and lift up lower life, but lower life cannot of itself press up into higher life; a "new ingredient," to use the phrase of Bateson, an eminent English biologist, must be added "to the old stock."

To get spiritual life, then, a "new ingredient" must be imparted by the Spirit of God, quickening the soul with a divine spark or seed of life. This is an eternal law which cannot be broken and which forever guards the entrance into the kingdom of God.

That this new birth is a mystery throws no doubt upon its reality or interposes no bar in the way of accepting its truth and experiencing its power.

All life is margined and mingled with mystery, and the simplest facts that we think are plainest to our understanding are bound up with hidden causes and consequences that interlink them with the whole universe.

We need only listen to the wind and we shall discover how soon our knowledge melts into mystery. Every mystery in religion is paralleled with a like mystery in nature.

And mystery is no hindrance to action.

We eat of the fruit of the tree, though we cannot follow the dextrous fingers that weave its blossoms and cannot trace the cunning chemistry that ripens its sweets. We walk in the sunlight untroubled by the problems of solar physics, and pluck the daisy with unalloyed pleasure although it hides from us the infinite secret of life.

So can we live the renewed life of the spirit though we cannot see and understand the renewing Spirit.

Thus Jesus only hinted at the nature of the new birth by illustration and symbol, and what he left a mystery it would be presumption for us to try to explain.

4. A Teacher of Authority

The learned rabbi was not an apt scholar and was still puzzled. "How can these things be?" was the exclamation that kept escaping from his wondering mind.

Jesus expressed surprise that a teacher of Israel did not understand these fundamental truths of religion.

There are still many surprising people in the church who with all their Bible reading and church going have not yet grasped some of the essential points of the gospel.

Jesus now gave his authority for his teaching. He knew spiritual life by experience. He was not a mere philosopher or speculator spinning airy theories or a reporter repeating other men's opinions, but he was speaking out of his own experience and bearing witness to that which he did know and had seen.

On every subject in which we are interested we try to get expert testimony, the best knowledge. Religion is the highest and most important subject in the world. To whom shall we go for the safest guidance along this path of character and destiny?

Only to the Lord Jesus Christ, for he only has words of eternal life.

The second ground on which Jesus rested his right to speak on the spiritual life was that he had come down from heaven. He was a native of that world and knew its laws.

His requirements were no mere guesses at truth, but laws that he had seen working in all their exactitude and beauty and blessedness in the spiritual world.

Therefore he had a right to speak, and any one that did not believe him rejected his teaching at the peril of his life.

Jesus also illustrated the nature of his work by an illustration drawn from the Scriptures with which Nicodemus was familiar. The serpent that Moses set up in the wilderness was a symbol of the Son of Man

lifted up on the cross. Thus at the beginning of his ministry Jesus saw the cross standing with outstretched arms across his path.

He knew what was coming, for he had laid down his life from the foundation of the world.

5. A Splendid Utterance

Nicodemus now became silent and sat a rapt listener. As Jesus spoke to his solitary hearer he uttered some of his sublimest sayings.

Presently there dropped from his lips that saying which is the most splendid verse in all the Bible.

As the whole Bible has been written on a manuscript that can be enclosed in a walnut shell and has been photographed on plates that make a package no larger than a pea, so the whole essence of the Bible has been condensed and crystallized in this one verse. It sweeps the entire unbroken horizon and sky of redemption, thickset with stars. It gathers up all the notes of the gospel and strikes them in one rich and massive chord. It is full of infinities and eternities. It is ineffably bright with divine love and yet is edged with divine wrath. Heaven is in it, and so is hell.

Jesus ended the interview with the practical admonition that he that doeth truth cometh to the light. Did this night visitor ever come to the light? Where do we find him next? Defending Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Where do we find him last? Coming to the burial of the crucified Christ.

And so this night visitor has gathered courage and has found his way out of the shadows into the morning.

Let us not, however, put off this meeting with Christ until it is too late, for the morning cometh and also the night.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Who were the Pharisees and what was the Sanhedrin?
2. In what ways may we think to flatter Christ without serving him?
3. Why are there in the church so many people ill-informed in the Scriptures?
4. Do natural laws interfere with spiritual laws?
5. How can we know that we are born anew?

LESSON IV—JANUARY 24

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Lesson: John 4:1-42.

Golden Text: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* I Timothy 1:15.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Talking with a Samaritan Woman.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How Jesus Deals with Sinners.

Lesson Text: John 4:9-26

9 The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said

unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.

22 Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

LESSON PLAN***Introduction.***

- 1. *A Tired Traveler.***
- 2. *A Surprised Woman.***
- 3. *A Startling Disclosure.***
- 4. *A Disputed Denominational Question.***
- 5. *An Unsectarian Answer.***
- 6. *The Revelation of the Messiah.***

From one extreme of the social world in his interview with Nicodemus Jesus passed to the other extreme in his interview with this woman.

Nicodemus was a great and good man, but this was a bad woman, yet he treated both with equal patience and kindness and courtesy, for he was no respecter of persons and any human soul was to him a great audience and opportunity.

Jesus had spent the first year of his ministry chiefly in Judea, but that aristocratic and ecclesiastical region was now growing suspicious and hostile towards him and he passed up through Samaria on his way to Galilee.

1. A Tired Traveler

One day at noon Jesus reached the village of Sychar where was Jacob's well, and he sat down tired and thirsty on its curb.

The well is there today and its stone curb is grooved with the marks of the ropes with which water is drawn, and this place is one of the few exact spots where we know Jesus stood.

Presently a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and the well furnished the text and the woman the audience for one of the greatest sermons of Jesus.

He opened the conversation with delicate tact by asking the woman for a drink of water, thus using one of the smallest courtesies of life as a door into his kingdom.

The woman expressed surprise that a Jew would ask a favor of a Samaritan, for they were of different races and religious denominations, and she supposed that therefore they should have no dealings with each other.

The narrow sectarian mind thinks that we should hold aloof from those that differ from us and beware of the most friendly advances.

The woman's question opened a fine opportunity for controversy, but Jesus passed by it in silence, for this was just what he wanted to avoid. Had he followed up her question, he would simply have stirred up her race prejudice and partisan zeal, and that would have ended all hope of doing her any good.

The beginning of religious controversy is usually the end of edification, and therefore we should avoid it as far as possible in our religious work.

Jesus said nothing directly on the subject on which the woman wanted to talk, and yet he reached it indirectly and in the end he closed up the gap between them. The longest way around is sometimes the surest way there, and in seeking to win others to Christ we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

We can seldom settle any disputed questions by controversy, but if we can get the spirit of Christ down under them, they will heal and close up.

Jesus answered the woman that if she only knew the gift of God, she would ask of him and receive living water.

She was close to a great blessing and did not know it, and we are often near to God's richest gifts and our ignorance or our earthliness veils them from us.

2. A Surprised Woman

As Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus and supposed he was speaking of a physical birth, so this woman supposed he was referring to earthly water. She was surprised and puzzled that the travel-stained thirsty Jew should have living water. Whence could he have it? Not out of the well, for he had nothing to draw with and the well was deep. Was he then greater than Jacob that he could supply better water than that great patriarch had found?

Jesus again parried her question and kept to the end he had in view.

He refused to be drawn off into controversial points.

He answered her that whosoever drank of that water would thirst again, but whosoever would drink of the water he would give would never thirst, but would have in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The analogy between Christ and a well is close and beautiful at many points.

The well had its origin in the heart of nature. It is not born of the spot of earth where it is found, but has deep and distant connections. It is fed by far-away hills and nourished by the clouds. It is born of the sky and brings heaven's life to bless the earth.

So Christ has divine roots and eternal relations.

He comes from above and out of the Heart of the Infinite, a refreshing stream gushing out of the Rock of Ages that brings us the blessed life of God.

Earthly wells of satisfaction are outside in the rock and sand of circumstances, where their springs may run dry, or where earthquake or disaster may crack them to pieces.

Jesus opens in the heart a well that is careless of the weather and is not afraid of a drought.

The man of pure heart and rich character can have peace and comfort anywhere, for he carries his well of water within him.

The happiest people are not those that have the most comforts outside, but those that have the most comfort inside. Position is vastly less important than disposition.

The spirit of Jesus abiding in us is an inner well of water ever springing up into pure and sweet life.

3. A Startling Disclosure

The woman now began to understand in a dim way that Jesus had better water, and she asked him for it, though still confusing it with earthly water. She had not yet freed herself from the material and grasped the spiritual.

We are so earthy and worldly that it is hard for us to realize that the great things of life are not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen.

Jesus had now reached the point where he could go no further without making her conscious of her deepest need. For this purpose he threw a searchlight into her inner life or thrust a sword right into her heart.

"Go, call thy husband," he quietly said unto her. The woman put on a bold face and said, "I have no husband." Jesus replied, "Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

This totally unexpected reply struck her like a shot.

She suddenly stood revealed in the blaze of the mysterious Stranger's knowledge; and her instant conclusion was, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

Christ cannot go far with us until he touches some sore spot or guilty secret in our lives.

The probe must precede the cure.

Christ must know all about us in order to heal us. Our secret sins must be brought to light and be cleansed away before his spirit can dwell in us.

4. A Disputed Denominational Question

The conversation was now growing uncomfortably searching and personal and the woman may have thought it was time to change the subject: besides, she thought she saw a chance to have a fierce denominational dispute between the Samaritans and Jews decided.

The burning point in this dispute was the true place of worship.

The Jews said Jerusalem was the only divinely appointed place of worship, and the Samaritans made the same claim for Gerizim; and so the two mountain tops twenty miles apart were crowned with rival temples and altar flamed defiance at altar.

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," she said, "and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Having submitted the point she waited for the prophet's reply, doubtless hoping that her own place of worship would receive a triumphant vindication.

What did Jesus answer? He was himself a Jew and all his patriotic and religious associations centered in Jerusalem. Would he not now

declare his own holy city to be the only true place of worship and brand the Samaritan temple as heretical and idolatrous?

He did nothing of the kind, but gave an answer that was equally startling and disappointing, revolutionary and tragical to both Jews and Samaritans.

“The hour cometh, ’ he said, “when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.”

He now delivered the grandest discourse ever uttered on the universality and spirituality of worship. He showed that worship is not a matter of mountains and temples, of place or rite, but of heart and spirit. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth,”—no matter about the place and name.

5. An Unsectarian Answer

Jesus simply wiped Jerusalem along with Samaria off the map as an exclusive center of worship and set religion free and diffused it around the world as a universal privilege. In this answer he refused to take either side in this denominational dispute and swept both sides away with a broader principle.

God has no favorites in the sense that some religionists think.

He is not interested in deciding little denominational controversies, but wants us to get away from them to broad spiritual principles.

He looks at the worshiper and not at the place of worship.

Worship is not like a rare plant that grows only on some solitary mountain top, but is like grass that grows all over the world. If we will only lift our eyes to the grand mountains of worship and see the whole world as a spiritual temple, we shall lose sight of the little divisive ravines lying around our feet.

God is truly worshiped in spirit and in truth, and such worshipers in every place and under every sky the Father seeks.

This is not implying, however, that no place of worship is needed as a means to this end.

Spirit always needs hands and feet to get along in the world. The water needs the cup, however the water is the important end and the cup only a means. If we discard the church as a place of worship and think we can be as Christian and good without it, we are not following the example of our Lord Jesus who went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day "as his custom was."

We still need the church and it is only when we allow the temple and mountain to crowd out and smother the spirit of worship that we are going wrong.

6. The Revelation of the Messiah

The woman now spoke in a more modest and teachable spirit. She felt she did not know much in the presence of such a prophet, and she expressed the belief that a Messiah was coming and that he would tell her troubled heart all things. Was she already suspecting that the strange Prophet was the Messiah?

Jesus now led her to the point he had in view.

The moment for his self-revelation had come; and with simple dignity he said, "I that speak unto thee am he."

Here is Christ's first and clearest declaration of his Messiahship. He knew who he was and why he was in the world.

There was no self-conscious vanity in this announcement, as it was the simple truth and it was needful that it should be told. It is not vanity for the rose to unfold its bloom, or impertinent in the sun to let its light shine. Jesus revealed himself to the sin-stricken woman on the point of penitence as a physician reveals himself to the sick and wounded.

The moment the woman felt her need of light, the Sun of Righteousness rose upon her soul. And from his blessed presence she hastened to tell the glad news, "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did." She had found her way from Jacob's well to the well of salvation; she went for water and she found Christ.

This same stream of water is still gushing from the Rock of Ages and is flowing through our world and it will enter and cleanse and fill and satisfy our hearts and lives: and it is also our work and privilege to pass the water on that it may refresh others and flow around the world.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Give some account of Jacob's well as it is mentioned in the Old Testament and as it is today.
2. Draw out the analogy between a well of water and the well of salvation.
3. Give other instances in which men have been near to great blessings and yet failed to see them.
4. What is the best way of approaching and settling all disputes, social and industrial and political, as well as religious?
5. What is the Messiah in the Old Testament and how does Christ fulfil this prophecy?

LESSON V—JANUARY 31

Jesus Feeds the Multitude

Lesson: John 6:1-71.

Golden Text: Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.
John 6:35.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 34:3-11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Sympathy of Jesus with Human Need.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus the Bread of Life.

Lesson Text: John 6:1-13, 48-51

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea* of Tiberias.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick.

3 And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

5 Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?

10 Jesus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in

the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would.

12 And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.

13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten.

48 I am the bread of life.

49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

50 This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Failure of an Expert.

2. A Boy with a Basket.

3. Making the Men Sit Down.

4. Distributing the Bread.

5. All Satisfied.

6. The Bread of Life.

There was no rest for Jesus, for when he crossed Lake Galilee seeking it the crowd followed and sought him in his retreat. Many a minister, fleeing for rest from his city charge to the mountains, would feel imposed upon and irritated with a message calling him back to some service, but Jesus "welcomed them" and "had compassion on them."

He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and the presence of the needy people quickly overcame his own sense of need and drew him back into service.

1. The Failure of an Expert

Evening drew on and a difficulty loomed up. What would be done with the great multitude? They were so absorbed in the teaching of Jesus that they appear to have been unconscious of the lapse of time and of their hunger. Should they be dismissed in their weary and weak condition?

This was the proposal of the disciples, but Jesus protested against this easy disposal of the case.

He put the problem to Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?"

Philip was from the neighboring town of Bethsaida and was acquainted with the region, so that it was expected of him to handle the situation. He also appears to have been a practical business man and ready reckoner, for he ran his eye over the crowd and made a rapid calculation and answered, "Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." This would be upwards of fifty dollars which would hardly furnish a single meal for six to eight or ten thousand people.

Philip took a business man's view of the problem.

This business expert was quick at estimating the multitude and figuring out the cost of a meal so as to show the impossibility of providing it,

but he forgot to take into account the wonder-working Master at his side.

How often do we take into our plans and perplexities everything we can think of—except God!

Many a cunning calculation has been vitiated by leaving God out of the column of figures. The business man's view and the expert's calculations have their place and worth, but they may fail at the most critical point. They may calculate to a cent the material and financial factors in the case, but leave out the unseen and eternal.

The solution of no problem is complete until God has been taken into account.

2. A Boy with a Basket

At this point Andrew reported the presence of a boy with five barley cakes and two fishes, but he immediately asked with almost contemptuous scepticism, "but what are they among so many?"

Evidently he did not think much of these pitifully few cakes and fishes and supposed they were hardly worth counting.

This is what Moses thought of his poor power of speech when God commanded him to go and speak unto Pharaoh. "I am not eloquent," he said in effect, "send Aaron." And yet Moses spoke great thundering words that are still rolling through the world, but who can quote anything that Aaron ever said?

This is what we often think of our abilities and means when we are given a work to do.

"We have only a few little loaves and cannot feed any one; we are slow of speech and cannot speak or pray; we are lacking in money, or in education, or opportunities; if we were only gifted or had money or were blessed as others, we might do something, but as it is we have no chance!"

Such are our blind reasoning and miserable excuses in the presence of hungry people waiting to be fed.

What did Jesus say of these few loaves? "Bring them hither to me" (Matthew).

The Master was not alarmed at the meagerness of the means.

What the disciples despised he took and with them wrought astonishing results. With the five cakes and two fishes they thought hardly worth mentioning he fed thousand men, besides women and children.

It is not the means but the power behind the means that does the work.

Give Samson only the jaw bone of an ass and with it he will slay a thousand Philistines. Give David only a smooth stone out of a brook and with it he will kill huge blustering Goliath who defied the whole army of Israel. Give the chemist only scum and dross and out of it he will extract the finest perfumes and the most beautiful colors. Give the poet only the rudest pen and coarsest paper and he will write immortal lines.

The teacher says, "I could teach better if I had a better class"; the minister thinks, "I could preach better if I had a larger church and more prominent pulpit"; and we are all disposed to think that we could do better if we had more money or a higher position; and in all these thoughts we are mistaken. What we need is not more means, but more power to use the means we have; not a higher position, but a better disposition or greater faithfulness and efficiency in the position we are in; not more loaves but power to use and multiply the loaves we have.

There are undreamed-of possibilities in us if we would only develop them.

And let us not overlook the fact that it was a boy that saved this situation. Every boy is a bundle of possibilities, and one may unfold powers that may astonish the world.

Respect the boy and train him for service. Despise not small means, whether a boy or his basket, but get the best out of them.

3. Making the People Sit Down

How was the multitude fed? First, Jesus gave the order, "Make the people sit down." And they sat down on the green grass in ranks of hundreds and fifties to the number of five thousand men.

What was the need of this? That the people might be got at in an orderly way, that the work might be systematized.

The disciples did not go around and distribute the bread indiscriminately, but each one had his own row or company and served only that. The principle is that of the division of labor, or order and organization, which is so necessary and effective in the business world. We must lay out our work and apportion it so that each one will have a definite part.

Find your work and stick to it; pick out your man and save him.

If we would receive some of this bread, we should sit down in one of these ranks. We should come into the church and receive and serve according to this divinely appointed way.

If there were any stragglers that hung around the edge of the crowd and refused to sit down in the ranks, it is not likely that they received any bread; and there is no promise of the bread of life to any refusing to join with those who sit down by hundreds and fifties at the feet of Jesus.

4. Distributing the Bread

Next, Jesus took the bread and gave thanks and blessed it. It was no longer common bread now: no eye could see any change in it, and yet changed it was. Jesus had pledged to that bread all his power and mercy and love.

Thank God for your bread and ask his blessing upon it: it will then be better bread and in some way through divine providence it will go further.

Jesus, having blessed and broken the bread, did not keep it but distributed it to the disciples. Jesus did not keep anything for himself but gave all his earthly glory and comfort for the lost multitude of this world. And the disciples did not keep the bread, but they distributed it to the multitude. We are to receive of this bread, but it would be utter selfishness for us to try to keep it for ourselves. It is given so abundantly that we may give it to others.

Partake of this bread freely, but do not fail to pass it on. See that the hungry man next to you gets some of it. By word and gift and service distribute this blessing that there may be less hunger and more satisfied souls in the world.

Let us note the exact point at which the loaves began to multiply. "Jesus took the loaves": it is not there; there were still only five loaves after he took them into his hands. "And having given thanks": we might expect it there: but it is not there; after he had given thanks there were still only five loaves. Where is it? "He distributed to them that were set down": there it is! When he began to distribute the loaves, the loaves began to multiply: not before.

When shall we learn this blessed divine law that it is not by keeping our good things that we get the most good out of them and that they multiply in our hands, but that it is in distributing them. Especially is this true of spiritual goods and blessings.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

5. All Satisfied

They all received "as much as they would" and "were filled." When the multitude saw these few loaves broken and started out towards them, perhaps those on the distant edges of the crowd thought, "Well, those down there by the basket will get some of that bread, but it will never reach us." Nevertheless it did. Nearer and nearer came the multiplying loaves until the uttermost rank was reached and the last child was satisfied.

Let us not fear that the means and mercy of God will ever run short.

Though the multitude of this world is so vast and we may be far out on its edge, yet will the bread of life come to us. It is near us now, and all we have to do is take and eat.

This we must do for ourselves. Jesus can make the bread of life and send it unto us, but he cannot eat it for us; we must do this each one for himself.

Our hearts are hungry and the world is full of hungry people. We need bread; not the husks that swine do eat, not the bread of earth for the body only or mainly, but bread for the soul; the bread of forgiveness and purity and peace.

Let us not overlook the fact that while there was abundance of bread, yet Jesus said, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost"; and they gathered up twelve baskets of fragments.

Was not this strange frugality on the part of him that could create such abundance?

But unbounded resources and the largest liberality may be closely connected with the strictest economy.

The Hand that could create many loaves did not disdain to pick up crumbs of bread. God with all his infinitude of resources never wastes anything or lets any fragment fall useless out of his hand.

Wealth is no excuse for waste.

Many a great fortune has grown out of gathering up the fragments. The by-products of some manufacturing establishments yield their chief profit.

Fragments of time have made great scholars. Fragments of opportunity seized have saved souls.

6. The Bread of Life

Jesus himself made the main point and application of this miracle. With him all material things were signs and symbols of things spiritual and eternal. "I am the bread of life." "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."

We have various kinds of hunger as each appetite of the body and mental faculty and affectional craving and spiritual yearning has its own hunger for food. The whole human personality cries for God as its complete satisfaction.

God has not failed to supply the proper nourishment for each of these needs. Wheatfield and stream, truth and home, and supremely the fulness of his grace in Christ feed us in body and mind and spirit and "in him ye are made full."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What motives attracted the multitudes to follow Jesus across the lake?
2. Find the failure of experts illustrated in Matthew 21:42.
3. Illustrate the fruitfulness of the division of labor in industry and in all fields.
4. What are some fragments that we may gather up?
5. In what respects is Jesus the Bread of Life?

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 7

The Slavery of Sin (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Matthew 24:45-51. John 8:31-36.

Golden Text: Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin.
John 8:34.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:1-10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Fight for Freedom.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Slavery or Freedom?

Lesson Text: Matthew 24:45-51; John 8:31-36

45 Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath.

48 But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth;

49 And shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

31 Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, *then* are ye truly my disciples;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered unto him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin.

35 And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever.

36 If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Faithful Servant.*
- 2. The Unfaithful Servant.*
- 3. Abiding in the Word.*
- 4. Abraham's Seed.*
- 5. The Slavery of Sin.*
- 6. True Freedom.*

We still have the subject of temperance with us notwithstanding all our legislation. The Eighteenth Amendment with the Volstead law did

not wholly remove intemperance and release us from the duty of teaching its evil.

It has done much and we believe has justified itself, but education was the main means by which this legislation was obtained and education must be continued to keep it and enforce it and to lead the rising generation to practice temperance and abstinence as a law of their own hearts.

The first passage of our lesson enforces the general duty of watchfulness and can be applied to watching against this evil; and the second passage warns us against the slavery of sin, the worst slavery that can bind us.

1. The Faithful Servant

In this parable the faithful and wise servant is made ruler over his lord's household to give them their food in due season. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

Our Lord has made every one of us a ruler over his house to give them their food in due season.

His household is the human family and each member is a ruler over some part of it and in some degree over all of it.

The food we are to give them is care and help, teaching and training, sympathy and sacrifice, brotherhood and love.

Faithfulness to this work is faithfulness to our Lord. The great need of this world is that this work of our Lord should be done; that Christ should be made known and his spirit shed abroad among men.

This would feed a hungry world and help us to solve all our social problems, of work and food, unemployment and poverty, intemperance and vice.

Laws will help us in solving these problems, chiefly by registering and enforcing our moral standards, but these laws will be efficient only as they express the real disposition and moral attainments of the people.

Doing this work is always the best preparation for the coming of Christ, whether in his final appearance or in his providence in our individual lives.

We are watching for Christ when we are watching over his children.

He is to be seen, not riding in a flaming chariot in the sky, but in the needs and sufferings of our human kind. He is to be found in every burden that we can bear and tear that we can brush away.

The reward of such service may in part be far off but the best part of it is immediate. "Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath."

The use of our powers brings us more power.

The muscle used grows larger and stronger, the mind taxed develops its faculties, and the spiritual nature obeys the same law. The way to get spiritual good is to use the good we have.

Our real rulership is measured, not by our outer position, but rather by our inner disposition. "To him that hath shall be given," and in this way it is more blessed to give than to receive.

2. The Unfaithful Servant

In dark contrast with the faithful and wise servant stands the "evil servant." His unfaithfulness began "in his heart," where all evil begins and it sprang from unbelief. "My lord tarrieth." He did not believe his master would keep his promise and flattered himself that the day of reckoning was far off or would never come.

An evil heart of unbelief is the root of much of our unfaithfulness.

The commandments of Christ and the laws of the spiritual life do not stand to us as solid and unshakable realities. A doubt creeps into our hearts whether these high principles of truth and righteousness are so sure and binding as they are represented to be. We begin to wonder whether we cannot get by them, at least in secret, and evade their penalties.

Many a man, balancing in his mind right and wrong, flings down the right and resolves to take a chance.

The evil servant, having cherished an evil thought in his heart, immediately began to beat his fellow servants and to live riotously.

Out of the heart are the issues of life; thought leaps into deed.

There is no greater heresy than that it makes no difference what we believe if we only live right. We cannot live right if our beliefs are wrong. If we distrust Christ in our hearts we will disobey him in our lives. Doubt and damnation are connected by logical links. Every wrong act runs back into a wrong thought.

When a Christian begins to deny the commandments of Christ in his heart he will presently be found dealing unjustly with his fellow men and may be found eating and drinking with the drunken.

The lord of the evil servant, though he seems to have forgotten to return, will surely come and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

Justice never forgets, though its patience may be long.

Every one of us is a bit of the universe and is shadowed and watched by the law of the Lord. "A man may play the fool in the drifts of the desert," says Emerson, "but every grain of sand shall seem to see." He may sin in secret, but a blotched complexion, a swinish look, ungenerous acts, all blab.

Especially is this true of the sin of intemperance. It registers itself in the nerves and paints itself on the face.

3. Abiding in the Word

Jesus was teaching the believing Jews and his words come equally home to us. "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." It is not enough simply to receive the word or teaching of Christ, to acquire a speaking acquaintance with it and then let it fade from our minds, but we must abide in it as our companion and assimilate it into our disposition and habit.

As a result of this abiding in the word, the believer shall know the truth, for the most vital part of life grows out of obedience and experience and not out of books and schools.

No one knows mathematics until he has applied its principles to practical problems, or music until he has wrought it into his muscles and nerves and made it a part of his personality.

He that does the will of Christ will constantly understand his doctrine better and be ever more sure that it is of God.

Such truth will make the believer free.

The effect of all truth that is perceived and practiced is to make life freer and fuller. It is our ever widening knowledge that is enlarging our life and letting us out into fields of liberty of which our fathers never dreamed.

Ignorance is a bar that shuts us in or a bond that binds us.

Knowledge reveals to us the laws of life which are the steel rails along which we can drive ourselves with speed and safety. Steam gave us the freedom of the locomotive, and now the airplane is giving us the freedom of the air.

While such knowledge restricts and forbids our liberty in wrong directions, it enormously increases it in right directions and is to us what the rails are to the locomotive and the air is to the wings of the airplane.

One who knows and follows truth can literally let himself loose and go.

All this especially applies to spiritual truth which sets the soul free with the liberty of the sons of God, or with some measure of God's own unbounded freedom.

One of the most binding and bitter bonds on a man's freedom both of soul and body is strong drink, and the health that springs from temperance or self-control in all things is joyous liberty.

4. Abraham's Seed

This teaching of Jesus contained an implication that grated harshly upon the pride of the Jews and instantly inflamed them into anger and antagonism. Why should the Nazarene talk of making them free, as though they were slaves in need of a liberator? "We are Abraham's seed," they indignantly and proudly said, "and never yet have been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

Had they never heard of Egypt and Babylon? Were they not at that very hour gnashing their teeth in impotent rage while the Roman eagles were scornfully looking down on their temple court and the hated Roman tax collectors strode unobstructed through their streets? Yet they were defiantly declaring that they had "never yet been in bondage to any man"!

None are so blind as those that will not see.

How surely and deeply may one be dragged down into slavery, and yet not know it, or refuse to acknowledge it and even loudly deny it!

This illusion of liberty is a delusion of the devil.

Many a man boasts his freedom and is insulted at any hint of weakness: he declares he can draw the line just where he pleases and that liquor can never get the better of him because he "can take it or leave it," and yet he is in the coils of the cup and under bondage more pitiful than any slave driver's lash.

"Never in bondage to any man" is but a small part of freedom: what about an enslaving habit, a fettered will, or an "evil heart of unbelief"?

5. The Slavery of Sin

Jesus answered their blind boast with a flash of lightning that smote through their false pretences and laid bare their real bondage. He solemnly answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin."

The slavery of sin—how that law is written in all wrong thoughts and evil passions and bad habits!

Every act immediately reacts upon us so that we never are quite the same again. An evil thought burns its evil brand upon the delicate tissues of the mind, and, unless it is washed out by some spiritual chemistry, there it will stay till the judgment day. Every wrong thought molds and crystallizes the soul in some degree into that mode of action, and binds its freedom.

Our freewill thus becomes our fate, conscious choice is at last hardened into unconscious habit and fixed disposition.

When this final disposition is evil, while it is still in a degree free, yet it is the deepest and most degrading bondage the human soul can know. The passionate man thus becomes the slave of his own passion, the selfish man of his selfishness, and the drunkard of his cup.

At first sin may seem to be a soft silken cord that can easily be snapped asunder at pleasure, but it winds and winds its delicate

strands around the soul until it at last twists and knots them into cords and ropes that strong crying and tears cannot break.

6. *True Freedom*

In contrast with the slavery of sin Jesus set true freedom. Slaves do not abide in the house: they come and go as they are bought and commanded; but the son abides in the house and can go in and come out at his pleasure. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

A man is not free simply because he may think he is; his liberty may be his delusion.

He is truly free only when his life obeys its laws, when his desires and his duties are identical, when his character and conscience and conduct coincide and flow in the same channel.

Then there is no friction or fret or discord in his life, but all his faculties and activities make one music.

Such a man can do just what he wants to do because he wants to do only what he ought to do.

This is true and perfect freedom, the freedom of God himself; and we can acquire it only through faith in and fellowship with the Son of God by which we shall be tuned into harmony with him and shall thus attain unto the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In what ways are we all servants?
2. How is faithfulness measured or on what does it depend?
3. How can we work knowledge into our mental life?
4. What is true and what is false pride of ancestry?
5. Is prohibition fairly succeeding and what is our attitude towards this law?

LESSON VII—FEBRUARY 14

Jesus and the Man Born Blind

Lesson: John 9:1-41.

Golden Text: I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. John 8:12.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 42:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Jesus Did for a Blind Man.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus the Light of the World.

Lesson Text: John 9:1-11, 30-38

1 And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?

3 Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

4 We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

5 When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay,

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

8 The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforesaid, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am *he*.

10 They said therefore unto him, How then were thine eyes opened?

11 He answered, The man that is

called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is and yet he opened mine eyes.

31 We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind.

33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Blind Beggar.

2. A Sinister Theological Question.

3. *A Sympathetic Answer.*
4. *Opened Eyes.*
5. *Sceptical Neighbors and Critical Pharisees.*
6. *A Beautiful Closing Scene.*

Jesus was now in Jerusalem on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the national thanksgiving week of the Jews celebrated in October.

He was also now under strict surveillance, and the Pharisees were keeping close watch on his doings.

1. A Blind Beggar

“And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.” Blindness is common in the East where in some places one-fifth of the people have diseased eyes.

It is one of the most pitiful of human afflictions.

All splendor swept from the sky, no color on the landscape, no beauty for the eyes, no face of friend ever seen, only groping and stumbling about in endless night. God save us from this and give us light!

But blind eyes are not the only blindness with which men are afflicted.

Ignorance is blindness that may be deep and often guilty. Some people are deaf to music and others are blind to poetry. Carlyle had small respect for poetry and once wrote Mrs. Browning a rude note telling her, if she had anything to say, to say it in plain English.

Deeper still is blindness of the heart to the things of the spirit, to conscience, duty and God.

We may be unconscious of our physical and moral and spiritual defect, blind to our own blindness. But it is not a good symptom but a bad one when we cannot feel disease working in us, and we are far gone in sin if we are unaware of our sinfulness.

But if we know our blindness, there is hope for us.

2. A Sinister Theological Question

“And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?” Their first thought was a cold, critical, sinister theological question.

They were only curious to know how the trouble began: not, how it might be ended.

Not only so, but they were willing to fasten on the poor man an ugly suspicion: that he had sinned and in retribution had been struck with blindness; and if they could not fasten this suspicion on him, then they would unload it on his parents. Instead of relieving him of his burden, they were disposed to lay on him a more cruel burden still; instead of taking away his blindness they would take away his honor. They put the worst construction on his condition, and, having done this, would have passed on without a word or act of sympathy and help: perhaps feeling they had done their whole duty towards the man in pointing out his sin and congratulating themselves on their superior virtue.

This is not altogether ancient history. We may do this very thing.

It is always easier to be critical than correct. When one is overtaken in a fault, blame him, charge him with some open or secret sin. If you cannot fasten the fault on him, then roll it on his parents or ancestry; revive some old and forgotten family scandal; say that he comes from a low family; dig up the bones of his grandfather and show of what coarse clay they were made.

Thus out of the misfortunes of others would we make capital for ourselves, and blacken them that we ourselves may look whiter.

3. A Sympathetic Answer

But Jesus answered, “Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be manifest in him.”

The theory that every misfortune must grow out of personal sin is a plausible one.

It seems that it ought to be so and therefore we are willing to believe that it is so, especially when the theory is applied to other people.

Undoubtedly many evils are the penalties of personal sin. The thief's prison bars, the drunkard's bloated face and palsied nerves, the idler's poverty, the avaricious man's selfishness, are righteous retribution.

But all misfortunes cannot be connected with personal guilt.

The Book of Job disposed of this theory and Jesus himself made short work of it in his reference to the Tower of Siloam. Sorrow sometimes is the bitter fruit of our own evil ways and sometimes it is the chastening of the Lord.

Especially are we not to be blamed for misfortunes descending upon us through our birth and ancestry.

Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born *black*? Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents. Then why blame him and cherish unbrotherly and cruel prejudice against him and make him feel the cut of some lash and try to crowd him down and out?

To be born with blind eyes or a black skin or an ugly face or a slow tongue or a dull mind is not a personal fault, and it is cruel to twit and taunt people with such things.

Beware how you cast stones at a man's ancestors; we all have come from savages; and we may be proud of our ancestors chiefly because we do not know them or because other people do not know them.

4. Opened Eyes

Having cleared the blind beggar of an unjust suspicion, Jesus now set to work to give him practical relief. "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Here is the contrast between the disciples and the Master.

In the presence of the blind man they could only think of a curious theological question: he was filled with practical sympathy; they were concerned only with how the trouble began: he was concerned only with how it might be ended; they were disposed to aggravate the man's misfortune by adding to it a personal fault: he was disposed to take both misfortune and fault away; they coolly speculated: he felt and acted. That man's extremity was his opportunity.

Jesus did not care how the poor man got into trouble; his only concern was to get him out.

In the midst of the blindness and burdens of men, let us not spend our time and exercise our speculative ingenuity in devising theories to explain these evils and thereby flatter ourselves that we are people of superior virtue and have done our full duty, but let us feel in our souls their infirmities and take their burdens upon us in sacrificial service and healing.

Action immediately followed.

Means were used. Even in his miracles Jesus kept close to nature, and the natural and the supernatural may be closer together than we think. Jesus made clay of the dust of the ground, mixed it with his spittle and with this salve he anointed the blind eyes of the beggar.

In doing this the great Physician honored the medical art.

The "faith cure" in so far as it renounces means receives no sanction from this act. Not that the clay was the efficient means, but it was a means though we may not see how, and its use sanctions and enjoins the use of such means as we have.

Salvation is not a magical process, but definite means are used and it follows the line of strict causation.

The blind man himself had part in the healing. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Jesus applied the means and gave efficacy to them, but the man himself had to use them. Jesus put clay on the blind eyes, but the man himself had to wash it off.

Some things God must do for us, and some things we must do for ourselves.

"He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing." A new world opened upon his wondering eyes, at first dimly and then with increasing clearness. The valley of the Kedron rolled below in a flood of color, the temple flashed its gilded roof above him, the sky was painful in its splendor, the way back was a path of beauty, and he saw the face of Jesus.

When Jesus opens our eyes a new spiritual world dawns upon us, and we behold wondrous things, the way of duty becomes a path of beauty, and following him we shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

5. Sceptical Neighbors and Critical Pharisees

The return of the blind beggar with restored sight created a sensation in the city.

There was commotion among the neighbors.

Some said that he was the man that had been born blind; others said, No, he was like him. Numberless times Christ has changed men so that their own neighbors scarcely knew them.

After Jesus has touched us we ought to be so different that our neighbors will notice the change. "Thou shalt be turned into another man" (1 Sam. 10:6).

The healed beggar did not conceal his identity but boldly said, "I am he." It took some courage to do this, for instantly he drew upon himself the enmity and persecution of the Jews. It may still take courage to confess Christ, but whosoever shall be ashamed of the Son of Man, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in his glory.

At this point the Pharisees appear on the scene, and from this moment pester and plague the man with all kinds of questions to catch him in a trap. They first seize on the fact that the alleged deed was done on the Sabbath day, and that was a sensitive point with them and was a pitfall in which they frequently tried to entrap Jesus.

When the restored beggar told them that the man put clay on his eyes and he washed and could see, they at once said, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath." Others of their number would not agree to this easy disposal of the matter and "There was a division among them." They tried in every way to get the man to commit himself to some compromising statement, but he was too much for them and in his simple honesty and truthfulness put them to confusion. He said he had told them once, and if he told them again would they believe?

Finally they said, "Give glory to God: we know that this man is a

sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

A wonderful creed! It contains serious gaps in its knowledge about Christ and has only one article, but one thing is enough to know about him if we only know the right thing.

At last they flung at him the sneer, "Thou art his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses." "If this man were not from God," replied the restored blind man, "he could do nothing."

Then they taunted him, "Thou was altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" "And they cast him out."

Here is revealed the intense pride of these Pharisees, assuming that they are the favorites of God through Moses, and that nobody has any rights that they are bound to respect. Their pride could do no more than explode in this taunt and act that really only showed their furious impotence and folly.

6. A Beautiful Closing Scene

The closing scene is a beautiful one. Jesus found the restored man and asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man did not yet know and had no means of knowing Jesus as Lord, and so he rightly asked, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe?" Jesus was quick to reveal himself and said, "Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh unto thee."

Was it not to a disreputable Samaritan woman that Jesus first made the revelation of his Messiahship in the simple words, "I that speak unto thee am he"? Did not the angels first announce the good news of the Saviour's birth, not to doctors of divinity and theological professors up in Jerusalem, but to shepherds out in their sheep pasture?

Verily, not many wise and mighty are chosen to hear the best news of God, but humble souls who have not been spoiled with their own conceit.

Then came the confession, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. How did Jesus turn the blindness of the beggar to God's glory?
2. Is this principle one explanation of much suffering in the world?

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- 3. How far are human ills due to ancestral sins?**
- 4. In what ways do those whose eyes are opened by Jesus still suffer persecution?**
- 5. What are good points in this restored blind man's creed?**
- 6. What are the strongest evidences we can have of Christ's power to save?**

LESSON VIII—FEBRUARY 21

Jesus the Good Shepherd

Lesson: John 10:1-42.

Golden Text: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.* Psalm 23:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 23.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Following the Good Shepherd.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Lesson Text: John 10:1-16

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

7 Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.

12 He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them:

13 *He fleeth* because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me,

15 Even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Sheepfold.**
- 2. The Door into the Fold.**
- 3. The Beautiful Shepherd.**
- 4. Intimacy Between the Shepherd and the Sheep.**
- 5. Other Sheep of the Great Fold.**

When the Pharisees found the restored blind beggar in the temple they first tried to extort from him some confession that they could use against Jesus, and, failing in this—for the man stood up bravely and more than held his own against them—they cast him out of its sacred precincts.

This unshepherdly act on the part of the Pharisees, the professed shepherds of the people, drew from Jesus this wonderfully beautiful parable, the Twenty-third Psalm of the New Testament.

1. The Sheepfold

The parable itself pictures a familiar Eastern scene. In that pastoral country every word of it would be instantly and richly significant.

The great Teacher did not spin abstract systems of theology, but drew his sermons out of the life and language of his hearers and made a sheep-pen preach the gospel.

One would not need to look far beyond the gates of Jerusalem to see a sheepfold and possibly the scene of this parable was in full view. A wall topped with a matting of thorns surrounded an unroofed enclosure into which entrance was gained through a strongly-barred door—this was the fold. Such defense was needful against sneak thieves and bands of brigands who would try to climb up over the wall to steal the sheep, and wild animals were prowling around watching an opportunity to pick up a lamb or even a sheep. The shepherd, of course, would enter only through the door, and the porter, who slept within the enclosure, would recognize the shepherd and let him in. The sheep also knew the voice of the shepherd and would come at the call of their individual names. As we name horses and dogs, so the Eastern shepherds name their sheep, and every sheep has its own name.

Wonderful stories are told illustrating this fact. "We heard," says an American traveler, "that sheep knew their names and would come when they were called, but we wanted to see it done. So the shepherd called one sheep that was a little distance away, and it immediately raised its head, and found its way in and out among the others right to the shepherd's feet. He put his hand on its head, and patted it for coming. It was a beautiful sight, and we wanted to see him do it again, and the scene was repeated. We asked the shepherd to give us the names of some of his sheep and we tried to call them, but they would not come to us."

2. *The Door into the Fold*

The application of this parable should have been plain enough, for the Old Testament used such figures of speech (Ezekiel 34), but the Pharisees failed to see the point. They were blind to their own Scriptures and their blindness elicited from Jesus an application of the parable in which he greatly expanded and enriched it.

“I am the door of the sheep,” was the starting-point of his explanation.

The sheepfold is the kingdom of God, and Jesus is the door of entrance into it.

A philosopher is the door into his system of truth, a musician the door into the palace of music, and a painter into the gallery of art. These teachers open the way into their respective fields of knowledge and skill and prepare their pupils so that they are fitted for admittance; and they do this by imparting to their pupils their own knowledge and fashioning them into their own likeness.

In a similar but more vital way, Christ is the door into the kingdom of God.

Every one entering must pass through his teaching and acquire his spirit and habits and likeness, so as to be admissible into this kingdom and fit for it after getting in.

All other ways of attempting to get into this kingdom are the methods of thieves and robbers who refuse to obey lawful conditions and try to get something to which they are not entitled.

Some further features of this door are set forth.

“By me if any man enter in”—it is not an exclusive door that lets in only a select few. It does not open only to the rich or learned or the strong, no golden key or proud lineage is needed to unlock it, but it will swing freely on its hinges to “any man.”

And it is not a door that narrows our life.

Once we are behind it, it does not shut and lock us up in a prison and deprive us of larger life and liberty. On the contrary, when we have passed into this fold the door swings both ways and we can go in and out and find wide free pasture.

The meaning is that, when we have acquired the spirit of Christ, we can go where we will with the freest liberty and everywhere we shall find something good.

The same truth is further expressed in the purpose of Christ's coming. The thieves of temptation and sin come only to destroy: whatever they may promise they will finally ensnare and rob us and leave us poorer.

Christ comes to enlarge and enrich our life so that we shall be stronger and freer, and then we can go where we will and always be in his pasture.

3. The Beautiful Shepherd

Jesus now introduced himself as "the good shepherd." The word here translated good is the common Greek word for beautiful, so that Jesus really said, "I am the beautiful shepherd." The word is to be taken in the sense of excellent, as we say of a musician that he is a good or beautiful player.

Jesus fills out the idea of a shepherd to its fullest measure of excellence and beauty.

All the shepherdly qualities of wisdom and watchfulness, tact and tenderness, sympathy and affection, aliveness and alertness to all the wants and interests of the sheep, meet and blend in him in perfect proportion and amplest fulness and power.

All that a faithful shepherd is to his sheep, that is Jesus to his followers, only he is infinitely more perfect and beautiful.

"Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul." "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom."

Most wonderful of all, the beautiful shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

When wild beasts or robbers attack the flock the shepherd will defend them with his life. This is no mere figure of speech even with the human shepherd who will defend his flock at the risk and cost of his own life.

Much more did Jesus pay this price so that this is a touch of crimson color in the picture drawn from his own life-blood, and it foretokened a scarlet stain upon the cross.

4. Intimacy Between the Shepherd and the Sheep

The good shepherd sustains very intimate relations with his sheep. "I know mine own, and mine own know me." We have seen how the shepherd names his sheep and has a personal acquaintance with each one. They are not to him a promiscuous herd or drove, but individuals characterized by distinctive marks that are as familiar to him as the features of his friends or children.

Successful shepherding of every kind calls for this intimate individual knowledge and personal touch.

The teacher does not teach classes but pupils, and adapts his instruction and discipline to the peculiar mental and emotional texture and temperament of each one. The physician does not prescribe for his patients in a mass and give them all the same treatment but diagnoses each one separately and prescribes for his personal needs. The mother knows each child in all its peculiar traits, physical, mental and moral, and deals with each one accordingly. In friendship and in all personal relations, mind faces and fits into mind, and heart touches heart.

Christ does not save crowds but individual souls.

The great multitude of this world is not in his sight an indiscriminated mass or herd, but it is separated into distinct units and every soul stands out before him in its own individuality. He knows each one of us in our nature and needs and adapts his grace and shapes his providence so that they exactly fit us. "Jehovah is my shepherd."

Conversely Jesus said, "mine own know me." The intimate knowledge uniting shepherd and sheep is not one-sided but mutual.

We are to grow into intimacy with Christ so that we shall feel that we have a personal acquaintance with him and shall know his mind and his will for us: "whom, not having seen, ye love; on whom, though ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

5. Other Sheep of the Great World Fold

The beautiful shepherd now gave a far-away wistful look out over the great fold of the world and saw other sheep. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."

Wonderful words are these, full of the boundless shepherdly love of God in Christ, widening out his fold to the utmost rim of the world.

This doctrine was dreadfully repugnant and exasperating to the Jews, especially the Pharisees. Had they not just cast out of the temple the restored blind man?

Jesus swept away this exclusive selfish narrowness and saw the whole world full of his sheep.

The Gentiles also should come and be folded in his love. This doctrine should not have been strange or unwelcome to the Jews, for their own Scriptures were broad and bright with it, teaching them that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. The Book of Jonah was a splendid foreign missionary tract inserted right in the middle of their Old Testament.

Blind were they to the breadth and catholicity and splendor of their own Bible, and blinder still are we if we do not see how full and free is the mercy of God, having in it a wideness like the wideness of the sea, overflowing all lands and barriers as the atmosphere flows over continents and mountain ranges and oceans and envelopes the globe.

This prophecy is being fulfilled on a wide scale, and the far-flung posts of foreign missions are gleaming lights to mark the frontiers of the marching hosts of Christ around the world.

Not only in foreign missions but in wide other ways is the world being brought into the fold of Christ.

Trade and travel open highways along which his gospel travels, and wider and deeper still Christian ideas are penetrating our civilization and molding it into Christian form and spirit. The greatest foe in the world today to war and intemperance and other vices and diseases of civilization is the spirit of Christ as it slowly introduces its healing virtues.

It is a profound comfort, as we look out over the teeming millions and multitudes of the world, to know that they are not sheep utterly without a Shepherd, and that many, we know not how many, of them are sheep of the Lord Jesus.

There are many sheep of different races and countries and classes and names, but there is only one flock.

The flock is now divided into sects and at times and points even sadly torn with strife, but it is growing towards unity; not the mechanical unity of one huge and unworkable organization or political unity, but the unity of the inner kingdom of God in the hearts of believers, whose basal unity is the indwelling Spirit of Christ in the bond of peace.

When this is realized, there will still be differing gifts and many names, but there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is a parable?
2. Of what use are sheep?
3. In what respects are Christians like sheep?
4. What other figurative names are given to Jesus in the New Testament?
5. How can we help to enlarge and unify the flock of Christ?

LESSON IX—FEBRUARY 28

Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

Lesson: John 11:1-12:11.

Golden Text: *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live.* John 11:25.

Devotional Reading: I Corinthians 15:50-58.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus the Giver of Life.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian Assurance of Immortality.

Lesson Text: John 11:32-44

32 Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was, and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews *also* weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him!

37 But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

39 Jesus saith, Take ye away the

stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been *dead* four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.

43 And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. A Delayed Answer.*
- 2. The Son of God in Tears!*
- 3. A Stone Taken Away.*
- 4. A Shattered Tomb.*
- 5. Critics*

Hostility to Jesus was growing so threatening that he retired across the Jordan into the region of Perea, where he continued his ministry.

During his stay in Jerusalem he made his home out at Bethany with Martha and Mary and Lazarus. While he was in Perea Lazarus fell gravely ill and the sisters sent in haste for Jesus. He waited two days and then announced his purpose to return. The disciples remonstrated with him in view of the threatened violence, but the only path of light and safety with Jesus was the path of duty.

Duty is ever the best life-preserver.

As he drew near to Bethany the active Martha hastened forth to meet him, announced the death of her brother and heard from him the wonderful declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life." Martha then returned and called Mary to meet the Master.

1. A Delayed Answer

When Mary met Jesus she fell at his feet and exclaimed, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." This was a common thought in the minds of these two sisters, showing their faith in Jesus as Lord. During the long days of terrible suspense in which they waited for him and the darkness deeped into death, they had doubtless often repeated these words as an agonized refrain and wondered why he did not come.

Our first thought in trouble should be to bring God into the case.

When he is far from us something is sure to go wrong. We become absorbed in our pursuits and pleasures, spiritual realities lose their vividness and vitality, and life takes on a worldly hue. If Jesus had been intimately present with us, these things would have worn a different aspect. His presence is protection against calamities, not necessarily against their outer form, but against their inner evils.

In the deepest sense Christ will abide with us always, yet sometimes we lose our sense of his presence and when we send for him he may strangely delay his coming.

Why did he tarry two days across the Jordan while these distracted friends were waiting for him in such anxiety and Lazarus was dying? "For the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." The faith of these sisters was put under tremendous strain by this trial,

but the divinity of Jesus shone out through this gloom in glorious splendor. When Christ delays his coming, as he still at times seems to do, it is only that he may accomplish a greater work that will bring a richer blessing and more fully manifest the glory of God.

God is always doing something for us, even when he seems to be doing nothing. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."

2. The Son of God in Tears!

When Jesus saw the weeping sisters and friends, he was troubled in view of the bitter fruits of a sinful world and then was moved with sympathy. "Jesus wept."

The Son of God in tears! The shortest verse in the Bible crowds into two words one of the greatest truths.

This was the most expressive manifestation in the life of Jesus of his humanity.

What is more human than tears? The first utterance of the newborn babe is a cry, the rosy cheeks of childhood are wet with tears, mother weeps, and the man of iron breaks down and sobs like a child. In the cradle and at the grave, in cottage and palace, in every age and under every sky, in sorrow and in joy, tears flow from human eyes.

This is a touch of nature that makes the world akin.

And when the Saviour of the world wept, though he was the Son of God in whom mysteriously dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, yet he also showed himself our human brother. By this act he identified himself with us in all the fibres of our human being.

He also sanctioned our tears as a rightful expression of grief.

It is a merciful provision of our nature by which we find relief in tears. The wounded heart is permitted to bleed and discharge its fulness through the eyes. The hardness of the heart is softened and dissolved.

There is nothing unmanly in tears.

The stoicism that would repress our grief is wrong. It would destroy our finer sensibilities and turn our hearts to stone. Let nature be true to itself and apply its own balm. Let the aching heart have its relief.

Jesus wept because he had lost a friend, and thereby forever sanctified our human tears.

He mingled his tears with the weeping of these mourning friends; in their affliction he was afflicted, and thereby he sustained and comforted them.

It is wonderful truth that Jesus is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and that the infinite heart of God is swept with profound tides of sympathy with us.

The majestic mountain reverberates with the crash of thunder, but it also returns the echoes of human speech; it shouts with the storm, sings with the bird, and weeps with the lost child. So God is the eternal Rock of Ages, and though he rolls back the mighty hosannas of the heavenly host, yet he also answers our prayer and praise and responds to the sobbings of his earthly children.

God is sensitive to human sorrows and our tears touch him.

In a deep sense he weeps with us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

The consciousness of this divine sympathy is the deepest comfort of this life.

When we can lay our sobbing hearts on the everlasting Arm and feel the beating of an infinite Heart, we are soothed into calmness and peace.

3. A Stone Taken Away

The sorrowing company had now reached the grave. But there was an obstruction in the way. A stone lay over the grave and shut in the dead.

There are obstructions in the way of every good thing, and many stones may lie between Christ and dead souls.

Ignorance is a stone behind which many souls are entombed. Prejudice, pride, the love of money, the fashion of the world, evil habits, all the forms and fetters of sin are stones upon the cave of entombed souls. Some of these stones have been rolled upon the mouth of the cave by other hands, and some have been dragged there by self-imprisoned spirits.

Christ cannot reach and release us unless these stones are rolled away. "Take ye away the stone," said Jesus.

He did nothing in this miracle that he could get others to do. He used human help up to the furthest point it could go.

Many obstructions that block our path or that shut in souls can be taken away by our hands. We can remove ignorance and misconception; we can do something towards loosening and removing prejudice and pride, evil habits and associations, worldliness and unbelief.

In so far as we do this through teaching and example and prayer, we are removing stones that bar human hearts from the saving power of Christ.

The stone was removed, but a deeper difficulty was now disclosed. "Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he had been dead four days."

The outer stone was a barrier thin as air compared with this inner corruption.

Back of the sinner's ignorance and unbelief and all outer shapes of his evil, lie the sinner's depravity and death. Jesus gave no intimation that human hands could take away this stone.

This was the point where human ability ended and divine sovereignty had to begin.

We can do something towards removing outer stones of evil, but before this inner corruption we stand helpless and dumb.

Jesus prepared himself for this supreme act by prayer. He intensified his consciousness of oneness with the Father. He reached up and grasped the infinite Life before he reached down and grappled with death.

Prayer is a necessary preparation for service. We must lay hold on God and get his power that we may roll away stones and lay hold of men.

4. A Shattered Tomb

"Lazarus, come forth!" was the voice that went resounding through the tomb, shattering its bars and wakening its dead.

Death knew its Master had come.

Instantly the King of Terrors dropped its scepter and freed its prisoner. "He that was dead came forth." The pulse began to beat, life returned, and the dead brother was restored.

Into this mystery we cannot penetrate a single step. But it is no more mysterious than the first breathing of life into the human body. Birth is as wonderful as resurrection.

By this sovereign act Jesus proclaimed himself Lord of life and of death.

The rocky jaws of the tomb that swallow up all our dead shall be shivered by his word and at his bidding they shall come forth. The body may crumble back into dust and be scattered by the winds to the four quarters of the earth, but there is something precious in that dust and its value shall not be lost. A glorified body shall take its place and a garment be woven around the redeemed spirit that shall never decay or be cast off.

Out of this empty tomb shines the light of immortality.

It is a prophecy of that general resurrection that shall bring the bodies of all the redeemed to their glorious incarnation.

Lazarus came forth bound hand and foot.

Converted souls enter the new life bound with old fetters of sin.

These are not ordinarily instantly stricken off, although sometimes this appears to be done in a glorious new life of freedom.

Here begins the battle of the Christian life.

"Loose him," said Jesus, "and let him go." The moment he reached the point of human ability again, he called it into action.

God will do nothing for us that we can do ourselves.

As there is work for us before the conversion of others, so is there much for us to do after it. Through our teaching and influence and prayer, we can unloose the bonds of ignorance and old habits and let souls out into liberty and life. We are all more or less bound with our old grave clothes, and instead of criticizing and judging and burdening others, we should seek to unloose them and let them go.

The whole world is fettered with sin and our mission is to go everywhere striking off these bonds and setting it free.

“Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him.” This was the reward of their sympathy. Their only thought was to comfort Mary, but in the end they received this unexpected and boundless blessing.

Every good act we send out to others shall in some way come back to us freighted with a greater good for our own lives.

So the home in Bethany had its broken circle restored and was filled with strange peace and joy.

Such is the ministry of Jesus in every home when he enters and becomes one of its inmates.

5. Critics

However, there were not wanting on this occasion critics, and we can infallibly name them before we read the record: “The chief priests and the Pharisees.”

There they are! Always watching and ready to find some fault and turn every good into evil; and their kind has not vanished from the world.

They gathered in council and said, “What do we? for this man doeth many signs.” Verily he did, and these signs still bear witness that he is more than human and is verily the Son of God and Saviour of the world. How puny and pitiful were these Pharisees in their efforts to minimize and circumvent the signs of this Man?

They have passed into oblivion, their names are long since lost in the dust of the ages, but he still stands supreme and is working signs that are the astonishment of the world.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Give other instances in the Bible of delayed answer to prayer.
2. What good results can we often see accomplished by such delay?
3. Can God suffer?
4. How can God be happy in the presence of all the sin and sorrow of the world?
5. In what ways can we help to release sin-fettered souls?
6. What are Christian grounds of belief in immortality?

LESSON X—MARCH 6

Jesus Washes his Disciples' Feet

Lesson: John 13:1-15.

Golden Text: The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Dignifies Lowly Service.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Spirit of Christianity.

Lesson Text: John 13:1-15

1 Now before the feast of the pass-over, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2 And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

3 *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God,

4 Riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself.

5 Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew him that should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Shadow of the Cross.**
- 2. The Self-Consciousness of Jesus.**

3. Lowly Service.**4. Peter's Blunder and Rebuke.****5. An Example for Us.**

The last week in the life of Jesus preceding the crucifixion was crowded with important events.

Nearly one third of the Four Gospels and one seventh of the entire New Testament is devoted to this one week.

The week opened with the triumphal entry on Sunday, the second cleansing of the temple followed on Monday, a great day of teaching on Tuesday, Jesus rested in the home in Bethany on Wednesday, preparation for the Passover came on Thursday, and on Thursday evening was celebrated the Passover meal with the institution of the Lord's Supper, at which occurred the incident related in this lesson.

1. The Shadow of the Cross

Jesus sat down at the feast of the Passover knowing that his hour was come.

Upon that table fell the fateful shadow of the cross and Jesus knew its terrible meaning.

He was not laboring under any illusion or delusion and walking blindly through the world, but he clearly saw his path running straight to crucifixion. Yet beyond the outstretched arms of the cross he saw the outstretched arms of the Father.

He knew that he was going out of the world, but he also knew whither he was going.

The grave to him was not a black finality that punctuated life with a pit, but it was a gateway into a larger and lovelier life beyond.

Well may we be willing to depart out of this world when we know that we are going home to the Father.

At this solemn crisis in his life Jesus loved his own that were in the world. The gathering shadows of his own death could not deflect his thought and love from his disciples. He was about to go, but they were to remain, and he thought, not of himself, but of them.

He not only loved them, but he loved them unto the end.

His love was not fickle and fluctuating, as human love often is, but it had deep divine roots that never could be shaken. These men had grown into his life and love and never could he let them go. Through all the storm and stress of suffering and death that came upon him and through all their fickleness and unfaithfulness, he loved them still.

In this changeful passing world the heart craves love that will last, and nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. The Self-Consciousness of Jesus

Into this holy sacramental feast crept an evil purpose so wicked that it was inspired by the devil himself.

Judas Iscariot resolved to betray him.

Though his purpose was born of Satanic suggestion in his heart, yet it was none the less his own and he must ever bear its fearful burden of guilt and shame.

Another evil also pushed its ugly presence into this feast.

The disciples wrangled and quarreled among themselves as to which should be the greatest (Luke 22:24).

In the midst of this wicked treachery and unseemly strife, what was the state of mind of Jesus?

We are given a wonderful glimpse into his self-consciousness.

At this moment Jesus knew three things. First, he knew that the Father had given all things into his hands: he was conscious of his power; he felt his infinite resources, he knew what he could do. One of the first things we need to know is what powers are in us, what things have been committed to us, what things we should lay hold of and what things we should leave alone because they have not been committed to our hands.

A clear plan of life matched to our power is essential to true success.

Next, Jesus knew that he was come from God: he was conscious of his divine sonship; he knew who his Father was and he was not a waif in the world.

What we believe about our origin and worth is a vital point in our estimate of our self.

If we believe that we are only beasts of finer clay and richer blood we will presently live as beasts. The spirit will sink into the flesh and what we shall eat and drink will become the main pleasure and pursuit of life. But if we know that we have come from God and are his sons, we may cherish our personal worth and not trail it in the dust.

Again, Jesus knowing that he had come from God also knew that he was going back to God. In his Father's house were many mansions and that was his glorious destination. Whither we are going is an even more important question than whence we have come.

If we are traveling towards a pit in the earth, life has small worth and incentive. But if we are traveling towards a glorious country and heavenly home, life is worth living with all its tears and tragedy, and in the darkest night we are following the gleam of an eternal star.

3. Lowly Service

What action resulted from this marvelously rich and inspiring self-consciousness of Jesus? What is the completion of this wonderful sentence in the gospel? "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God": do we not now expect some wonderful conclusion and climax to that sentence, some splendid and worthy action to flow from this glorious consciousness? A root so deeply buried in the life of God will surely bloom into some matchless blossom; a rocket that has shot up so high will certainly explode in a shower of stars and spangle the sky with many colored splendors.

Doubtless if we were to try our hand at completing such a sentence we would piece it out with some such cheap and tawdry rhetoric and spectacular conclusion; we would climax it with a tinsel crown.

But give the pen to John and let him write the truth: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth to God . . . took a towel, and girded himself, . . . And began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel."

Was there ever a greater anti-climax, a deeper fall, a more unworthy and ridiculous conclusion?

Jesus with all this rich and splendid stream of consciousness flowing through him did no great and worthy thing at all, but simply took a towel and actually began to wash and to wipe his disciples' feet! Shall all this divine endowment and supreme power in its most vivid moment be turned to no more dignified and worthy use than seizing a towel and performing the menial service of a slave? Can it be possible that this is so? Yes, it is possible and verily it is so.

This sentence has upon it all the inimitable marks of truth.

No one would have ever thought or been capable of inventing it, it would be out of place in any other book, a misfit in any other life, but it is just in the right place in the gospel and exactly fits the life of Jesus. This is just a piece of the life of him who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.

All that infinite endowment of divine sonship which the Father had given into his hands he used, not for personal comfort or aggrandizement, but for humble service to others.

And it is beautiful to see what that service was on this occasion. On other occasions he had used this endowment in feeding the hungry and forgiving the penitent and speaking immortal words of life. But on this occasion he used it in washing his disciples' feet that he might cleanse them from dust and heat.

It was a small and lowly service, but it taught a great lesson.

While the disciples were quarreling over the question of who among them should be greatest, he quietly rebuked their selfishness and strife by showing them that true greatness lies in service; not in getting but in giving, and that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

And so this sentence, that seems to end in a vanishing point, after all ends in a blossom of beauty richer than any thought of ours, in an explosion of splendor more brilliant than any little fireworks that we could have supplied.

4. Peter's Blunder and Rebuke

As Jesus passed around the little circle of the disciples washing their feet, he came to Peter, and this impulsive disciple gave a characteristic

exhibition of himself. Very likely a sense of shame came over him, as it should have done to all the disciples, that he had not performed this act of Oriental courtesy himself and had thus allowed the Master to come to him in this capacity. He therefore first essayed to stop Jesus with an enquiry that raised a question of fitness and right.

Jesus gave an answer of wonderful dignity and depth, reaching far beyond the incident of the hour into all the plans and perplexities of providence.

We must not expect to understand all the Lord Jesus does in this time; the future will explain many of his ways that we cannot now comprehend.

Peter blurted out, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus calmly answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Instantly Peter swung to the opposite extreme and cried, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Again the Master met him with a quiet word of rebuke.

Peter's motives were good, but he was still swayed by his self-will and had not yet learned to take Jesus at his word and simply do his will.

Christ needs not give account of himself to us, or to receive advice from us, but we need only to know his will and follow his way.

5. An Example for Us

Having passed around the circle, Jesus sat down and said, "I have given you an example that ye also do as I have done unto you." The disciples themselves in one of their number should have performed this humble courtesy, but they were too full of strife to be in any such mood. Jesus without taking any notice of their unseemly quarrel had himself first performed the service, and then he talked to them in tender and beautiful words of the obligation and blessedness of such ministry.

We utterly miss the purpose and power of God's gifts to us if we do not employ them in service.

These goods, while we are to use and enjoy them for ourselves, yet grow in our hands and yield us their best reward and enjoyment only as we use them in behalf of others.

And let us not be too particular about the kind of work we are to do.

We are often seeking what we are pleased to consider important service, conspicuous and yet easy work. But Jesus in the high-tide of his supremest and richest self-consciousness took a towel and washed his disciples' feet; and we are never more like him than when we are hitching our most splendid powers and opportunities to the lowliest service. Any act that will add to the cleanliness and comfort of others is washing their feet and is work for us to do. Great souls often illustrate this point, not hesitating to condescend to the humblest act that helps others and thereby proving their essential greatness.

Our religious consciousness in its highest and most blessed moments of worship is not complete until it flows out into acts that will bless and beautify the world.

A parishioner called upon Phillips Brooks when he was at the height of his fame as rector of Trinity church in Boston and, finding him out of his study and being told where he had gone, went to the address in an alley and up the rickety stairs into a poor tenement and, on knocking on the door and hearing a voice inviting him to come in, went in and found the great man sitting with a baby in his lap which he was caring for while the mother went out on some errand.

Phillips Brooks was as great a man while caring for that baby as a helpful act to its mother as when preaching in the full tide of his eloquence before a great audience hanging enraptured on his lips.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. **Has the quarrelsome spirit of the disciples died out of us?**
2. **Which Gospel gives us the fullest insight into the consciousness of Jesus? Give other instances of this fact.**
3. **Give instances from history of great men doing humble things.**
4. **In what ways may we think to correct Christ and give advice to God?**
5. **Give ways in which we may follow the example of Jesus in this act.**

LESSON XI—MARCH 13

Jesus Comforts his Disciples

Lesson: John, chapters 14-17.

Golden Text: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful. John 14:27.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 40:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Comforts His Disciples.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Comforts His Disciples.

Lesson Text: John 14:1-18

1 Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

4 And whither I go, ye know the way.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

7 If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me

hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do.

15 If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Comfort in Trouble.**
- 2. Many Mansions.**
- 3. An Interruption.**

4. A Pathetic Appeal.**5. A Splendid Promise.****6. The Pledge of Power.**

Comfort is a universal and great need in our human world and we find it here in its richest fulness and power.

The Twelve had gathered with Jesus in the upper room in Jerusalem for the Passover, Judas had gone out from the supper to betray the Master, and Jesus announced that he would be with them only a little while. The shadow of the cross was deepening and the storm of conspiracy was about to break. All were troubled—except the Master; he remained calm and strong.

In this hour he spoke these words that shine like a rainbow on that dark cloud, that floated out of that storm in an immortal strain of music that will comfort this world till time shall be no more.

1. Comfort in Trouble

“Let not your heart be troubled” is the fundamental theme that interweaves itself through all the strains and chords of this grand symphony, the melodic germ that blooms into all this matchless music.

Sorrow, of course, must pour itself out in grief and tears, the wounded heart must bleed. The Bible is not an iron book that would crush our feelings into insensibility. Yet the soul in sorrow should not be lashed and torn like an angry sea, but should possess itself in patience and its central depths should be filled with peace.

Jesus gives profound and powerful reasons for this untroubled heart.

“Believe in God” is the tonic note of this comfort, the corner stone that can sustain the intolerable weight of this weary world and shape it into peace.

When we know that God reigns we know that no atom can get out of its place, that no creaturely will can thwart his purpose, and that all things work together for good to them that love him.

“Believe also in me” is the second chord, growing out of and completing the first. Christ is the manifestation of God, revealing his heart of

sympathy and love. Therefore faith in God finds its logical completion and crown in Christ.

Jesus comforts troubled hearts by drawing them into sympathy with himself and enfolding them in the Fatherhood of God.

Trust God and trust Jesus—this is the cure for all our trials and sorrows, a song in the night that can sing and soothe our troubled hearts into peace.

2. *Many Mansions*

The Master now wove this primal faith into triumphal chords of hope. "In my Father's house are many mansions."

He opens the door into the other world and shows us that it is not a dark void where our conscious life is lost in oblivion, but a many-roomed, many-storied house, a grand mansion where our Father makes his home.

"If it were not so, I would have told you." Of course he would, for he always told the truth. Would he leave us under any delusion on so vital a fact as the future life?

"For I go to prepare a place for you." Wonderfully suggestive and comforting are these words. Jesus Christ has not vanished into nothingness, but has gone to a place.

He knew whither he was going and simply stepped through the door of death into the Father's home.

Jesus has gone to prepare this place—then he is still at work. Heaven is not a place of eternal idleness and stagnation, but of intense activities where all powers are urged to the utmost and the mightiest plans are being carried on and where God himself is busy doing his best. Jesus has gone "to prepare a place for you"—then he is still our servant; still is the Lord of creation building a home for us and laying up his treasures for us.

How richly will this place be furnished after it has had lavished upon it the wealth of Christ's wisdom and beauty and power and felt the finishing touch of his hand?

Since this earthly house has been builded so magnificently and sculptured and painted so richly and splendidly what a world of

grandeur and beauty will not that heavenly place be where the redeemed dwell through eternity with the spirits of just men made perfect and with Jesus?

3. An Interruption

At this point occurred an interruption. Jesus assumed that his disciples understood where he was going and how he was about to depart, but bewildered Thomas spoke up and said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?"

The frequent misunderstanding of Jesus by his disciples, especially the way in which they misinterpreted his spiritual teachings in the light and terms of their material hopes, is one of the pathetic things of the gospels.

Thomas's question elicited the answer, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

This disclosed the goal to which Jesus was going and the way: he was going to the Father and forevermore is the way to him.

Christ is the way to the Father in that he brings God near to us and reveals him to us as our Father; in that he atones for our sin and clears the path for us back to him; and in that he is the example after which we are to be fashioned into the full and fair image of the sons of God.

The way is the path of conduct in which we are to walk; the truth is the light of knowledge falling upon our path; and the life is the end to which the way and the truth are the means. This way and truth and life are all found in Christ, and in following him we shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

We live in a world darkened by many shadows in which we often get confused and lost, but in Christ we have the Light of the world and a path of certainty and peace.

4. A Pathetic Appeal

This drew from Philip the pathetic appeal, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Another instance of blindness in the disciples. It would seem that Philip could hardly have been listening to Jesus, or he would not have so missed the point.

“Show us the Father” is the universal cry of the human heart through all ages.

The most hideous idol of wood or stone has in it this great truth that it is the feeling of some human heart after God if haply it may find him. The whole world is one great altar at which this cry goes up day and night. The coarsest materialist or the most confirmed agnostic cannot wholly suppress the stirring of this instinct, the silent yearning of his heart after the Father, and very pathetic are many of their confessions.

Philip’s exclamation was received by Jesus with almost painful surprise: “How long have I been with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip?”

How long shall we be with Christ, in the presence of his example and teaching, and yet not know him?

Then Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

This is one of the greatest sayings of Christ, full of the profoundest truths and comforts of the gospel.

Christ is the visible manifestation of God which has so long been the search and hope of the world. All the qualities of Christ, his personality and truth and sympathy and love, manifested the fatherly nature of God. He came out of God as the light out of the sun disclosing the central splendor at its heart, or as a blossom blooms out of a plant revealing its inner nature of sweetness and beauty.

In seeing Christ we see God as though we looked upon his face and into his heart.

Christ is the incarnation of God, God manifest in the flesh. Great is this mystery, but it is the blessed truth of the gospel, the mystery that contains and explains all other mysteries of God’s redeeming love.

We accept this fact because it rests on Christ’s own word who tells us only truth and because it is confirmed by the many proofs of his person and work.

This truth properly grasped and experienced is also full of comfort to the troubled heart.

5. A Splendid Promise

Jesus now turned his departure that so perplexed and pained the disciples into a great and splendid promise. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

His departure, then, was not so much confusion and loss in his work, but it was progress and gain.

It was needful that he should go back to the Father in order that the kingdom might go forward. His work was not to stop, but was to be continued by his disciples. The power that would slip from his hands would fall into theirs, and the same work that he did they should do also.

Yes, greater works should they do, his power should develop and multiply in their hands and work along broader lines and strike deeper into human hearts and institutions.

It was Jesus himself that said this, and therefore it must be true and subtracts nothing from him.

Every great person is more powerful after his death than in life, as he is released from local conditions and is able to cast long shadows down the ages and propagate his teachings and influence through the centuries and mold distant generations and fertilize far-off civilizations. Plato illustrates this point.

The moral miracles and transformations wrought by Christianity as it has marched through the world are greater works than those wrought by Jesus on the plains and mountains of Judea.

His works then excited wonder among a few provincial Jews, but now his thoughts sown by his disciples are blooming on every shore. This is the power of God unto salvation exceeding in greatness every other manifestation of divine working and this power may flow through our hands. Here is a work committed to us surpassing the works of genius that draw the attention of the world.

The smallest and weakest of us are so interlinked with the presence and work of Christ in the world that we can touch the whole world with healing uplifting hands and help to send streams of mercy to its most distant shore.

We can do greater works than Jesus because we live in a greater and more unified world.

6. *The Pledge of Power*

What is the pledge that this power shall flow through human hands? "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Christ would be absent in human form, but he would still be present in his Spirit with his disciples and work through them. The power that wrought such wonders in his ministry would still stream through the world. His disciples would touch the world with fingers electric with divine energy; from them would flash fire from heaven. Their prayer, safeguarded by being asked in his name, would draw from him transforming power.

This is why Christ can do greater works through his disciples than he could by his human presence in the world.

While in Galilee or anywhere on the earth he would be confined within local limits in his work, but from his throne in heaven he works everywhere throughout the world, overleaping all continents and seas as wireless waves flash around the globe.

In this divine succession we stand today and work these mighty works of God.

Our hands join with millions of other Christians to form this electric chain that carries the healing currents of Christ's spirit everywhere through the world.

So spoke Jesus to these troubled disciples. Where, now, was the darkness of sorrow that was enveloping them in such sore trouble? Lost in the splendor of these words and promises of their Lord.

He had taken the surgings of that storm and transposed and transfigured them into these triumphant chords. So may the sorrows of earth be composed into the music of heaven.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is the most universal cause of trouble in the world?
2. Do the children of God have as much trouble as those who are not his professing people?
3. What is the Christian view of heaven?
4. Are there ways in which we still misunderstand Christ?
5. What great works can we do for Christ?

LESSON XII—MARCH 20

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Lesson: John 18:1-19:42.

Golden Text: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. I Corinthians 15:3.

Devotional Reading: Romans 5:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Dies for Us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Why Christ Died.

Lesson Text: John 19:17-22, 25-30

17 They took Jesus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha:

18 Where they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

19 And Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. And there was written, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 This title therefore read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, *and* in Latin, *and* in Greek.

21 The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but, that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

25 These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own *home*.

28 After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.

29 There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Golgotha*
- 2. The Mode of Execution.*
- 3. The Inscription on the Cross.*
- 4. Soldiers Dividing the Spoil.*
- 5. The Women at the Cross.*
- 6. The Closing Scenes.*

Here we have come to the loftiest summit in the story of redemption.

Towards this point for centuries the lines of prophecy and providence converged, and from it ever since have issued streams of blessing that are everywhere making the world rejoice and blossom as the rose.

From the upper room in Jerusalem where Jesus spoke his immortal words of comfort he passed with his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane, where about midnight he was arrested and taken to his trial and from thence he was led to his crucifixion.

1. Golgotha

The name of the place was Golgotha, a Hebrew word meaning skull, the Latin name with the same meaning being Calvary. The name was probably given to a small knoll in the shape of a skull, and it was a significant name for the place of man's redemption.

How eloquent of death is a skull!

The delicate organs of sight and sound and speech that were so expressive of life are utterly gone, leaving dark caverns staring blankly around; and the great golden bowl of the brain, the seat of intelligence and affection and will, is empty forever.

So is man in his sin.

It was fitting, then, that the cross should be uplifted at Golgotha, the place of a skull, emblem of man's condition, for it was to bear the wounds and woes that have reduced man to a skull and from it were to issue such virtue and power as would restore his shattered faculties and make him once more a living soul.

2. The Mode of Execution

Having arrived at the place of execution, the Roman soldiers promptly despatched the business.

The mode of the Messiah's death had been shadowed forth for ages under a variety of types and figures.

The brazen serpent signified that he was to be lifted up; the lamb upon the altar showed that he was innocent, helpless and dumb; the slaying of the lamb showed that his blood must be shed; his hands

and his feet were to be pierced, he was to be wounded and tormented, his ears were to be filled with revilings, upon his vesture lots were to be cast, and vinegar was to be given him to drink. These numerous and diverse requirements as to the Messiah's death had been foreshadowed in Jewish prophecy.

And now the Gentile world came forward with a mode of death that marvelously combined them all.

An instrument of execution had been invented by the cruelty of the human heart that was the terror of the ancient world. This was the cross. It was only two beams of wood nailed together as a cross, hence the name, but it was armed with almost preternatural power for inflicting suffering. The victim was first stripped quite naked and scourged until his flesh was all lacerated and bleeding. He was then laid upon the cross, his arms outstretched upon the cross beam, and large iron spikes were ruthlessly driven through hands and feet into the beams. The cross bearing its victim was then raised upright and dropped into the hole dug for it with a violent jolt. Hanging on four great wounds, naked under the blazing sun, with wounds inflaming, thirst raging, every nerve quivering with pain, the sufferer endured the agony for one or even two days until death mercifully put an end to the scene.

And through it all the soldiers and the rabble mocked and jeered and tormented the unhappy creature, even spitting on him and brutally striking him as they passed by.

This is what they did when "they crucified him."

There by the holy city at the place of a skull, surrounded by enemies, cruelly tormented, with only a few women and a single disciple looking on in silent sympathy, Jesus hung upon the cross.

All the horrors of this death burst upon him in flames of agony so terrible that in a few hours his life was consumed.

Yet no spot was found upon him, no secret guilt was in him, but he was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities.

3. The Inscription on the Cross

On the top of the cross over the head of Jesus was a board whitened with gypsum bearing in black letters the inscription, JESUS OF

NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Pilate wrote the inscription, doubtless as a deadly insult to the Jews, and when they saw it they were enraged and interceded with him to have it changed.

But the Roman governor, having recovered some of his courage, met them with the refusal, "What I have written I have written." He may have had some dim consciousness of the moral greatness of Jesus and thus wrote.

More likely, however, it was written as a jest and an insult; yet, like many another word spoken in ridicule, it turned out to be one of the greatest truths of the world.

It was written in three languages, the official Latin, the current Greek, and the vernacular Aramaic, a fact which may explain the variations in the form of the inscription given in the gospels.

The writing of the inscription in these languages was significant.

Every one present could understand one or another of these tongues.

The gospel is for all men of every race and tongue and nation, and it must be put into all languages that all may hear and none may miss its good news.

The Latin was representative of power in the ancient world, the Greek of culture, and the Aramaic of the common people.

Christ is King over all; he is mighty to rule the strong; he has truth for the intellectual; and his sympathies are as broad as humanity and the common people hear him gladly.

These three languages have now multiplied to near a thousand in which the gospel is translated and preached, and thus the prophecy of this inscription is being widely fulfilled.

Two thieves were crucified with him, one on either side.

This may have been intended as a further degradation of Jesus, but it only raised him to higher exaltation.

The thieves also joined in the blasphemy and railed at Jesus. But one of them repented and was saved and passed with Jesus that day into Paradise.

One repented, and therefore there is hope of repentance in the dying hour; but only one, and therefore let none presume to run this risk.

4. Soldiers Dividing the Spoil

The soldiers in charge of the crucifixion received the garments of Jesus as their perquisites. Wholly unconscious that they were fulfilling ancient Jewish prophecy (Ps. 22:18), they divided the outer garments into four parts, one for each soldier; and then, rattling dice in their brass helmets, they gambled for the inner garment woven without seam. Thus unwittingly do men even in their deepest wickedness fulfil far-off divine purposes.

How little did these soldiers realize the overshadowing significance of that death while they were busy in getting a few shreds of this world's goods?

Their eyes glittered with avarice as they watched the fall of the dice, but they were blind to the innocence and meekness and self-sacrifice of the Man on the cross. Their tongues were noisy with bargaining and blasphemy, but they had no words of appreciation and sympathy for the strange Sufferer.

Is it not even so among us to this day?

In all our cities and towns in the very thick of their crowded streets and marts, churches and cathedrals lift their spires to heaven often crowned with a cross. Within sight of this symbol of the crucified Christ men buy and sell and speculate and gamble and follow with the fiercest competition the pursuit of this world's goods: how seldom do they lift their eyes to that symbol and temper their bargaining and restrain their blaspheming with thoughts of that holy Man?

How much of our living is but noisy worldliness and selfishness in the presence of Christ?

Let the shadow of that cross ever fall upon our lives to quiet and constrain us into holy purpose and high endeavor.

5. The Women at the Cross

While the soldiers were thus engaged, another group of persons were enacting a very different scene. Three or four women and one disciple stood by and gazed with unutterable sympathy and sorrow upon the Sufferer. These were Mary the mother of Jesus, and her sister (probably Salome), Mary the wife of Clopas (who may have been but probably

was not the same as the preceding), Mary Magdalene, and John the writer of this gospel.

When the eyes of Jesus fell on his mother and John his dying agonies did not prevent his giving thoughtful and loving attention to her future comfort. Looking at his mother and John he said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then turning to John he said, "Behold, thy mother!" "And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home." Possibly it would not have been good for Mary to return to Nazareth to be subjected to mockery, and this arrangement saved her from this.

Even while engaged in transacting the greatest business of time and eternity and the cross was crushing him into unconsciousness, Jesus lovingly provided his mother with a home.

His suffering for others did not let him forget his own kindred and out of the soil of his divine sacrifice grew this beautiful flower of filial love.

He was a true human son unto the last, and kept the Fifth commandment on the cross.

6. The Closing Scenes

A furious mob raged like an angry sea around the cross. There were the preachers and elders of the church, Sadducees in their silken robes, Roman soldiers in their scarlet cloaks, coarse people drawn by low curiosity, and the basest dregs from the slums of the city. These kept up a constant tumult of jeers and taunts and insults and violence against Jesus.

A few of these taunts were caught up into the gospels and have been wafted down to us as bits of straw out of this storm.

Like everything that was said in derision against Jesus, they add to his honor and are so many crowns upon his head. "He saved others," they said, "himself he cannot save."

No grander eulogy could be pronounced even upon the Son of God. Unconsciously, they placed on his brow his brightest crown.

He had saved others, but he could not save himself at the expense of his covenant with the Father and his love for lost men. No imagination could picture the awful consequences if on that eventful day Jesus had simply saved himself. The gospel would have perished on the spot and the world would never have had heard of his name.

Thank God that Jesus did not save himself. Saving self is the curse of this world; saving others is its salvation.

It was now near three o'clock and Jesus knew that all things were finished and that the end was at hand.

Thirst was the agony that swallowed up all the pains of the cross, and Jesus made his last request in the saying, "I thirst." A sponge soaked with sour wine was touched to his lips to give him some relief.

The Son of God was human to the last.

The last thread of life was now strained to the point of snapping. With the triumphant cry, "It is finished," and commending his spirit to his Father, his head fell forward and he was dead. With wicked hands they had crucified him.

Was this only one more death among the innumerable deaths of earth? No, this Death is the Fountain of Life: from it flow streams of mercy and healing and power to save the world.

It is the fullest revelation and proof of the great truths of the gospel. In the presence of this cross only can we know God: how absolute is his justice and how great is his mercy and love.

In the presence of this cross only can we know man: how deep is his sin and how high is his worth.

Only in its light can we read the full meaning of sin and death, and of obedience and holiness. Only at its foot can we see how deep is hell and how high is heaven.

The justice of God, the love of Christ, the sinfulness of earth, the holiness of heaven, all these were gloriously manifested when on that green hill far away the dear Lord was crucified.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Give a brief outline of the arrest and trial of Jesus.
2. Give a general description of the crucifixion scene?
3. Why is so much made of the cross in our Christian theology and faith and life?
4. What is meant by crucifying "the Son of God afresh" (Hebrews 6:6)?
5. In what sense are we to "fill up the afflictions of Christ" (Col. 1:24)?

LESSON XIII—MARCH 27

Jesus Rises from the Dead (Easter Lesson)

Lesson: John 20:1-31.

Golden Text: But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep. I Corinthians 15:20.

Devotional Reading: Revelation 1:10-18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Loving and Serving the Risen Lord.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Fact and Meaning of the Resurrection.

Lesson Text: John 20:11-20

11 But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

12 And she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She

turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabbóni; which is to say, Teacher.

17 Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord; and *that* he had said these things unto her.

19 When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

20 And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Mistaken Tears.**
- 2. An Unrecognized Lord.**
- 3. A Familiar Voice.**
- 4. A Message of Peace.**
- 5. Rejoicing Disciples.**

After the crucifixion the body of Jesus was prepared for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and laid in a new sepulchre hewn in the rock, and the grave was closed with a great stone and sealed. There it lay undistinguishable from all the dead of earth through Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday morning.

But there was a wide difference in that grave, and in the morning of the third day an event occurred that has transformed all succeeding centuries.

The resurrection of Christ is the central column of the gospel on which it all rests.

Throw this down and the whole structure falls into ruins. Make this sure and the whole gospel is established. No resurrection means no Christ, but a risen Jesus means a mighty Saviour.

It is the splendor of the resurrection that scatters the darkness of the cross and kindles every page of the gospel with glory.

No one saw Jesus rise, but many saw him risen. Five different appearances of him on the day of the resurrection are recorded: first to Mary Magdalene early in the morning near the sepulchre; second, to the other women soon after in the same place; third, to Peter in the morning; fourth, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus in the afternoon; fifth, to the assembled disciples, except Thomas, in an upper room in Jerusalem in the evening. Six later appearances are recorded, making eleven in all. The first and fifth appearances are the subject of this lesson.

1. Mistaken Tears

Among the faithful women that were last at the cross and first at the tomb was Mary Magdalene. Peter and John had entered the sepulchre and found it empty and had departed. The other women had gone and Mary was left alone.

She stood outside weeping and peering into the tomb. As she gazed timidly into the dusky cavern she discovered two white-robed angels sitting in the tomb, and they accosted her with the enquiry, "Woman, why weepest thou?" and she answered them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

Mary, weeping at the empty tomb of her Lord, ignorantly supposing that his body had been stolen away, presents a pathetic and deeply significant picture.

Her faith was not able to ride the storm that she supposed had resulted in a wreck. She was weeping over what she thought was a piece of infinite mischief in God's world. All her passionate faith and love and hope had been swept into confusion by this tragic disaster. Yet God was shaping all these events into a triumphant victory that shall fill eternity with its blessing.

How often are our judgments as mistaken and blind?

We see the wrong side of the web of the world, and its tangle of broken threads and blurred colors distracts and distresses our minds and hearts. But on the other side God is weaving a pattern of beauty and blessing that will forever fill us with wonder and worship.

In particular, Mary was laboring under an entire mistake as to the meaning of that empty tomb.

She thought it meant the body of her Lord had been taken away and hidden from her, and knew not that the tomb was empty because he was risen.

So she was breaking her heart over a pure misunderstanding and fictitious trouble, the baseless imagination of her own mind.

Had she but known it, there was not the slightest reason for weeping at the door of that sepulchre. It was empty, not because a dead body had been carried out of it, but because out of it had walked a living body. What seemed to her the desecration of her dead was resurrection and glorification. That empty tomb, instead of taking her Lord away from her as a corpse, gave him back to her in the fulness of life. The darkness of that tomb was simply the shadow cast by a great light, and she was shedding tears over the shadow instead of walking in the light. How the angels must have wondered at such tears and viewed them with amused pity!

Are not our tears sometimes as far astray in their grief?

Do we not trouble ourselves with much unnecessary distress and often shed tears over our own imaginings? Are we not living in God's world

and is he not causing all things to work together for our good? Is not the grave itself but the green mountain top of a far new world?

Its decay and dust have not stolen away our dead, but they have risen into everlasting life and light.

Did our blinded eyes and unbelieving hearts but know the truth about our dead, our tears might seem to be as mistaken and baseless as the tears of Mary at the empty tomb of her Lord.

2. An Unrecognized Lord

Just then the fall of footsteps seems to have attracted Mary's attention, and, turning, she saw Jesus standing there! So close was she to her living Lord whom she mourned as dead!

All she needed to do was to turn her face away from that empty tomb and she would see her Lord.

Are we not often close to the solution of our trouble and know it not?

May we not simply be looking in the wrong direction, into some cavern of darkness and doubt instead of towards the light, down into the grave instead of up into the sky, towards emptiness and unbelief instead of towards the face of our Lord? Everything may depend on the direction in which we are looking, and a simple turning of the face may turn darkness into day.

Yet Mary, seeing her Lord, "knew not that it was Jesus."

Still blind to him while looking straight at him!

She thought he was the gardener, and, on his asking her whom she was seeking, repeated her pathetic plaint and wanted to know where her Lord had been laid.

How could this be?

Several circumstances combined to this end for which she was not blameworthy. The morning was yet dusky and her eyes were dim with tears; but, chiefly, she was not expecting to see Jesus and so did not recognize him, especially as he may have had on unaccustomed clothing. None of his disciples was expecting a resurrection and at first refused to believe it, and this is strong evidence in its favor.

Mary did not recognize her Lord because she saw him in an unexpected place and in unfamiliar garb: is it not often so with us?

May we not insist on seeing Jesus in our own church and clothed in our own creed, and be blind to him as he appears in other places of worship dressed up in a strange creed and ritual?

Are there not sectarians so bigoted and blind that they think that only they have a living Christ in their church and that the Christ in any other church is dead? Is Christ so circumscribed and poor that he can appear only in one church and must ever wear the same suit of clothes?

Has God ever crowded all his truth and glory into one sectarian hut?

Blameworthy are we in our blindness if we do not have enough clearness and breadth of vision to recognize our Lord in whatever place and garb he may appear.

3. A Familiar Voice

Mary did not recognize even the voice of Jesus when he first addressed her as to the cause of her weeping, but when he simply addressed her with the name "Mary," she instantly recognized him and responded with "Rabboni," Master.

The tone of his voice suddenly grew familiar when he pronounced her own name.

This personal address that calls one by name is one of the sure touches and strong ties of friendship.

This tie binds Christ and the Christian together. "He calleth his own by name."

Mary was about to embrace and cling to her Lord, when he dissuaded her with the bidding, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father." It may be that we cannot hit the exact meaning and purpose of this admonition, for it depends on the purpose of Mary in her movement to lay hold on Jesus. Probably she thought that he had come back to abide, that the "little while" during which he would be absent was now passed and he would remain with them in the old familiar

relations, and she was about to express her joy by clasping him and clinging to him. But Jesus intimated to her that he had not come to stay with them and must yet ascend unto the Father.

But if Mary could not clasp and keep her Lord, there was something she could do for him, she could go and tell the brethren the good news that he was risen and that he would ascend to his God and their God.

There are impulsive mistaken ways in which we may try to serve Christ and especially we may grow too free and familiar with him in ways that suggest sentimental relations that are distasteful to reverent souls.

But there is no lack of right ways in which we can serve Christ, and we are always doing his will when we are telling others of his glorious presence and power.

4. A Message of Peace

At evening the little company of disciples was gathered in a room in Jerusalem. It had been a strange day to them, full of startling surprises and wonder and they were met to talk it over.

The doors were shut, a fact twice noted, and the implication is that they were locked or guarded, for already the disciples knew that the report of the resurrection of Jesus would involve them in fresh danger from the Jews. Apparently through those shut doors Jesus appeared and stood in the midst of the disciples. The sudden apparition must have filled them with fear, and he greeted them with the assuring benediction, "Peace be unto you."

The body of the risen Jesus had about it something of a spiritual nature so that he was no longer hindered in his movements by shut doors and solid walls, possibly a transition state to his heavenly body and the resurrection bodies of the saints.

The risen Christ came to do his disciples no harm but to quiet their excited and fearful hearts into peace.

The Lord Jesus armed with the power of his resurrection comes to allay our fears, born of sin and ignorance, and to purify us into the peace that passes understanding.

When his presence is with us we need fear no evil.

We know that these disciples at first doubted and denied the resurrection of Jesus, and this scepticism may have manifested itself on this occasion, for "he shewed unto them his hands and his side." He gave them visible and tangible material evidence that struck their senses and could not be an illusion or delusion, but was infallible proof of this event.

The resurrection of our Lord is so vital to the gospel that nothing was left undone that would show that this great fact of our faith is rooted in reality.

5. Rejoicing Disciples

"The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord."

That is a truly logical and fruitful "therefore."

It is the bridge over which these disciples passed from crushing disappointment and utter despair into triumphant faith and joy and hope. They saw Jesus dead and now they saw him alive; this fact explains the marvelous transformation of these men from beaten, bewildered and scattered disciples, who thought their Master was dead and the whole matter was over, into men of magnificent courage and might that went forth to turn the world upside down.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ accounts for this tremendous revolution, and nothing else will.

When this fact becomes a living faith in our hearts it will have transforming power in our lives, and it will blossom out into manifold joy and gladness.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. When are tears mistaken?
2. In what ways may Jesus present different appearances to different believers?
3. When are we to blame for not recognizing Jesus in a strange garb?
4. How can we distinguish the voice of Jesus from other voices?
5. Why does the message of Jesus not bring universal peace to the world?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUARTER

All history is interesting and useful because nothing is so interesting to man as man himself and because history shows us developing and operating in the past the same principles that are acting in the present.

The pages of history are thus a kind of looking-glass in which we see ourselves mirrored and magnified.

The history of the Hebrew people is especially interesting and valuable because it has sent down to us the richest freightage of blessing. We have received from Rome a grand heritage of law and power and from Greece a finer treasure of culture and beauty, but from the Hebrews we have received an infinitely richer blessing of religious revelation and redemption.

From the mountain summits of Palestine have flowed down streams of truth and grace that are now everywhere fertilizing the world.

All beginnings are interesting, but the first chapters of Genesis take us back to the beginning of all things. We look into the mighty workshop of creation and see suns and systems fly as sparks from the anvil as the Creator strikes them off in his omnipotence. We see the primitive garden of the world in which the first human pair were placed in innocence and in which the first human sin was committed.

The Scripture narrative soon drops the general history of the world and narrows itself to one chosen family and nation. The purpose of this restriction is not to shut the world at large out from the range and power of the divine mercy and redemption, but to isolate and educate one family and people as the seed with which to fertilize and redeem the whole world.

It is a temporary restriction in order that there may be a universal and final expansion of divine grace.

We next see this single family multiplied into a multitude and passed through oppression and discipline in Egypt and then led out into its own Promised Land.

These lessons only pick out a few salient points, or step from peak to peak, and the intervening connections are vital parts of the general

landscape. The student should read the entire narrative and make a study of the whole subject.

This study is a real education, as scientific and fascinating as that of Greece or Rome, and, when carried on in the proper spirit, is vastly more profitable, for to know these things and do them is eternal life.

SECOND QUARTER

MESSAGES FROM GENESIS

Aim: To lead the pupils to discover in the Biblical stories of beginnings a revelation of God, and to seek closer fellowship with Him and right relations with their fellows.

LESSON I—APRIL 3

God in Creation

Lesson: Genesis 1:1-2:7.

Golden Text: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* Genesis 1:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Maker of All Things.

Topic for Young People and Adults: God in Creation.

Lesson Text: Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created

he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food:

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, *I have given* every green herb for food: and it was so.

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

LESSON PLAN***Introduction.***

- 1. *The Heavens and the Earth.***
- 2. *Man and Woman.***
- 3. *The Family.***
- 4. *The Dominion of Man.***
- 5. *The Food of Man.***
- 6. *The Goodness of the Creation.***

From the New Testament we step back into the Old and look in upon the grand scene of the creation, one of the sublimest pieces of literature in any language.

It strikes the universe out at one stroke.

It sweeps its circle around the utmost bounds of being and gathers into its totality all atoms and suns and systems. It contains all beginnings and the principles of all progress. It is pregnant with the seeds of all science and philosophy and religion. It is a grand panorama of the process of creation, a stupendous moving picture or gorgeous pageant of the making of the world.

Yet it is marvelously simple and orderly and rational and conforms even to our broad scientific conceptions of natural processes.

It stands in striking contrast with the confused and chaotic pictures of creation conceived by other ancient religious attempts to explain the origin of the world. These mythological cosmologies are absurd and irrational and cannot be tolerated by our modern ideas of law and order.

The First Chapter of Genesis is itself a striking proof of inspiration. Some guiding Spirit saved the hand that wrote it from wild vagaries that make other ancient stories of the creation impossible to the modern mind and led it along rational lines.

1. The Heavens and the Earth

The story opens with the sublime sentence, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

It states the majestic fact with impressive simplicity and self-restraint.

There is no straining after effect and effort at fine writing. The writer does not attempt something that only reveals his own impotence and results in foolish futility. At this point it was only a slip from the sublime into the ridiculous, but the writer kept a steady step and trod this dizzy height with calm composure. As the First Chapter of Genesis is an unsurpassed or unequaled masterpiece of literature, so is this opening statement the sublimest sentence in the chapter.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This is the seed and germ of the chapter and of the whole Bible and of all creation and history.

This puts the first thing first.

“In the beginning God”—that is the point and purpose of the chapter. The primary object of the chapter is not to give us a scientific account of the creation or to teach science, but it is to show us that God is the Creator of all things.

Its point of view and purpose is not scientific but religious.

As was said long ago, its object is not to teach us how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven. Judged in the light of its purpose it is grandly true and accomplishes its end. Science itself repeats its order and rationality.

Development is its principle and program and process.

It begins with the lowest elements and proceeds by orderly stages to higher levels and reaches its summit in man. God is first, midst and last in all its process and progress. The divine immanence is stamped upon and interwoven with all its facts and fibres, and this is its supreme point and principle.

This fact is the foundation of all science and philosophy, and it is the common ground and unity and harmony of science and religion.

2. Man and Woman

Millions of years rolled by in which the Creator was constructing the fabric of the universe and furnishing the planet for man. At length the star-domed, verdure-carpeted earth was ready for its human inhabitants, and the great hour struck for the Father of spirits to bring forth his human children. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”: that states the fact but leaves open the process by which it was done.

However it was done man is made in the image of God and this fact stands unshaken.

Man is of the same nature as God and differs from him only in degree. The candle does not compare with the sun in size and splendor, but it is of the same substance and glory.

So man is a spark of the Infinite and reflects his image and shines with his light.

God is spirit; man is spirit. God has faculties of thought, feeling and will, in infinite degree, and man has the same faculties in finite degree; he is topped with the same dome of thought and in his will is armed with the same creative energy.

God is a being of moral character, and man is crowned with conscience as his supreme gift and sovereignty and responsibility.

Out of the divine constitution of man sprung all his wonderful powers. He can think God's thoughts and feel his emotions and hold fellowship with his Maker and Father. Man is not "a worm of the dust," but is great with some of the greatness of God. "Thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor."

"Male and female made he them." This puts woman on an equality with man in their creation and shatters at a blow all theories that would degrade her below his level.

Woman equally with man is the offspring of God and equally with him bears the divine image.

She stands at his side, a helpmeet for him, a personality of the same worth and dignity and powers and rights.

The oft-quoted comment of quaint old Matthew Henry may be repeated; "Woman was taken out of man; not out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled under foot, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

3. The Family

"Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." This first man and woman were made for each other and were immediately joined together.

Either man or woman is incomplete and fragmentary without the other; they are complementary and it takes both to make full-orbed human life.

One husband and one wife is the divine appointment for the family, any other arrangement breeds discord and makes the home inharmounious and impossible.

The home is founded for the completion and full satisfaction of husband and wife and for the rearing of children.

The children complete the parents and fill their lives with joy and from the parents they receive care and training.

The family is the unit of human society and is the chief center and means of human happiness.

It is the fountain whence flow the streams of the social world: keep this fountain pure, and sweet, and society will be sound and safe; defile it and all its streams will run foul.

Whatever strikes a blow at the family strikes at all virtue and civilization. "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:6), and wants all the world to be full of harmonious happy life.

Any theory of "companionate marriage" will not stand in the light of Scripture teaching.

4. The Dominion of Man

"Subdue it, and have dominion."

In this command is wrapped up all material progress and civilization.

In his physical and mental powers man is capable of mastery over nature akin to God's own power in creation and providence. He tames animals, cultivates the soil, pierces mountains, bridges streams, sails the ocean, and flies through the air. He catches and harnesses the most subtle and powerful forces of nature and trains them into his nimble servants. Air and stream and lightning bear his burdens and transmit his thought and the very tones of his voice.

He flings his net out into the heavens and catches comets and planets, stars and distant systems. He untwists the light of the most remote

star and forces it to tell the secret of its constitution and distance and speed.

Man is slowly mastering nature, and more and more earth and air and sea are pouring their treasures at his feet. While man has been mastering nature, nature has been making man, developing his powers of thought and invention and skill.

The struggle with nature has been the education of the race. This process is still going on more rapidly than ever, and in the future man may attain undreamed-of dominion and work wonders that would now appear miraculous.

5. The Food of Man

“I have given you every herb yielding seed; to you it shall be for food.”

Every capacity and need of man is provided with its appropriate means of satisfaction.

God did not create man with appetites of hunger and thirst and then forget to create wheatfields and sparkling streams; much less did he create man with spiritual needs and then fail to bring Christ into the world. Man is not a misfit in the world, but his inner nature and his outer environment match each other.

This food has been provided in abundance and variety. “Every herb and every tree.” The whole earth blossoms and fruits and unnumbered harvests sleep in its soil.

The planet is stocked with plenty of food for the race.

And it is supplied in multiform variety: grainfield and orchard and vine, countless roots and fruits and berries, all variously colored and spiced and flavored, satisfy the hunger and gratify the taste of man.

Yet man must plough the soil and sow the seed and cultivate fields and toil for his food. Golden wheat and rosy apples are not only the gift of nature but are also the product of man’s selection and cultivation.

God and man are co-workers in the field of nature and reap a joint harvest.

Even so the Bread of life is God’s gift and yet we must receive it and work out our own salvation.

6. *The Goodness of the Creation*

“Very good” was the judgment of God on his finished work.

His work corresponded with his thought and purpose, fulfilled his ideal, expressed his character and satisfied his whole nature.

Everything in it was “beautiful in its time,” and the whole was one harmonious world pulsing with gladness, a divine symphony and cosmic song that was jubilant with joy.

Yet does not nature also present facts that greatly perplex our Christian faith?

What about disease and suffering, fire and flood, storm and tornado, destructive wild beasts and poisonous serpents, earthquake and volcano, and all the evils that destroy human life? Do they not fly in the face of a good God and accuse him of providing, along with Paradise, also a snake in its garden?

Volumes have been written in discussion of this aspect of the world and still it perplexes and pains us.

For one thing, sin presently entered and spoiled its pristine goodness and this accounts for much of this evil. As for evils in nature that have not been caused by human sin, much that we may think evil may be good when properly interpreted and used.

Nature with all its hardships is the field and means of man’s education and in matching his powers against its diseases and storms and earthquakes he grows stronger and mounts into mastery over it.

All God’s own works are good. When he makes a thing, it is right and cannot be improved. All real imperfection and evil come from errant human wills.

When we think we can improve upon God’s plan and process, we are thinking folly.

“God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastes 7:10).

Thus Genesis opens with a plan and process of creation that comes down to us from the ancient world swarming with impossible

mythological cosmologies, and yet it commands our respect and excites our admiration and wonder.

A book that begins in this way wins our confidence and we are sure that it will prove a guide to our feet and a light to our path.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Give some other ancient accounts of creation and compare them with the Genesis story.
2. Does the Genesis account have any connection with or relation to the Babylonian account?
3. Trace order and development through this chapter.
4. Give some of the most recent achievements in the dominion of man.
5. Does nature exhibit the moral goodness and love of God?

LESSON II—APRIL 10

How Sin Begins

Lesson: Genesis 2:8–3:24.

Golden Text: Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Matthew 26:41.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 1.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Overcome Temptation.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Our Responsibility for Our Sins.

Lesson Text: Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–8

15 And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

8 And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Privilege and Prohibition in the Garden.*
- 2. Temptation.*
- 3. Fall.*
- 4. Consequences.*

We are rapidly introduced to changing scenes in these opening chapters of Genesis. The finished creation, which fell from the hands of God "very good," did not long retain its pristine purity and beauty and peace. A tempter was permitted to enter through the gates of Eden and sow seeds of evil suggestion that have ever since overspread the world and borne all the scarlet blossoms of sin.

Why did not God protect his innocent world from this dire intrusion?

We do not know. The simple fact is that when Evil came knocking at the gate, God's shoulder was not against it to prevent the dreadful thing from pushing through.

It would appear, however, that the trial of character with the possibility of a fall is a necessary condition of a moral world.

An arrangement in a bank that would prevent in its employees the possibility of their committing dishonesty would equally prevent their exercising honesty and would reduce them to unmoral machines.

God could not have shut moral evil out of Eden without at the same time shutting out moral good.

Character is possible only where it is a choice.

The inner truthfulness of this narrative is written on its face. Whatever view may be taken of the literary form of this dramatic story its essential events must have taken place. It is a marvelous dissection of the movements and motives of the human soul and is a masterpiece of psychology.

The searchlight of divine inspiration is here thrown into the deepest recesses of evil and the lights and shadows are startlingly vivid.

The whole scene is intensely realistic. This is very ancient history and yet it is very modern and its counterpart may be found any morning in the daily newspaper.

Satan is everywhere setting the same traps and telling the same lies and they are everywhere catching men with the same fatal results.

1. Privilege and Prohibition in the Garden

The scene opens in the garden of Eden of which man has been placed in charge. He must keep it under his care and cultivation, for it will not keep itself and would quickly run to weeds. This is just as true today as it was then.

Man must keep the garden of the world, and this involves him in all the toil of our vast material civilization.

Men must plough and sow and reap and exploit all the mines, the fields and the forests, and develop all the resources of nature, or the world would become a wild tangle of vegetation or become barren.

This necessity is built into the plan of the world and is not the result of human sin.

By the sweat of his brow must man earn his bread, and he that will not work, neither shall he eat, and may starve to death. Such work is not evil but the health and happiness and the very breath of life to man.

It is not without reward and it does not condemn him to slavery, for it is the field of wide human liberty and life.

He shall reap rich harvests from his work.

“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.” The world thus opens to us an immense privilege in the exercise of which we find our life and liberty.

It is a foolish and fatal mistake to look on the toil of the world as a fetter and drudgery which we should escape as far as we can; it develops all our powers and is God’s way and our way of making men.

Yet this privilege is accompanied and balanced with a corresponding prohibition. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Here is the principle of prohibition introduced into our world in the beginning in its very constitution.

We can have many things, but not all things, for some things are deadly and will surely bring upon us the judgment of death. This lays the axe at the root of the evil suggestion that we should taste evil and

try it out in order that we may know what it is: such a taste will necessarily poison our whole life and may be mortal. It also justifies the principle of prohibition in our life and even in our legislation. It is right that we should throw every safeguard around dangerous things, machinery and methods, intoxicating drink and every form of temptation.

Such prohibitions do not really take from us any good thing and thereby constrict our life, but they keep us away from bad things and thereby safeguard and enlarge our life.

2. Temptation

We pass to the scene of the temptation and find a snake in this garden of beauty.

Temptation is very cunning in associating itself with all the forms of art so that it can turn the finest things in the world to its own evil purposes.

The tempter began with an apparently innocent question that yet was tipped with a poisonous point. He did not begin with a black and palpable sin, for this would have been no temptation to Eve and would only have excited her horror. The devil never shows his cloven foot first, but always veils himself as an angel of light. His first point is to make sin look innocent and good.

Men rarely will do a thing they know or believe to be wrong until they have persuaded themselves that it is right.

With an air of sincere interest in her welfare, the tempter inquired if God had forbidden her any of those pleasant trees. Is it possible he would do anything so unreasonable and unkind?

Thus he withdrew her mind from the many good things she was permitted to have and fastened her attention and desire on the one thing she might not have.

Eve answered the tempter and by so doing stepped on dangerous ground. The first breath of evil doubt against God's wisdom and goodness should have raised her alarm and caused her to fly. The woman that hesitates is lost; so is the man. Nothing is more dangerous than to parley with temptation.

All the devil wants is a chance to talk with us.

Having gained a hearing, the tempter now followed up his advantage with a daring attack. He gave the lie direct to God, charged him with selfishly withholding a secret from Eve, and promised that she should find it out and get even with God if she would only eat of that forbidden fruit. Thus apparently innocent doubt became flat denial of God and a wicked falsehood. The devil baits his lie with a sweet morsel.

He promises good and makes it appear that he is taking our side against some hard injustice. He sets himself up as one that is offering bigger pay than God.

One of the most fascinating temptations is that we should try sin and find out what it is like.

3. Fall

The evil suggestion, having got a lodgment in Eve's heart, swiftly ran its course. She began to look at the forbidden tree and it began to develop new attractions and with fatal fascination it appealed to her sense of beauty and her desire for wisdom. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise": how rosy grew that fruit, how loaded with appeals to every part of her nature.

Mental association was here at work as it threw around that tree a shining web of subtle attractions.

"Good for food," and is not food a necessary and good thing? "a delight to the eyes," a still finer appeal to her artistic sense of beauty, and is it true that obedience to God stifles and kills our artistic taste and delight? "to be desired to make one wise," is not wisdom a still higher good and appeal, and are we not bidden with all our getting to get wisdom? Thus the mind of Eve played around and brooded over this forbidden thing.

It multiplied in her mind rich and alluring associations and kindled ever stronger desires, hushed all the voices of duty and danger, lulled into a deeper sleep her sense of obligation to God, laid an ever more fascinating and fatal spell on her senses, until it obsessed her whole soul, and then "she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."

This is the psychology of all deliberate sin.

It is a growth. It begins with a sense perception or with an idea which attracts to itself all the kindred associations of the mind that enrich and strengthen it; it weaves around its object a web of witchery, it crowds its guilt into the background and hides all its repulsive features in a halo of light, it roots itself in the whole heart, and thus tips the balance of the will and moves it into action.

The devil is a master psychologist and knows how to play on all the complex keys and chords of the human heart.

If Eve had fixed her mind on the duty of loyalty to God and of trusting his wisdom and will, however strange and even unkind and cruel it may have seemed; if she had considered the danger that lurked in that forbidden fruit so that she would have seen that its rosy glow was as the hectic flush of a deadly fever or the gleaming fires of hell; if she had pictured the possible and certain consequences of disobedience and seen the flaming sword shutting her out from that garden, she would, like Jesus in the wilderness, have resisted the devil until he would have fled into the darkness whence he came.

So can we resist the devil until he flees from us.

4. Consequences

Consequences immediately followed the guilty act.

Sin at once showed its contagion.

“She gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat.” No one can shut his sin up in his own heart: it spreads its fatal infection into other lives. Every sin has a prolific progeny. One sinner destroyeth much good.

The guilt of this first sin cannot be laid on the forbidden tree, or the beautiful garden, or upon God, or on the devil alone, but it must lie upon this woman and this man who did this evil thing.

There was no sin on their part in being tempted: the sin began only when they began to listen and consent.

There is a disposition among men in our day to roll the responsibility of sin off on their bad heredity, or their hard circumstances, or on the social order. If we were only all born of good families and had pleasant

homes and fashionable clothes and plenty to eat and little to do, we would all be good. But this theory was tried out in this garden and it did not work out well.

There was nothing the matter with the heredity of Eve or with the social order of that garden; they sinned in spite of their own innocence and of the abundance and beauty of their world.

No one can shift the burden of his sin to his heredity or his circumstances or to others, for no one ever sins until he consents and in the consent lies the sin.

A swift sense of guilt swept like a flame of fire into the souls of these guilty people.

Their eyes were opened, but they saw, not with the eyes of God as they had been promised, but with the eyes of the devil. They knew good as a blessing had gone from them, and evil as a curse had come upon them. They got more than they bargained for.

The remorse that follows sin is often something terrible.

The deed that at first looked attractive and sweet is now found to be repulsive and exceeding bitter. The rosy hue of the apple now burns like a coal of hell fire. The illusion of sin has gone and its fearful reality is felt.

Their unconscious nakedness suddenly turned to a burning sense of guilty shame. The soul that carries with it a guilty secret sees guilt reflected in everything around it. The most innocent things seem to be pointing at it the finger of suspicion. It is pitiful to see these guilty people trying to cover their shame with fig leaves, but there is no depth or corner of the universe where the guilty soul can hide its shame from itself or escape the judgment of God, except at the foot of the cross of Christ.

There and there only can sinners "lose all their guilty stains."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Does modern psychology throw any helpful light on sin?
2. Do our heredity and environment and social order modify our sin and guilt?

3. Has Satan invented any new weapons of temptation since this first temptation?
4. Is our responsibility and our guilt deeper than in the case of these first human beings?
5. In what sense is every day a day of judgment?
6. Is God's mercy as wide and deep as our most wicked and guilty sin? What light does this throw on God's permission of evil?

LESSON III—APRIL 17

The Call of Abram

Lesson: Genesis 12:1-9.

Golden Text: *Be thou a blessing.* Genesis 12:2.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Making Life an Adventure.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Conquering Power of Faith.

Lesson Text: Genesis 12:1-9

1 Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram went, as Jehovah 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 Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. A Call to a Far Country.**
- 2. Rough Root with Rich Blossoms.**
- 3. Unquestioning Obedience.**
- 4. Household and Substance.**
- 5. Disillusionment!**
- 6. A Great Promise.**

Abraham steps upon the stage as one of the epochal figures of history.

In him we come to a new method of redemption.

The plan of washing the planet clean of its wickedness in a universal flood had been tried, but it did not drown the old Serpent of sin, and the bow in the cloud was a pledge that it should not be used again. One man faithful to God was now to be called out and kept separate from the idolatrous world, and his descendants were to be guarded and trained as a chosen nation, a peculiar people, and through them should come a Redeemer mighty to save and finally in him all the world should be blessed.

In this plan outer mechanical means changing circumstances give way to inner moral means changing the heart.

The material is superseded by the spiritual. This is a deep principle of the divine working: first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual.

We have here the beginning of the Jewish race, that strange and wonderful people that are separate from the world to this day.

The work of redemption is here called off from the world at large and narrowed down to a select race for a limited time and a special purpose; not that the rest of the world should be excluded from grace, but that a righteous seed should be preserved from utter destruction and that in the fulness of time salvation might come to all the ends of the earth.

God first made sure of one man in order at length to save all men. A fence is put around a wheatfield, not to keep it from people, but to keep it for people.

1. A Call to a Far Country.

The call came to Abraham to go out of his own country into a far land, he knew not where.

The call suddenly uprooted his whole life, wrenching him away from country and kindred.

His native land and scenes and associations were dear to him, but they were all to be cut off and left behind by this call. The European emigrant has this trying experience in leaving his country for some distant and strange land, but he is young and is driven out by tyranny and poverty

and is lured into a land of freedom and splendid attractions. Abraham was now seventy-five years old, yet he was to tear himself loose and push out into the desert towards an unknown country.

There must have been some imperative necessity for this call: what was it?

Abraham was now the one man in the world that had a living faith in the one true God, a strong grip on monotheism in the midst of a polytheistic world.

This faith was of such vital importance that it had to be preserved at any cost. To save Abraham and all the world it was necessary to isolate him and safeguard him from idolatrous infection. This was a radical remedy, but it was the only one that would work.

Christians must still come out of the world in spirit. We cannot save the world by being like the world; and we cannot thus be saved ourselves.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.

2. Rough Root with Rich Blossoms

On the hard-knotted root of this call grew a rich cluster of promises.

For loss of country, Abraham was to become the founder of a great nation; for loss of earthly goods God would give him spiritual blessings and his name should be crowned with fame.

There would be such union and identity of Abraham with God that whoever touched the one touched the other and would be repaid in kind.

The good man has God behind him.

Thus Abraham not only would be blessed himself, but he should be a blessing to others, unconsciously radiating holy influences on all around, and in the wide sweep of his power all the families of the earth should be made better by him. Thus for all his loss Abraham was to receive marvelous compensation.

When God takes anything from us he always puts some better thing in its place.

For every material loss there is some richer spiritual gain. God never routs us out of a comfortable nest simply to get us out and make us uncomfortable; his calls are to wider service, larger life, purer joy. Great calls to duty are always topped out with great promises.

God does not ask us to serve him for nothing while the devil is offering big pay.

Men must have great rewards to spur them on to high endeavor and noble victory. All the great achievements of the world have been born of great hopes. It was a splendid star of gold that hung glittering over the East that lured Columbus across the unknown, horror-infested Atlantic. Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. The command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is completed and crowned with the transcendent promise, "and thou shalt be saved." We are not to serve God for pay, but out of loyal service to him will come great rewards.

This promise to Abraham has been grandly fulfilled. If he had stayed in Haran he would long since have been lost among the forgotten millions of that buried civilization, but coming out from them he became one of the most influential and famous men of all time.

3. Unquestioning Obedience

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him": there is something sublime in this calm statement.

Dropping the old life without debate or delay, he departed as the Lord had spoken.

"By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed."

Faith was the powerful mainspring of this heroic action.

Abraham did not know whither he was going, but he knew that the Lord was leading him. He did not ask to see the distant scene: one step enough for him. There was no gap between his creed and his conduct, his call and his coming, but the two coincided and made one music.

The great need of our lives is to keep our conduct abreast of our conscience.

Too often these get separated as conduct lags behind conscience and we do not do what we know we ought to do.

The Lord had spoken to us and we know his will: now let us have brave faith to do his will, though it be to leave pleasant things behind and push out into the unknown desert.

4. Household and Substance

Abraham took with him his household and his substance. Wife and kindred and servants must already in some degree have shared his faith, and he was able to take them with him out of the old life of idolatry into the new life of faith in the one true God.

The Christian is not to go alone into the kingdom.

Jesus finds Philip, and then Philip finds Nathanael. Thus the golden chain has had link after link added to it until it has lengthened down to us and some one found you and me.

It is now our duty to find the next one and keep the chain extending until it binds Christ's first with his final coming.

Especially should each one endeavor to lead his own household into the kingdom. These natural ties of blood are powerful means of drawing our loved ones with us into the Christian life, and God does not mean that being so closely bound together in this world we should be separated in the next.

Abraham took not only his family but also "all their substance that they had gathered": they left nothing behind, devoting all that they had along with themselves to the new life of faith.

Our substance also should go with us into the new life and service of the kingdom of God.

Zacchaeus emptied his pockets of all that he had at the feet of Christ. Conversion has not struck clear through us until it has penetrated into our pockets and seized our pocketbook and bank accounts. If we hold back part of this price for our selfish use and enjoyment, we may go into the same class with Ananias and Sapphira.

All that we have belongs to Christ and must be taken out of the service of idolatry and the world and be used for his glory.

5. Disillusionment!

The long journey is over, and suddenly the scene shifts to the promised land, and what is the first thing we read? "And the Canaanite was then in the land."

Does not the statement startle us and seem to mock Abraham's faith? Instead of getting out of idolatry he had gotten into it worse than ever!

Instead of finding a richer country he had found a rocky strip of coast. He had left an old and splendid civilization for half-civilized tribes. Did it ever enter the old man's heart that his faith was an illusion and delusion and that he had been fooled and had made a blunder?

No, he had not made a mistake because God had made no mistake.

Abraham was separated from idolatry in the new scenes as he could not have been in the old, and the new country was rich in possibilities and had a great future.

God in blessing us is looking far ahead.

Nevertheless Abraham was not yet free from temptation and trial. The Canaanite was there to endanger and vex him, and he still had battles to fight and plenty of hard work to do.

Wherever we go we shall find the Canaanite in the land.

Disillusionment still awaits us at the end of many a promising pathway, and through disappointment and trial must we ever win our way to the heights of victory. God may change our place and work, but wherever he drops us down we shall have temptations to resist, disappointments to meet, and hardships to bear. Jesus went up from his baptism and ran right into a desperate struggle with the devil, and wherever we go the devil of temptation and trial will follow us and put our faith and courage to the test.

But do we want to live a life of ease and idleness, or of heroism and victory?

If we want to live a jelly-fish life and never develop a backbone and have power to help shape the world and wear a crown, then let us seek a

country and place where no temptation is to be found: but there is no such place in this world.

Wherever we go we shall find "the Canaanite in the land."

6. A Great Promise

One presence, however, Abraham did find in the new country: God! "And Jehovah appeared unto Abram."

His presence sustained and cheered the weary pilgrim's heart.

And there Jehovah renewed his great promise unto Abraham: "Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah." If Abraham had any discouragement at the outlook of things in the new land, this renewed promise would encourage him, and he immediately set about consecrating the land to the worship of Jehovah.

He kindled a light in the darkness of the idolatry in which he found himself.

He set up an altar that daily bore witness to the Canaanites of a better faith and a truer God.

He strengthened his own faith by imparting it to others.

However far we travel we cannot get outside of God's presence and providence, and he will appear unto us.

The altar should be set central and first in our lives.

It is the foundation and core of all ownership and prosperity and blessing and radiates its divine influence over all our possessions and thoughts and deeds.

The Christian faith is the great adventure of this world. "It is betting," in the language of Charles Frohman, "that there is a God."

Life with us is a constant pilgrimage.

Our habitations are only tents pitched for one little day and must soon be removed. Wherever we are today, we shall be elsewhere tomorrow. Move on we must, for here we have no continuing city.

But we look for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Compare the emigration of Abraham with that of the Pilgrims.
2. Give other instances in Scripture of how hard duties resulted in great blessings.
3. Illustrate unquestioning obedience from the life of Jesus and of Paul.
4. Give some Scripture teaching on the subject of our substance.
5. What great disillusionment did the Jews experience in their hope of a Messiah?
6. What is the place and power of an altar of worship in our lives?

LESSON IV—APRIL 24

Abram's Generosity to Lot

Lesson: Genesis 13.

Golden Text: In honor preferring one another. Romans 12:10.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 133.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: An Adventure in Friendship.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Too Generous to Quarrel.

Lesson Text: Genesis 13:5-15

5 And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou take* the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before

Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar.

11 So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly.

14 And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seeest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Prosperity.**
- 2. Strife.**
- 3. Peaceful Settlement.**
- 4. Lot's Choice.**
- 5. Prospect and Promise.**

Abraham, emigrant out of Haran into Canaan, is having experiences common to such pioneers. He ran into strange racial and religious conditions that involved him in temptation and trial and he may have thought that he made a mistake in his adventure.

However his confidence and courage were sustained by his assurance that he had a divine call and was under divine guidance.

And so he built an altar and continued to worship and trust Jehovah his God. Presently things began to take a turn for the better, and our lesson opens with the statement that "Lot also, who went with Abraham, had flocks, and herds, and tents."

1. Prosperity

Abraham is the first rich man mentioned in the Bible. He was a sheik or prince with a considerable number of dependents. Soon after this time he was able to put three hundred and eighteen men of war into the field, so that he must have had twelve or fifteen hundred persons in his following, and wherever he pitched his tents a considerable town of black tents quickly arose.

Abraham's wealth, so far as we know, was honestly obtained and bears an honorable testimony to him.

It was not gained by robbery or speculation or by any process that enriched him at the expense of others. His gain was not another man's loss, but was a positive addition to the community's wealth. He had reared cattle, oxen and sheep and asses and camels, and thus increased the stock of these useful animals; and he had distributed these goods among others while they had enriched him with money and merchandise. Thus no man that dealt with Abraham was poorer on that account, but every man was richer, while many that had no personal relations with him were benefited by his presence in the land.

Abraham's wealth bore testimony to his ability as a producer and manager, to his foresight and thrift, industry and energy, and to his honesty and honor. Such a man is himself the richest wealth of the community in which he lives, for it is from such men that wealth springs.

Rich men have their rightful place and use in the world and are necessary to its welfare.

There is no little popular prejudice against this class, because some of them get rich by defrauding others, and some use their wealth in wasteful and harmful ways. But rich men as a class are leaders in production, capitalists and captains who organize and manage industry in the most profitable way, and thus multiply the world's goods and lift the level of its comfort. They are not as a class parasites that suck the blood out of the social organism, but men whose superior abilities not only make themselves rich but benefit all.

It is senseless and wrong to declaim against rich men as a class, for they are necessary factors in the world's development and welfare, and we would all be poorer without them.

2. Strife

Prosperity in time came to Abraham and his company, but prosperity breeds new conditions and dangers, and these now began to appear. Presently Abraham and Lot, his nephew, were growing rich as their flock and retainers were increasing, and "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together."

There was growing difficulty in finding pasture for the multiplying herds, and the pressure of the land began to pinch.

This difficulty is constantly emerging in old countries where population is ever crowding on the land. This forces emigration and sends colonies out in search of new lands. Thus arises the colonial system of old countries, such as England, by which they obtain an outlet abroad for the surplus population at home.

This problem of land is the cause of many conflicts and lawsuits among individuals, and it is at the bottom of many international complications and wars.

Every nation, with its population pressing on its resources, is likely to think of and demand "a place in the sun" for its multiplying people and may resort to arms to get it. This precipitated "strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle." Thus their increasing prosperity was attended with competition and strife and stirred up a family quarrel. As long as they were only moderately well off they dwelt together in peace, but when they became rich they fell out.

How often has this been the story of increasing wealth? How many business firms has it dissolved, families has it disrupted, nations has it brought into collision and dreadful war?

Poverty often enjoys peace that sudden prosperity turns to strife.

3. Peaceful Settlement

Shall this quarrel down among herdsmen spread upward until it involves the heads of these families and thus kindles the whole house in flames? How often does a quarrel that starts among children or even servants end in widespread social strife or deadly feud? Or how often does strife over the division of the products of industry result in strikes and riots threatening to disrupt society?

Who can avert this result? Somebody can always do it. Who did it in this case? Abraham.

We can generally depend on Abraham to do the right thing at the right time. How did he settle this incipient strife? By two simple means.

First, by the brotherly spirit in which he approached his opponent.

“Let there be no strife,” he said, “between me and thee, and between thy herdsmen and my herdsmen; for we are brethren.” That simple appeal to their kinship at once put them in pleasant relations and promised a speedy and amicable settlement of the difficulty.

How much depends, in our relation with others, on the light in which we view them and the spirit in which we approach them?

If we regard a man simply as a customer, we may try to exploit him and get all we can out of him. If we regard him as a competitor or rival, we may be alert to take advantage of him and get the better of him. If we regard him as an enemy we may be full of hatred against him and watch our chance to strike him. But if we regard him as our brother, our whole attitude and feeling towards him will change and we shall be sympathetic towards him and desire to do him good.

If men would only regard one another as brothers how many quarrels would be quickly settled and how much strife would be averted?

War itself would mostly or altogether cease if international problems were approached and solved in this spirit. All men are our brethren, and

we should view and treat them as such. All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them.

Abraham's second means of settling this strife was concession.

He proposed that Lot take his choice of the land first and he would take what was left. Abraham was the elder of the two and he had been the pioneer in the emigration and no doubt had contributed most to their prosperity, and especially as the head of the house it was his right to take first choice.

Yet he did not insist upon this right and present an unyielding front, but he receded far within his rights and gave Lot plenty of room in which to choose.

Stubbornness would have fanned this flame into a hot fire, but concession quenched it. Many quarrels are caused or at least inflamed by one or both sides insisting on a right or claim with pig-headed obstinacy. A reasonable spirit of give and take would have averted the quarrel and settled the matter peacefully.

Nothing is so costly as a fight, and we should pay almost any price short of violating our own conscience for the sake of peace.

This principle applies to our private relations and industrial problems and a large share of this spirit would arbitrate and stop strikes and wars and compose them into peace.

4. Lot's Choice

Lot looked the ground over and chose the plain of Jordan, a well-watered and fertile region where were flourishing cities and civilization. With its alluvial soil and its streams it was the richest portion of the country and Lot took the best.

In doing so he showed his own selfishness and abused Abraham's generosity.

Being the younger member of the house he should have put some restraint on his ambition and taken a part more in keeping with his rank; and having been trusted by Abraham to make the first choice he should have shown himself worthy of such fair and generous treatment and taken a more modest portion. But he went the full limit of his privilege and took the richest part.

Yet time works its own retribution, and this selfish choice of Lot led to his undoing.

The corruption of the cities of the plain infected and ruined his own family, and he himself had to flee to the mountains for his life.

It is even so yet. Many a rural family that becomes rich forsakes its country heritage and goes to the city and there its wealth is dissipated and its members, especially its young people, go astray and are wrecked.

To Abraham was left the hill country. It was a comparatively rocky and barren ridge of broken mountains, and it looked as though Abraham had been cheated.

Yet he developed its resources and turned that mountain into fruitful fields and it made him stronger and richer than ever.

Presently when a coalition of kings from the East came sweeping down the Jordan valley and captured Lot and his followers, Abraham assembled a little army and took after them and caught them and forced them to give up Lot and to disgorge their loot (Chapter 14). The old man stood head and shoulders above his soft weakling nephew and was master of the situation.

Beware of the man from the hill country and rocky soil: he has some of that rock in his blood and bones and will carry all before him when he comes into conflict with the soft men of the plain.

And let us beware that in the choices we make we do not demand the best portion or seek a soft place, lest we go the way of Lot.

5. Prospect and Promise

With his rocky ridge Abraham received a marvelous compensation. No sooner was he separated from Lot and Lot had gone down into the Jordan valley than Abraham was bidden: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever." Abraham was now on a mountain height where he could sweep a far horizon and see vastly more than Lot could see down in his valley.

Get up to the heights when you would see visions of breadth and splendor.

The great things of life may not lie near at hand but rather far off. Take a long look and a far sweep when you would see your best inheritance.

This promise had a near promise in that Abraham did possess the land in a measure, but its real fulfilment reached forward into the future of his race, and surely God has given to him and his seed a portion infinitely outmeasuring and outweighing any strip of material land.

We should make a choice that is wise for our children and our vision should so forecast the years that we can reap the far-off interest of our faith.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What are some causes of the enormous increase of wealth in our day?
2. How can we discriminate between right and wrong means of getting wealth and between right and wrong ways of spending it?
3. Why is there so much strife in the world?
4. Name some means and methods by which we can generally settle our quarrels peaceably.
5. Name some great promises that we have.

LESSON V—MAY 1

Isaac and His Wells

Lesson: Genesis 26:12-25.

Golden Text: *A soft answer turneth away wrath; but a grievous word stirreth up anger.* Proverbs 15:1.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:1-12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Stop Quarrels.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How World Peace Is to Be Established.

Lesson Text: Genesis 26:12-25

12 And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and Jehovah blessed him.

13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great:

14 And he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him.

15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the

valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.

21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

24 And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Isaac Man of Peace.

2. New Wells.

3. Old Wells Dug Out.**4. Old Wells and Religion.****5. The Philistines.**

One generation goeth and another generation cometh. We pass from Abraham to Isaac, from father to son, and the same general story is repeated, for there is nothing essentially new under the sun.

The land of the Philistines in Southwestern Palestine was a flat, sandy region where water was scarce and a well was one of the most precious possessions, a chief form of wealth, a source of life itself. Isaac at this time was down on these plains with his flocks.

It was a hard country in which to find a living, but Abraham had been there before him and that made it easier for his son Isaac.

Life is always vastly easier for us because our fathers have been before us and left us the fruits of their toil and we are entered into their labors.

1. Isaac Man of Peace

Our lesson opens with a beautiful pastoral scene in which Isaac is in the midst of great prosperity. His crops are yielding him a hundred fold, his flocks are multiplying into large herds, his household has grown into a great establishment with many servants, and he has become an important man in the region.

Such prosperity was then regarded as the mark and measure of divine blessing, as indeed honest prosperity is always in some degree due to divine laws.

But it also drew upon Isaac the envy of the Philistines, his pagan neighbors, and they devised measures for driving him out of the country. They filled up the old wells of Abraham and shut off Isaac's water supply.

Destruction of property as a means of forcing rivals out of business or of settling disputes has been resorted to down to our day.

There was no general government and law to which Isaac could look for defence of his rights, and so it was a case of fight or fly.

Isaac was by nature a man of peace and chose the latter way.

He moved his establishment to another part of the country where Abraham had been and dug out his old wells. But the Philistines followed

him and again he was driven by force from his water supply. A second and a third time Isaac moved his camp and at the third settlement he was unmolested and "for that they strove not."

Some would disapprove of Isaac's policy and even denounce him as a coward and maintain that he should have stood his ground for his rights.

But he had to judge of what was the wisest course, and the outcome seems to justify his decision.

Every such situation must be judged by itself in the light of the circumstances. There may come a time when we must stand on our rights and use every lawful means of enforcing them, but we should always seek the way of peace and often it is best to be patient and yield much rather than resort to law or war. "Blessed are the peacemakers, and "if it is possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men."

The world is now trying to work forward towards this peaceful settlement of all questions.

2. New Wells

Our lesson brings before us the question of old wells and new and we may follow this central line in this story.

We have grown somewhat suspicious of old wells in our day. New things are the cry of the hour.

Progress is rushing forward very rapidly and leaving old things behind. Is it up to date, is it the latest fashion? is now one of the most imperious questions of life. It is said that even religion does not give a woman a sense of comfort quite so perfect as the consciousness that she is dressed in the newest style; and this feeling is by no means confined to women.

New discoveries and theories in science, new inventions, new books, new ideas and methods in business, new principles and policies in government, new engines of destruction in war,—the whole world of human interests is in a process of rapid and often radical change.

Religion, of course, cannot escape this process.

We hear of new methods of church work and worship, new ideas about the Bible and all the doctrines of religion, new sects and new religions.

Many of the old wells with old names are being abandoned, and there is a general spirit of unrest and disposition to dig new wells with new names.

This general spirit, it need not be said, is right and good.

This is the motive power that drives the wheels of progress. The world must have new wells with new names, and there must be adventurous men to dig them.

Let us not be afraid of this process and try to impede it, but let us trust it and push it on.

But the process needs to be guided and guarded.

It may make mistakes. It may run after the flashy and false because it is new, when the old is better.

It may go about digging new wells, when what is needed is that the old wells should be cleaned out, and then they will be found to contain abundance of sweet water.

3. Old Wells Dug Out

Isaac did this: "dugged again the wells of water, which they digged in the days of Abraham his father." He did not think his father was an old foggy who did not know anything about wells and that the old wells with such ridiculous names were out of date and that he would show a progressive spirit and advanced ideas by digging new wells and giving them new and fashionable names. But he hunted up the old wells and dug them out and called them by the old names his father had called them, and found they still yielded pure water that refreshed and sustained his family and flocks.

When we come to think of it, are not the old things worth much more to us than the new after all?

For instance, the sun is not a modern novelty, but the electric light is: which is best? If we could have only one, which of these would we give up and which would we keep? We could institute similar comparisons between the old and the new at a thousand points. Water is very old compared with any other drink, and is it not still incomparably the best? Bread is about the oldest food in the world, and it is still the staff

of life. Strawberries are a modern product of cultivation and are very delicious in their season, but they could never take the place of the old-fashioned loaf.

One of the first human inventions was the hammer, and one of the latest marvels is the telephone. Yet the hammer is still more useful to the world than the telephone and between the two we would still be forced to choose the hammer; because hammers make telephones, but telephones cannot make hammers and cannot be made without them. The wagon still renders more service to the world than the locomotive.

The scientist, the poet and the painter are not interested in new things nearly as much as they are in old things. When they begin to study and write and paint they nearly always dig out some old well; the rocks as old as creation buried deep in the earth, or the old trees and flowers that grew and blossomed when the world was young.

We get our purest and most lasting enjoyments out of old wells.

New things may be gaudy and glaring in their attractions; the excitement and rush of the city, the show of fashion, the glitter of wealth, highly spiced pleasures—these seem to promise much; but they soon satiate the senses and are found to be weariness and vanity, bitter water.

When we would find pleasures that will satisfy us and last we must go back to old and simple things, the old fields and woods and the old oaken bucket at the well, the old books, and above all the old friends and the old home.

4. Old Wells and Religion

You see whither this line of thought has brought us.

The old wells in religion are the best.

Whatever new things are discovered in religion that are true and useful—and there are such discoveries—we are to welcome and accept and use. We care not how novel and strange and startling they are, if they are true and good, let us have them.

But any new truth that may be discovered cannot disprove or dispense with the old truth, and as we have seen that the most fundamental and useful things in invention and art are old, so have the most fundamental doctrines and virtues in religion been known and used from ancient times.

The old wells of salvation have ever contained these essential things of the spirit and they are still vital.

Here is the Bible. It is a very old book. Is that anything against it? The best books, it has been said, are the newest in science and the oldest in literature. Homer and Shakespeare are literature, and these old poets are still glorious suns in the literary firmament compared with whom the passing poets of the day are vanishing meteors.

Prayer is one of the oldest wells of religion, and it is still one of the most vital. The old and simple graces of Christian character, faith and reverence and righteousness, sympathy and love, service and sacrifice, kindness and courtesy—are not these the highest and finest attainments and treasures of life?

And Christ as Teacher and Lord and Saviour—has any one yet arisen to displace him from his central and supreme place in our world, has his well of water run dry or ceased to give eternal life?

These things, Bible and prayer, Christian character and Christ, are no modern novelty or passing fashion, but are old wells whose waters gush from the Rock of Ages.

If we want water that will satisfy and strengthen and save us, we must not run simply after new things, digging little shallow holes in the sand of this world, but we must dig out these old wells and drink of this water of salvation.

5. The Philistines

Isaac digged again the wells of water, “for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham.”

How often are the wells of religion stopped after father dies?

Many read their Bibles and go to church and pray and try to live a Christian life as long as father and mother live; but after they die, somehow they lose interest in these things and cease to drink of these old wells until they “are filled with earth.”

The Philistines stopped them after the death of Abraham.

They did not dare to do this while that grand old man was alive, but they were not afraid of his weak if not cowardly son.

The devil is always waiting for some good man or men to die so that he can do some evil he does not dare do while they are alive.

Do not be so weak and cowardly as to let your father's wells of religion be filled up! He spent his life in digging them; stand by them and keep them open.

The Philistines stopped them. They filled and choked them "with earth," with sand and rocks and mud.

Are there not still Philistines among us filling up the wells of salvation? Yes.

What are they? First, business. What a Philistine it often is, how imperious it is in demanding our time and attention, perhaps trampling upon our very principles and conscience; how it fills our thoughts in church and keeps us away from the place of prayer, how it throws sand and dirt into this well until it is choked and full?

Watch your business that it does not stop up your well of religion.

Greed is another coarse and fleshly Philistine, measuring everything by money, crushing all the finer sensibilities and aspirations of the spirit and trampling the well of salvation full of earth. The madness of amusement and pleasure, the lusts of the flesh—is not this the coarsest and most ruthless Philistine of all? What virtue or decency does it respect, what holy well will it not fill with its filth?

So our wells must be watched and kept cleaned out. Let us ever come back to these old wells of God's Word and prayer and faith and obedience and keep them dug out and in constant use, and we shall find them full of pure sweet water that will ever refresh and strengthen us, and more and more will prove itself the water of life, even that which flows bright as crystal by the throne of God.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. When is prosperity to be ascribed to the blessing of God?
2. Is there any single rule by which we can determine when to stand for our rights and when to yield them?
3. What is the test by which we are to try new things?
4. Give reasons why old things in religion are best.

LESSON VI—MAY 8

Esau Sells His Birthright (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Genesis 25:27-34.

Golden Text: Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. I Corinthians 9:25.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 12:14-17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Controlling Our Appetites.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Indulgence or Self-Control?

Lesson Text: Genesis 25:27-34

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint:

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Two Brothers.*
2. *Esau Sells His Birthright.*
3. *The Lack of Self-Control.*
4. *The Failure of Foresight.*

This lesson is the story of two brothers. They were twins, so closely were they related in parentage and birth and heredity.

Yet diversity marked them deeply in all their characteristics, physical, mental and spiritual.

1. Two Brothers

Let us look at these two brothers more in detail.

Esau was an expert hunter, a man of the open and the wild: Jacob was a man of settled habits dwelling in tents.

One was a free, light-hearted man of roving disposition and generous warm heart, a man of impulse, seeking immediate gratification, careless of tomorrow with its consequences: the other had a long head and looked into the future.

One was a lover of pleasure and sport and scattered with a free hand: the other had a cold and calculating instinct and was the father of the modern money-maker.

Yet their deepest difference was spiritual: Esau was earthy and worldly in his nature; Jacob had a vein of spirituality in his soul and dreamed of angels.

The beginning of the story dates far back, as all beginnings do. It is a story of family division and strife and such a story has the elements of the darkest tragedy.

Each of these two boys was a favorite, the elder of the father, and the younger of the mother.

Curiously enough, Esau, who had in him more of his mother's worldly nature, was the favorite of the father, and Jacob, who had in him more of his father's religious nature, was the favorite of his mother.

There is often no accounting for such likes and dislikes, secret attractions or repulsions of blood that bind or sunder us in the home and the world.

2. Esau Sells His Birthright

The selling of the birthright was a critical day in the lives of these two brothers. Esau was the elder by virtue of his slight precedence into the world, but Jacob followed so close after his brother that he grabbed his heel—a prophetic instinct and act.

Esau by virtue of this birth had the right of primogeniture, which made him the successor of his father as the head of the family, as prophet, priest and king. Jacob coveted this right from which he was forever shut out by the accident of only a moment in his birth. Esau, however, by reason of his nature did not prize or appreciate his birthright. To him it seemed an unimportant and shadowy thing, not worth an hour's pleasure in an exciting hunt or a good dinner. Herein lay the real cause of his selling his birthright so lightly.

He had already sold it many times in his careless life before he flung it down at Jacob's feet.

One day he came in tired and hungry from the hunt and found Jacob in the very act of preparing a smoking appetizing dish of red lentils, and he exclaimed, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint."

His impulsive, thoughtless, sensual nature leaped out in that speech.

Cunning Jacob saw his chance, knew his brother's weakness and was quick to see and seize his opportunity. So he said with an air of careless indifference, "Sell me thy birthright," as much as to say, "that trifling thing that is of no particular importance to you or to anybody."

Esau fell into the trap. In his extravagant style of speech he exclaimed that he was dying of hunger and his birthright was of no practical value anyway. And so the bargain was struck. Jacob, making sure of his prize, made his brother swear to the sale, and in a moment the fatal deed was done. Jacob gained his coveted ambition, but he did it by deception.

The stronger brother took advantage of the weaker, which is a prevailing form of dishonesty.

Esau enjoyed his momentary pleasure of appetizing broth, and Jacob had the coveted birthright.

This ancient history is repeating itself every day in many a home and life. We have various birthrights, Christian ancestry and homes, the Bible and church, Christian education, privileges and opportunities, the gospel of Christ, and how often are these not appreciated and are neglected and flung away and even trampled under foot of those who despise them for the sake of this world's goods or the pleasure of an hour?

Our Christian birthright is our supreme inheritance and we are guilty of great blindness and folly if we carelessly let it slip from our hands for such a cheap price.

And many and cunning are the traps and tricks and deceptions by which men take advantage of one another and win gains by unrighteous means. Esau "did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright."

Of how many a life is this statement a true epitome? It condenses into a flash of light the whole course and end of many a worldly man.

3. *The Lack of Self-Control*

We are studying a temperance lesson and this story lets us see down to some of the roots of the vice of intemperance. Why do men go or drift into this dissipation?

One fundamental reason is the lack of the exercise of self-control.

We are a compound of various diverse elements in our nature, physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual. These do not always coincide in their desires and sometimes fall into warring factions.

Yet the strength of one's personality depends upon and is measured by his degree of self-control by which all his powers are concentrated into one stream and purpose to which all elements are subordinated.

The power of an army is measured by its ability to keep rank and march under one command. At the first battle of Bull Run 12,000 Union soldiers became disorganized on the field and then fled in a panic. No braver men ever marched into battle, but because they were not under control they went to pieces and were slaughtered in their flight.

Each one of us is a little army with all our faculties and passions: we can control them and then they will march with unitary discipline and power, or we can let them divide and distract us, or let the lower usurp the higher ones, and then we shall go to pieces.

What is the matter with the dissipated man? He is not master of himself and is subject to every gust of passion that blows. He cannot keep himself in control and yields to the temptation of the moment.

Professor William James in his *Psychology* has a powerful passage in which he depicts the mind of a drunkard wrestling with temptation in the presence of strong drink. He argues with himself that it is Christmas and Christmas comes but once a year, or that it is only one drink and one doesn't count, and so he yields, whereas if he would only fix his mind on the idea that taking that drink is just being a drunkard and

nothing else, he might master himself and turn from the drink. The thing that is the matter with the drunkard, the tramp, the lazy loafer, the passionate man of quick and violent temper is this lack of self-control by which he should keep all his powers, especially his warring desires, under the control and whip of the will as motivated by some master idea.

Esau was literally led about by his nose, his smell mastered his soul, and so he sold the birthright for less than a song; whereas if he had only concentrated his attention on what he was doing he could have brought his sense of smell under subjection to his will and not have followed his nose but made his nose follow him.

All our senses are possible masters and will control and ruin us if we do not control them; and the way to master them is to have some dominant idea and motive that we can intensify until it becomes stronger than drink or any other assault on the senses and crowns us with self-control and victory.

4. The Failure of Foresight

Another form of Esau's weakness was his failure of foresight. He did not look ahead and foresee and vividly realize the consequences of his act in selling the birthright. He considered and was governed by his immediate appetite, carried away by the gust of a momentary desire, and did not look ahead and count the future cost.

This cost in his case was a long time in being paid and cast a shadow over his whole future life: ever thereafter was he the poorer as he sank to a lower place in the family and occupied a menial position.

His pitiful fate is vividly depicted by the writer of the Hebrews who warns his readers that there be not among them "a profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears." We may imagine the long days and nights the disillusioned and unhappy Esau spent in meditating over his failure of foresight and his folly in thus gratifying the appetite of a moment at the expense of so long and so poignant a loss.

Tears could not erase the guilt of his folly or restore his loss; he paid a heavy price for his brief pleasure.

This is one of the causes of sin in all its forms: it is partly due to a momentary yielding which would have been restrained by a proper consideration of its consequences. Nearly always a man in temptation before he actually does the evil thing persuades himself that it is right in the circumstances, at least "this once," and so he takes a chance regardless of the future price and penalty that must be paid. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death."

The Scriptures frequently warn us against "the end" of sin and bid us take a long look.

This long look is one of the broadest and deepest differences between man and the beast. The beast always lives in the present moment: "the present only toucheth it," but man has the power of foresight and can often forecast how things are going to come out.

One of the most fatal fascinations of sin is that it can blind our foresight and make us oblivious to tomorrow and the long days to come under the spell of some momentary passion or gain or pleasure.

The intoxicating cup has this power almost more than any other temptation.

It wreathes itself in roses of pleasure that excite the appetite to the point, it may be, of a delirium of desire that overmasters all deeper voices and warnings of future consequences, and then it pours its poison into the blood and does its fatal work. The very next morning its victim may wake up with a sense of remorse that eats like fire into his very soul.

But presently this sense of folly fades out and at the next temptation the same folly is committed, and this process goes on until a chain is forged about the drunkard that strong crying and tears cannot break. The time to crush this crocodile is while it is in the egg.

The habit of forecasting consequences is one strong safeguard against this dreadful bondage.

Esau thus illustrates two causes of falling into habits of yielding to the temptations of sense, especially of gluttony and strong drink: the lack of self-control and the failure of foresight.

Every one of us should exercise and strengthen these two mental and moral safeguards of controlling the self and considering the end of all our choices and actions, whether or not we are exposed to the temptation of intoxicating drink. They are the inner armor of the soul that will make it invulnerable in the presence of any and every temptation and, wearing this crown, we shall stand erect and quit ourselves like men.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. Is there an Esau sleeping in every one of us?**
- 2. How can we develop and strengthen the power of self-control?**
- 3. How can we acquire the habit of always looking to the end of our actions?**
- 4. What is the place and power of law and prohibition in guarding men against this evil?**
- 5. Have you considered what would be the consequences of repealing our prohibition law?**

LESSON VII—MAY 15

Jacob at Bethel

Lesson: Genesis, chapters 27, 28.

Golden Text: *I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest.*
Genesis 28:15.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 139:1-12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Jacob Learned at Bethel.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Face to Face with God.

Lesson Text: Genesis 28:10-17

10 And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep.

12 And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

13 And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Jacob's Journey.*
- 2. Jacob's Dream.*
- 3. The Awakening.*
- 4. The Memorial and Vow.*

This scene in the life of Jacob throws light back upon his divine appointment to the birthright instead of Esau.

The earthly Esau had no eye for heavenly visions and never would have dreamed of angels.

With all his trickery and treachery, Jacob had in him spiritual affinities and possibilities. God is on the lookout for such men.

The sharp practice by which Jacob secured the birthright was followed up with a palpable fraud in which Rebekah and Jacob deceived blind old Isaac and obtained his blessing for Jacob (Chapter 27). On learning of this, Esau was furious and declared he would kill Jacob. This threat forced Jacob to fly, and, to escape Esau and also to obtain a wife among his kindred, he set out for Paddan-aram.

1. Jacob's Journey

He went out from Beer-sheba toward Haran. Out from home, away from its kindred and precious ties and associations, with the fury of a wronged brother behind him and four hundred and fifty miles of difficult and dangerous journey before him—this is what came of his rapacious bargain and cunning treachery. He had won the first place in the old man's will, but he had lost his home and was a wanderer in exile. Little did Rebekah know what she was doing when she sent her son out that day; she thought he would be gone only "a few days" (27:44), but she never saw him again.

Forty years' exile did not enter into their plans when they were plotting their treacherous scheme.

Jacob now began to find out that after all he had the worst of the bargain. Unholy gain may burn the hand that holds it. We may grasp some passionate ambition of selfishness and fraud, but it may kindle a fire behind us that will drive us into the desert. Judas betrayed his Master and got his money, but "he went out straightway: and it was night."

On the second or third evening of the journey Jacob was caught in the deepening twilight in a lonely place. The weary traveler lay down on the ground to sleep with a stone for a pillow.

It was a country of cliffs and from near where he lay a series of rocky shelves sloped up through the shadows like a mighty stairway and apparently leaned against the sky. It was no special hardship for a shepherd to spend the night in such a place, and yet this was not exactly what Jacob was thinking of when he was reaching after the birthright.

Yet God had led him there and he was near a marvelous blessing. From that stone pillow he saw angels.

God often leads us into a hard place, but only that he may show us some heavenly vision.

2. *Jacob's Dream*

Jacob dreamed, and behold a ladder reaching from earth to heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending on it. The sloping cliff or succession of hills stretching far away on which he had closed his eyes in falling asleep and which had carried his thoughts up to God may have been the physical basis and suggestion of this dream.

The dream itself, however, was a divine manifestation. The angels were the ministering spirits of God ever passing to and fro between heaven and earth to do his will. Thus Jacob knew that he was not forsaken and alone, but that the angels of God were encamping round about him.

This vision sheds a glory on the earth. Earth and heaven are not remote from and inaccessible to each other, but are in close touch and constant communication.

The universe is not simply a mass of dead matter or an iron machine ruthlessly grinding its way, but is alive with spirits. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.

The great realities are not the things that are seen but the things that are not seen.

This earth would be a pitifully narrow and insignificant place if it had no ladder connecting it with the sky. Life may start low down, but it should run up beyond the stars.

Every truer thought and better impulse is an angel of God to lead us up this ladder from the lowly earth to the vaulted skies and on to the throne of God.

Above the ladder stood the Lord Jehovah, who now renewed the covenant with Jacob with an exceedingly rich promise. The land was pledged to Jacob and his seed. He was now lying on it as an exiled wanderer, but one day it should be his.

The future estate of the child of God cannot be told from his present condition: the heir may be in exile.

Jacob's seed was to be multiplied as the dust of the earth and was to spread out to the four quarters of the globe.

Most comforting of all in the promise was the assurance, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee." Though Jacob had wronged man, yet God had not cast him off; though he had been driven from home, yet the Lord was with him; and through all his coming days and scenes the divine hand would guide and keep him.

Thus Jacob's hardship was turned to a great means of grace.

On that stone pillow he saw a vision and received a message that might never have come to him on the softest bed under his tent. No matter what hard circumstances we may be in, if we are in the Spirit we can see heavenly visions and hear the voice of God.

It is not a softer place we need, but opened eyes to see the angels that are ever ascending and descending before us.

Visions create victories. They lead us on and lure us up to higher and finer things. "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint" (Proverbs 29:18).

3. The Awakening

Jacob awaked and said, "Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not." Not, "Jehovah *was* in this place" when Abraham built his altar there, but "Jehovah *is* in this place." Jacob did not locate the Lord's presence back in Abraham's day only, but he knew that the Lord was then present with him.

He did not date all his religion in the past, but it was an ever present reality and experience with him.

When we think of the Lord as manifesting himself, we are apt to slip back into some ancient time and think of patriarchs and apostles.

We date the Holy Spirit two or three thousand years ago.

God is not God of the dead but of the living. He is with us as he was with Abraham and Jacob and all the prophets, and we do not need to go

far back to find and hear God, for his word is nigh us, even in our hearts (Romans 10:8).

Yet Jacob "knew him not." So we often think of God as far away, and are blind to him when he is near, closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.

How often are we looking far off for blessings when they are right at our hand!

Contentment is not to be found in some distant city or grand palace, where we think it is, but it must be found just where we are if we are ever to find it at all. We are ever living in the blaze of the splendor of God if we only had eyes to see his presence in stars and grass and in every turn and circumstance of providence.

God has put the great blessings of life near us, and no far journey or extraordinary opportunity is needed to find them. You may be looking far away, when "if thou knewest the gift of God, . . . thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10). "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18).

Jacob was overwhelmed with a sense of reverence, and that rocky place became the house of God and the gate of heaven. God is in the cathedral he himself has built, whose walls are the amphitheatre of the horizon and whose roof is the vast dome of the sky frescoed in blue and scarlet and gold by day and at night is fretted with stars hung in silver astral lamps.

We do not need to go to church to find God, though he may be specially manifested there: we can find him in the home, or in the place of business, or on the street, or in the groves which were his first temples and are still his dwelling place.

There is really no such distinction as sacred and secular, all things are divine and are trembling with God's presence and are ready to reveal his glory or speak with his voice.

"This is the very end of our spiritual education: to find God everywhere: never to open a rosebud without finding God; never to see the day whitening the Eastern sky without seeing the coming of the King's brightness; to feel that every place is praying ground and every speech is as pure as prayer; to renounce the idea of partial and official conse-

cration, and stand in a universe every particle of which is blessed and consecrated by the presence of the infinite Creator."

4. *The Memorial and Vow*

The stone pillow was set up as a memorial and consecrated with oil. This experience was too precious to be lost; and Jacob used means to fix and fasten it in his memory and prolong its influence in his life.

It takes material signs and outward acts to express and retain spiritual experiences.

While the spirit of worship finds God everywhere, yet it must have definite places and forms of expression, or it will evaporate into meaningless sentiment. To reject or neglect the forms of worship is to lose its spirit also. The form is nothing without the spirit, but the spirit is apt to be nothing without the form. The water is more important than the cup, but if we refuse the cup shall we get any water?

There are those who think that the church is too narrow for them and that they can worship better out under the stars. But such worship is apt to lose the sense of reality and cease to be a vital force.

The soul that finds God everywhere is the soul that builds an altar and has a definite place of worship, or presently it will find God nowhere.

Faith in Christ must express itself in confession of Christ. Our churches and noble cathedrals have been a powerful means of conserving and propagating our Christian religion and often they stand as sermons in stones preaching reverence and righteousness in the midst of our great cities.

We do well to build them solidly and adorn them beautifully that they may worthily house and express our faith.

Jacob's stone pillow became a memorial of the richest blessing he ever received.

The hard things of life may one day be seen to have been our best friends and God's kindest gifts.

The old heathen name, Luz, was changed to Bethel, House of God. Names must keep pace with things, new things demand new names, and

he that has experienced new faith and hope should take upon him the new name of Christ.

Jacob also sealed this experience with a solemn vow: "If Jehovah will be my God, then this stone . . . shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." This may smack of Jacob's bargaining spirit, but the meaning is that as God would be faithful unto Jacob, Jacob would be faithful unto God.

Life depends first upon what God does for us, and then upon what we do for God.

If we make God our God by faith and obedience, his life shall stream through us in unbroken fulness and sweetness.

Jacob in pledge of his vow laid on God's altar one tenth of all his possessions, which was no small and easy thing for him to do and was a thorough test of his consecration.

God is not the God of a man until he is also the God of his money.

If we first give our own selves unto the Lord, then shall we also freely give him all things. Though all the silver and gold and the cattle upon a thousand hills are the Lord's, yet he has committed these in trust into our hands and we are to administer them as his trustees.

This is a high honor he has bestowed upon us, and we should regard and administer it in the spirit of loyalty and love.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What effect do solitude and night have upon our thoughts?
2. Do dreams have any moral significance in our lives?
3. Are there any spirit communications now received from heaven?
4. What visions may we have in life?
5. What is the great Christian memorial and give its meaning.

LESSON VIII—MAY 22

Jacob and Esau Reconciled

Lesson: Genesis, chapters 32, 33.

Golden Text: Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 6:9-15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Righting a Wrong.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Cultivating Peace at Home and Abroad.

Lesson Text: Genesis 33:1-11

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

3 And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant.

6 Then the handmaids came near,

they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

7 And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

8 And he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, To find favor in the sight of my lord.

9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which thou hast be thine.

10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

11 Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Jacob Flies from One Trouble into Another.*
- 2. A Transformed Jacob.*
- 3. Precautions for Safety.*
- 4. Jacob's Meeting with Esau.*
- 5. Esau Declines Jacob's Gift.*
- 6. The Gift Accepted.*

Time has passed since Jacob slept on his stone pillow and saw the angels of God. From Bethel he journeyed to Paddan-aram and settled in the home of his uncle Laban. Here in time he got a wife—in fact he got one too many. In Laban, however, he met his match, and the same trick he played on his father Isaac, Laban played on him.

The heel-catcher was caught, the deceiver was deceived, paid back in his own coin. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.

Seven years he served for Rachel, when Laban palmed off on him her sister. Seven years more he served for Rachel, the idol of his heart, and thus he won her twice. Six years more he served for cattle.

Twenty years of intrigue and treachery thus passed between Laban and Jacob, and this was more than he was thinking of when he fled to his uncle's home.

1. Jacob Flies from One Trouble into Another

Jacob was now seventy-seven years old with two wives, eleven sons, and large flocks, a rich man. The growing friction with Laban, the yearning for the old home and a divine command combined to urge his return. Knowing there would be trouble in getting away from Laban, he fled in secret and, when overtaken, dictated terms with his angry uncle and father-in-law.

No sooner was he free from one trouble behind him than another loomed up before him. He had escaped Laban, but now he must meet Esau.

Twenty years had not obliterated the wrong he had done his brother in defrauding him of his birthright.

As he drew near the border of his homeland, he sent messengers to interview Esau and discover the situation. The messengers returned and reported that Esau was approaching with four hundred armed men.

Jacob and his company were thrown into a panic. Esau's time had come. Retribution was about to strike. But crafty Jacob, fertile in resources, did not lose his head. He hastily divided his people into two bands in the hope that, if one were captured, the other might escape. It is an interesting situation and we shall see how Jacob slips out of the net.

2. A Transformed Jacob

Before meeting Esau Jacob experienced a strange transformation that is an important fact in this story. That night he was left alone, and there wrestled with him a man until the breaking of the day. He had sent all his people across the brook Jabbok and it would seem he was about to cross himself when he was suddenly seized by a mysterious antagonist who was a messenger of Jehovah. The man began the contest, and, when he prevailed not, he touched Jacob's thigh and disabled him: then Jacob knew that he was in the grip of no mere man but was in the embrace of God.

What was the divine purpose in this? To transform Jacob.

After all these years of divine guidance and blessing, he was still the same scheming, crafty, cunning supplanter, relying on his mother wit and clever tricks to carry him through. He had never yet been deeply humbled and profoundly changed in heart. Jacob was still Jacob, and he was not the kind of man God wanted to put in the line of the covenant as the head of the new race.

Cunning self-dependence had been the evil genius of his life.

He needed to be broken and brought into total dependence upon God, to be humbled and chastened and filled with a new spirit.

God met Jacob that night on the edge of the promised land to have it out with him. He did not instantly strike him down as he could have done, for he did not wish to crush him but to conquer him. But none the less he did make Jacob feel that he was clay in God's hand.

The struggle revealed Jacob to himself and changed him almost as profoundly as the blaze of light out of the sky transformed Saul into Paul.

The old, selfish, self-dependent spirit was broken, and in him a new, trustful, obedient spirit was born.

Great crises in our lives may work profound changes in us. God struggles with us at such times to show us our weakness and waywardness and break us into submission to himself.

Not until we have given up our imperious self-will and yield absolutely unto God are we strong in the power of his might.

3. Precautions for Safety

Jacob, having prayed for deliverance from Esau (32:11), now took measures to answer his prayer. He was a changed man himself, but he did not know about Esau and had reason to believe that he was still hostile. He had already selected large gifts and sent them ahead to placate his wronged brother, but presently there were new developments.

He looked out across the rough country and saw an ominous sight: Esau was approaching with four hundred armed men. He knew not what this might mean, but evidently feared the worst, for at once he took further precautionary measures.

He now divided his family into three bands: in front he placed the two handmaids with their children, next came Leah and her children, and Rachel with Joseph, the most precious members of his family, came last. The evident plan was to have successive groups of his family meet his brother in the hope that the women and children would cool and mollify his anger and win from him a kindly reception. Jacob, though transformed, had lost none of his wits and was as resourceful as ever.

Conversion does not change the natural gifts of a man; after it Peter is still Peter, and Paul is still Paul.

Jacob prayed as if all depended on God, and then he worked as if all depended on himself. Prayer is not an easy way of getting God to do things for us that we can do for ourselves.

It does not release us from the use of means and our utmost endeavor.

It is not a blind trust and does not lull us into a false security, but awakens all our powers and makes them more alive and alert than ever.

It hitches our wagon to God's star, but we must still look after the wagon.

4. Jacob's Meeting with Esau

At last Jacob drew near to Esau and bowed himself seven times to the ground before his brother. He thereby expressed his sense of the wrong he had done him and his dependence upon the mercy of the armed Esau.

At this moment the unexpected happened.

Instead of vengeance falling upon the prostrate Jacob, "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." Whatever anger and sense of wrong may have been rankling in the injured brother's breast, it was quickly dissolved in forgiveness and love and tears.

Jacob's fears proved wholly unfounded and instead of an armed attack he was greeted with a brother's embrace and kiss.

He had filled that meeting on the desert with spectres which were projected out of his own imagination and were insubstantial as the shadows of the clouds.

Often are we afraid of "things to come," when we are creating our own fears and meeting them more than half way.

This Oriental greeting with which Esau received his brother is a beautiful display of our better human nature.

Deep as was the sense of wrong in his heart, deeper still was the sense of the common blood and brotherhood that bound him to Jacob. There were precious memories and ties that were common to these men, the same father and mother and the boyhood days and the old home, and these relaxed and dissolved any bonds of bitterness that had united and yet separated them. This meeting was a happy solution of their estrangement, and the spirit of it would settle many a difference and alienation amongst us.

There is large room and need in our life for the spirit of patience and charity and forgiveness.

If we insist on our rights and on cherishing our grievances and demanding their settlement to the last letter and pound of flesh, we shall strain and snap many of our common human ties and embitter all our days. But if we cultivate and exercise a large spirit of charity and forgiveness and forget much, we shall gain infinitely more than we lose and multiply and strengthen and enrich the relations that bind us to others.

How many families are torn to pieces with the tragedies of hatred between brothers. How many wars are kindled by this same spirit.

But how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity? "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot

love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

5. Esau Declines Jacob's Gift

Esau inquired about the women and children, and Jacob replied that they had been graciously given him of God, and then Esau made further inquiry about the herds that had come with him, and Jacob answered that they were a gift "to find favor in the sight of my lord." But Esau replied, "I have enough, my brother; let that which thou hast be thine."

This is a bit of surprising self-restraint and magnanimity on the part of Esau with his strong love of gain and especially of large flocks that characterized these Hebrew herdsmen.

Possibly, too, there was some outward show of declining the gift when it was expected and understood that it would be pressed upon him and there was little danger of losing it.

Oriental are masters of this kind of courtesy.

But however this may be, it was a fine spirit on the part of Esau that he did not wish to restore brotherly relations with Jacob in terms of a trade or commercial transaction. His friendship was not for sale, but he would embrace and kiss his brother without thought of anything that might look like payment.

Such social bargaining is not unknown among us.

Friends may exchange gifts in a way that only thinly conceals a trade in which each is hoping to get the better of the bargain. All fine relations of life may be pervaded by a mercenary atmosphere in which it is expected that every favor granted will be repaid by one of equal or greater value. This reduces everything to a cash basis and degrades and vulgarizes the purest relations and richest treasures of life.

"I have enough," said Esau, a rare thing to say in our human world.

Few of us ever think we have enough, especially of this world's goods. The workman wants larger wages, the minister a more adequate salary, and even the millionaire thinks he has far from enough and wants to multiply his millions into millions more.

There is an element of good in this desire, which is often a pressing need, but Paul discovered a better way and a happy secret when he says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

6. The Gift Accepted

Jacob was not to be outdone by the gracious spirit of Esau and insisted, "Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough."

Jacob did not take advantage of Esau's magnanimity in declining the gift, but urged him to accept it.

It was offered in no hesitating and niggardly spirit in the hope that it might be declined, but was a genuine offering that not only came out of his hand but also out of his heart as a stream gushes out of a fountain. Jacob had joy in his giving, and all the more so because he recognized the fact that all his goods were the gracious gifts of God.

"And he took it." Esau had his gift and Jacob had his joy. We have not yet learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and when we realize that all our possessions and powers are gifts of God we shall be more liberal in sharing them with others and in consecrating them to his service.

There was small chance of further quarrel between these two brothers when they each could say, "I have enough."

The fact that men feel that they do not have enough, do not have their share of the goods produced, is a prevalent ground and root of bitterness among them and of strife and war.

Let us strive to be just in all things and to see that all men have enough. We cannot be forgiven until we are just.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is the greatest transforming power of human nature?
2. Give striking instances of men that were profoundly changed.
3. Did Jesus ever take precaution against danger?
4. How can we cultivate and exercise the forgiving spirit?
5. What spirit should govern our exchange of gifts?

LESSON IX—MAY 29

Joseph the Dreamer

Lesson: Genesis 37:1-11.

Golden Text: *Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men.*
Romans 12:17.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 3:1-6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Right and Wrong Ambition.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Right and Wrong Ambition.

Lesson Text: Genesis 37:1-11

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and he was a lad with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought the evil report of them unto their father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors.

4 And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves came round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying in mind.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Joseph Appears on the Scene.**
- 2. A Tale-Bearer.**
- 3. An Unfortunate Favorite.**
- 4. Hated of His Brethren.**
- 5. A Dreamer of Dreams.**
- 6. The Mistake of Telling Them.**

From Peniel Jacob journeyed southward through the promised land, stopping at Shechem, where he purchased a piece of ground, set up an altar and dug his famous well on the curb of which Jesus sat and which is there today; at Bethel, where he set up another altar and received a renewal of the promise; at Bethlehem, where Benjamin was born and his mother, the beloved Rachel was buried; and finally reaching Hebron where Isaac was still living in his old age and where he settled down and "dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger."

1. Joseph Appears on the Scene

At this point Joseph appears on the scene, and henceforth until his death in Egypt is the most conspicuous figure in the story. He is now a lad of seventeen, the firstborn of Rachel whose beauty was still perpetuated in his comely form and face. Heredity had done much for him, as he inherited the best qualities of his ancestors, the strength of Abraham, the purity of Isaac, the shrewdness of Jacob, and the lovely disposition of Rachel.

His character is stamped with nobility and grace from his youth and he is one of the most attractive and inspiring figures in the Bible.

Few lives are so checkered with startling events and issues as his, and few men have been so signally raised up for critical moments in the history of the world.

We first find him feeding his flock with his brethren, or half-brothers. Though a favorite son of a rich man, yet he was not spared from useful toil but served with his brothers in keeping the flocks, probably as a kind of errand boy to do chores and keep up communication with home.

This is a good point in Joseph and promises well for his future. Idleness is a special danger and may prove a curse to youth, and industry is one of its strongest safeguards and most fruitful teachers.

Habits of industry and skill are the richest capital a young man can acquire.

Boys should begin early to learn useful things and never be ashamed of work. Great lives often have humble beginnings. Joseph, Prime Minister of Egypt, and David, King of Israel, both began as shepherd

boys, and many eminent men in all walks of life have started in equally humble ways. Low beginnings can be made stepping-stones to higher things.

It is faithfulness in little things that prepares us for greater things. The way to get a larger place is to crowd with good work the place we have.

2. A Tale-Bearer

Next we find Joseph, in passing to and fro between the home and his brothers out with the flocks, bringing his father evil reports of their doings.

These half-brothers were sons of heathen mothers and were very different men from Joseph. They were much older and had been brought up in the heathen associations of Haran. They were wild boys, unprincipled and rude, immoral and lawless in their relations with the Canaanites, the terror of the neighborhood. Joseph could not help but see their evil deeds, and from time to time reported their misconduct to their father.

It is not easy to decide whether he was wise in this or not.

Possibly his father drew such tales out of him. If he brought these reports in no spirit of evil tale-bearing or of malice, and if such reports would help his father to restrain his brothers, his course was justifiable. It is sometimes a duty to engage in the unpleasant work of detecting and reporting the evil conduct of others.

But such work in itself bears an evil reputation and few persons are so unpopular as a tale-bearer.

If such work can do no good, and if it springs out of any evil motive, it is in itself mean and malicious.

The case does not look altogether good for Joseph.

These brothers were not boys but men, so that reporting them probably could not help the situation; and the brothers were unfriendly to Joseph and had treated him roughly so that he may have been influenced by personal motives. In this view of the case Joseph was to blame.

Tale-bearing is mean business in the home and school and in society. It springs from selfish motives, it colors the truth with personal spite,

and it works evil all around. It is of the same piece with spreading malicious gossip and writing anonymous letters.

The young should be taught to despise such dishonorable work and to keep their speech clean of evil reports, and older people should be above it.

3. An Unfortunate Favorite

Joseph was also unfortunate in being his father's favorite son. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age," and because he was the child of his beloved Rachel. Joseph also was probably the most lovable among Jacob's sons and was the most comfort to him.

Yet it was unfortunate and wrong that any such partiality should have been cherished and made prominent. The chosen family had already been disrupted by this very evil, and it seems to have had a fatality for repeating its mistakes.

Parents rightly love their children each one with a peculiar love, but pronounced favoritism is unjust and cruel and sows seeds of discord and bitterness that may spring up into strife and tragedy.

Jacob showed his fondness for Joseph by making him a coat of many colors, or "a long garment with sleeves" as the margin of the Revised Version has it. He dressed him finer than the other boys, which is one of the most exasperating ways of showing favoritism.

It would have been strange if Joseph was not somewhat spoiled by this treatment. It would tend to make him feel that he was better than his brothers and to beget in him a foolish, foppish pride in dress.

This is a point of danger with the young.

Dress should be carefully attended to, but one should be something more than a thing to hang clothes on. A tailor can make a dude, but he cannot make a man.

Becoming dress is a grace, but one is not well dressed until he has on the beautiful garment of Christian character.

4. Hated of His Brethren

As a consequence of all this, Joseph was hated by his brethren. Though he may have been blamable in some things, yet he had done

nothing to deserve their bitter and murderous hatred. His superior goodness was the deepest root of their dislike.

Merit attracts malice.

Thorns try to choke flowers. In the school, workshop, business, politics, literature, those that develop superior merit and are rising excite the envy and opposition of competitors who try to keep them down. Such hatred is reprehensible and may be wicked. It was the unearthly beauty of Christ that drew the murderous malice of the Pharisees.

We all need to be on our guard against exercising such envy and to bear it with quiet unobserving patience when directed against us.

His brethren could not speak peaceably unto Joseph, but stung him with sharp words. Yet he seems to have borne the rough treatment of these brutal men with commendable patience and peaceableness.

Hatred is a terrible thing among brothers. Children in the same home should especially abhor that which is evil and be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly kindness.

5. A Dreamer of Dreams

Joseph dreamed dreams. He dreamed that they were binding sheaves in the field and that his sheaf stood up and the sheaves of his brethren bowed down around it. He dreamed again a more startling dream in which the sun and moon and the eleven stars (his father and mother and eleven brothers) made obeisance to him.

Dreams may be significant.

In them the restraints of attention and will are removed and then the deeper streams and tendencies of mental and emotional life, that in full consciousness are repressed, often come to the surface and reveal themselves.

Dreams are sometimes thus a startling self-revelation. They show what we have been habitually thinking of and cherishing, perhaps in some degree unconsciously; they let loose unsuspected tendencies that are sleeping in us.

Dreams are thus not the idle irresponsible things they are gen-

erally supposed to be, but are important marks of character and have valuable psychological and moral meanings and uses.

These dreams of Joseph sprang from his life. They showed what he had been thinking of and what he felt himself capable of becoming. Already it had been borne in upon his mind that he was born to rule. This had doubtless been suggested to him by his father's favoritism, and probably his father had indicated to him that the birthright was to be his.

Deeper still, he may have felt the budding of genius in his mind, the stirring of the power in his soul that afterward made him ruler over these brethren. He could not but be conscious of his capacities, he forefelt his coming greatness.

These influences and thoughts were working deep in his heart, and they emerged and bodied themselves forth in his dreams.

There is no intimation that the dreams were supernatural, but none the less they were a means of conveying a divine message to him.

God tells some souls very early in life what they are born for.

Mozart at three years of age ran his baby fingers over the keys and picked out complicated chords, and at seven he was the wonder of Europe. Such youthful stirrings of the spirit are sometimes prophecies of coming power.

It is a grand thing for one to have such influences playing around him and such capacities and purposes growing within him in his earliest years as will give birth to noble ideals and powerful inspirations.

Whether these ideals cast their shadows before in our dreams or not, they are divine messages to our souls and they draw us onward and upward.

6. The Mistake of Telling Them

Joseph made the mistake of telling his dreams. He seems to have done this in the artless simplicity of his soul, but none the less it was a mistake as he was now seventeen years of age, well on in young manhood with a Hebrew youth, and should have known better and exercised wiser reticence.

It did no good to tell these dreams and only inflamed his brothers against him, and rightly enough.

Of course they flew at him with the charge, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou have dominion over us?" They would not stand for such impertinence and "hated him yet the more for his dreams and his words." Even his father took offence at his second dream and rebuked him for it, though he was impressed by it and "kept the saying in mind." Joseph should have kept these dreams to himself, though once out they became important links in God's providence, for he can use our mistakes in his plans.

It is not wise for us to tell all that we are thinking about and expecting to do. Dreams of coming greatness especially should be kept to ourselves.

It is very easy to be mistaken in such dreams. They may be the vain imaginings of foolish ambition. If dreams could make us great there would be few small men left. Even if such a dream has a substantial basis in our capacities and opportunities, it is folly to announce it: for such announcement displays egoism and boastfulness and excites envy and ridicule.

But there is a dream we may cherish and announce, an ideal we may openly strive after: the dream of the crown of life, the ideal of Christian character.

Paul was lured on by the splendor of this dream, Jesus himself endured the cross for this joy, and it is a star that should rule our lives.

Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, let us press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. How shall we know when to repeat a report against another?
2. What is said in the Scriptures about hating our brother?
3. Do you know of families that have been disrupted by favoritism and hatreds?
4. What is the psychology of dreams?
5. Should we put much trust in them whether they are good or bad?
6. Why should we practice reticence about our dreams and thoughts about ourselves?

LESSON X—JUNE 5

Joseph the Worker.

Lesson: Genesis, chapters 39-41.

Golden Text: *Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings.* Proverbs 22:29.

Devotional Reading: Luke 19:11-23.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Rewards of Faithfulness.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Religious Value of Work.

Lesson Text: Genesis 41:46-57

46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49 And Joseph laid up grain as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering; for it was without number.

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti- phera priest of On, bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For, *said he*, God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.

53 And the seven years of plenty, that was in the land of Egypt, came to an end.

54 And the seven years of famine began to come, according as Joseph had said: and there was famine in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine was sore in the land of Egypt.

57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was sore in all the earth.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt.**
- 2. The Prime Minister at Work.**
- 3. Preparing for Famine.**
- 4. Sons with Significant Names.**
- 5. Bread in the Famine.**

Twenty years have passed since the events of the last lesson, and much has happened. The brothers threw the hated Joseph into a pit, whence he was drawn out and sold to a passing caravan of Midianite merchants who carried him down into Egypt where he was sold as a slave. He was given a place in Pharaoh's establishment and under false charges thrown into prison.

Here he rose on the steps of his faithfulness to a position of some responsibility in which he was able to render service to the baker and butler of Pharaoh, who had fallen under the wrath of their master and were thrown into prison, by interpreting their dreams.

In due time as the dramatic story unfolds, Pharaoh himself had dreams—for there is troubled sleep in the palace as well as in the dungeon—and then there was consternation in Pharaoh's court, for no one could interpret his dreams. The butler whom Joseph had served now served Joseph by telling of his gift, and the Hebrew slave was hurried from the prison into the royal presence.

With swift insight, which he humbly ascribed to divine guidance, he discerned the meaning of the dream. Egypt was to have seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph supplemented his interpretation with the far-seeing advice that a man be appointed to store up the surplus food of the years of plenty and thus provide for the years of famine.

Wanted a man! was the demand of the hour.

“Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?” exclaimed Pharaoh.

The question implies that competent men were scarce.

Here was a great work demanding to be done and there were millions of men in Egypt, but how many among them were equal to this task?

The world is ever full of great responsibilities, but there is always a shortage of competent leaders and executives. A high position usually has to hunt far and wide to find the right man.

1. Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt

At one step Joseph mounted into the position of Prime Minister of Egypt. “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: thou

shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." At thirty years of age the Hebrew shepherd boy and slave was food-controller, Viceroy, or Prime Minister of Egypt into which he had been brought and sold as a slave.

It was now thirteen years since he had dreamed of his destiny to rule.

It takes some dreams a long time to come true, but if God is in them they will not fail.

Yet Joseph had not sought the place, but the place sought him. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5). Let them come of themselves.

On the other hand, the place did not fall to Joseph by mere chance or accident, but he had prepared himself for and shown his right to it. His ten years of faithful service in his master's house and his three years of imprisonment in the dungeon were a thorough discipline for the high office. In fact, his education for this responsibility ran clear back through his boyhood to his earliest years.

Serving is the best preparation for ruling.

Only he is fitted to command who knows how to obey. Bad servants proverbially make worse masters, but he that is faithful in few things shall be made ruler over many things. Wherever he was put, whatever he was given to do, Joseph did his best, and in following this principle he at last stepped up to the top. Yet in serving others he was not thinking of himself and little knew that, in interpreting the butler's dream, he was carving out his own destiny.

Providence is always watching and testing us and we never know by what unsuspected act we may be put up or down.

Joseph's high place was due in a measure to his trust in God as his guide. He had not been ashamed of his religion in that heathen court and down in the dungeon, and now his religion commended him to Pharaoh ("God hath showed thee all this").

Yet his religion was not simply a magical gift that fitted him for the occult work of interpreting dreams, but it was blended with common sense and practical power.

He was discreet or intelligent: he saw into things and could pick out the best ends; and he was wise: he knew how to devise and apply the best means so as to work out his ends.

Mere religion will not raise a man to a high place.

One may be religious and fanatically so and yet not be discreet and wise and so be unfitted for important positions. A man may be good and yet good for nothing.

Piety will not take the place of competency. A wise man will not write his own recommendations. If there is anything in him others will find it out, and if he is needed he will be sent for.

2. The Prime Minister at Work

Joseph is now in his place of power: what will he do with it? He had a great inauguration into his office attended with royal pageantry, but this did not do anything practical. Not one grain of wheat was stored up by all this gorgeous show and splendid apparel.

The real test of the man was now to come.

He must show what mettle was in him. He did not rest on his honors and take life easy, but he took hold of his work with tremendous energy. He laid vast plans and set immediate enterprises in motion. He did not delegate his work to others, but went out over all the land of Egypt himself.

Men in low places often think that men in high places are doing nothing.

The mechanic thinks the merchant is having an easy time, and the peasant imagines the President or the Prime Minister has nothing to do but enjoy his honors.

But no other men work so hard as those in high places.

The higher up we go the greater grows the burden and pressure of responsibility and toil. Those that are seeking high places that they may have an easy time are looking in the wrong direction and would miserably fail if they were to get them.

To every man is given his own work, and the Christian especially should take hold of his task and do with his might what his hand is given to do.

3. Preparing for Famine

In accordance with his own proposal, Joseph now gathered up the food of the seven years of plenty and stored it in the cities throughout the land. A fifth part of the abundant harvest was saved each year, and was either taken as a tax or was bought at the low price that prevailed in the market.

Provision was made in the present for the future.

This is a principle that enters universally and deeply into life. The laborer toils today that he may buy bread tomorrow. The farmer sows seed this year that he may reap next year. The youth in going to school and college is looking twenty years into the future. Men make provision in their productive years for their old age, and, in insuring themselves, often look beyond their lives and provide for the next generation.

The power to foresee and provide for the future is, perhaps more than anything else, what constitutes wisdom.

This gift is one of the most potent elements of success, and the different degrees in which it is possessed are one of the deepest differences among men. The man who is careless of the future is almost sure to run upon rocks. This is what wrecked Esau and he has multitudes of modern followers. Economy in the present in the interest of the future is one of the most important lessons and habits that young people can learn.

The highest exercise of this power is in religion.

He that can see farthest into the future is the wisest, and the truly religious man is wisest of all, for he sees into eternity. The soul has a distant future and it must have bread. What it gathers now determines what it shall live on then. God has put the Bread of Life in plenty within our reach, but many are only gathering husks that swine do eat.

Such provision for the future shall at last bring famine on the soul. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up treasures in heaven.

4. Sons with Significant Names

In the midst of this narrative about the great work in which Joseph was involved, he was married, and home life went on throughout all Egypt.

After all, do not the exciting public events of the world, politics and the stock market and even war, fill but a small part in the real life of people and of the nation itself?

A storm fills the whole heavens with black clouds and thunder, and yet underneath all its fury lies the landscape with all its teeming life in which birds still find shelter and the smallest blossoms continue to unfold their bloom and exhale their fragrance.

Joseph was married to "Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phera priest of On," showing that he was getting up into high circles of society. His first-born son he called Manasseh, meaning Forgetting, "For, said he, God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house."

He must have been glad enough to leave behind him all the bitter memories of his early years. Yet his later experience showed that he did not altogether forget the old home and especially his old father, but he did not continue to mourn and brood over these things so that they would embitter him and unfit him for his work.

Often should we forget the past, especially by not brooding over it and thereby distracting and weakening ourselves, but concentrate our powers upon present duty.

Joseph's second son he named Ephraim, meaning Fruitful, "For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." He had turned these afflictions to his own good so that they became stepping-stones up into prosperity and power.

His religion was embodied in this name and God was in all his thoughts; he could not even name a baby without thinking of God.

5. Bread in the Famine

In due time famine struck Egypt and sore and loud was the cry for bread.

A widespread famine is about the most dreadful evil that can befall a country.

We know it not in our country, but we read of its indescribable horrors and scenes in such a country as China or India where it is periodic and

almost always impending like a fearful black cloud on the horizon. The people waste away to skin and bones while hunger gnaws into their vitals and wrings every nerve with agony. Especially does it fall with fury on little children who understand not and whose pinched faces and constant cries redouble the pains of their parents, and the mother will give the last drop of her own life to keep alive the babe at her breast.

Egypt has always been exposed to famine, where the failure of rainfall in the south lowers the Nile which is the very life-stream of the fields and the people.

This famine in Egypt was especially long and severe, extending far beyond the borders of the land, and the cry for bread rang all around the Mediterranean shore. "But in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread": just as today when any calamity befalls us, such as a Mississippi flood or drouth or widespread unemployment, we call upon our President to find some means of relief.

"And Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."

Then Joseph's foresight stood him and the people in good stead.

He simply opened his vast granaries and sold the bread to the Egyptians, and presently people were coming from other lands and they also were supplied with grain.

"Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."

Is there any Bread-Giver to whom we can go and who can tell us what to do? "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," said the mother of Jesus to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and this direction still holds good and he can supply us with the Bread of Life.

Whosoever eats of this Bread shall never hunger.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. To what did Joseph owe his success?
2. What are some things in our future that we should prepare for?
3. What are some of the causes of famines?
4. What are some means by which they can be avoided?
5. To what extent may we depend on the government for aid in such calamities?
6. Is there any famine of the Bread of Life?

LESSON XI—JUNE 12

Judah the True Brother

Lesson: Genesis 44:18-45:15.

Golden Text: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 26:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Boys and Girls Can Do for Their Family.

Topic for Young People and Adults: True Brotherhood.

Lesson Text: Genesis 44:18-34

18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loveth him.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25 And our father said, Go again, buy us a little food.

26 And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the

man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.

27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons:

28 And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since:

29 And if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

31 It will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father.

LESSON PLAN**Introduction.**

- 1. Reversed Relations.**
- 2. Judah's Plea.**
- 3. A Noble Offer of Self-Sacrifice.**
- 4. A Startling Disclosure.**
- 5. A Pathetic Scene.**

Seven years of plenty packed the granaries of Egypt, and seven years of famine were now draining them of their surplus store of wheat. The famine is spreading out over neighboring peoples, and they are coming to buy bread. The distress strikes Canaan, and the sons of Jacob are forced to go down into Egypt on the same errand.

Did the thought of the long-lost brother make them fear to enter that land?

In due time they appeared in Egypt and bowed down before Joseph, though they knew him not. But Joseph recognized them and he "remembered the dreams which he had dreamed of them" when their sheaves bowed around his sheaf (37:5-11).

The rapid play of events is told with dramatic pathos and power.

Joseph charges them with being spies, learns about his family, and demands that Benjamin, the youngest brother, be brought down. Simeon is kept as a hostage and the frightened brothers return home. Sorrowing old Jacob is alarmed over their report and refuses to give Benjamin up. The increasing distress at last forces him to yield, and the brothers return with Benjamin to Egypt. Joseph involves Benjamin in an apparent theft of a silver cup which was found in his sack where it had been secretly placed by Joseph's order.

The panic of the brothers is pitiful as they are caught in this new and dreadful coil of circumstances, and they are hurried back into the presence of Joseph, still only known to them as the lord of Egypt. Joseph demanded that the brothers return home but that Benjamin be left behind as a bondman in his hand.

1. Reversed Relations

At this point our lesson opens. Judah speaks in explanation and defence and makes a plea for Benjamin that is one of the noblest and most pathetic speeches in all literature.

Drawing near to Joseph he began, "Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh."

Judah was the brother who asked "what profit?" and made the proposal to sell Joseph into Egypt (37:26).

How many things had happened since that fateful day and in what tragically reversed relations were these brothers at this time?

Then Judah looked on his young brother with the cold and cruel eye of jealousy and hatred and ruthlessly sold him into slavery; now he bows before him cringing with fear and repeatedly addressing him as "my lord." The whirligig of time, which in this instance is but another name for divine Providence, has strangely reversed these relations and the younger brother is now up and the elder is down pleading before him for mercy. Little did he foresee or dream of such outcome to the dreadful deed the brothers perpetrated that day when they seized their brother and sent him to his doom.

It takes time to see and evaluate an action.

Its beginning may be utterly deceptive and only its end can disclose its true nature and results. Sin is always deceitful and can never be judged until its course is run. Its beginning may be sweet, but its final fruit may be bitter as death.

Many are the tragedies of life that in the start seemed safe and profitable enough, but in the end wrecked homes and dug dishonored graves. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

2. Judah's Plea

Judah in his appeal to Joseph showed himself a master psychologist and orator, though any such knowledge and art were far from his thought.

This absence of self-conscious art was a chief factor in the effectiveness and beauty of his speech, and this is true of effective and eloquent speech in any field, especially in the pulpit or in the teacher's chair.

Judah recounted the conversation that passed between Joseph and these brothers on the occasion of their former visit and he retold the story of the family situation up in Canaan. Back in the old home was their aged father with his youngest child, the son of Rachel, his beloved wife, and to take him away from the father would break the old man's heart and he would die. But the lord of Egypt had demanded that this boy be brought down into the country and when this was reported to the old father he refused to let the boy go until the increasing distress of the famine relaxed his hold and he had consented to run the risk.

Judah now declared that if he were to go back to the father without the boy, "when he seeth not that the lad is with us, then he will die: and thy servant will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol."

Judah was also able to give personal point and poignancy to this plea by adding that he himself had pledged the return of the boy to the father and would bear the blame of failure to do this.

The speech is vibrant with sincerity and sweeps all the chords of family life.

It recalls the peculiar affection of Jacob for his youngest boy now so dear to his heart after the loss of Joseph; the strong ties that bound the old father and young lad together which only the dire distress of a famine could relax; the promise that the darling child should be returned safe, and the terrible tragedy that would kill the old father if the boy were not returned to his bosom.

As Judah in this appeal represented the older brothers, it shows how changed they were in spirit as compared with their former heartlessness in the old days. Then they deceived their father in the most cruel manner when they sent back to him his boy's blood-stained coat that led him to believe he had been torn to pieces by a wild beast. Now they were swept with storms of emotion as they thought of their father and the death blow that would befall him on receipt of the fatal news that the last child of his bosom was snatched from him.

However treacherous and murderous they had been before, they were

now standing true to the old home and their aged father and youngest brother.

Something had changed these men, and it was a new heart that was giving birth and bloom to all this fine and noble outflowing of family affection and devotion.

3. A Noble Offer of Self-Sacrifice

Judah came to the climax of his appeal in a noble offer of self-sacrifice. "Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come upon my father." Judah goes to the extreme limit of making good his promise to his father and rose to the supreme height of human heroism and nobility.

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend.

Accepting slavery in Egypt was a doom perhaps more bitter than death, but Judah faced it in all its terrible reality in this offer to stay and let his young brother go back to his father.

Our human world is not lacking in such noble devotion to family and kindred and duty, and, indeed, it is more common than we know or suspect.

Most families are bound together by such ties and often do they pay the full price of devotion in sacrifice. Fathers and mothers do not hesitate at such sacrifice in behalf of their children, and children are not behind them in making an equal return. Patriotism exacts and receives the last full measure of devotion on many a field, and the cause of truth and especially of religion can offer martyrs' blood as the seal of devotion that is paid to them.

The supreme example of such sacrifice is the cross of Christ who gave himself that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.

He sealed with his own blood the great covenant that delivered us from the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Judah closed his appeal with an ominous utterance: "lest I see the evil that shall come upon my father." He was now forecasting the horizon of the future to see what might come. He would have done well to have considered this on that day when he took the initial step in selling his brother into slavery. He was now reaping the bitter consequences of a deed which fell as a seed of sin into his life and was bearing its scarlet fruit.

Every sin has such consequences, and we can be sure that we shall see the evil that will come upon us in after days.

However hidden from us may be the far-off results of our evil doing at the time we are yielding to the temptation, yet as sure as reaping follows sowing shall we reap what we sow.

The time to crush the evil that may grow big and leap upon us in fury in after years is when it is in the seed.

4. A Startling Disclosure

Up to this time Joseph had been dealing with his brothers as utter strangers and foreigners, speaking to them through interpreters and concealing his identity from them, though he knew them.

But the speech of Judah was too much for him.

Home recollections and associations sent a storm of emotion surging through his soul, and he felt himself giving way.

The room was quickly cleared of all attendants and Joseph was left alone with his brothers. Some scenes are too private and sacred for mere spectators to witness.

There are chambers of joy or of sorrow into which strangers should not intrude.

Then Joseph broke down and wept. The strong man sobbed like a child. This was no unmanly weakness in Joseph, but a noble exhibition of deep and tender feeling. Beware of the man that cannot cry: he may be as hard and cold as steel.

Tears are divine. Jesus wept.

Tears are the floodtide of both joy and sorrow and are a blessed relief to the surcharged soul.

Then the ruler of Egypt uttered the startling words, "I am Joseph." For the first time the brothers heard themselves addressed in their own language and recognized the voice and features of the dreamer whom they had sold into slavery.

One thought was urgent in Joseph's mind and instantly leaped from his lips: "doth my father yet live?" Twenty years' absence had not extinguished his filial love and longing. The old homestead up in Canaan was still more to him than the empire of Egypt, and his aged father was dearer to him than Pharaoh with all the magnificence and splendors of his court.

That is a cold and selfish man who, as he grows successful and great, forgets the old home and his parents and kindred.

How startled and stunned his brothers must have been at the amazing disclosure! No wonder that they could not answer him: for they were troubled at his presence. Already the thought of their guilt had been burning in their hearts. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; wherefore is this distress come upon us" (42:21).

Twenty years had passed, yet how vividly all the details of their crime came back to them and drove the sword of retribution deep into their hearts.

Time has no power to heal wrong. Whither, then, shall we fly? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

5. A Pathetic Scene

Joseph now addressed his brothers in different tones. "Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near."

Why had he not done this before?

Why all this apparently tantalizing and cruel treatment? Was he paying them back? No, but he was testing them out and feeling his way along cautiously. He had known his brothers as selfish and treacherous men, and he had to beware of entering into relations with them and introducing them into Egypt until he knew them. And so his only wise and safe course was to try them out and find what manner of men they

were. But when they stood every test, he could safely say unto them, "Come near to me, I pray you."

This principle enters widely into our relations with one another and into God's providence over us. Often when God seems to be driving us off, he is really saying, "Come near to me."

And so coming, in his everlasting Arm we shall find reconciliation and peace.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. Does secular history have any record of the presence of the Hebrews in Egypt?**
- 2. Ought we to be more loving to our kindred than to others?**
- 3. Can we do anything to correct our past mistakes and sins?**
- 4. In what respects is this world our Father's school?**

LESSON XII—JUNE 19

Jacob the Aged Father

Lesson: Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30; 47:7.

Golden Text: Honor thy father and thy mother. Exod. 20:12.

Devotional Reading: Luke 2:41-52.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How May We Honor Our Parents?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Our Obligations to Our Parents.

Lesson Text: Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30; 47:7

1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land

of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.

7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Jacob's Faith.*
- 2. A Dangerous Adventure.*
- 3. The Caravan Departs.*
- 4. Meeting of Joseph with His Brothers.*
- 5. Meeting of Jacob and Pharaoh.*

The interview in which Joseph revealed himself to his brothers resulted in their being sent back to their father in Canaan with wagons

to bring him and his family and goods down into Egypt where they would be settled. In due time they reached their home and broke to their old father the astounding news that Joseph was alive and, even more astounding, "he is ruler over all the land of Egypt."

Jacob fainted at the news and "believed them not." But they repeated to him the very words of Joseph and showed him the wagons he had sent to bring the family down into Egypt, and then Jacob said, "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

1. Jacob's Faith

Jacob at once started and went as far as Beer-sheba, the home of Isaac, and there tarried for a brief season. At this point we see Jacob exercising his faith. He "offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac."

He did not leave his religion behind when he left the old home, as some Christians seem to do, but it was an incorporate part of him and went with him wherever he went.

He was now in the home of his father and worshiped "the God of his father Isaac." His religion had deep ancestral roots that could not be easily shaken.

He honored the past and was not so modern that he could not appreciate and appropriate it.

He knew that he drew his spiritual sustenance from the God of his father as trees draw life from their roots. We are not bound to believe and live just as our fathers did, but if we think we can cut ourselves off from their ways and start at the beginning for ourselves, we shall quickly discover our folly.

The old faith should ever have fresh sap flowing through it, but it is still the old faith tried out in the arduous test of the experience of generations.

Jacob offered sacrifice at the ancestral altar. His faith was not simply a verbal creed or sentimental feeling, but expressed itself in deed.

Sacrifice was the chief fact in the worship of his religion.

It cost something and had deep meaning as it satisfied God with the reality of his worship and also expressed his sense of sin and need of atonement.

Jacob was now about to set out on a dangerous journey and it was especially needful that he should strengthen his faith in God that he might be guided and guarded in the way.

2. A Dangerous Adventure

In the usual method of a dream or vision God appeared to Jacob and said, "Jacob, Jacob." With beautiful readiness and unquestioning obedience Jacob responded, "Here am I." Then came the revelation, "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for there I will make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." Of course this fear was in Jacob's mind and there was good ground for it.

An emigrant must ordinarily face many fears.

Tearing up the roots of the old home and country and venturing out into a strange land must be a trying experience to the stoutest hearts. The possibility of mistake and disillusionment and tragedy casts dark shadows on the future, however bright it may be with hope.

In Jacob's case this adventure was especially doubtful and dangerous. He was leaving the promised land, and this in itself seemed like forsaking the God of the promised land.

Egypt, also, loomed up as a danger and doom of fearful aspect. Egypt was a colossus that strode all over that region and trampled subject peoples into slavery and misery.

It struck fear wherever the name of Pharaoh was heard.

And Jacob especially had fears growing out of the strange story told him by his sons of their tragic experience and of Joseph's greatness and power in that land.

Was it safe to venture into such a country?

Did it not look like deserting his ancestral land and faith and going into an enemy's country? What assurance had he that he and his family would not be enslaved and never return? To meet this fear God spoke to him in this vision and gave him abundant assurance of safety; not only so, but he would be enlarged and the promise to Abraham that his seed should become a great nation was repeated and confirmed. It was a

dangerous venture, but it was a practical necessity and was worth the risk and Jacob was ready to take it.

Life is full of such adventures and often are we called upon to make some decision that calls for facing fears and going forward, not knowing how the matter will come out.

But this is not an easy world and it would not be best for us if it were. Had not the Pilgrims set forth on a dangerous voyage and landed on a bleak New England shore beset with famine and disease and savages, we would not be here today. .

Trial is a great teacher and makes men. Adventure into the unknown opens new worlds.

We are bidden to fight the good fight of faith, which means that we must often live dangerously. First put on the whole armor of God and then go forth to do and dare and win the victory.

3. The Caravan Departs

“And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba.” He did not debate and delay and let things drift, but he acted with decision, burnt his bridges behind him, and “rose up.” There is great virtue in the ability to do this thing.

Let there be proper delay and preparation, but bring the matter to a decision and rise up and go.

We now look in on a busy scene of preparation and departure. The wagons that were brought up from Egypt were assembled, the goods were loaded on them, the old father and the sons with their children were gathered together, the cattle were herded, and finally with much bustle and excitement the caravan was off. .

It was easier to do this in that day and place than it is with us. Nearly all their property was movable.

“The Oriental is not afraid to go far, if he has not to cross the sea; for, once uprooted, distance makes little difference to him. He has no furniture to carry, for, except a carpet and a few brass pans, he uses none. He has no trouble about meals, for he is content with parched grain, which his wife can cook anywhere, or dried dates, or fried flesh, or anything obtainable which will keep. He is, on a march, careless where he sleeps, provided his family are around him—in a stable, under a porch,

in the open air. He never changes his clothes by night, and he is profoundly indifferent to everything that the Western man understands by comfort."

No doubt, once they were in motion, fear was dissipated in practical action, and they strode along with hopeful hearts, "the sons carried Israel their father," handling him carefully and tenderly, there was much mirth and laughter among the children, and outwardly the company of seventy people seemed carefree enough: yet underneath, suppressed anxiety troubled many a heart.

It is always so in life.

We travel in companies along life's road and generally are light-hearted, gay with jest and song, but shadows are ever near and sometimes we do not dare to speak what is in our hearts.

We do well to keep our spirits up while we simply do and wait the Lord's will.

4. Meeting of Joseph with His Brothers

After some days or weeks of travel, the caravan approached the borders of Egypt, and now anxiety in the hearts of the company grew deeper and heavier. Judah was sent before unto Joseph, and we can see why: ostensibly to "show the way before him unto Goshen," where they had been assigned their place of settlement; but no doubt because Judah had made the noble speech to Joseph that had won his heart and led to his revelation of himself to his brothers, and it would be safer for him to go ahead and see what the situation was. They were still proceeding cautiously and feeling their way one day and step at a time.

Faith and prayer do not excuse us from using every proper means in carrying out our plans and following divine directions.

Joseph, however, was before them in his thoughtfulness and anticipated their coming. He had his chariot made ready "and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while."

Any thing unmanly about that? Shall Joseph, ruler of Egypt, behave like a child in meeting his father?

Let it be childlike, but what is nobler and finer and more beauti-

ful than a childlike spirit and behavior in a man, and the stronger the man the more beautiful it is.

We may well pity the man that has become so encrusted and stiffened with place and power, wealth and culture, society and fashion, that his human emotions are dried up and he is ashamed to cry. The Roman centurion, strong man in command of others, yet when pleading for his servant at the point of death broke down and cried like a child. And who would erase from the gospel the shortest sentence in it? "Jesus wept." Is any Christian ashamed of that record?

Tears are not a sign of unmanly weakness but may be the outgushing of a strong nature and a tender heart.

We need to have more manifestation of affection in our homes and among friends to keep this central fountain of life pure and sweet.

The care of parents, especially in their old age, is a virtue that lies at the foundation of our social order.

Neglect of parents is inappreciation and thanklessness and cruelty that show a degraded nature and deserve social disgrace and ostracism. They care for us in our infancy and childhood and we make to them the lowest return when in their old age we care for them.

Jacob appreciated Joseph's affection and said, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive." It was too good to be true. So deeply was he moved and satisfied that he felt that he needed no more to complete his happiness and would now be willing to depart. He didn't depart just yet, but his last days were spent in peace.

Happy are the father and the mother that have such children and such support and consolation in their last days.

5. Meeting of Jacob and Pharaoh

We are given a glimpse of the final scene in the relation of Jacob to Pharaoh. "And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh." The ruler of Egypt was not ashamed of his old father in the court of Pharaoh and did not keep him in the background out of sight but brought him into the royal presence of Pharaoh himself.

There now occurred the interview between these two men that is one of the most beautiful scenes in the Bible.

One was a mighty monarch in rank and the other a humble shepherd farmer, but these differences of rank scarcely entered into the consciousness of either, and they met simply as man with man.

There are times when all distinctions of rank and attainment vanish and men meet as human beings on the ground of their common humanity.

The king asked the shepherd how old he was, for age was a great honor among the Orientals and was always a question of interest. Jacob proudly confessed to a hundred and thirty years, but he looked on these as "few and evil" and he had not yet "attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Life was a pilgrimage with him as it is with us. We are strangers and here we have no continuing city.

Yet we look for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God.

The family of Jacob was settled in Goshen, and the story rushes to its end. Presently Jacob fell on sleep and Joseph fell upon his face and wept and kissed him, so strong was the filial affection of this great man.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Are we more religious in times of crisis than at other times?
2. How far should we emphasize and trust in the "faith of our fathers" ?
3. What are some ways in which we must live dangerously?
4. How can we show our affection for our parents?
5. Whither is life's pilgrimage leading us?

LESSON XIII—JUNE 26

Review: What We Have Learned from Genesis

Golden Text: We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:4-22.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Favorite Characters in Genesis.

Topic for Young People and Adults: What Genesis Teaches About God and Human Relationships.

We have stepped along the mountain tops and high lights of Hebrew history from the story of the creation in Genesis to the descent of Jacob with his family into Egypt, and we may now take a sweeping view of the whole scene and course of events.

1. God in Creation

We first see God at work in his mighty workshop striking sun and stars and systems off his anvil.

It is a grand scene which our expanding science illuminates into grandeur greater still.

In the process of creation man is created at the top of the world, joined with woman as his wife and helpmate. Nothing can displace God from the throne of creation and were this possible the universe would be thrown into confusion.

The family came into existence with the first man and woman, the central unit of our social life.

It is still the vital cell of our human world and should be guarded in its unity and purity, for were this cell destroyed all social tissues would decay along with it. Man was placed in dominion over the world, and all our progress strengthens and widens this mastery. Food was provided for man, and this is one of the greatest and at times one of the most distressing problems of our modern world.

God looked upon his work and found it very good, and if we do not find it so there may be something wrong in our vision or in our relation to the world.

2. How Sin Begins

The fair world fresh from the hand of God was soon marred by the entrance of sin. The garden in which the first humans were placed was a place of privilege but also of prohibition.

These two principles are always joined together as mutual safeguards and checks.

Temptation early appeared on the scene and a snake crept into the garden. The tempter asked an apparently innocent question but it concealed a poisoned point. The devil never shows his cloven foot at first but rather veils himself as an angel of light.

All the devil asks is a chance to talk with us.

He sets himself up as one who is offering bigger pay than God, but his promises are lies. The evil suggestion having got a lodgment in Eve's heart led her on to her fall, and then she dragged Adam down with her into the same pit.

We may be sure our sin will find us out and we must pay its price.

3. The Call of Abram

The general history of the world is now narrowed to one man and family as the start of a new plan of redemption. The flood did not drown the old Serpent of sin, and now outer methods give way to inner means of regenerating the world.

Abraham steps upon the stage as one of the epochal figures of history.

To him came the call to get out of his county into a far land, he knew not where. It was a rough root planted in his life but it bore rich blossoms of promise.

Unquestioning obedience was his response to the divine call.

He was to receive a blessing far greater than the loss he had sacrificed. He packed up all his goods and started. We must take our substance with us when we enter into the kingdom of God.

Yet what disillusionment he experienced when he reached the promised land!

He went out to get away from idolatry, and he ran right into it in worse form than ever.

Yet even in the new conditions of idolatry and hardship Jehovah appeared to him and strengthened and cheered him with promises of enlargement and future blessing.

4. Abram's Generosity to Lot

Abraham is the first rich man mentioned in the Bible. Under the touch of his hand the new land with all its drawbacks began to blossom. He accumulated herds and retainers and presently he could put over three hundred men in the field as soldiers to drive back some predatory intruders.

Prosperity, however, has its dangers and it bred strife between the followers of Abraham and those of his nephew Lot.

Abraham approached the problem in a brotherly spirit and this was more than half its solution.

He then proposed to let Lot have the first choice of the land, which was an act of generosity as he was the older and the main factor in developing the land.

Lot abused his privilege by taking the rich lowlands and left the rocky highlands to Abraham.

But time works its own revenges and Lot paid dearly for his selfishness.

Abraham took his rocky ridges and turned them into fruitful fields and again received a large promise.

Get up into the highlands and mountain tops in your life, where you can see farther and reap richer rewards.

5. Isaac and His Wells

Isaac, son of Abraham, was a man of peaceful disposition. His pagan neighbors, the Philistines, took measures to drive him out of the country. They filled up the old wells of Abraham and thus shut off Isaac's water supply.

Isaac moved on and dug out some of the old wells of Abraham and found in them good water.

It is a fine lesson for us to follow.

Let us not fight even for our rights as long as we can find some better way of settling disputes. Better yield something than risk everything in a fight.

Old wells are getting out of date with us and we want new things with new names. New things are also good, but the old is good and often even better. The old wells of literature are still the best.

Old wells in religion, the Bible and prayer and the Christian virtues, are still full of sweet water and we should dig them out and drink of their refreshing streams.

6. Esau Sells His Birthright

Two brothers, twins, furnish the characters of this story.

Esau and Jacob are contrasted characters: the one a hunter and the other a man of settled habits, the one a man of impulse and appetite seeking immediate pleasure, and the other with a long head and a vein of spirituality.

Esau had the right of primogeniture by a moment's precedence into the world, and Jacob coveted this right. Coming in from the hunt with hungry appetite Esau proposed to sell his birthright to Jacob for a dish of soup Jacob was preparing, and Jacob took advantage of his offer and got the birthright.

It was a case of short-sighted lack of self-control, which is one root of intemperance.

All our senses are possible masters and will control and ruin us if we do not control them: and the way to master them is to have some dominant idea and motive that we can intensify until it becomes stronger than drink or any other assault on the senses and crowns us with the self-control of victory.

7. Jacob at Bethel

As the result of Jacob's sharp practice in getting the birthright he was forced to fly from his angry brother and found himself out in the desert on the way north to his uncle at Paddan-aram. In the night as he lay on his stone pillow he had a dream in which he saw a ladder extending from heaven to earth with angels ascending and descending on it.

Esau would never have dreamed of angels and Jacob's finer nature was being stirred.

There are more things in heaven and on earth than are dreamed of in materialistic philosophy.

Jehovah spoke to Jacob and assured him of the divine presence.

It is not a softer place to sleep we need, but opened eyes to see the angels that are hovering around us.

Jacob awoke and knew that God was in the place, desert though it was, and we can hear God speak and see angels anywhere.

Jacob signaled the place by setting up a stone of memorial, as we should commemorate epochal events in our lives.

8. Jacob and Esau Reconciled

Jacob spent twenty years in Paddan-aram in the service of his uncle Laban and came away with two wives and flocks and servants.

Having escaped from Laban he ran into a new danger from Esau who was coming out to meet him with armed men.

In the night Jacob had an experience in which he wrestled with a messenger of God and was conquered and transformed into a new and more spiritual Jacob.

He then set his wits to work and devised measures for appeasing Esau. The two brothers met in amicable relations and the old sore was healed. There was a fine display of courtesy in an interchange of gifts and they both said, each to the other, "I have enough."

They were surely reconciled when they could say that, and so shall we be when we come together in this spirit.

9. Joseph the Dreamer

Our lessons now pass into the family history of Jacob and become tangled up in one of the most dramatic and tragic stories of the Old Testament. Jacob had twelve sons and jealousy ran rampant among them against their younger brother Joseph.

The brothers were out tending the flocks and the young brother took food to them and bore back tales of their misdoings to their father. Jacob also showed his favoritism for Joseph, and so family division drove a wedge of jealousy and hatred between the older brothers and the younger one.

Joseph was a dreamer of dreams in which he appeared to the advantage of the others, even as the ruler over them to whom they bowed down. He could not help the dreams but he made the mistake of telling about them.

Dreams have value as they may emerge from the deeper streams of our submerged unconscious life and reveal what ideas we are cherishing there. Yet we had better not put too much trust in them.

It was little wonder that Joseph was hated of his brothers. It is not wise to tell all that we are dreaming about, and dreams of coming greatness especially we would do well to keep to ourselves.

If dreams could make us great, there would be few small people left.

Yet there is a dream we should all cherish, the ideal of Christian character and attainment.

10. Joseph the Worker

Dreams cannot release us from work, and so a lesson on Joseph the Worker properly follows the one on Joseph the Dreamer.

Time passed and much has happened since Joseph dreamed. His ruthless brothers seized him and sold him as a slave into Egypt and made his old father believe he had been destroyed by wild beasts. Joseph rose in Egypt on the steps of deeds well done into the position of prime minister and was ruler of the land second only to Pharaoh himself.

Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream to mean that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph stored up the surplus food of the years of plenty and was ready for the famine.

In due time famine struck Egypt and sore and loud was the cry for bread. Joseph's foresight stood him and the people in good stead and he sold bread to them for a fair price, increasing the price as the famine went on and finally taking over their land.

Is there any bread for the spiritual famine of the World? "I am the bread of life," is the answer of Jesus.

11. Judah the True Brother

The whirligig of time whirled on and in time we find the brothers of Joseph before him in reversed relations. Famine devastated the land of Canaan and the sons of Jacob were forced to go down into Egypt to buy bread.

They appeared before Joseph though they did not recognize him, and Joseph put them through a sore trial. Benjamin had been born as the youngest brother, and Joseph demanded that he be brought down.

Judah's plea to Joseph to spare their old father this trial is one of the noblest speeches in the Bible and in all literature.

He offered himself as a hostage and sacrifice. At length Joseph could contain himself no longer and revealed himself to his brothers.

Their consternation was pitiful.

Their past rushed back upon them and they said one to another, "we are verily guilty concerning our brother." However Joseph spoke to them in affectionate tones as he said, "Come near to me."

How often we need to get near to one another, even to our enemies, and above all to God in Christ.

12. Jacob the Aged Father

The brothers reported to the aged father the story of Joseph as ruler of Egypt and Jacob resolved to go to see him. His faith sustained him in this hour and he went to Beer-sheba and there built an altar.

It was a dangerous adventure to go out of the promised land into the dreaded country of Egypt, but a divine promise sustained Jacob and he was ready for the duty, let it lead where it would.

The wagons were loaded and the caravan started. Joseph went out to

meet them and fell on his father's neck and kissed him. It was all too good to be true and the old father was so happy he felt he was ready to die.

Joseph introduced his father to Pharaoh and an interesting interview took place between these two men.

Joseph's filial care of and love for his father is a mark of his greatness, and this care for the aged should mark all our ways.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Is divine creation still going on?
2. Are the essential elements of human life displayed in the beginning?
3. Trace the stages in the life of Abraham.
4. Tell the story of Joseph and his brothers.
5. What are some general principles of divine providence illustrated in these lessons?

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD QUARTER

This quarter leads us through a dramatic and epochal period in Hebrew History. It starts in Egypt and takes us out through the tragic crossing of the Red Sea to Sinai, lifting its sombre mass up far out in the desert, and then the story marches with the great caravan right up to the border of the promised land but fails to enter in.

Moses overtops all this history standing so tall and masterful that he is yet visible all over the world.

He is the greatest man in the Old Testament as Paul is in the New, both being pioneers and road-breakers and foundation builders in their respective times.

Moses comes upon the scene as a firstborn male babe under the doom of Pharaoh's decree of slaughter of all such Hebrew children, but by a complicated and beautiful chain of Providence he is rescued and brought up in the very court that had plotted his destruction.

His Egyptian education helped to fit him for his great work.

Another strange turn in the whirligig of time threw him at the age of forty far out into the desert where in its solitude and silence he spent another forty years in further deepening the roots of his character.

Sent back to Egypt he lashed it into unwilling obedience to let Israel go, and out they marched through the Red Sea in which their enemies were smothered while they marched on to Sinai.

Here this people, numbering three millions but only a horde of slaves, were organized into a nation and the Ten Commandments were received and a tent of worship was set up, and their ordered national and religious life was started.

After about a year they struck their tents and marched towards the promised land, only to fail through cowardice to enter in when they reached its border.

It is a picturesque and stirring story told in the straightforward and graphic way of the Hebrew historian.

It is full of divine guidance and human frailty, temptation and fall. Though so ancient in time, yet it is singularly modern in its play of

human motives, fickleness and failure, but always getting forward towards some better thing and opening roads along which much of the best in our civilization and religion has come down to us.

Three great religions, Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, recognize Moses as a great prophet, and we do well to study his life and profit by his teaching and experience.

THIRD QUARTER

THE ERA OF MOSES

Aim: To lead the pupils to study the life and work of Moses and to develop in themselves a spirit of reverence and willing obedience to God.

LESSON I—JULY 3

Childhood and Education of Moses

Lesson: Exod. 2:1-10; Acts 7:20-22.

Golden Text: Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:9-16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Preparing for Life's Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Influence of a Godly Home.

Lesson Text: Exodus 2:1-10; Acts 7:20-22

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

4 And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it.

6 And she opened it, and saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse

of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maiden went and called the child's mother.

9 And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water.

20 At which season Moses was born, and was exceeding fair; and he was nourished three months in his father's house:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. *A Child Is Born.***
- 2. *The Child in Danger.***
- 3. *The Mother's Device to Save Her Boy.***
- 4. *A Royal Personage Appears on the Scene.***
- 5. *A Little Girl Makes a Happy Suggestion.***
- 6. *The Mother Receives Her Boy Again.***

Time has passed since Joseph finished his work and was gathered to his fathers. Generations have come and gone and Israel has served its time in Egypt. It has been developed and trained and compacted and is ready for a higher stage. It has suffered long enough and the time of its deliverance is near.

But deliverance calls for a deliverer and Moses is born. When God has a great work to do he raises up a great man to do it.

One of the largest figures in the Bible and in all history at this point steps upon the stage.

We see him first as a babe floating in his little boat on the river Nile, a seemingly abandoned waif, but he has in him tremendous possibilities and over him God is keeping watch. He shall smite Egypt so that it shall writhe under his lash like a mighty serpent; he shall deliver his people Israel. He shall create a nation, and from Sinai he shall rule all coming ages.

Few characters in history are so large and imposing and important and will so richly repay our study.

Here we see the marvelously complicated play of Providence around his infancy.

1. A Child Is Born

First a child is born. The Hebrews were being sorely oppressed, but the passion of love still drew kindred souls together and knit them into life union.

The very hardest adversities cannot kill love out of the world, or the world would die.

A youth and maiden of the tribe of Levi were joined in this mystic bond. Their names are not here given (but see Ex. 6:20) but few human

beings have played so important a part in the history of the world. Little did they suspect what a far-reaching step they were taking the day their lives were joined in one.

Herein lies one element of worth in common lives; we never know what possibilities slumber in them. The parents may be nameless, but the son may be Moses!

Into this humble home a son was born, a goodly child, exceeding fair. What a wealth of affection would be lavished upon it, what a new world of joy it would create in that home for its parents and for its brother and sister.

How serious and solemn and almost funereal would the world be if no babies were born in it.

And how empty and almost desolate is the home that has not been blessed with a little human blossom fresh from the hand of God! But the baby comes and changes all that. The cup of life immediately begins to sparkle and effervesce. How comic is its size, how interesting are all its little ways, how instantly it becomes the monarch of the house and overrides all our artificial conventionalities, how it humanizes the home. And how also it sobers life with responsibility and makes it tremble with anxiety.

God be thanked for the little ones. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.

2. The Child in Danger

Next we see this child in danger. A monstrous decree had gone forth from Pharaoh that all the male children of the Hebrews should be killed at birth. Oppression had failed to keep down the Hebrew population, and the next step was to stop this stream at the source. Extermination should cut short their multiplication.

Hatred runs into murder.

Herod adopted this plan when he thrust a sword through every cradle in Bethlehem. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel to little children, and in some heathen countries to this day there is a slaughter of the innocents.

Every babe is born into danger.

Temptations beset it on every side. Evil lurks in the home, and just outside the home monsters of temptation, great spotted serpents of pleasure and vice, lie in wait to crush it. A home may be Christian in spirit and training, and yet every child in it is exposed to danger and destruction.

This is one of the mysteries and tragedies of life.

Father, we pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil (John 17:15).

3. The Mother's Device to Save Her Boy

Next we see the mother trying to save her baby boy. This was the first child born to her since the terrible decree of Pharaoh was passed. With what a passion of love and fear would she clasp it to her heart! How every element of innocence and beauty in the babe intensified her agony as she thought of its dreadful fate.

With motherly instinct and devotion she determined to save her child.

Three months she kept it hid in her home, months in which she had many an hour of secret joy darkened with the fear of discovery. But this course was no longer safe, and something had to be done.

She set her wits to work. Presently she hit upon a bold plan and put it into execution. She took a basket woven of rushes and made it water-tight with pitch. In this she snugly tucked her babe and stole down to the river Nile, and, imprinting a last fond kiss on the sleeping boy, laid the little boat among rushes along the shore. Then she went back to her home, leaving the precious babe to the river and to God.

It is not clear just what purpose or hope was in her mind in this plan. She doubtless had a hope that her child would fall into hands that would save it and may even have thought of Pharaoh's daughter, possibly having seen her down by the river. But however this may be, she had thought of divine guidance, and this was a link in the chain of God's providence.

The home must take thought for the protection and welfare of its children.

Cunning traps are being devised and set to catch them, and we must use our watchfulness and wisdom to thwart and destroy them.

The whole teaching and spirit, atmosphere and surroundings of the home should be such as will ward off and quench all the fiery darts of evil.

We should train up our children in the way they should go and have them put on the whole armor of God, and then they will be safe.

4. A Royal Personage Appears on the Scene

At this point a royal personage appears on the scene of the story, and the plot of Providence grows dramatic.

A princess of the royal house, the daughter of Pharaoh, came down to the river, attended by her maidens to bathe. Presently she spied the curious-looking basket among the reeds and sent her maid to fetch it. When it had been brought she opened it and was astonished to find in it a baby! The poor wee thing was crying.

A baby's cry makes the whole world kin, and the human motherly heart of the royal woman was instantly touched.

Though she saw that it was a Hebrew child and therefore according to the royal decree should be thrown back into the river as though it were a little crocodile, yet she was too human to do any such dreadful thing.

Her heart instantly got the better of her and she loved it and resolved to save it.

Pharaoh's hand was mighty, but Pharaoh's daughter's heart was mightier!

Her action in this scene is human, simple and most beautiful, investing her with grace more splendid than the purple robes and queenly crown that she afterward may have worn.

In what startling ways does God often work to thwart human plans and carry out his own decrees.

Pharaoh decreed to destroy that child but God decreed to save it.

Sometimes we think of the decrees of God as harsh and hard, but they are all merciful and good.

Pharaoh decreed the extermination of the Hebrews and his own daughter was unconsciously led to frustrate his plan and effect their deliverance. There is no fighting against God when he can turn our own weapons against us and make our very wrath to praise him.

Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river on a simple errand with no ulterior purpose, and yet she was unwittingly playing an important part in the plan of Providence and in the history of the world. We never know in what unseen ways and for what ulterior purpose God is using us. Pharaoh's daughter reached down and saved only a baby, but in saving that infant she saved Moses!

We never know what great thing we may be doing in saving a child.

Moses lying in his little boat was worth as much as Moses standing on Sinai and uttering great words that are still thundering through the world.

Save the children.

5. A Little Girl Makes a Happy Suggestion

Next a little girl comes on the scene and makes a happy suggestion.

At this point we see a beautiful instance of a child's usefulness and of a little sister's love.

When the baby brother was left in the river, his sister stood afar off to see what would become of him. Probably no plan was in her mind; she did not know that she could do anything, but her love for her brother prompted her to wait and see. Her willingness put her in the way of a great service.

Watchers are often good workers. They also serve who only stand and wait.

Presently her opportunity came. When she saw Pharaoh's daughter take the child she was quickly at her side offering to obtain a Hebrew nurse to care for the baby. The wisest philosopher could not have reasoned out a more appropriate and cunning suggestion.

A child's intuition is often something wonderful.

The suggestion was at once adopted by the Egyptian princess, for royal women need the help of their lowly sisters and humblest subjects. Off flew the little girl and presently she was back again with her mother to receive her own child!

A little girl helped to save Moses. A sister's love was a shining golden link in this beautiful chain of Providence.

This is not the only instance in the Bible in which children played important parts in great crises, and still they may render great service in the complicated plan and play of Providence in our human world.

Let us see to it that we despise not one of these little ones, for God may be raising them up for some great purpose and at any rate they are of supreme worth in his sight.

6. The Mother Receives Her Boy Again

The mother reappears upon the scene to hear from Pharaoh's daughter words that must have swept her heart with a storm of emotion. "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." It was as though she had received her baby back from the dead. Perhaps her wondering thought was, What hath God wrought? The mother had her boy back in her bosom, and now her great work begins.

What this boy will be depends upon this mother.

By her teaching and training, spirit and prayer, and by all the subtle unconscious radiations of her life, she is to mold this child and largely determine its character and destiny.

Most men are what their mothers make them. "All that I am," said Abraham Lincoln, "I owe to my angel mother."

When God is about to make a great man he first makes a great woman.

Judged by this principle the mother of Moses was a truly great woman.

She was to be paid by the princess her "wages" for rearing her own boy, but her real wages was not any money, though it might be shekels of gold, but her joy in the possession and training of her precious child.

Talk of "wages" to a mother? The word is almost an insult: she is paid a million fold every day in the joy of her heart.

The mother of Moses, however, could not always keep her boy. When he had grown she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son.

A mother must do her work quickly and thoroughly with her boy, for presently she must give him up and let him go out into the world.

The Hebrew boy received an Egyptian name and entered upon his life in the royal court. He was sent to school and became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; he received a university education.

The men that make history are always prepared for their work and are armed with the power of thought.

Thus all the links in this wonderfully complicated providence worked together so as to rescue this child and bring him up under such training as would fit him for the work he was to do in the world.

Let us get our children ready for their work, and may they do their part in their preparation for their task in life.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Give other instances in the Bible of children who did important things.
2. What are some of the dangers that specially confront our children in the home?
3. What temptations meet them in school and college?
4. What can boys and girls do today in helping God in his providence?
5. What are the chief blessings of a religious home?

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LESSON II—JULY 10

The Call of Moses

Lesson: Exodus 2:11-4:20.

Golden Text: *Certainly I will be with thee.* Exodus 3:12.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Hearing and Heeding God's Call.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Accepting a Great Task.

Lesson Text: Exodus 3:10-15; 4:10-12

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt

thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, This shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

10 And Moses said unto Jehovah, Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

11 And Jehovah said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, Jehovah?

12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Call of Moses.**
- 2. Moses Objects.**
- 3. A Great Promise.**
- 4. A Present God.**
- 5. A Vision of Liberty.**
- 6. Difficulties.**

The babe found in the little boat on the Nile has become a man. Nearly eighty years have passed since he was brought as a boy into Pharaoh's court. After he was grown to manhood he did not forget his own people, but was deeply concerned over their condition and probably was meditating some bold scheme for their deliverance.

One day, seeing an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, he killed the oppressor and hid his body in the sand. When Pharaoh discovered the crime, Moses had to fly for his life.

He turned up in Midian, where he settled in the family of a sheik, married his daughter and adopted a shepherd life. For forty years he lived in this retirement.

These were not lost years, but were a necessary part of his preparation for his great work.

At the age of forty in Egypt he was educated and eager, but he was impulsive and rash. He could not control himself and therefore was not fitted to control others. He needed to have his roots of character deepened and his powers of action disciplined.

Such growth takes place in solitude and silence.

The tree pours years of hidden life into the rosy apple. The meteor travels millions of invisible miles before it explodes in one brief flash of splendor. Jesus took thirty years of preparation for just three years of public ministry. Forty years of meditation and growth in the wilderness shaped and tempered and put finishing touches on Moses.

The man for the hour was now ready. It took eighty years to make him, but he was worth all the cost, and God now called him to his task.

1. The Call of Moses

Moses was keeping his flock when out of a burning bush the call came to him. "And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt." Will he then not go himself and right the wrong? No. "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh." "All authority hath been given unto me: go ye therefore" (Matt. 28:18).

This is ever the divine logic and line of procedure. When God has a work to do, he immediately calls upon man to do it.

The best worker is he that gets others to work. God is the great Organizer, making us co-workers with him and using us to accomplish his plans. This is one of the greatest dignities of man and one of the grandest inspirations of life.

Every man who is at the right work is called of God.

The mechanic and the merchant have a divine mission and commission as well as the prophet and apostle. All true workers are co-workers with God, Success in life is doing the work to which God has called us, and those that get into the wrong places are misfits and failures. Every mission on which God sends us is to deliver his people from some form of bondage.

We fulfil this mission when as industrial workers we deliver them from hunger and cold; when as teachers we deliver them from ignorance; and in the highest form when as Christians through the gospel we bring deliverance to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound in sin.

2. Moses Objects

Moses met this call with an objection: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" This doubtless expressed his sense of humility and inability in the presence of such a call. He never would have sought such a mission and its greatness overwhelmed him.

It was right for him not to push himself into this work and not to go until he was sent.

Many run before they are called, specially towards high places.

But Moses underestimated his powers and pressed his objection too far. He forgot God was the judge of his fitness.

He urged the point that he was not eloquent, but was slow of speech, as much as to say, "I am not the man, send Aaron, he is the eloquent member of our family."

Aaron could speak well (4:14), yet Moses uttered great words that are still thundering through the world, but who can quote anything that Aaron ever said?

We may be too modest and too willing to undervalue our powers when God calls us to a higher work.

We think that if we had more brilliant gifts and larger resources we might accomplish something, but with our few gifts and meagre means we have no chance. So thought the disciples with their few loaves and fishes, yet with those small means under the blessing of Christ they fed five thousand men.

Moses thought he could do nothing, and yet he was the one man that could deliver Israel.

3. A Great Promise

This objection was met and the call was backed up with a great promise. "Certainly I will be with thee." God had not overlooked the point of power in his plan. Though he was using human agency, yet he was not trusting to human weakness but to his own omnipotence. Moses himself against mighty Pharaoh was nothing, but Moses with God was everything. Moses was to supply the human channel and God the divine energy, and the two together would be irresistible.

God never sends a man to a work without giving him the ability to do it.

"Lo, I am with you always" is Christ's promise to his disciples.

"Ye shall serve God upon this mountain," was the assurance of this promise. Moses by vivid imagination was to see the work done, and then in the strength and inspiration of that faith he was to go and do it. This is the way faith works in every field. The inventor by faith sees his magic machine in operation and is as sure of its success as though it were working before his very eyes, and impelled by this assurance he proceeds to work it out. The sculptor sees the angel in the rough block of marble before he sets it free with his chisel.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

4. A Present God

Moses raises another objection. The children of Israel would ask questions of him and demand his credentials for his authority to speak in the name of God. What name should he give?

Every one entering a work should be prepared to show his fitness for his work.

God was ready with an answer for Moses that equipped him at this point. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall ye say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

The name Jehovah is of the same root and meaning as I AM, but the Jews may in some degree have lost its significance, and this form of the name brought this meaning out and made it vivid.

This name emphasizes some fundamental divine attributes.

It asserts the personality of God, as he speaks in the first person; it declares his eternal self-existence as he exists in himself; and it affirms his abiding unchangeable presence and power, the same yesterday, today and forever.

God is not one who was, but who forever is.

This was the special significance and comfort and inspiration of this name for the Jews. For many generations no prophet had appeared and God was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but he did not appear to be present with them as their God.

They dated God in the past.

They knew a God who was, and they needed to be aroused and inspired with a sense of a God who is. Hence this new name was given that pressed this point sharply into their minds.

We are exposed to the same danger. Religion is apt to grow retrospective. It looks back upon the golden age when God was with his people and loses a sense of the ever present living God. Some people seem to think that God has left the world and that we must go back two or three thousand years to find him. But I AM is ever with us as our God in whom we live and move and have our being.

A direct consciousness that God is with us is the vital root of religion. He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Christ is Immanuel, God with us.

5. A Vision of Liberty

A plan of action was now outlined for Moses. He was to go first and gather the elders of Israel together and enlist them in the work of

deliverance. The great leader must have the help of his brethren. It is only as we work together that we can win victories.

Moses was to declare to the elders God's purpose to deliver them. They were to be brought up out of the affliction of Egypt unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

Deliverance and reward were the two blessings of the promise, the two wings that would carry it to victory.

It was the glorious vision of liberty that Moses was to hold up before his oppressed people, the same vision that has often inspired men with heroic might. This is the message of the gospel, deliverance from the bondage and bitterness of sin into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Moses delivered them from physical slavery, but if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.

Moses, having won the elders, was then to go in company with them to the king of Egypt and pray that they might be allowed to go three days' journey into the wilderness that they might sacrifice unto the Lord their God. Their request was reduced to the lowest terms in order to give Pharaoh the least ground for refusal.

It was not a secret rebellion, but an open proposal.

Had it been granted, it would doubtless have led to organized action and liberty. The point of the request was that it raised a religious issue between Pharaoh and the Hebrews. It turned the contest into a religious war, which more than anything else arouses the passions and energies of men to their intensest pitch.

Every question of sin and duty raises the question of whom we shall serve, the Pharaoh of this world or the God of heaven.

6. Difficulties

Moses was warned that there would be difficulties in his path. The king of Egypt would not let the people go, no, not by a mighty hand. Moses was not deceived into thinking that he was to have an easy victory, but was forewarned that he was to have a hard fight. Jesus never deluded his disciples with any false hopes, but plainly told them

of the terrible trials they must bear. He never was deceived himself, but from the beginning saw his cross.

The Christian life is a real fight that calls for hardships and loss and we must count the cost.

There is no way by which we can be carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease. Satan will not let us travel the road of righteousness without arraying all his forces of opposition against us.

Yet God would stretch out his hand over Egypt and after that Pharaoh would let his people Israel go.

The Captain of our salvation who won the victory over Satan in the wilderness goes before us into battle and in his might we triumph. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Put on the whole armor of God and resist the devil: after that he will let you go.

As Moses heard the call of God and faced the great opportunity of his life, so are we to hear the call of God to our appointed work and endure its trials and discharge its duties with such courage as will carry us to victory.

And it is always better, with Moses, to choose "rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25).

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In what ways may divine calls come to us?
2. Why are we often reluctant to obey the call of God?
3. How can we intensify our consciousness of the presence of God?
4. What has the vision of liberty done for the world? What countries are stirring with unrest today?
5. Why is the world so full of difficulties?

LESSON III—JULY 17

The Passover

Lesson: Exodus 11:1-12:36.

Golden Text: *Our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ.* I Corinthians 5:7.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 63:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Memorial Feast.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Meaning of the Passover.

Lesson Text: Exodus 12:21-28

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover.

22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.

23 For Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

24 And ye shall observe this thing for

an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.

25 And it shall come to pass, when ye are come to the land which Jehovah will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of Jehovah's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

28 And the children of Israel went and did so; as Jehovah had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. An Epochal Event.***
- 2. The Lamb Selected.***
- 3. The Shedding of Blood.***
- 4. A Terrible Judgment.***
- 5. Notable Exceptions.***
- 6. A Memorial.***

From Midian Moses returned to Egypt and entered upon his great task. He first revealed the plan to Aaron and then to the elders and people.

Moses and Aaron, from this time indissolubly joined together, appeared before Pharaoh and presented the petition of the God of Israel that he let the Israelites go into the wilderness to worship. Pharaoh flew into a rage, insolently asked, Who is Jehovah? defiantly refused the petition, and ordered the tasks of the Hebrew slaves to be made heavier.

The children of Israel under the fresh fury of Pharaoh turned against Moses and Aaron and Moses himself wavered. But God strengthened him and held him to his work.

All peaceful means having failed, desperate measures were resorted to. Plague after plague was let loose upon the land and stroke after stroke devastated it with horrors. Still Pharaoh stiffened his pride and nursed his hatred and refused to let the people go.

Then Jehovah made ready to bring one plague more. At midnight he would walk through the land and shoot an arrow into every Egyptian house, and every firstborn child should be dead and a great cry would pierce the night through all the land.

But against any of the children of Israel not a dog should move his tongue that Jehovah might put a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites.

In the lull preceding this fearful storm of death, this ordinance of the passover was instituted as the sign of deliverance.

1. An Epochal Event

This event was to change the beginning of the Jewish religious year.

It marked an epoch. It was the birth of the nation.

It was therefore to be distinguished from common months and be pushed into prominence. The beginning of the year itself was a memorial that turned their minds back to this great event and revived its inspiring meaning.

Nations generally have epochal events in their history.

The birth of our nation is marked and celebrated by our Fourth of July. Such days are of immense importance in national life. They consolidate the nation and kindle and conserve its patriotism.

The supreme epoch of human history was the birth of Christ.

That event fixed the axis of the world's history and swung all the centuries around its center. The most tremendous fact in the morning newspaper is the four figures that give the date of its publication.

Christ's birth was the beginning of months, and no one has reached the true beginning of life until he has come into living relation with him.

2. The Lamb Selected

First, a lamb was to be selected by each family. The ordinance recognized God's providence over the home. It bound the members of the family together, and it made each home a centre of religious training and worship.

The home is older than the church and is charged with religious responsibility.

Church and Sunday school and all other agencies can never take the place and do the work of the Christian home.

The lamb had to be a male of the first year without blemish and be kept four days. The offering had to be perfect and the slightest defect would unfit it for this holy ordinance.

The Jews did not understand or but dimly understood the deep far-reaching significance of this paschal lamb. But subsequent events and teachings have revealed it unto us and we can interpret this ordinance in the light of the gospel.

This lamb was a type and prophecy of Christ, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

Its excellencies are faint foreshadowings of his glories. Its innocence typifies his guiltlessness, and its perfection his unblemished holiness. He was chosen of God as an offering and kept through the ages until the fulness of time was come.

We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot.

3. The Shedding of Blood

On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month the lamb was to be killed, its blood was to be sprinkled upon the doorposts of the house, and its flesh roasted with fire was to be eaten.

The shedding of blood is a deep fact in religion everywhere significant of deliverance from sin.

The blood is the life and there can be no atonement for sin unless life is laid down. The scarlet thread of sacrifice is everywhere woven into the web of the universe. This eternal law, typified in the blood of the paschal lamb, is fulfilled in the cross of Christ whose blood is the perfect atonement and cleanseth from all sin.

It was not enough, however, that the lamb should be killed: its blood had to be sprinkled upon the doorposts of each house. This signified that the Israelites accepted it as the sign of their deliverance and had faith in its efficacy.

Christ's death avails not for our redemption unless we accept him and come into living union with him.

The eating of the flesh gave the Israelites strength for their escape out of bondage into liberty. Christ is to be not only believed but also received as the Bread of life to give strength unto our souls.

Through faith and prayer, meditating upon his words and doing his will, the spirit of Christ is assimilated by the believer and reappears in the strength and fruitfulness and beauty of the Christian life.

4. A Terrible Judgment

Then terrible things would come to pass. God would pass through Egypt and smite all the firstborn.

Egypt's cup of iniquity was full and the hour of her judgment was come.

God had not forgotten his justice during the long years of oppression. The merciless Egyptian lash had drawn its last drop of blood from the back of a Hebrew slave and now retribution was about to strike and the account would be settled. A wrong may be centuries long, but God has not forgotten it and is only biding his time.

History contains many impressive instances of crimes that long persisted, but justice and judgment triumphed and they were at last washed out in seas of blood.

This presents a severe and terrible aspect of God's character, but justice and judgment are eternal attributes of his divine nature and without them the universe would be wrecked.

There are views of God that exalt and magnify his compassion and love at the expense of his truth and justice and dissolve his character into sweetness and light. Some would wash all the wrath out of his nature and leave it colorless and limp. But such a God could not govern this world and would not be worthy of our reverence. God would not be a respectable God if he put no difference between the righteous and the wicked.

Revelation and reason and nature are one in repudiating such a view of God.

“Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians.” Let us not trust any religious teaching that would disarm God and turn him into an indifferent and impotent spectator of good and evil. Such a view is a dangerous opiate to dull our sense of sin and lull our conscience to sleep.

While we should not robe God in unreasoning hate and should ever hold that his heart is love, yet it can never be erased from the Word of God or from the constitution of the universe that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.

The justice of God will do us no hurt if our sins are forgiven, but if we persist in impenitence he will surely smite us.

5. Notable Exceptions

There were, however, to be notable exceptions to this destruction. “When he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come unto your houses to smite you.” The retribution of God was not a blind fury carrying indiscriminating slaughter through Egypt. It made “a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel ” (7:11).

It picked out the right persons and never once made a mistake.

Amidst all the confusion of this world in which the good and the evil are so deeply tangled together and so often seem to be treated alike, God never fails to put a difference between the righteous and the wicked and always stands “within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.”

If it be said that it was strange justice that picked out the Egyptian children on which to wreak divine justice, the reply must be that the Judge of all the earth must have seen no injustice in what was done in the long run and final outcome.

Such suffering of children is a universal fact in our human world and it is one of its darkest aspects.

There was a token by which this difference could be distinguished. The blood on the doorpost was the sign of the passover, a signature of faith in that family, and the spirit of Christ in the heart marks the deepest difference among men and is the sign by which God knows his own and passes over them in mercy.

This is not an arbitrary sign by which God unjustly discriminates among men. It is a mark of character that is freely open and offered to all men and all may receive it.

Any house presenting the blood-mark that night would be passed over, and any soul receiving Christ becomes a redeemed child of God.

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto him and live, and whosoever will may receive his forgiveness and life everlasting.

6. A Memorial

This day was to be kept as a memorial to the Lord through all generations.

Memorials are needed to fasten events in the memory and keep their significance vivid and vital through the years.

As life grows older, many ordinary days and common things become baptized into higher meanings. That is a poor life indeed that is not rich in such memorials. Birthdays and battlefields and monuments and holidays, Christmas and New Year's, Fourth of July and Armistice Day, flags and emblems—countless are the memorials by which we endeavor to keep alive and active in our experience the precious things of the past.

Such memorials unify and enrich our life. Especially do they teach the children the meaning of their inheritance.

The passover became the central institution of the Jews and was a powerful factor in binding them together and preserving their faith in Jehovah. This event was burned so deep into their national consciousness that it has never faded out and is observed to this day.

It is the oldest ordinance in the world that is still celebrated.

Scattered as the Jews are, no other people have any existing religious memorial that runs back unbroken through so many centuries.

The Jewish passover was transformed into the Lord's Supper which is the true fulfilment of this ordinance today.

Christianity has deep historical roots running back to Christ and on back to Moses and out over the pagan world, and all the accumulated life of these centuries is still coursing in its veins.

Christianity exists by its remembrance of Christ.

Jesus took only common bread and wine, two of the frailest elements of earth, as his material memorial, and yet these slender threads have been spun down through the centuries and through all their revolutions and storms and are as fresh in their meaning today as when they first passed through his hands to his disciples.

There must be some deep and vital meaning in this memorial which the world will not let die.

"Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever." This we do when we gather at the Lord's table and fulfil his command: "This do in remembrance of me."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Name all our national memorial days and give the significance of each.
2. How can the innocent justly suffer with the guilty?
3. Are justice and love inconsistent attributes of man and of God?
4. Does God show favoritism in passing over some and not others?
5. Why does Christ want us not to forget him?

LESSON IV—JULY 24

The Deliverance at the Red Sea

Lesson: Exodus 13:17-15:21.

Golden Text: Jehovah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. Exodus 15:2.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 37:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Israel Won Freedom.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How God Helps His People.

Lesson Text: Exodus 14:10-16, 21-22

10 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto Jehovah.

11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt?

12 Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14 Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

16 And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Complaining People.*
- 2. Stand Still and See.*
- 3. Jehovah Will Fight.*
- 4. The Divided Sea.*
- 5. The Greatest Crossing of History.*

At midnight Jehovah smote the firstborn of Egypt and instantly there was a scene of indescribable confusion and horror throughout the land.

One thought seized the panic-stricken Egyptians: the Hebrews must be got out of the land before morning.

Pharaoh sent in hot haste for Moses and Aaron and ordered them to take their people and flocks and be gone. The passover prepared them for immediate departure and the start was made. Their course ran southeastward and in a few days they struck a northern arm of the Red Sea. Pharaoh had already repented of his action and was closing in behind them with his chariots of war.

The Israelites were caught between Pharaoh and the sea, and it seemed that all was lost.

1. Complaining People

At this point our lesson opens with the Israelites in a state of panic. Notwithstanding the divine protection symbolized by the pillar of cloud going before them by day and of fire by night, "when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto Jehovah." They cried unto Moses, also, and wanted to know if there were no graves in Egypt that they had been led out into the wilderness to perish, and they reminded Moses that they had told him it was better to stay as slaves in Egypt than to die in the desert.

Nothing suited them, and Moses was to blame whether he kept them in Egypt or led them out towards freedom.

Here is the fickleness of religious faith that so often easily loses confidence in God and is ready to cry out against his providence.

We want God to keep us on a smooth road and carry us on flowery beds of ease and then we will trust him, but rough roads and severe trials are often too much for us and we faint and fall. We need to get deeper roots to our faith that will stand unshaken in all storms and enable us to exclaim, "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope; nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him" (Job 13:15).

The popularity of Moses, also, faded like the morning dew. Hailed one day as a deliverer of his people, the next he was denounced as a traitor who had plotted their destruction. Popularity, especially political, is one of the most fickle forms of reputation and fame.

Democracy has small patience and will as quickly throw down as it will raise up its idolized leaders.

Lincoln was no sooner seated in his chair as president than men of his own party began to plot against him and drew up plans to depose him as leader; and many of our presidents and eminent statesmen have tasted this bitter cup of a sudden loss of their popularity.

Barabbas got more votes than Christ, and counting votes is still often a poor way of reaching truth or establishing solid wisdom and worth.

2. Stand Still and See

This complaint of the people aroused the spirit of Moses and he stood up in his might and spoke to them in a commanding voice that compelled attention and allayed their fear. "Fear ye not," he said, "stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you today." By rousing their faith he overcame their fear by the expulsive power of a stronger affection.

Fear has its place in our life and world, but there are times when it should be driven from the field of consciousness by courage and determination.

The personality of Moses was a power that expelled the fear of the people and gave them new strength and courage.

A strong personality is the solution of many a problem.

The mere appearance of Napoleon on a wavering field of battle was said to be equal to the arrival of fifty thousand fresh troops. The personality of Washington, more than any other single fact, won the independence of our country, and the personality of Lincoln saved it from going to pieces. No wonder that Moses still looms so large today when he could thus turn a mob on the verge of a panic into a strong united people.

His firm command to them was, "Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you today."

It would seem that to "stand still" was a strange command in that hour when "up and at them" appeared to be the urgent need of the moment. But there are times when standing still that we may see the situation comes first.

We must see clearly before we can go forward wisely and masterfully.

If we do not see what we are going to do, we may blunder foolishly and fatally, be we ever so brave.

How important that we stand still in youth that we may get ready for the work of life, and that in all our work we get ready before we begin?

John the Baptist knew this secret when he retired into the wilderness. Jesus did the same when he spent thirty years in silence for three years' work, and Paul after his conversion hid himself in retirement three years before he entered upon his public work. Standing still may be not idleness or wasted time, but the most thorough preparation.

When by quiet meditation and prayer we fulfil the condition, "Be still and know that I am God," when we stand until by faith we "see the salvation which God will work for us," we are ready for action and sure of victory.

3. Jehovah Will Fight.

What great promise did Moses now give the people? "Jehovah will fight for you." But is God a fighter? Are we not now bending all our efforts to get men to cease fighting and live in peace?

This is even so, and we cannot do too much in this good work.

Nevertheless, history is one long struggle in which there have been many occasions when fighting had to be done in the name of righteousness and liberty.

God is "a man of war" and in the Old Testament especially is represented as fighting for his people, while the teaching of the book also looks forward to the day when "they shall learn war no more."

War is a waning fact in our civilization and we believe it will finally fade out into international means of preventing it and solving all problems by peaceful means.

However, moral and spiritual warfare still remains and perhaps will until the end of time.

The weapons of this warfare are not carnal but spiritual, truth and

justice, kindness and sympathy and brotherhood, patience and peace.

God is the leader in this warfare and on him we are to rely and in it we are to engage. Wherefore put on the whole armor of God and stand fast and quit you like men.

God is ever on the side of the right, of truth and justice and brotherhood, and in this nobler warfare the ringing assurance still comes to us, "Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

4. The Divided Sea

At the moment when the Israelites were caught between Pharaoh and the sea Moses was bidden, "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it."

This was done and the great miracle is told with impressive simplicity. Tradition and poetry have embellished the great event with richer rhetoric, but the account in its severe self-restraint bears marks of sober truth.

God wrought the great event by natural means. A terrific storm raged all night and a strong east wind blew the water off the shallow sea bottom and left it dry.

Storms have produced similar effects in the Gulf of Suez in modern times. God honors ordinary means and keeps close to nature even in working miracles. The natural and the supernatural are harmonious parts of one system and we cannot always draw the shadowy line between them.

God is in all things and natural and supernatural are one with him.

Across the soft sandy bottom, sprinkled with spray torn from the angry billows, the Israelites escaped from bondage into liberty and entered upon their career as a nation. The pursuing Egyptians rushed in after them in reckless rashness and fury.

Their blind folly resulted in an unparalleled tragedy. At the divine command Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea. The waters loosed from restraint rushed and leaped with deafening roar and mad-

dened foam upon the struggling, shouting, cursing Egyptians, smothering their cries and burying warriors and horses and chariots under the waves.

None escaped.

With the morning light the sea was again calm in its place and the Israelites saw the Egyptians washed up dead upon the shore.

This tragic event seized upon the Hebrew imagination and wrought itself into the great poem contained in the next chapter and into other psalms. "I will sing unto Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea."

Good men can go where bad men cannot follow.

The Lord's guidance gives safety and they that follow Pharaoh run terrible risks. The same agencies that God uses for the protection of the righteous he also wields for the punishment of the wicked. The gravitation that holds one building up pulls another down. The sunlight that makes the whole earth bud and bloom may also smite and scorch it with untempered heat. We can use all the forces of God's world so that they will serve us as servants or fall upon us as masters.

Yet the judgments of the Lord are never blind and indiscriminating, arbitrary and unjust, but are righteousness and truth and goodness.

The wisdom of his ways are often hidden from us, and we must fall back upon our fundamental faith, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

5. The Greatest Crossing of History

"But the children of Israel walked over on dry land in the midst of the sea."

This simple statement marks the greatest crossing of history.

They crossed from Africa into Asia and thereby strode over continental distances and differences. Behind them lay Egypt with its monster temples and pyramids and its pagan priests and rites, and before them lay Sinai and Jerusalem and the tabernacle and temple, psalmists and prophets and apostles, and in the fulness of time the fulfilment and

blossom of all their national development and glory, the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Behind them lay slavery, before them lay freedom. Behind them lay idolatry, before them lay spiritual worship. Behind them lay the stagnant and polluted Nile, before them lay the rushing Jordan and blue Galilee whose shores should be forever hallowed by the footprints of Jesus.

This crossing is still a grand illustration of deliverance from sin into salvation.

Behind us lies the slavery of sin and before us lies the glorious liberty of righteousness. The Christian life is one of hope ever looking forward into new and grander vistas and visions opening before it. The best things for the Christian are yet to be.

Our promised land lies not behind us in this world, but before us, stretching beyond the horizon into the eternal world where its shore touches the glassy sea and where the redeemed stand and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

What did the Israelites take with them out of Egypt? They took with them the knowledge and worship of the one true and living God and in this were wrapped up their freedom of forgiveness and their new life. They took with them the education they had gained in Egypt, a land of learning, wise with centuries of accumulated experience in architecture and art, government and civilization. They took with them discipline in obedience to their prophets and especially to Moses.

They also took in their baggage something that seems surprising: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him" (12:19).

Why take time in the midst of the confusion of the preparation and departure to find these old bones and why cumber the wagons with them.

Joseph himself had pledged them to do this, and there was reason enough for carrying out the promise.

In taking these bones they were taking Joseph himself.

These relics that to unseeing and profane eyes may have seemed to be only a box of old bones, rattling around in a transport wagon, to the

people of faith and vision represented the person of Joseph and were charged with the mystic power of his presence. His very spirit hovered over that box and inspired the people with the memory of all the power of his great soul.

A great epoch of history was packed into those bones, and they did well to carry them with them.

We do well to carry with us the great mementoes and memories of the past and be faithful to them.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What pillars of Providence do we have to guide us?
2. Have we yet escaped from slavery?
3. How has this great crossing helped us?
4. What treasures do we have in our national transport wagons?
5. Does God still fight for us?

LESSON V—JULY 31

The Giving of the Manna

Lesson: Exodus 16:1-36.

Golden Text: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. James 1:17.

Devotional Reading: John 6:32-40.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: God's Daily Gifts.

Topic for Young People and Adults: God's Daily Gifts.

Lesson Text: Exodus 16:1-5, 14-15, 35

1 And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness:

3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

4 Then said Jehovah unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I

may prove them whether they will walk in my law or not.

5 And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground.

15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them, It is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat.

35 And the children of Israel did eat the manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat the manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Bread! Bread!*
- 2. Murmuring Rebuked.*
- 3. A Rain of Bread.*
- 4. Gather It.*
- 5. Provision for the Sabbath.*
- 6. A Promise Fulfilled.*
- 7. Forty Years.*

A notable psalm of victory celebrated the deliverance out of Egypt and then the Israelites started towards the promised land.

Their troubles began early. Disillusionment often quickly throws shadows over our fairest visions.

The first stop was at Marah, where bitter water caused the people to murmur. The second stop was at Elim, where there were palm trees and wells of sweet water. The fifteenth day of the second month brought them into the wilderness of Sin, where the event of the present lesson occurred.

1. Bread! Bread!

Bread! Bread! was the hoarse maddening cry that came up from every quarter of the camp. The people were hungry and starving, and they immediately lost faith in Moses and in God and again cried out that they wished that they had died in Egypt. So quickly did triumphant jubilant faith and song pass into unbelief and complaint.

Our faith is too dependent on circumstances.

It goes up or down with the thermometer, or with our health, or with the flour barrel and bank account. We need faith that is impervious to wind and indifferent to the weather, that has its foundations down beneath the sand of earthly circumstance and change and lifts its summit above all storms and clouds.

God is still God out in the wilderness, though not a crumb is in sight, and we should trust him there.

Hunger is the most powerful driving wheel that moves the world. For this the tiger leaps out of its lair, and the little bird pecks upon the ground. For this microbes hunt by the million in our own blood, and for this all the people in the world toil and must find it or die.

The first necessity of man is bread: not in the order of importance but in the order of time.

The human stomach has its rights and must be attended to even in the midst of our holiest aspirations as is seen in the Lord's prayer. If a man is hungry and starving the first thing to do for him is not to read the Bible to him and try to convert him, but to feed him.

Jesus did not try to preach to hungry people, but he stopped and gave them bread. And right in the middle of his model prayer he taught them to ask, "Give us this day our daily bread."

2. Murmuring Rebuked

Moses rebuked the murmuring of the people. "Jehovah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against me, but against Jehovah" (verse 8).

Things had not worked out according to their desire and comfort, and they at once lost patience and began to grumble.

Their complaint that they would rather have died in Egypt was a vain imagination, for they did not want to die in that land or in any land, and in Egypt they were in bitter bondage and their slave fare was doubtless scanty and coarse.

In the wilderness they might be pinched for bread, but they had liberty and a promised land of their own. They lacked the indomitable spirit of the Pilgrims and Puritans who would rather starve on that bleak New England shore and have liberty than be full fed in old England and endure civil and religious tyranny. People are often disposed to complain at present conditions and lament the passing of "the good old days," when the truth is that the former days were not better and we are now living in the best days the world has ever seen.

Much and indeed all our murmuring runs up against God.

He is leading us out of the bondage of sin into a promised land of liberty and abundant life, and we complain because every step of the journey does not suit us.

Having committed our way unto the Lord, we should let him bring it to pass. Let us stop complaining and endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

3. A Rain of Bread

God heard the cry of the people and promised, "I will rain bread from heaven for you." He who created us with appetite and need for food also created wheatfield and orchard to match our need.

All our bread comes from heaven.

It may grow out of the ground and seem to have its origin in the earth, but its real roots are in the sky. For no sky would mean no wheat; no clouds overhead, no garden round about; no rain, no leaf and no loaf; no sun, no blossoming earth. And who made earth and sky and sun and breathes into every root and bud the breath of life?

We plough and sow, but take God out of our farming and how much harvest would we gather?

Take God's share out of our business and brains, and what would be left? We must bring God in somewhere; we must bring God in everywhere. In him we live and move and have our being, and we should acknowledge him in all our ways, in our work as well as in our worship.

This promise reveals the unexpected resources of God.

The Israelites could see no wheatfields or bread in the wilderness and thought they must get back to Egypt to find anything to eat, or die. But God had resources they knew not of, and he just opened one little window in the heavens and the very ground was covered with bread. The whole universe is his farm and he can instantly reap a crop when he wants it.

Often we find ourselves led into a wilderness in which there seems to be no possible supply for our needs, and we grow discouraged and are tempted to complain and doubt God.

Such extremity may be God's opportunity when he opens a way of escape or a means of supply that just matches our need and we are abundantly cared for.

4. Gather It

The people had a part in getting their bread. "The people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day." The manna did not drop down baked, spiced, fragrant and appetizing on their tables, but they had to go out and gather and prepare it for food.

God feeds us, but in such a way that we must do our part in the process.

God creates the soil, and we must plough it; he creates the seed, and we must sow it; he causes the grain to grow, and we must reap it. Our

whole vast system of industry is based upon the fact that we are co-workers with God in feeding the world.

If we do not do our part, his part will fail of its purpose, and we shall go hungry and die, or ought to do so.

“If any will not work, neither let them eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). Paul says there is one thing worse than being an infidel: what is that? “If any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). Idlers are parasites that simply eat what others have gathered.

Get your own living, make yourself at least worth your board on the planet and gather a day's portion every day.

The children of Israel were restricted to a certain daily rate, and when they gathered more than was sufficient for the day the surplus spoiled and became offensive. We are not satisfied with enough for our daily needs, but we want to pile up the manna in great heaps. The ambition to be rich is a fever that is burning in our blood, and often it is unfriendly to spiritual health and strength and not infrequently it is fatal to honor and honesty and sometimes it kills the very body.

We ought to pray only for “our daily bread.” If we have “a day's portion for every day” we should be content: more than that might spoil on our hands, or, worse still, spoil us.

5. Provision for the Sabbath

On the sixth day the people were to gather a double portion which would last unspoiled over the Sabbath, and thus the day of rest was kept in the wilderness. The Lord did not forget or violate his own commandment, but arranged for it in this provision for feeding the people.

This day has come down to us and is binding upon us.

It has upon it the sanction of divine command and of natural utility. It exactly fits into our physical and mental and spiritual constitution as light fits the eye, and air the lungs.

Man cannot work uninterruptedly and preserve his health and strength unimpaired.

Even the locomotive must have periods of rest: much more must the delicate machinery of the human body. Steel itself rebels against being overworked, and human muscle is not less imperious in asserting its demand for the same consideration. Men will do more work in a year or a week by working six days and resting the seventh than by working seven days in the week.

We need the day of rest, also, for the higher utilities of mental and spiritual improvement, for meditation and worship.

Man cannot live his best life by bread alone, however abundant and rich it may be, but must have every word that proceeds from God.

The Sabbath is a day when we are specially fed on this heavenly manna. The spirit not less than the body must have food convenient for it.

We cannot feed the soul on corn or money or pleasure, but it craves ideas and ideals and aspirations that lead it up into eternal life, even that life which is hid with Christ in God.

Let us appreciate this holy day and we shall get better bread, or at least we shall get our bread in a better way.

6. A Promise Fulfilled

A great promise was now fulfilled. "At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God."

The Bible miracles always have some natural basis which is adapted to the divine purpose.

Travelers tell of flocks of quail covering the ground by the million in this very region, and "manna rains" are also known in the East. An edible lichen is blown about by the wind and sometimes covers the ground four or five inches deep, and it makes an excellent kind of bread.

But no matter how this food was supplied; God supplied it. All nature is pliant and plastic under his hand, and he can drop bread wherever he wants it.

At even the quails came in a cloud, and in the morning the people saw the wilderness covered with a strange substance. They exclaimed, "What is it?" (Hebrew, "Mah hu," whence our word manna is thought to be derived).

Moses answered, "It is bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat." Thus Jehovah fulfilled his promise and manifested his fatherly goodness and care, and their fears were proved unfounded and their murmurings rebuked.

This earthly manna points to the heavenly manna.

"Your fathers," said Jesus, "ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:49, 51).

7. Forty Years

"And the children of Israel did eat the manna forty years, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan." The divine promise that provided for them in the start continued to supply their needs to the end. Jehovah having begun a good work for them did not let it fail but carried it to completion.

God's arm is never shortened that it cannot save.

We run short of means and get to our wits' end, as did the disciples when they faced five thousand hungry men with only a few loaves and fishes. But God feeds the hungry millions of the world and has bread enough and to spare. The heavenly manna falls from his hand in measureless abundance and all may partake and be filled.

Here and there the bread of earth does fail as famine stalks through the land, but the grace of God is never subject to drouth and flows unfailing out of his infinite heart of love.

All the resources of God are pledged to our sustenance and care until we reach the heavenly Canaan.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. Can Christian civilization increase the production of bread?**
- 2. What ought we to do with men who will not work?**
- 3. What should we do for men who cannot find work?**
- 4. Is God a farmer?**
- 5. Do natural laws run through the spiritual world?**
- 6. In what sense is Jesus the bread of life?**

LESSON VI—AUGUST 7

The Ten Commandments I

Lesson: Exodus 19:1-20-11.

Golden Text: *Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might.* Deuteronomy 6:5.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 19:7-14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Loving and Worshiping God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Giving God First Place.

Lesson Text: Exodus 20:1-11

1 And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me,

6 And showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work;

10 But the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Basal Principles.*
- 2. One Sovereign God.*
- 3. The Spirituality of God.*
- 4. The Sin of Irreverence.*
- 5. The Sabbath.*

Mount Sinai is a sombre mass of granite striated with ribbons of metal upon which sunshine and storm have beaten for ages without

penetrating it. On different sides it rises abruptly up from the plain like a giant altar of God. Its only products are copper and gems. No forest or vegetation clothes its skeleton of rock, and no foaming stream comes dashing down.

The region is a wild and awful solitude. The silence is terrifying. A whispered word troubles the air with weird echoes, and the sound of one's foot is startling. The only sounds that break the stillness are the artilleries of thunder when storms battle around its summit. The place has been described as the perfect image of a world without atmosphere or water, such as we see in the pitted and scarred face of the moon.

This mass of rock out in the desert far from centers of population and civilization, like a solitary isle in the ocean, is one of the most famous and sacred mountains on the globe. In moral magnitude it overtops the Alps.

It looms up massive and majestic and overshadows all the centuries. Out of ancient Egypt the people of Israel, then a horde of bondmen three millions in number, marched straight to the foot of this mountain and under its shadow pitched their tents and there abode a year.

Into this year were crowded great events that still are pulsing in the life of the world.

The foundation stones of law and religion, literature and civilization of this twentieth century were hewn out of this granite rock. On the top of this mountain stands Moses, the tallest figure in ancient history, looking down on future ages and framing laws for all coming time. On the top of this mountain the Bible was born, for on its summit in the solemn silence were first formulated the Ten Commandments which are the germ and root of this holy book. At the foot of this mountain the people of Israel were organized into a nation and church, and the tabernacle, the first temple of the worship of Jehovah, was built.

The roots of Jewish and Christian faith run back to this place and here we stand on holy ground.

1. Basal Principles

The Ten Commandments are the basal principles of all religion and morality. While they were promulgated at Sinai, yet they were not originated there but had been in the world from the beginning.

It would not be possible to start or have a moral world without them.

They were really old when Sinai's granite was molten rock and had their primal reality in the eternal character of God. They were not ceremonial rites, which are necessarily local and temporal, but are the universal and eternal laws of life. They are not limited in their obligation and application by continents and seas, climate and custom, like racial lines and national boundaries on the map, but like gravitation they are operative under every sky and throughout all worlds.

These are the rocky ribs of the moral world, the foundation of character and society, and the individual or nation that forgets them shall perish.

Every science has a few principles that are its unchanging elements which are then combined into endless forms. Mathematics has its axioms, astronomy its gravitation, and ethics the moral nature of man.

Religion has its unchanging elements that are woven into all the religious forms and fabrics of the world.

These basal principles are found in all religions, pagan as well as Jewish and Christian, for they are essential to our very life.

It was given unto Moses to take them as they were passing through the hands of men in rude form or raw moral ore and to purify and mint them into current coin, stamped with divine inspiration, that have ever since been circulating in the higher civilization of the world.

2. One Sovereign God

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The commandments begin with God; for this is the center that determines every point on the circumference; if we are wrong here we are wrong everywhere else.

There is not room in the human heart or in all the universe for two Gods.

Two Gods would mean a divided and disrupted world. In the nature of things there cannot be two supreme powers, for they would contend for the mastery and one would inevitably subordinate the other, and so there can be only one absolute sovereignty.

There is only one true and living God; all others are false or fictitious or delusive.

Every soul has a God, an object of its supreme faith and affection and obedience, and the fundamental secret of life consists in worshipping the right God. There are other interests and affections such as the love of money or fashion or power or pleasure, that try to crowd God off the throne and rule over us and that may so fill our life as to leave no worthy room for him.

God is the Great Necessity to us so that we believe in him instinctively and this belief is universal among men.

It may be a very dim or vague or perverted and degraded belief, but it is universal in the human heart as a constituent element in human nature. It is not the product of reasoning but of constitutional instinct and practical necessity. Reason did not create it and reason cannot permanently destroy it.

Yet this germinal belief needs to be brought out into clear consciousness and made central and regnant, vivid and vital in our life.

We do this by fixing our attention upon it and cherishing its yearning and feeding its faith and exercising it in worship and service and thus causing it to grow into full strength and fruitfulness.

The first commandment puts the first thing first.

3. The Spirituality of God

“Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image.” The first commandment relates to the sovereignty of God as the sole object of worship.

The second commandment relates to his character, especially to his spirituality.

Graven images are forbidden because they hide the spirituality and materialize and degrade the character of God. When God is represented by a material image of a man or an animal, the character of the man or animal is attributed to him and presently he is lowered to the level of the image and clothed with the worst human and animal passions and

vices. An idol, however at first it may be intended to represent God and make him vivid and vital, at length crowds out all thought of a spiritual being and becomes a base God itself.

No soul is ever better than the God it worships.

Idolatry thus logically and inevitably drags men down and it has been attended with unspeakable pollution. God cannot tolerate such scandalous misrepresentation of himself and degradation of worship, and therefore it is forbidden under severe and far-reaching penalties.

Worship, the highest and holiest thing in the world, when perverted becomes the worst thing.

Nothing else is so full of blessing when pure, and so full of evil when corrupt. When the light in the human heart becomes darkness, how great is that darkness. Religion, the highest life of man, may also be dragged down into his lowest degradation.

This danger lurks in ritualism and in all the outer forms of worship. When ordinances and pageantry stifle the spirit of worship and become a splendid spectacle and end in themselves, they are a species of idolatry and blight the true spirit of worship.

The cup may be necessary as a means of receiving the water, but when it becomes a work of art, wrought of gold and set with jewels, it may then be kept apart and guarded as an object of beauty in itself and cease to serve as a cup. It is right that the cups of religious ordinance should be beautiful and not ugly, but they should not be exalted and used as ends in themselves and thereby be emptied of the spirit.

We may, while condemning and pitying pagan idolaters, be idolaters ourselves when we substitute an image of Christ in a stained-glass window for the spirit of Christ in our hearts, or a beautiful ritual for righteousness in our lives. "God is spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

4. *The Sin of Irreverence*

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The third commandment forbids irreverence and thereby enjoins the spirit and habit of reverence towards God.

Not only profanity and blasphemy, but also trifling and jesting with divine names and sacred things come within the sweep of this prohibition.

We should also be on our guard against the habitual use of such expletives and by-words as are a kind of veiled substitute for profanity. These may be "the devil's recruiting office for the army of profane swearers and drill-ground of profanity."

God forbids profanity because it is dishonoring to himself and degrading to us.

Reverence is respect for worth, appreciation of and devotion to that which is above us, aspiration towards heights that pierce beyond the stars to God in his sovereignty and glory.

Reverence is always a step up, and irreverence a step down.

Profanity is a way of showing our contempt for everything above us; of vulgarizing earth and heaven into our own coarseness, of flinging our filth at God's holy character and splattering the great white Throne of the universe. The man that profanely swears not only exposes his own meagreness and impotence of expression, but he thereby declares or implies that he holds nothing sacred and he makes all things cheap and vile.

Is such language only emphatic talk? Is there no sin, no degradation in it? The fact is that few sins strike so fatally at the soul's health and welfare. It poisons life at the fountain.

Reverence for God is a root of all virtue.

If we have no object and spirit of reverence then we have no object of worth higher than ourselves, nothing to look up to and climb towards, but are lowering all things to our own level if not to the dirt under our feet.

Fine reverence for all things high and holy is the delicate bloom on character that gives beauty to all our virtues.

We rub it off at a loss that will go deep into our very souls.

"Hallowed be thy name," is rightly put first in the Lord's prayer as that fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom.

5. *The Sabbath*

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” Man must live by bread, but he cannot live by bread alone.

Work and worship are two fundamental necessities of his life, and the fourth commandment provides for both.

“Six days shalt thou labor.” Labor is enjoined as positively as rest.

Labor is a religious duty, and the man that will not work is worse than an infidel.

But life must not be all labor, for there are higher necessities.

The body needs rest, the mind needs instruction, and the soul needs worship. On one day in seven the fourth commandment stops the toil and rush of life and gives us rest for recuperation, meditation and aspiration.

We ought to appreciate this day and use it wisely and guard it well, for it is a bulwark that protects all our days from incessant toil and ministers to our higher life. Other days bind us to the seen and temporal, but this day links us with the unseen and eternal.

It should be, not a day of irksome restrictions and unwelcome religion, but of delight and of spiritual fellowship with man and with God; and it should diffuse its renewed strength and cheer and spiritual vision through all our days.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In what ways may we have more than one God?
2. What various kinds of idols may we have?
3. Why do men swear?
4. How can we come to delight in the Sabbath?
5. How can we make all these commandments our habits?

LESSON VII—AUGUST 14

The Ten Commandments II

Lesson: Exodus 20:12-21.

Golden Text: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* Leviticus 19:18.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Loving and Helping Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian Interpretation of the Commandments.

Lesson Text: Exodus 20:12-21

12 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

18 And all the people perceived the

thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, **Speak** thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, **Fear not:** for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before you, that ye sin not.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Parental Respect.

2. Murder.

3. Adultery.

4. Theft.

5. Falsehood.

6. Covetousness.

The Ten Commandments fall into two divisions. The first four relate to duties to God, and the last six to duties to man. They begin with God and then proceed to deal with man in his social relations.

This is the right order and relation of these things.

God comes first as the origin and center and foundation of things, and man comes second in his proper place as a dependent being. The Bible begins right by putting God in the first sentence and forefront of the book: "In the beginning God." Jesus also observed the same order in the model prayer.

Always are we to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all other things will fall into their right place and relation.

1. Parental Respect

"Honor thy father and thy mother."

The family is the unit of human society, and the fundamental social relation is that of parents and children.

Children are dependent on their parents for subsistence, care, training, instruction and love; and in return they should give their parents love and obedience. It is only through this mutual relation that parents can do their proper work for and give their best to their children, and that children can receive the largest good from their parents. The parents put their entire stock of wisdom and wealth, knowledge and experience, protection and love at the disposal of their children, pouring it out upon them in unstinted streams, lavishing upon them all the possessions of their hands and affection of their hearts, and are ready at any instant to sacrifice life itself in their behalf.

This parental love is an instinct distilled into every drop of their blood and woven into every fibre of their being and is stronger than life itself. It runs back through the whole animal world and is the altruistic principle that begins with the division of a cell and grows with all the growth of life.

It is one of the finest and strongest and most beautiful things in our human nature and is a breath of the fatherly love of God for his children.

But parental love is only one side of a mutual relation which can do its full work and receive its just reward and joy only as it is met with the response of filial obedience and love.

These are the two hemispheres of the full-orbed family life.

This foundation of the family and of all human welfare is ruined and wrecked by filial disrespect and disobedience. This breaks the tie that binds one generation to another and chokes the channel through which the stream of hereditary blessing flows and destroys this fountain of social welfare.

Long life is the promise and reward of this commandment, and this is the logical result of such respect and obedience.

Obedience in the home is the mother of obedience in the state and in all life; and disobedience to parents is the first step towards lawlessness and prison bars. Nothing is more beautiful and promising in children than this honoring of their parents, and nothing is more unlovely and reprehensible and prophetic of evil than their disobedience.

Jesus was "subject unto" his parents and thereby "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:51-52). "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Ephe. 6:1).

2. *Murder*

"Thou shalt not kill."

Life is God's gift and every one's supreme right, and we dare not touch it with unlawful hands.

This command is far wider in its sweep than actual murderous violence. It is based on the sacredness of life and includes and prohibits everything that would unlawfully injure it. Dissipation and drunkenness, excessive indulgence in appetite, unsanitary conditions and habits, whatever works harm to health comes under the spirit of this commandment.

Deeper still, it applies not only to outward acts, but to inner states of mind and heart.

It throws a searchlight into the inmost secrets of the soul and brands as a murderer many a man that walks unsuspected among his fellowmen. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). Hatred in the heart is the egg that hatches out murder. The time to crush this awful crime is when it is in the egg.

Keep the heart pure and out of it will flash no spark of passion that will explode murder in the hand.

Disregard of this commandment is becoming an American crime in an alarming degree. More murders are committed in some of our large cities in a year than in all England in the same time. Men and women are taking the law into their own hands and committing murder with little fear of the law, and so seldom is the extreme penalty exacted that this crime is thus encouraged.

We need to take national alarm at this social menace and tighten up the enforcement of the law. People will not respect a law they can violate with impunity.

But correction of this crime must go deeper than law into the character and conscience of the people. Training in self-control and in respect for all the rights of others should begin in the home and should develop such Christian ideas and ideals, character and habit as will withstand any such temptations and guard the supreme right of every one to his own life.

Especially should children be taught to restrain anger and passion as the seed out of which murder springs, and all of us should rule the spirit with such principles of right as will guard the life and liberty of our fellowmen.

3. Adultery

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” The seventh commandment forbids the illicit indulgence of sexual appetite and guards personal chastity, the sanctity of marriage, and the purity of the home. It extends to all means that touch and kindle passion, such as stories, books, pictures, plays, places, amusements, social customs, and allusions that are spiced and flavored with impure suggestion.

It reaches into the heart and brands the most secret lust with adultery.

The sexual instinct is fundamental in our life, yet like all good things when perverted becomes a danger and a veritable death-trap. It fatally entangles and corrupts body and soul and poisons the whole stream of society. It breaks up the home and dooms children to disgrace and sorrow. The amount of ruin and tragedy and broken hearts and lost souls wrought by this evil is beyond our knowledge and belief.

Youth should guard itself at this point with the most jealous care. When the bloom of purity is gone it never can be restored. Penitence may bring forgiveness, but something is lost that cannot be recovered.

4. Theft

“Thou shalt not steal.”

The rights of property are a foundation stone of society.

The Bible has something to say about business and intrudes itself into all our life.

Stealing is wrong, for it works a double injury. It injures the owner of the stolen goods, for he is robbed of the fruit of his toil; and it injures the thief who violates his conscience and corrupts his life.

Man has an inherent right to the product of his own labor, whether of brawn or brain, and to deprive him of it is to strip him of this right and cut into his very personality.

It also works wide social injury, for robbery discourages production and may altogether stop it.

Men will not work to produce goods if they know or fear they will be forcibly deprived of them; and so stealing tends to shut off production at its source and thus impoverishes society. The losses of thievery must also be made good by society in general, and this raises the prices of all our goods. The most primary civilization depends on the just and secure possession by every one of the fruit of his own toil.

This commandment also has a wide range of and applies to many things that are not called by the coarse name of stealing. It forbids wrongfully anything that is not our own, defrauding others, beating down wages of employés, rendering unfaithful service to employers, and all forms and means of gambling. It brands as stealing many large transactions in the business world that are considered triumphs of financial genius and are called by high-sounding names.

But names do not change things.

Railroad wrecking is none the less robbery because it is called “re-organization.” What difference is there between speculation and peculation? Very often not even a speck.

Square your business with your Bible and cultivate a fine sense of justice and honor in all things relating to ownership. "Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men" (Rom. 1-2:17).

5. Falsehood

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

Truthfulness is another bond of society without which it would fall to pieces.

If we could not trust one another we could not live together and human life would perish.

He that tells a lie does what he can to break up society.

We cannot do business with nature, cannot farm or fish or live in the sunlight, except as we know the truth about nature and obey it. Any kind of error throws us out of gear with the world and with one another, and then confusion and chaos are the result.

Truth is also the foundation of personal character.

If one does not feel the sacredness of truth, he will not feel the sacredness of anything else and his whole conscience will be dulled. Truth is the primary virtue of the mind and the chastity of the soul: when this is lost, all is lost.

This commandment is wide and searching in its range and forbids exaggeration, misrepresentation, deception, false names, evil imputations, slander and every departure in letter or spirit from the truth.

The habit of perfect truthfulness is the first virtue we should acquire and instil into our children.

Men of science have developed a method of simple and sincere searching for fact and truth that has come to be known as the scientific spirit.

The children of this world are at this point setting a standard and example for the children of light.

When religious teachers and leaders resort to misrepresentation or any kind or degree of untruthfulness they are putting to shame their own

Master who declared, "I am the truth." Life itself is too dear when purchased at the cost of truth. Especially should we be truthful when bearing witness with reference to others.

Only truth will endure and stand every test of judgment. No lie can last, and every lie is so much lost soul.

6. Covetousness

"Thou shalt not covet." It is right to covet in the sense of legitimate desire (1 Cor. 12:31), for such desire is the root of all ambition and attainment. But the covetousness which is forbidden is the inordinate desire that overrides right ends and means, or desires that reach after unlawful things and uses unlawful methods.

Covetousness is desire minus conscience.

It has no respect for others' rights, or for any right, but only wants its own way at any cost. Such desire is a root of all other sins of character and conduct. We do not do any wrong thing until we desire to do so, and so here is the egg that hatches all sins. If this evil spirit gets possession of our hearts we shall know no more peace and others may be put in peril by our presence. Covetousness robs a neighbor of his house and goods and may stop not at his wife and takes all and leaves nothing that its coarse appetite and greed demand. It may covet another's position or reputation and then go about finding ways of getting it.

We must strive to keep this evil spirit out of our hearts by learning in whatsoever state we are therein to be content.

These Ten Commandments are the foundation and framework of that law of the Lord which is perfect and in keeping of which there is great reward.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. Is it selfish in God to put himself first?**
- 2. Are our children growing more disrespectful to parents?**
- 3. What can we do to discourage sensuality in fiction and in the theatre?**
- 4. Is it ever right to tell a falsehood?**
- 5. How can we distinguish right from wrong desires?**

LESSON VIII—AUGUST 21

The Tent of Meeting

Lesson: Exodus, chapters 32, 33.

Golden Text: *Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.* Exodus 33:11.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 5:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Talking with God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Becoming Aware of God.

Lesson Text: Exodus 33:7-16

7 Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it, The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one that sought Jehovah went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp.

8 And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the Tent.

9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the Tent: and *Jehovah* spake with Moses.

10 And all the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door.

11 And Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his minister Joshua, the son

of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent.

12 And Moses said unto Jehovah, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight.

13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

14 And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

16 For wherein now shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? is it not in that thou goest with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Place of Worship.***
- 2. The Reverence of the People.***
- 3. The Cloud and the Voice.***
- 4. The Need of Guidance.***
- 5. The Continual Presence.***

Mount Sinai was the chief station of the people of Israel on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. While the journey lasted forty years and the stay at Sinai was about one year, yet into this brief period were crowded more important events than occurred during all their wanderings.

The chief event at Sinai was the giving of the law to Moses, but at this place also the people were organized so that they were passing from a loose herd to a nascent nation.

There was a sad lapse of Israel into gross idolatry in which Aaron played a pitiful part of cowardly weakness, and Moses at the sight of the golden calf lost his temper and broke to pieces the tables of the law he had brought down from the mountain.

Moses received many divine directions as to the political and religious organization and life of the people, and among these were those relating to the tent of meeting, which is the subject of this lesson.

1. The Place of Worship

The tent of meeting was pitched outside the camp as a holy place apart from the ordinary affairs of life and a common meeting point for all the tribes.

It was the place where the people met with Jehovah, the house of worship.

The first important fact about it was that it was a place.

Worship is a spirit of fellowship with God and is diffused through all life, but it needs a definite place in which it may be vividly symbolized and realized. There are those that think they need no church in which to worship God, for they find him everywhere and nature itself is for them a temple of God's own rearing grander than any pitiful architecture of man in which his divine glory continually burns.

Undoubtedly nature is such a temple and God is always everywhere and happy are the fine spirits that are always sensible of his presence.

Nevertheless, the finest things need the help of visible expression and material means.

The home needs a house, or its members will be scattered and this rich relation of life evaporate into a memory. Education may be obtained

in some measure without the help of a school, and yet symmetrical disciplined education is ordinarily the product of the school that meets in a building and has all the equipment of professional education together with the inspiration of intellectual and social contagion that is found in social education.

Religion, the finest spirit and richest relation of life, needs the same help of definite place and means.

The tent of meeting brought the people to a place that symbolized the presence of Jehovah and made it more vivid and vital.

The church is our tent of meeting with God and with one another in religious worship and fellowship, and we need it still.

Though our worship is more spiritual than that of the Israelites, yet, if we do not have a home and school for it, it is likely to grow dim and thin and may fade into a reminiscence.

If we think we can sufficiently worship God everywhere we are likely in time to worship him nowhere.

Jesus went as his custom was into the synagogue, which was his tent of meeting, and we cannot afford to disregard his example.

We should appreciate and honor the house of God and be glad when it is church time. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah" Psalm (122:16).

2. The Reverence of the People

When Moses went out to the tent "all the people rose up, and stood, every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the Tent."

They were religious and worshipful in their private tents as well as when they were in the public tent.

That central tent diffused its mystic influence through all the camp, and every tent drew from it spiritual life. The church stands in the community lifting its spire over all the surrounding homes and business blocks as an ever-visible and silent symbol of the presence of God in the midst of our life. All our social life and civic affairs and our bargaining

and pleasures should be pervaded by a holy spirit that emanates from that sanctuary.

Wherever we stand in any of our towns and cities we see the church tower or spire, pointing its finger towards God, and it should ever give an upward glance to our thoughts and put upon our spirits the spell of the divine presence. We shall thus live in two worlds, and the two are not incongruous as though they were opposed to each other, but they correspond with and complement each other as the sky and the earth fit into each other and form one growing blossoming world.

As the sky sheds sunshine and showers upon the earth to quicken all its life, so does heaven pour down upon us the pervasive quickening influence of the Holy Spirit to impart divine life and growth and fruitfulness to us in all our ways.

The people standing, "every man at his tent door," expressed their reverence and worshipful state of mind at their own homes as well as in the place of public worship. Their religion was not all for public display and did not exhaust itself in the sanctuary, but went with them wherever they went and was as active and fruitful at home as in the church.

People that are most sincerely religious in the church and on all public occasions will also be most religious in the privacy of the home and in all their personal relations.

It is a poor and despicable religion that is only religious when on exhibition before the public and loses all the reality and even the pretense of religion in private life and secret places. Let us follow the better example of these Israelites in that "everyone went out unto the tent of meeting," and yet also stood "every man at his tent door."

They also stood as they "looked after Moses until he was gone into the Tent." They were reverential in their attitude and spirit towards Moses when he was engaged in his official duties as their minister and prophet.

We ought always to be in a spirit that is not incongruous with our worship, but should be especially reverential when in the house of God and towards ministers of religion and all sacred things.

The spirit of irreverence is one to which we Americans appear to be specially inclined, and we should guard against it as a serious defect in our appreciation of the higher and finer things of life.

In the immediate presence of the divine, "put off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5).

3. *The Cloud and the Voice*

When Moses entered the tent a cloud descended upon it and then Jehovah spake unto the prophet.

Cloud and voice are symbols of the concealment and the revelation of God.

They appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and all through the Scriptures are manifestations of these aspects of the divine presence. This is a method of God in all his ways.

He always conceals much from us, and yet ever lets us see enough to do his will.

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing. The ultimate nature of the world, of the simplest and most familiar fact, is enveloped in a cloud. We cannot go far in our search into these things until we are lost in a maze of mystery. And God, the Infinite and Eternal, who inhabiteth eternity and jewels his garments with burning suns and glazing constellations, who by searching can find him out? "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him!" So God walks through the world trailing clouds of glory that hide the mysteries of his wisdom and ways.

Yet this cloud never envelops us in doubt about our duty.

There is an infinite stretch of mystery we cannot see, but there is always an edge or shore of fact and truth which we can see and on which we can walk. There is a cloud, but out of the cloud speaks a voice.

"Jehovah spake," and he still speaks in many voices, through the grand picture-language of nature, through the voice of reason and conscience within, through holy men who spake as they were moved of the Holy Spirit, and above all through Jesus who is the express image and clear voice of the Father: "Hear him."

He that heareth him hath heard the Father, and in following him we do not walk in clouds of darkness but in the light of life.

4. *The Need of Guidance*

Moses had received the commission and command to bring the people out of Egypt into the promised land, but there was yet much that he needed in the way of definite guidance. "Show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people."

Moses, master mind and leader of Israel, who had smitten Egypt under his lash and brought proud Pharaoh to his knees before him, yet humbled himself before Jehovah and was dependent and teachable as a child. In the presence of the weight of responsibility that he must carry in leading the people onward, he called unto God, "Show me thy ways."

Such humility always befits us, and the larger our powers and the higher our station and the greater our responsibility, the more dependent we should feel.

Solomon as he stepped upon the throne of his splendid empire, prayed, "I am but a little child: Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart" (2 Kings 3:7, 9). We need guidance. In this complicated and tangled world, where knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, good and evil, are so strangely mixed together, how often do we stand at a crossroads where we are in uncertainty and doubt as to which course we should take?

Often in our perplexity and sore distress we feel that only God knows the right way for us and plead with him for some revelation of his will.

How does he speak to us and how do we know when he has spoken and what he has said? There is no voice out of the sky for us and no special revelation that certifies his will. There is no one means of finding out what he would have us do.

Yet there are means and signboards that will let us know his will.

The Word of God is full of the ways in which and the light by which he has guided his people in times past. Providence itself nearly always contains indications of the way we are to go. Our own reason and conscience must discover and interpret the signboards that mark our road.

The great Light is Jesus himself.

“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” Who said this? The mother of Jesus; she knew by a woman’s intuition and a mother’s love.

Who else said it? All his disciples by the million down to this day.

Who else more startling still said it? One of the greatest agnostic thinkers of modern times, John Stuart Mill. “Not even now,” he wrote in his posthumous essays, “would it be easy to find a better translation of the rule of virtue into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live as that Christ would approve our life.”

5. The Continual Presence

A wonderful promise was vouchsafed to Moses: **“My presence shall go with thee.”** Some people think of God as coming down into the world and into their lives in spots; in special days and places which are sacred as other times and places are not. Some appear to think that he is in the church only and not out on the street or in the business office, or in the political convention and platform.

Any such view of God’s relation to us is imperfect and impossible.

The world is not divided into water-tight compartments spiritually.

The Holy Spirit can no more be shut up in some places and excluded from others than the atmosphere can be confined within the limits of any city or country or continent. It sweeps around the globe and presses into all corners and far down into the depths of the earth.

God is everywhere, and we need to acquire that spiritual sense and sensibility that we shall ever be aware of his continual presence with us. “My presence shall go with thee.”

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Give an account of the events that occurred at Sinai.
2. What makes people reverent?
3. Why does not God speak to us plainly (John 10:24-25)?
4. May we desire too much guidance?
5. How can we “practice the presence of God”?

LESSON IX—AUGUST 28

Gifts for Building the Tabernacle

Lesson: Exodus 35:4-36:7.

Golden Text: Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. Proverbs 3:9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 84:1, 2, 8-12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Giving Our Best to God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Giving in Church Life.

Lesson Text: Exodus: 35:20-29

20 And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and* brought Jehovah's offering, for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all the service thereof, and for the holy garments.

22 And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, *and* brought brooches, and earrings, and signet-rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man that offered an offering of gold unto Jehovah.

23 And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, brought them.

24 Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought Jehovah's

offering; and every man, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it.

25 And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, and the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen.

26 And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' *hair*.

27 And the rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate;

28 And the spice, and the oil; for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

29 The children of Israel brought a freewill-offering unto Jehovah; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Jehovah had commanded to be made by Moses.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Stirred Hearts.**
- 2. Every One.**
- 3. Of His Own Toil.**
- 4. Systematic.**
- 5. Liberal and Joyous.**

The last six chapters of Exodus are devoted to an account of the tabernacle or tent of worship, which in time developed into the temple and synagogue and is continued in our churches. It is a very elaborate description and impresses us with the care bestowed upon this tent and the costly materials of which it was constructed. It was a beautiful and even gorgeous structure and must have presented an object of striking splendor as it stood in its blue and purple and scarlet colors and its gold and silver ornamentation.

Temples and churches and all houses of worship are among the most imposing buildings in all religions the world over.

Religion of every kind has lavished the wealth and devotion and sacrifice of its adherents upon its places of worship. Pagan faiths have not been behind Jewish and Christian faith in this devotion.

It is fitting and right that religious worship should express itself in costly and beautiful buildings.

We should worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and it is not becoming that such worship should be rendered in an unworthy place.

Ugliness is not a means of grace.

A church that is unattractive and ill-adapted to its use is not proof of superior piety. While the beauty of a church cannot take the place of the beauty of holiness, yet the two are not antagonistic and the one may be a means to the other.

The lesson is on giving, and this is a large fact in the Bible and in religion.

While the grace of God is free and we dare not buy or sell it for money, yet the administration of this grace calls for means in the form of buildings and equipment and these cost.

We must give to the church because we must pay its bills and we also give as an expression of our faith in and gratitude to God and Christ.

The word worship is only a slightly different spelling of worthship, and this shows the real meaning and inner spirit of our giving.

What we give for the support of religion is a measure of our sense of the worth of God, his cash value for us.

It may be a coarse but it is a true measure of what God is really worth to us. Our lesson contains some points that are pertinent to the subject of generous and systematic giving.

1. Stirred Hearts

The passage gives us a lively picture of the activity of the Israelites as they gave to the tabernacle, and as its motive power we read that “they came every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and brought Jehovah’s offering.”

A stirred heart and a willing spirit—this is the secret of generous giving.

We are not likely to do anything well unless we do it out of an enthusiastic spirit. Forced work of any kind is drudgery and slavery, but free-hearted work is delight and liberty.

These abundant offerings were not squeezed out of the people under compulsion, but they poured out of them as a stream gushes out of a spring or as song out of a bird. It was their desire and delight to give these things, and so far from begrudging them and grumbling about them, they were hilarious givers.

“God loveth a cheerful giver,” and nobody loves any other kind.

“Let each man do as he hath prospered in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity” (2 Cor. 9:7). Offerings that have to be drawn out of people by scolding and compulsion or by a kind of surgical operation are a poor expression of their sense of the worth of God and cannot be flattering to him.

We need to get our hearts stirred and then we will give willingly and cannot be restrained.

We cannot stir our hearts by a sheer act of the will, but we must have motives and reasons for this state of heart. These Israelites starting out through the wanderings in the wilderness had a vivid sense of their dependence on Jehovah and of his worth to them, and this fact moved their hearts. We need to consider what our worship means to us, how without God we are without guidance and aspiration and hope in the world, and how the worth of life depends upon the worth of God to us.

The church is the best dividend paying piece of property in the community, the most profitable investment we can make.

When we realize all it means to us, its faith and fellowship, and its ideals and service and comfort and hope, it will stir our hearts deeply and a willing spirit will catch us up and carry us along in a gale of hilarity.

2. *Every One*

It was "every one whose heart stirred him up" that made these gifts, and this point is frequently emphasized in the passage. "Every one," "every man," "both men and women," and "all the women," and "every man and woman": it was not a wealthy few that made these offerings, but all the people.

' All individuals and classes are mentioned as contributing.

There were no class divisions or party lines in this movement, but it was a common spirit and universal enthusiasm that pervaded all the people. It was a popular movement that swept the camp. No one withheld his offering or escaped this collection, because every one wanted to have part in it.

Giving is a universal duty resting upon every one, as an essential part of the Christian life.

It is not a piece of secular and worldly business interjected into our church services, but is as real an expression of our worship as our praise and prayer.

Paul passes from the resurrection of Christ and believers in the glorious fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians immediately to "the collection," and thus puts the offering in the class with the resurrection, hitching the humble collection basket to this splendid star. Giving is not a bit of worldly business dragged into the house of God; but it is the business of God and is as necessary in its place as any other act of worship.

It therefore does not rest exclusively or mainly upon any class of people, but equally upon all people.

While we all cannot give the same measure, yet all can give some measure.

The rich should not be expected or permitted to furnish all the means for carrying on our religious work, but the poorest should have a proportionate part. The poor widow that threw several cents into the

temple treasury was as truly under obligation to worship God by her offering as were the rich that gave much.

Children should be taught to give even as they are taught to read the Bible and sing and pray.

The head of the family can no more properly do all the giving for it than he can do for it all the praying and Bible reading.

If every one were thus to give, many of the streams would be rills but in the aggregate they would swell into great rivers that would pour into and fill the treasuries of our churches.

3. Of His Own Toil

A prominent feature that stands out upon the face of this narrative is that each one gave of his own handiwork and toil. There was little money among them, but they had goods most of which were doubtless made by their own hands. The men brought their "goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins," and the women "did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun," and the whole camp was filled with activity as every one was making or obtaining his contribution to the tent which was the object of their devotion and joy.

In giving these various products each one gave of his own time and toil and thus gave himself.

There is a close connection between wealth and worship, gold and grace.

Our money ordinarily is our daily work crystallized into gold and silver, our life-blood minted into coin. When we give our money to God we give him our time and toil and skill, our strength and service, our very body and soul, and thus we are literally giving ourselves unto God.

This gives us a standard by which we are to measure our gifts.

Do they cut into our substance and life? or are they only bits of our abundance and drops out of our superfluities? Do they amount to no more than the loose change in our pockets which we shall not miss and will they make no practical difference in our scale of living and not cause us to give up one luxury? These Israelites gave up their "goats' hair, and rams' skins," and these women spun their very lives into that tent, and this is the principle by which we should test our gifts.

It was because the poor widow cast in her living that she won such eulogy from Jesus: and the rich people, though they gave much, yet because they gave little as compared with their abundance, received small praise.

4. Systematic

The principle of systematic giving can be traced in these offerings to the tabernacle. The people did not give indiscriminatingly of their goods, but there was evidently some plan by which they contributed the different materials in their proper proportion.

Haphazard giving is inefficient, and this matter should be reduced to a business in which budgets are made up apportioning the needs of each department of our work and then raising the whole amount on a systematic plan.

Each individual should also budget his portion of gifts to the church and set it apart to this purpose, to be paid as he meets his other financial obligations.

So long as we treat our contributions to religious work as incidental and accidental gifts to be determined according to the circumstances and whim of the moment, we are conducting the Lord's business on a lax and disorderly method that would ruin our own. System is a condition of success in any field, and nowhere is it more needed and should it be more faithfully applied than in our offerings to the Lord.

Paul having introduced the collection in immediate connection with the resurrection laid down the true financial and scientific as well as spiritual principle on which it should be conducted: "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper."

Here is every member, systematic, proportionate giving, and this principle will solve for us this vexed problem, turn it into business order and efficiency, fill all our treasuries, build better tabernacles, spread the gospel more widely and wisely, and give us the joy of this service.

5. Liberal and Joyous

This narrative gives us the impression that the giving of these people was liberal and joyous.

It was unstinted in measure, as they did not hesitate to give substantial portions of their goods involving serious sacrifices, and all done in a spirit of willingness and delight.

The account in our passage closes as it begins with the fact that "the children of Israel brought a freewill offering unto Jehovah; every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work." We commonly think of giving as a duty, that which is due or owed, and this carries with it the unpleasant implications of a debt that might even be collected by the sheriff.

But we should rise above this conception and view giving not simply as a duty and debt, but as a privilege and delight.

The Hebrew worshipers, as the smoke of their sacrifice rose from the altar, blew their silver trumpets as an expression of the gladness with which they rendered this service. We have passed into the life of the spirit and should worship God with our offerings with even greater joy. That we by our gifts can give wings to the gospel to send it out over the world, that our money is an arm and hand by which we can reach around the globe and touch and bless every human being, is a splendid privilege that we should appreciate and that should cause us to blow our most jubilant trumpets.

This power immensely widens our sphere of service and makes us benefactors of the world; it enables us to work the greater works that Jesus promised us we could do; and it broadens and enriches our own life and hides it more deeply with Christ in God.

We should leap at such a privilege and find its duty a great delight.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Do Christians give as much as pagans to religion?
2. Why do we have so much trouble in raising money for our church boards?
3. How can we teach our children the spirit and habit of giving?
4. Some churches announce: No Collection will be taken. Is this a good policy? Might we as well announce, No prayer will be offered?
5. What proportion of our income should we give to religious work?

LESSON X—SEPTEMBER 4

Evils of Intemperance

Lesson: Isaiah 5.

Golden Text: Drink no wine nor strong drink. Leviticus 10:9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 24:1-6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why Obey the Law?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Observing and Enforcing Law.

Isaiah 5:11-16, 22-23

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them!

12 And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are *in* their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol hath enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure; and their glory, and their mul-

titude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend *into it*.

15 And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled:

16 But Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness.

22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink;

23 That justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. A Picture of Woe.*
- 2. Enhanced Fascination.*
- 3. Logical Consequences.*
- 4. Still Deeper Captivity.*
- 5. A Mighty Chorus of Woes.*
- 6. Our Duty Towards This Evil.*

Two evils as old as civilization were troubling Israel in the days of Isaiah—the land problem and the liquor question. The small estates were being bought up and added to great estates, so that instead of many small freeholders there were a few great landlords with many dependents.

Wealth was getting into the hands of a few and was being used as a means of injustice and oppression.

Against this evil the prophet dared to lift up his voice in judgment.

Intertwined with the land evil was the liquor evil. The extremes of want and wealth both relax self-control and promote intemperance. Poverty often drives to drink, and luxury and liquor are closely related.

Against this evil, also, the prophet utters a warning voice and paints a picture of its awful features.

1. A Picture of Woe

It is throughout a picture of woe. The first effects of wine are a picture of features flushed with pleasure which seem to be a glow of health. But nowhere are first appearances so deceptive and false as those of wine.

The true picture is not seen until the first flush has passed off and permanent effects have appeared: then every feature is a line of woe.

The prophet is describing those that are far gone in drink. These rise up early in the morning for it; their appetite is not an occasional or intermittent impulse, but it has grown into a steady craving that burns constantly and never ceases its cry. It wakes as they awake from sleep and the first thing the twilight reveals are their unsteady steps stealing through the grey morning to the place of drink.

Ordinary drink will no longer satisfy them, and now they must have strong liquor. Wine and beer lose their pungency and they must have something that bites with sharper fangs. Diluted poison is not deadly enough and they mix their drinks with distilled lightning and hell fire.

Having started in early, they continue late; as the darkness hides them from public view they lose their sense of shame and their reveling runs into rioting and ends in debauchery.

All this they do that wine may inflame them; and this it does in a more literal sense than they intend, for it literally burns them up.

It spreads its subtle fire through all their senses and burns up blood and bone and brain. Its fire goes much deeper and consumes intellect and conscience and burns the strength and purity and beauty of manhood into ashes.

2. *Enhanced Fascination*

All attractions are used to enhance the fascination of the wine cup. Violin and harp, flute and drum, weave around it the witchery of chords and songs, and around it revolve the whirling mazes of the dance. The saloon is often a gilded palace, gorgeously furnished and decorated, blazing with colored lights, agleam with silver and cut glass, and sometimes enriched with costly works of art.

Strains of music come floating out through its doors to attract and tempt. The music that stirs the pulse kindles the desire for drink and becomes a subtle and powerful ally of appetite.

The saloon thus makes itself comfortable and attractive and appeals to all the senses that it may lure its victims.

Society puts the wine glass on its table and surrounds it with social enticements. All arts and allurements, music, society, friendship, the most beautiful things in the world, are turned into procuresses of vice.

The devil wreathes the wine cup in roses that he may conceal its deadly fangs.

But while the votaries of the cup are charmed by these glittering enticements, there are deeper things which they do not consider: "they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands."

The judgments of God are written all over these allurements. Around the wine glass lie its slain victims by scores and thousands, as scorched and burned insects lie under the gas lights on a summer evening.

3. *Logical Consequences*

The cup has many "therefores" or logical consequences, and one of them is captivity.

Already the northern kingdom of Israel had gone into captivity and Judah was soon to follow. The chosen people through their vices and lack of knowledge or folly became an easy prey to foreign oppressors.

The drink habit is one of the most imperious masters to which a human being can become subject.

It brings into bondage every nerve and tissue, every mental faculty and spiritual power, until body and soul must obey its lash. The hopeless enslavement of the drunkard in his own evil habit is one of the most pitiful spectacles we can witness and ought to be an awful warning to the young.

This captivity tightens its slimy coils around men of all classes and conditions and is mightier than the mightiest. Honorable men are degraded by it and the most gifted geniuses are brought low. Some of the strongest and brightest men in every community are the slaves of this habit.

Drink is no respecter of persons.

It throws its net over millionaire and tramp and shuts them up in the same captivity.

With a powerful stroke of imagination the prophet represents the grave, or Sheol, enlarged to receive the multitude of captives descending into it with all their glory and pomp and ribald rejoicings.

“How graphic the suggestion that sin is so multiplying on the surface of the earth that all the under-world must enlarge itself to accommodate the thronging and multiplying populations that eat the bread of dishonesty and drink distilled damnation! Imagine some spectral voice saying, The evil under-world rulers expect a thousand more men in by the end of the month. Ere the year closes you will need to redouble your accommodation, for the world gets madder: evil is on the steps of the throne, evil is in the house of beggary, the aristocracy are corrupted through and through, and all the original space leading to Hadean places will be crowded, and men will be hurrying down in thousands, as if urged on by the whip of cruel destiny; be ready!”

Before joining this crowd every one should look down into this pit and see whither he is going. The final end of sin is eternal captivity.

4. Still Deeper Captivity

A deeper stage of captivity and woe is reached when men draw iniquity with vanity and sin with a cart rope. Instead of being drawn away by sin and enticed (James 1:14) they now seek for temptation and draw sin to them, even dragging it to them as with cart ropes.

They hunt for evil, they invent new and more horrible vices, they work with all their ingenuity and might at digging their own degradation deeper.

The iniquities that other men would fly from with horror they hitch themselves up to and tug at them to draw them along in their lives. Common sins lose their relish and men must mix viler compounds to satisfy their depraved tastes. They become "wise to do evil," experts in wickedness. All their natural instincts are perverted and they glory in their shame. The worst men may work as hard at evil as the best men work at good.

If all the planning and toiling that are spent in the interest of evil were spent in the interest of good, how soon would the millennium come rolling in!

Sin is often hard work and men must tax themselves and tug at ropes to pull their iniquities after them. And these cart ropes with which they draw evil become coiled and knotted around them in fetters of terrible bondage and their burden of iniquity becomes a body of death from which they cannot get loose though they try with strong crying and tears.

Meanwhile they defy and mock God, saying, "Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it." "But the Lord of hosts is exalted in judgment, and the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness."

The Lord is in no hurry to execute judgment, and his chariot wheels are not dragging for lack of power but are moving with the inexorability of the stars in their courses. In due time the cup of iniquity of the wicked will be full and then judgment will fall in righteousness.

5. A Mighty Chorus of Woes

A final stage of wickedness is now reached in a mighty chorus of woes. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (verse 20). This is that state of evil in which all moral distinctions are blurred and confused so that the soul sees all things false and reverses every principle of right and wrong. Its moral world is turned upside down, its sign-boards all point in the wrong direction, and all its judgments lead it deeper into evil. If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

This is what comes of following evil until it becomes our habit and nature and turns conscience itself into an evil eye.

Woe is pronounced upon those that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight, for such self-trust blinds one to his own weaknesses and dangers, and is an easy path into temptation and ruin. It is characteristic of drunkards that they have so much confidence in themselves that they will rush blindly along their way into the deepest degradation. The very poison that undermines their will power and weakens their self-control turns their wisdom to folly.

Woe is pronounced upon those "that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." They mix their drinks so as to increase their intoxicating power, and we have carried this art still further by distilling liquor so as to raise its alcoholic contents to any degree.

These hard drinkers now "justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!"

The land evil and the liquor evil are here brought together and shown to have common roots.

Rum was carrying rottenness into the courts of Judah and great estates were being built up by the liquor power.

There are few evils that do not have some connection with liquor. It feeds the roots of all other evils and makes them grow fat and lusty.

If this tap-root were cut off, many other evils would begin to wither.

6. Our Duty Towards This Evil

This old evil has not improved its methods and manners with the lapse of time but has grown more riotous and rampant than ever. We are now grappling with this python and endeavoring to sever its neck so that it will relax all its coils and set us as individuals and as a nation free.

The place to begin the end of this evil is an amendment to our own constitution imposing upon us total abstinence.

Without maintaining that every degree of using intoxicating drink is injurious, though there is good scientific authority for this, yet the one way of sure safety is total abstinence. It is not necessary for health

but introduces some degree of poison into the system, and it is planting a seed that may grow beyond our power to control it.

If we do not touch it, it can never constrict us in its fatal coils.

And, besides, we set a good example to others, especially to our children and to the young, and make the home itself a school and model of temperance.

But a further means of putting an end to this evil is legal prohibition such as we have embodied in our national constitution and in our prohibition laws. This "noble experiment" has now been on trial for ten years and, while there is much noisy dispute as to its working, yet we believe the evidence is good and even conclusive that it is working well enough to justify it and to call for its continuance and more rigorous enforcement.

We are now rearing a generation that has never seen a saloon, and this is a tremendous fact, and to retreat from it would be a calamity and tragedy.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Is this ancient picture of the liquor evil true to our modern life?
2. What are some of the ways of enhancing this temptation today?
3. Is the slavery of drink highly-colored fiction, or sober fact?
4. What do you know in your experience as to how prohibition is working?
5. What can we do to make it work better?
6. What were the conclusions and what is the value of the report of the Wickersham Commission?

LESSON XI—SEPTEMBER 11

Israel Journeying Toward Canaan

Lesson: Numbers 10:11-36.

Golden Text: Come thou with us, and we will do thee good. Numbers 10:29.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 34:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Camp Life in the Wilderness.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How God Guides His People.

Lesson Text: Numbers 10:11-13, 29-36

11 And it came to pass in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, that the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony.

12 And the children of Israel set forward according to their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud abode in the wilderness of Paran.

13 And they first took their journey according to the commandment of Jehovah by Moses.

29 And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which Jehovah said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for Jehovah hath spoken good concerning Israel.

30 And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred.

31 And he said, Leave us not, I pray

thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes.

32 And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what good soever Jehovah shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

33 And they set forward from the mount of Jehovah three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting-place for them.

34 And the cloud of Jehovah was over them by day, when they set forward from the camp.

35 And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, O Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.

36 And when it rested, he said, Return, O Jehovah, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. On the Road.*
- 2. Parting Ways.*
- 3. Traveling Together.*
- 4. An Unselfish Invitation.*
- 5. The Best Life.*
- 6. The Ark in Advance.*

Moses, having slain an Egyptian, was forced to fly for his life, and one evening turned up at the well where Hobab's daughters were watering their sheep. There was a case of love at first sight, and soon Moses wedded Zipporah, and Hobab became his father-in-law. So the two lives crossed.

Forty years they continued together, when Moses was called back to Egypt to deliver his own enslaved people out of bondage.

Dropping everything in the wilderness, parting from father-in-law, wife and children, he went to his mighty task, and the two lives have separated again. Out through the divided waters of the Red Sea Moses led the people and began the long weary wandering of forty years through the great and terrible wilderness.

Soon after leaving the Red Sea Moses' father-in-law (called Jethro in Exodus 18) visited him and gave him some good advice, and after the departure from Sinai Moses again meets his father-in-law, here called Hobab. And the two lives have again crossed each other. Nothing is said about the wife and children, but Moses was glad to meet his father-in-law and gave him a pressing invitation to go with him, and this is the chief subject of our lesson.

1. On the Road

The invitation declares, "We are journeying." Both Moses and Hobab had to keep moving on: neither could stay where he was. We are traveling along various roads. We are speeding along the pathway of the years towards old age. We are passing through ever changing scenes and circumstances in life, the place we live, the business we follow, the kindred and friends we have about us. We are traveling in our thoughts and purposes and plans. Knowledge is widening and character is growing.

Every thought and deed helps to form and fix our permanent preferences.

We are journeying towards death and destiny. The great procession of humanity, that through all the generations has been marching across the earth, is ever disappearing over the horizon into the undiscovered country. In this process we are marching; we shall soon be there.

So life is a journey. Wherever we are today, we shall be elsewhere tomorrow. We cannot stay where we are.

Who can clutch the wheels of time and hold them still? Move on we must. Here we have no abiding city.

2. Parting Ways

The invitation implies that we are not all journeying towards the same place. "We are journeying," said Moses, "unto the place of which Jehovah said, I will give it you." But Hobab said, "I will depart to mine own land, and to mine own kindred." And so their ways parted and they traveled in diverging directions to different destinations: the one towards the land flowing with milk and honey with a great future, and the other further and deeper into the wilderness to be lost in oblivion.

However our lives may cross and recross and at times run side by side, yet we may be moving along widely diverging lines.

Two boys are brought up in the same village; they sit together in the same school and play together in the same games: the one becomes a merchant or manufacturer, and the other becomes a tramp. Two minds investigate the same problem. They may start with a common view, but they arrive at opposite conclusions, the one affirming and the other denying the same proposition.

The widest divergencies are moral and spiritual.

Two men engage in business, and the one is honest and honorable, and the other misrepresents and defrauds: these two men are not traveling the same road. Two brothers are reared in the same home, nursed at the same mother's breast and taught the same prayer at her knee: the one goes the way of uprightness and honor, and the other the way of dissipation and ruin. At some crossroads in life they parted company.

There are diverging roads running through the world and out of it: if we would all go to the same place, we must all get upon the same road.

3. Traveling Together

But the invitation implies that we all can travel together to the same place. "Come thou with us," said Moses to Hobab. Hobab could have gone with Moses; no force or fate compelled him to stay in the wilder-

ness, though, of course, he may have had good reasons why he should do so. And there was wide room for him and his family in the promised land. These two friends did not need to part but could have gone on together.

So men need not be separated along the moral roads of life in the world.

No secret decree or fixed fate sends them in different directions against their will. Men have liberty and ability to enter the Christian life and travel together.

There is ample room in the kingdom of God for us all, and God is not willing that any should wander around in the wilderness and perish.

There is room in the church for us all. It is not built on narrow lines but is broad as humanity. It is not a class institution but democratic with gates open on every side so that all can enter and find warm welcome and abundant hospitality.

There is room for us all in heaven. God has built the eternal city vast enough for all the countless multitudes of earth. In the Father's house are many mansions.

So we all can travel together and go to the same place.

4. An Unselfish Invitation

The invitation exhibits the unselfishness of the Christian life. "It shall be, that what good soever Jehovah shall do to us, the same will we do unto thee."

How different is this from the spirit of this world?

When a party of friends start on a journey they usually restrict their company and travel alone. When a man gets a piece of ground he fences it in and keeps it to himself. People reserve their homes to their own use and guard their jewels as their exclusive possession.

In any particular monarchy there is room for only one crown and that is strictly exclusive and supreme and solitary in its glory and no rival is permitted. Why did William II, when he stepped upon the throne of Germany, soon dismiss Bismarck? Because that man of giant personality and splendid achievement overshadowed the throne and obscured

the brightness of the young Emperor's crown. That high-spirited, inordinately egotistical and selfish youth could brook no interference with his personal aggrandizement, and so the man of iron who had made Germany had to take himself off and die in obscurity of a broken heart. William II said: "I have this crown myself, and no man shall dim its splendor or share with me one ray of its glory."

Now mark the language of Paul, the aged and battle-scarred veteran of Christian warfare, when he had wrought splendid achievements and was about to receive his crown: "Henceforth there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that loved his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

How splendid that phrase, "Not to me only"!

Paul claimed no exclusive and selfish crown. In receiving a glorious crown himself he would not discrown the humblest believer.

In the Christian life there are crowns for us all.

The spirit of the world is to take all and keep it; to get in ourselves and crowd others out; to have an undivided and unshared crown.

The Christian spirit bids us say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." "And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what good soever Jehovah shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

5. The Best Life

The invitation promises that if we all travel together towards the promised land, we shall get good: "for Jehovah hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Fellow Christians will do us good.

They will give us their friendship and sympathy and support. It is not likely that we can find better company to travel with through this world than Christian people.

The Christian life will do us good.

It is a life of purity, truth, love, high vision and divine service, and these mean health and happiness. The Christian life knits itself into the life of God. It shares his thought and purpose and pulses with his life

and love. It nestles in his arm and knows that all things are working together for good.

The Christian life is the highest, fullest and most joyous life. If any one can find a better life he should go and get it. If we cannot find any better life then we should accept the invitation of Christian believers, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good."

Who else will do us good? Jehovah. "For Jehovah hath spoken good concerning Israel."

When the Lord speaks good concerning a people, something uncommonly good is bound to come.

He knows what is good and what is not; and he sends what is best. Take any true believer, however poor and lowly and wronged he may be, and what is the greatest, most pregnant and promising fact about that one? that God hath spoken good concerning him.

This is blessing enough.

No matter about the time and place, it is sure to come in his own good time and measure. Then shall our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.

Let us cease our wanderings over the blazing sands of sin and get out of the wilderness of a worldly life. A better land opens before us and will lead us on through this world into the heavenly country.

6. The Ark in Advance

As the children of Israel set out from Sinai on the great adventure, "the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them," and according as the ark moved before them or rested did the great caravan march forward or stop and pitch their tents.

It was a symbol of the divine presence and guidance.

The ark was in the tabernacle and a luminous cloud rested over the tent which was visible from every quarter of the camp. The people by this means of guidance always knew when and where to march and when to rest.

We need guidance as we wander around in the tangled wilderness of this world and God has not left us without sign-boards and lights.

His Word is a record of his leading of his own people through many centuries and it is still full of signs we are to follow and roads we are to travel. It may not point out the exact step we are to take in difficulty and perplexity, but it instils into us such a spirit and endows us with such principles and vision as will enable us to see the way and walk therein.

Providence itself is ever an indication of God's will as our circumstances block up one path and open another. Prayer puts us in a mood and state of insight to discern and obey the divine will. Our own reason and conscience must ever perceive and decide what is the way for us in the light of all these means.

The supreme Guide is our Lord Jesus who walked through the world in the light of his Father's face and presence and he could testify, "And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone, for I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). And he left a light for us in his promise, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

A chief means of seeing the right road is a sincere willingness to take the next step in duty as it is made known to us; if we do not want to take this next step that we ought to take we shall remain blind to it, but if we are really willing we shall see it plainly enough.

Hardly ever are we in darkness and doubt as to what we should do next. But often we are asking to see what we want to see or wish to see beyond the present duty into things farther ahead; we want to see into tomorrow and the next year.

Let us not ask to see so far ahead: not "the distant scene," but "one step enough for me." Follow the ark of God.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What part do roads play in the life of the world?
2. Are moral roads as plain and as important as physical roads?
3. What are some of the causes that lead us to part company?
4. What are some of the advantages of traveling together?
5. What is our ark? and how may we follow it?

LESSON XII—SEPTEMBER 18

The Reports of the Spies

Lesson: Numbers 13:1-14:45.

Golden Text: *Jehovah is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?*
Psalm 27:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 95:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Brave and the Cowardly Scouts.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How Faith Gives Courage.

Lesson Text: Numbers 13:1-3, 25-33

1 And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Send thou men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a prince among them.

3 And Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the commandment of Jehovah: all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel.

25 And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days.

26 And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us; and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

28 Howbeit the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are

fortified, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

29 Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South: and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the hill-country; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan.

30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

31 But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.

33 And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Committee of Investigation.

2. Advantages and Disadvantages.

- 3. *The Committee Disagrees.***
- 4. *The Minority Report.***
- 5. *The Majority Report.***
- 6. *Turning against Their Leaders.***

From Sinai the Israelites marched north directly to the promised land and soon reached its southern border at Kadesh Barnea.

One decisive step would have taken them in and the dream of centuries would have been realized.

But cowardly fear seized the people, the horde of bondsmen were not yet ready for national life in their own land, and the great opportunity was lost.

1. A Committee of Investigation

Moses urged immediate entrance into the land (Deut. 1:21), but the people asked for a preliminary exploration, and the plan was adopted. The committee was composed on the democratic principle of one from each tribe, "every one a prince among them," or a man of outstanding ability. They were to go through the land and note its good and bad points, the character of the people, the density of the population, the size of the cities, the strength of the defences, the fertility of the soil, and the extent of the forests.

They were charged to be of good courage, to enter upon the work in a brave and hopeful spirit, and to bring some samples of the fruit of the land.

This action was wise.

The land was theirs by promise, but this did not release them from using the proper means and precautions in gaining possession of it.

Foreordination is necessary in human as in divine action. No one can accomplish anything without foresight and plan, any more than one can hit a mark by pointing a gun in any haphazard direction, or compose a poem by scattering type upon the floor. We must first know what we are going to do and how we are going to do it before we can take a single wise step.

In all our affairs, financial, political, international, we first appoint committees of investigation to look into the matter and make report; and the same wise principle rules in the religious and spiritual world.

2. Advantages and Disadvantages

The committee performed their dangerous duty faithfully, and there was a great assembly of the people to hear their report.

The report first presented the facts in the case, and on these the committee were unanimous.

The good points were stated first. It was a land flowing with milk and honey—a poetic expression of its fertility and richness. Then pointing to a great cluster of grapes and to pomegranates and figs, they said, “This is the fruit of it.”

These advantages were now offset with a “howbeit” and an ominous array of disadvantages and dangers. The people were strong, the cities were walled and great, and the land from the mountains to the sea was inhabited by warlike tribes. The case plainly had two sides and there were some things to be considered.

The facts of life hardly ever look all one way and in every situation there are advantages offset with difficulties.

Many a course of action stretches out before us a land flowing with milk and honey, but when we come to investigate it we find it thick-set with hindrances and dangers. Business, education, religion, national and international affairs, every field of life presents these aspects.

We may wonder that the world was built this way, but it is thus that we find it and that God makes men.

All the achievements of men, their science and invention, their heroism and triumphs, their courage and character, are the victories they win in battling with opposition.

The obstructions that lie in the way of good things are a measure and proof of their worth and desirability. If the promised land had been a barren region, it would not have been inhabited by strong and warlike people.

The giants of the land proved that it was a land worthy of giants.

Strong walls may hide rich treasure, and great trials may lead to great triumphs.

3. *The Committee Disagrees*

The practical part of a report is in its conclusion and recommendations, and when it came to this point the committee presented majority and minority reports. With the same facts before them they drew directly opposite conclusions.

Religious men do not all think alike.

Out of the same Bible they draw different doctrines and ordinances, church polities and systems of theology. The religious world is thus "a dust of systems and of creeds," a Babel of voices, some crying, "Lo, here is Christ," and others, "Lo, he is there."

These differences in doctrine and polity are urged as a reproach against the church and as an argument against the reality of all religion itself. Where there is so much confusion, it is said, nothing can be believed.

But this diversity of belief is not peculiar to religion.

Government is one of the fundamental necessities of the world, and yet politics is a veritable synonym for partisanship and strife. Medicine is one of the most vital of the arts, and yet that "doctors differ" is one of the most familiar proverbs of the world. Scientists are divided in their views, even as to the multiplication table, and philosophy not less than religion is "a dust of systems." Every field of life is crossed and crisscrossed with these divisive lines.

They grow partly out of the limitations of the human mind, which can see only fragments and partial aspects of truth, and partly out of the prejudice of the mind which often perverts the judgment so that it sees truth through the discolored and distorted lens of its own contents and interests.

Differences of doctrine are a weakness and sometimes a reproach to the Christian church, but they are not an argument against religion, and they need not hinder us from reaching practical conclusions and walking in a plain path of duty.

4. *The Minority Report*

The minority report was presented first. Caleb and Joshua were the immortal names attached to it, and Caleb offered it. "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it."

This has the right ring to it.

It presents a definite line of forward action and breathes a spirit of courage and confidence. It is brief and goes right to the point.

“Let us go up at once, and possess it.” That is what they were there for.

This was the promise that had been made to them, and preparation extending from the call of Abraham through many centuries had led them right up to the border of the promised land.

The dream of centuries was within realization.

History and providence, prophecy and promise were behind them urging them on. There was just one thing to do: Go up at once and possess it; throw all doubts and fears behind them and march in.

It is a great thing to act decisively at the right time.

After we have investigated the case and made preparation and know what to do, Do it! We sometimes kill action with too much thinking and too much talk. When we know what to do and the path of duty stretches straight before us, let thinking and talking stop and action start. Decision drives doubt out of the mind, and promptness is often victory.

This minority report, however, was not simply a blind call to action, an appeal to patriotism as mere herd instinct that rushes on to its fate with little consideration of consequences.

Brief as it was, it gave a convincing reason: “for we are well able to overcome it.”

Caleb and Joshua saw the difficulties and dangers in the way as clearly as anybody, but they were conscious of strength and skill to master them. They felt in their souls that they could win. Being men of faith as well as of military knowledge and bravery, their self-confidence grew out of their trust in the promises of the Lord and in the power of his might.

Religion has ever been the most masterful motive in inspiring men to action.

When men believe that God is with them they feel that the very stars are marching behind them, and who, then, can be against them? No one that they need fear, and they will then not count their lives dear as they declare, “We are well able.”

5. *The Majority Report*

The majority report was now presented on the other side. It was signed by ten men whose names remain practically unknown.

Are not majorities often forgotten and their very names lost in oblivion, while the one or few who were the minority stand out conspicuous on the pages of history?

They began by declaring that they were not able to take the land. They then exploited the dangers of the country, saying it was "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof," probably meaning that it was an unhealthy country with an unfavorable climate. They exaggerated the inhabitants into giants and played mightily on the fears of the people by parading before their imagination the formidable and fearsome "sons of Anak."

They made no mention of their own resources, of their six hundred thousand men, of their past victories, of the promise and presence of Jehovah, of the mighty miracles with which he had delivered them, but they kept the fears of the faint-hearted people fixed upon their terrible enemies. As the Israelites looked northward they could see, in their imagination, the land swarming with giants and they forgot God.

All the arts of the demagogue were ingeniously embodied and played up in this report.

From the point of view of the majority it was a masterly and telling report, and it swept the crowd and carried the day by an overwhelming vote.

This is what comes of magnifying our fears and minimizing our resources and leaving God out of the account. This is what results from putting our trust in material force rather than in spiritual power. This is what comes of trusting majorities.

A majority vote is a rough method which we must often use, but it is a very untrustworthy means of reaching truth and duty, and it should never usurp individual judgment and conscience. Most of the errors and wrongs of the world have, at one time or another, had upon them the seal of a majority vote.

The great truths of the world have at first generally been voted down.

Barabbas got more votes than Christ.

Majorities may be wrong, they often have been, and while we must consider and often go with them, yet it is sometimes our duty to resist them.

The ten carried the day against the two, but the ten were wrong and the two were right.

Yet it is also our duty to yield to the majority in practical lines of action in cases in which our own conscience is not violated.

In a democratic government and in societies and assemblies governed by vote, majorities must rule or order would be lost and confusion would result.

Caleb and Joshua submitted to the majority and did not attempt to lead a rebellion and enter the land themselves. But submission does not preclude us from working for the reversal of the majority when we think it is mistaken and wrong.

Caleb and Joshua did not change their convictions, but they only bided their time and carried with them the next generation.

The minority of one generation is often the majority of the next.

6. Turning against Their Leaders

The majority swept the crowd into a frenzy of cowardly weeping and they turned in rebellion against Moses and Aaron and blamed the whole bad business on them. "And they said one to another, Let us make us a captain, and let us return to Egypt."

What brave words these be! How often has this very thing been attempted in the hour of danger and threatened disaster?

Did not the cowardly sailors threaten to throw Columbus overboard and did they not actually bring him back in chains? How often has the popular leader of one day become the object of popular rage on the next? Has not every generation stoned its prophets and let the next generation build their magnificent tombs?

It takes the court of the ages to do great men justice.

The prophets and pioneers of the race have generally had a hard road to travel. Out of the death cell in Athens in which Socrates was condemned to drink the cup of poison issued words of wisdom that still inspire the world.

And the supreme illustration of this tragic principle is the cross of Calvary.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In what spirit should we conduct any investigation?
2. What is crowd psychology and what are its dangers?
3. Give instances of great leaders that have had their followers turn against them?
4. When should we go with the majority and when with the minority?
5. By what means may we quiet fears and beget faith and courage in the Christian life?

LESSON XIII—SEPTEMBER 25

Review: Moses Honored in His Death

Lesson: Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:5-8.

Golden Text: Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints.
Psalm 116:15.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 116:12-19.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What We May Learn from the Life of Moses.

Topic for Young People and Adults: What the World Owes Moses.

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:5-8

48 And Jehovah spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying,

49 Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession;

50 And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:

51 Because ye trespassed against me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.

52 For thou shalt see the land before

thee; but thou shalt not go thither into the land which I give the children of Israel.

5 So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah.

6 And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

7 And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping in the mourning for Moses were ended.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Up into the Mountain.*
- 2. Because of Trespass.*
- 3. See But Not Enter.*
- 4. Death and Burial.*
- 5. Mourning for Moses.*

What does the world owe to Moses? More than we can know or tell. All great men have woven the threads of their lives into the web of the world and we cannot disentangle them so as to distinguish them as they are woven into our lives, but they are there, strengthening and enriching them.

Moses laid down or gave expression to the fundamental principles of government and righteousness and religion that are foundation stones in our civilization, however deeply they may be sunk out of our sight.

We have been following the career of this great leader from his infancy to the end, and now we come to the final scenes.

1. Up into the Mountain

“Get thee up into the mountain of Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession.”

The Bible stages many of its great scenes on mountains, Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, the Mount of the Sermon, the Mount of the Transfiguration, Mount Calvary.

Its great events have some affinity with mountains in their height and mass and majesty. We can see more when we climb to a mountain summit than we can down on the plain where we are shut in with a narrow horizon and fogs may obscure the air and cloud our vision.

The death of Moses was worthy of a mountain setting, and thither he climbed for his last vision of earth.

What was the chief sight he was to see there? “The land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession.”

This land had been the “promised land” for a long time. Centuries had passed since it was first promised to Abraham and he started westward in search of it. He gained a temporary footing in it but soon passed on into other scenes. His sons followed the same vision, but did not realize it. It was still only a dream.

Time still slowly dragged onward the wheels of its chariots and at length carried the sons of Jacob down into Egypt. Here they passed a

long period of discipline in preparation for their future possession of the land; but still they did not possess or see it.

They came to Sinai and having there been organized into a nation and church they started on the march to the promised land and came right up to the border of it.

But still they did not enter in, and were turned back by their own cowardice to wander around in the wilderness for forty years and now again they arrived at its border.

They were about to enter, but Moses was sent up into this mountain top overlooking the land to behold it. It must have gladdened his heart even to see it and to have the promise renewed that it would be given unto the children of Israel for their inheritance.

Promises, even divine promises, are often long in reaching their fulfillment.

Such visions are the great incentives of our world, and poor and barren and stagnant would be the world or the people that had no such ideal to lead and lure it on.

God has given us exceeding great and precious promises, and it is these that kindle our future with hope and inspire us to march on and fight the good fight that we may win the victory.

2. *Because of Trespass*

Moses was permitted to look out over the land, but was shut out from it "because ye trespassed against me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah, in the wilderness of Zin." A former sin here rises up against Moses to keep him from what must have been his fondest ambition.

The account in Numbers 20:7-13, explains this sin of Moses and Aaron in connection with drawing water from a rock in their march through the wilderness. It appears that Moses spoke as though he had the power of causing water to issue from the rock and thereby usurped the power and glory of Jehovah; at any rate he there blotted his record in a way that long afterward rose up in judgment against him. We cannot judge of all the circumstances that made his assumption of power and his pride so grave a matter that cost him so dearly.

But the fact illustrates the principle that any sin puts a blot on one's record that may unexpectedly stand in his way in after years.

Political history contains many such cases and many a man has been shut out of some coveted attainment because of some failure or fault in his early life that was used as a bar against him. Such cases sometimes look cruelly unjust as it may so seem in the case of Moses.

But a very serious fault is charged against him: "because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel." In some way he pushed himself into the place of honor and crowded Jehovah out; and this is what every sin does, though we may not always see this result.

The warning is plain: always do our work in obedience to and recognition of the will and glory of God and beware of how we leave any sin behind us that may afterward rise up in judgment against us.

Judgment has a long memory and goes back far into our records and we may congratulate ourselves that we are safe from the reach of its hand when it is only biding its proper time to let retribution fall.

We live in a serious world that cannot lightly condone sin however deeply it may seem to be buried in the past, and it is solemnly written: "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

3. See But Not Enter

The tragic result of this failure of Moses in the wilderness is the judgment, "For thou shalt see the land before thee: but thou shalt not go thither into the land."

See but not enter: it looks like cruelly taunting the aged prophet and leader, does it not?

However, this fact was not peculiar to Moses but falls into the lot of every one and sometimes as tragically as in the life of Moses.

Every one is carrying on a work which he cannot complete, but must see it in prospect and then leave it to other hands.

Parents in the home are usually doing this very thing in rearing their children and often must they leave their future to themselves and to the providence of God.

The same fact is true of our work in life: we begin it and carry it as far

as we can, perhaps up to the very edge of some promised land, and then we must drop it and leave it to others. The poet may begin a poem which he cannot finish, and the painter a picture, and the architect a building, and the statesman a policy, and the reformer may start a movement which can reach realization only long years or generations after he is gone.

The scientific genius of powerful imagination may penetrate some little way into a secret of nature which he can only catch a glimpse of and must then let other men work it out to results that would have astonished him.

We cannot but think of Lincoln as a tragic example of a man of leadership who came to the edge of the promised land and then was shut out. Yet it may be that his work was carried on by other hands better than he could have done it himself, for he was so deeply enmeshed in the passions of the day that he could hardly have freed himself so as to have done the best work.

Possibly he died at the very hour when he left the greatest reputation and his own work was finished.

Our work to which we have committed our toil and sacrifice may be better carried on by others. It may be necessary that we should leave that our children should be thrown upon their own resources and come to the fulfilment of their own plans and powers. Anyway we cannot do everything and must leave much for the next generation to do.

The great example is that of Christ dying on his cross when he seemed to be only beginning his work, and yet truer words he never uttered than when he cried on that cross, "It is finished."

4. Death and Burial

The death of Moses is told with the impressive simplicity in which the Bible always clothes its great events. Never does it indulge in tawdry rhetoric. "So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah. And he buried him in the valley of the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." He came to the inevitable hour along with all human kind from the least to the greatest.

And yet his death was no accident but "according to the word of Jehovah."

Is not this true of every death? This solemn event, however it may happen, whether in infancy or old age, by accident or human violence and wickedness or peacefully in one's own bed surrounded by family and friends, is yet "according to the word of Jehovah." Either by his positive action or his permission, God holds the day and manner of our death in his hand and brings it to pass.

In this fact and faith lies our greatest comfort in this last hour and article.

The place of the burial of Moses appears to have been purposefully concealed, so no man knoweth of it to this day. Perhaps it was feared that the Israelites might make a shrine of the place and exalt it into a place of worship.

Anyhow, it makes little or no difference where we are buried, whether in the home cemetery or in the sea or in some unknown place.

The body will be dissolved back into the general stream of nature and be blown around the planet if not dissipated off into space.

Jehovah "buried him in the valley," in some ravine or rift in the mountain where no human eyes ever saw the grave and no monument marked the place. What need Moses care for place and monument with such a burial as that?

It is pathetic to see what means are used and sacrifices people make and men sometimes make for themselves to mark their graves and rear over them monuments of marble to preserve their memory.

But how long do such monuments last? At once wind and weather begin to gnaw at them and eat into their lettering and presently the very names become illegible and then the people buried there are forgotten and no one in the neighborhood can tell anything about them. Few places are so pathetic as an old graveyard with its stone stumps into which the monuments have crumbled.

And yet "that was the grandest funeral" that ever man had when Jehovah buried Moses.

We need care little about what marks our place of burial and what becomes of our mortal flesh if God takes our spirits home.

5. Mourning for Moses

It is a remarkable record that Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, and yet "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." He seemed taken away in the full tide and flush of life. No wonder then that "the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days." A sense of national bereavement in the loss of his inspiring personality and leadership overwhelmed them with grief. Everything else stopped in the camp and no doubt services were held and addresses were made to commemorate his work and worth and express their sorrow.

Such mourning has its necessary place and use. It is a relief to our burdened hearts as it discharges its inner floods through tears. Tears are divine. Jesus wept.

It is right for us to express our loss and sorrow in such means of relief.

Yet "so the days of weeping in the mourning for Moses were ended."

Weeping had had its day, and now the people were again ready for their work.

The tents again were struck and the great march resumed. The work that Moses had carried forward up to the border of the promised land must now be carried on into that land. What he began they must complete.

Weeping is right within due bounds, but it should not be prolonged to excess so as to weaken us for our work. After the funeral life must go on and the day's work be resumed.

So passed this greatest leader in the Old Testament and the touch of his hand is still upon us.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Why do mountains affect us so impressively?
2. What part have they played in history?
3. How can we prevent our past sin from troubling us in the future?
4. Does good result from the fact that often we see but cannot enter?
5. On what occasion did Jesus turn his weeping into working?
6. Give some of the leading lessons from the life of Moses?

INTRODUCTION TO FOURTH QUARTER

Standards are things that stand, patterns to which we conform, rules of action that abide amidst current changes, ideas and ideals that lead us on and lure us up.

Such standards are necessary in all fields, architecture and art, business and government, character and conduct.

They give law and order, principle and purpose to all our life without which it would have no regularity and stability on which we could depend but would be blown about by every wind of circumstance and passing wish and whimsical caprice. Civil laws are such standards, and so are ethical and spiritual laws.

The Christian life is preëminently an orderly life based upon spiritual laws that have their origin and seat in the eternal character of God.

We must conform to them, or we shall fall into moral and spiritual anarchy and ruin. They may not impress us as being as sharp and sure in outline and operation as physical laws, but they are not less certain in their demands and consequences.

In so far as we follow them we shape our lives after the same patterns that are embedded in God's nature and live in harmony with him and will thereby share his blessedness.

Some of the standards of the Christian life are set forth in the lessons of this Quarter. They relate to the devotional life, the family, the home, civil law and temperance, world peace, making a living, stewardship of money and of life, living with other races, and the use of leisure.

These broadly cover our whole life, individual and social, physical and political, moral and spiritual.

They are the plans and specifications according to which we can build our lives so that they will be solid and symmetrical and beautiful, foundations on which we can erect our life structure so that it will stand through storm and flood, ideals that will lure us on and lift us towards the highest and best, even the life of God.

These standards do not necessarily restrict our liberty except as all laws restrain and guide us, not really narrowing and hampering our life but broadening it and giving it all the liberty it has.

May we study these standards so that we may understand them better and build after their patterns and attain unto their promise of life more abundant and blessed.

FOURTH QUARTER

CHRISTIAN STANDARDS OF LIFE

Aim: To aid the pupil to discover the Christian standards of living and to follow these in daily life.

LESSON I—OCTOBER 2

The Christian's Devotional Life

Lesson: Psalms 1:1-6; 119:9-16; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 6:5-15; II Timothy 3:14-17.

Golden Text: *Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* II Peter 3:18.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 122.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Christian's Devotional Life.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Means of Christian Growth.

Lesson Text: Matthew 6:5-15; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

5 And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

7 And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

14 But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. *Dangers in Prayer.***
- 2. *Vain Repetitions.***
- 3. *The Model Prayer.***
- 4. *The Turning Point.***
- 5. *Scripture in Our Devotional Life.***

The devotional life is the Christian's inner life of prayer and meditation and praise by which he deepens and enriches his spiritual strength and fruitfulness.

Our passage from Matthew is hewn out of the Mountain Sermon. It deals with prayer, which is the soul's topmost blossom issuing in life's finest fruitage.

Prayer is a simple exercise in which the humblest soul can engage and yet it is a high art calling for the best teaching and example, study and effort.

Jesus himself prayed, stood so close to God that he could speak with him face to face, and therefore he could teach others to pray.

He was at his best, if we may so speak, at this moment and never from his lips issued grander sweeter music than this immortal prayer.

1. Dangers in Prayer

Prayer, the highest and finest state of the soul, is attended with some of the deadliest dangers, as around the snow-capped, sky-bathed mountain top sweep the fiercest storms.

One danger is that of turning prayer into an actor's performance.

"Ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." The Jews observed stated hours of prayer, morning, noon and evening, and these posers took care to be caught at some public place, such as a conspicuous street corner, where they would strike an attitude of prayer and loudly pray before the crowd. They would thus put on prayer as an actor puts on his mask, and then with furtive glances would slyly observe how their ostentatious piety was impressing the public.

That kind of prayer did not cease to be performed when the last

Pharisee with his broad phylacteries and public attitudinizing passed out of the world.

It repeats itself in every prayer that is addressed to men rather than to God.

The man that, when he comes to pray, whether in the pulpit or in the prayer meeting, betrays consciousness of his human audience in affected tones and stilted rhetoric, is simply putting on the actor's mask.

"An eloquent prayer," of which we sometimes read, may not be a prayer at all but only an eloquent performance.

"Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward," said Jesus. They did not really ask God for anything and so they did not get anything from him.

The praise of men was what they were seeking and this is what they got.

They were able to fool simple-minded folk for a few minutes and this was their poor reward. Every soul can get its own reward, what it really is seeking; but any reward that sits squat upon the earth and has no connection with heaven will not add to our spiritual worth and wealth, but will only make us poor.

One cure for hypocritical praying is found in private devotions.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Of course this direction was not intended to forbid public prayer, which has its necessary place, but over against hypocritical acting sets a form of prayer that is not subject to this danger.

The soul that holds communion with God face to face in secret will be less likely to forget him in public, and will receive the reward of a purified and comforted and strengthened heart.

2. Vain Repetitions

A second danger in prayer is found in vain repetitions. "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Instances of such vain repetition are found in the conduct of the priests of Baal (Kings 18:26), and of the mob at Ephesus (Acts 19:34). The theory of such repetition seems to be that God is dull of hearing and needs to have prayer dinned into his ears, or that he measures the value of prayer by keeping count of the number of times it is repeated.

This kind of praying has by no means died out of the world.

The counting of beads on a rosary, each bead registering a prayer, has reduced it to a mechanical form.

The Buddhists have carried this theory to its logical extreme by introducing labor-saving machinery into their praying and thereby enormously increasing mass production. A "cylinder is stuffed full of short, written prayers, and every time it is turned on its axis all the prayers it contains are regarded as duly said. All that the prayer has to do is to give the wheel a twirl and it grinds out prayers with a rapidity and fluency which leave nothing to be desired." Not only so, but wind and water power are set to turning such wheels day and night and thus running up an almost infinite amount of credit.

The form that this danger assumes for us is that of falling into ruts in our prayers that become mere mechanical repetitions.

Conventional petitions and set phrases wear grooves in our prayers along which we may roll our words without any accompanying action of the mind and heart. This kind of praying may not differ essentially from counting beads or turning a wheel.

There is no objection to set phrases and printed forms of prayer, as in the Prayer Book and other rituals; these have their proper place and use, provided such forms are not used thoughtlessly and mechanically but are kept alive and filled in our minds with the devotional spirit.

Jesus cut up by the roots the reason for these repetitions: "for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." The purpose of prayer is not to inform God as though he were dependent on us for the latest bulletins of our spiritual condition, and therefore no amount of reiteration and vociferation will make him any wiser or more willing.

If it be said that this cuts up the need of petitions as well as of repetitions, the answer is that this mistakes the true nature and purpose of prayer.

Prayer is not teasing and plaguing God into giving us favors, but it is communion with him through which he imparts to us blessings he could not otherwise bestow and we could not otherwise receive.

Prayer is a process of coming into harmony with the will of God and then his will energizes us and flows through us in streams of blessing.

3. The Model Prayer

The Lord of prayer now taught the prayer of the Lord.

It is a model prayer of marvelous simplicity and comprehensiveness.

The sentences are short and the words are the plain speech of the common people. There is not one hard theological word in it.

The whole prayer contains only six petitions and can be slowly uttered in less than half a minute. Yet it sweeps heaven and earth in its range and grasp and leaves out no good thing.

It contains the roots and germs of all worship and blessing.

Its first word strikes the keynote of Christian faith and theology.

More than any other word the name Father tells us what God is, showering upon us the most charming memories and suggestions.

It asserts his sovereignty and power and wisdom, and also his providence and mercy and love. In making him our Father it equally makes us his children and asserts our kinship with God.

More than any other aspect this concept of God matches the human soul and fills it full, as the sun mirrors itself in and fills the dewdrop, or as the father fulfils himself in his child.

“Hallowed be thy name,” is the first petition.

We might think that we could have made a better start.

Should not some pressing human need have been put in the conspicuous forefront of this prayer? But it begins with divine interests, praying for God himself, and looks straight away from human needs.

The prayer, however, begins at the right point.

Right relations with God is the first and central condition of all blessings. Reverence is the root of all virtue. Unless God be respected the human soul has nothing to look up to, no ideal above it and no authority over it.

So the prayer moves on along these heavenly heights, praying that God's kingdom may come and his will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

Will it forever keep its thoughts turned upward to God himself and never look down upon our poor human needs?

It is the mountain tops, however, that keep the valleys green, and all our blessings come from above.

If only God's name were properly hallowed and his kingdom were come and his will done on earth, we would need ask no more; for these divine conditions carry with them all human blessings.

4. The Turning Point

The turning point of the prayer is at last reached. "Give us this day our daily bread."

The prayer suddenly drops from the highest spiritual aspiration to the lowest physical need; in the midst of the holiest longings of the soul the human stomach has something to say.

All the material conditions of life, bread, work, prosperity, health, are rightly subjects of prayer.

Religion covers the whole life from top to bottom.

Do not hesitate to speak to God on any subject. Whatever it is right for you to speak about with others, or to think about with yourself, it is right for you to speak about with your heavenly Father.

Yet our requests touching our material life should be kept within modest bounds for the necessities of life.

We are authorized to pray only for our daily bread, not for a year's supply or for rich viands.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Having lightly touched on our material needs, the prayer quickly bounds back into the spirit.

Forgiveness is a fundamental need of life and is a root of purity, peace and power.

But this blessing is available only for those that forgive others.

An unforgiving spirit in us will necessarily shut divine forgiveness out of our souls by making us incapable of desiring and receiving it.

"And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

The great fear of the prayer is not poverty and suffering, but evil and it shrinks from every slimy touch.

We cannot desire to enter temptation in the sense of trial and ought not to enter evil solicitations, but if God takes us in we are to turn temptation into victory.

Such is the model prayer, short, simple, comprehensive, laying hold of the greatest blessings and rifling heaven and earth for our enrichment.

If we learn to pray after this manner, in its spirit, we shall know what things we ought to pray for, and whatsoever we thus ask we shall receive. Our inner life will grow strong and deep and rich, and we shall go forth from our devotions to overcome the world.

5. Scripture in Our Devotional Life

We are given a glimpse into the devotional life of young Timothy as it was guided by the teaching of Paul. Timothy had been brought up on the Bible and had found it good and now he was exhorted to stand by it and stick to it.

The Bible is the bread that has put iron into our spiritual blood and made us strong, and we shall be guilty of great folly if we ever let it slip out of our hands and hearts.

Abide by the Book, bind its precepts continually upon thine heart, and thus shall we ever abide in Christ.

The Bible is an intensely practical book, always aiming at righteousness. And it is the marvelous profitableness of the book that proves its inspiration. It has stood like a tree rooted down in the centuries and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

The Spirit of God was breathed into it, and therefore this divine spirit still breathes out of it.

But its inspiration will do us no good unless it instructs us in righteousness and furnishes us completely unto every good work.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Is every good thing attended with danger?
2. May old evils change their form for us without changing their spirit?
3. Did Jesus need to pray for himself?
4. Why do spiritual blessings come first in importance?
5. May we pray for success in life?
6. How can we study the Bible devotionally?

LESSON II—OCTOBER 9

The Christian in the Family

Lesson: Genesis 50:17-21; Luke 2:40-52; 10:38-42.

Golden Text: I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Psalm 101:2.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 101:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Being a Christian at Home.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Making the Home Christian.

Lesson Text: Luke 2:40-52; 10:38-42

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast;

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not;

44 But supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance:

45 And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.

46 And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. A True Human Child.*
- 2. Growth in the Home.*

- 3. *First Visit to Jerusalem.***
- 4. *Anxious Parents.***
- 5. *The Beginning of Obedience.***
- 6. *The Home in Bethany.***

Being a Christian at home is an ideal difficult to realize because the seclusion of the home releases it from public criticism and it is easier in such circumstances to let our human nature have freer play than when under surveillance. And one of the ways of being a Christian at home is to make the home Christian in spirit and behavior.

And so these two aspects of the home assigned as the topics of the lesson play into and support each other as mutual factors and helps in realizing the same ideal.

The home in Nazareth realized these ideals in a rare degree and we shall attain the same goal in so far as we can acquire and exercise the same spirit.

It differed widely in outer form and circumstances from our homes, but its inner spirit may fill and shape our own.

The gospels hide the childhood of Jesus from our view, giving us only a few glimpses into its inner life as a hint of what lies behind the scene. Jesus grew in secret and did not come forth into the world until he was ready for his work.

1: A True Human Child

But while the gospels maintain an impressive silence, yet we know more than they tell us and have considerable general knowledge of the childhood of Jesus. We know he was a true human child and grew up through the stages and experiences of our common human life. He nestled and cooed and smiled in his mother's arms. His "baby hand was prest against the circle of the breast," and he was lulled to sleep with a cradle song. He took his first tottering steps and invented his first childish words. He played in his father's carpenter shop and went to the village school. There were brothers in the home and he grew up with them. He associated with the boys of Nazareth and was full of play.

We draw the line at any wrong thought or act. He was human and yet he was sinless. But he was not a grown-up boy, such as we used to find in the Sunday school books, morbidly self-conscious and pious, but

a genuine boy, artless, inquiring, spirited, with his entire nature in free and healthy play.

The whole charm of his boyhood lies in the fact that he was a boy and not something else. This is an ideal for our children.

2. Growth in the Home

The child grew. Human life begins in unconscious infancy and must slowly increase in body and mind.

Jesus obeyed this law. He did not come as a preternatural child, precocious and wise beyond his years, but in the home and carpenter shop and school he grew day by day, lesson by lesson, and so increased in stature and wisdom. He was not crowded forward and overtaxed in his work and growth, but he was permitted to take things as they came in their proper order and was not in a hurry.

Children are often hurried forward under high pressure too fast and pushed into publicity too soon. Parents are ambitious to have their children show signs of brightness and surpass other children, and they crowd them forward and often they irreparably injure them and sometimes they kill them.

It is pitiful to see children, through hot-house education or through dress and fashion, despoiled of their youth and made old beyond their years.

Let them grow quietly and take things in their due order; they will be young men and women soon enough. Do not thrust them into the excitement and glare of the world, but keep them in seclusion and let them quietly increase in stature and wax strong in spirit, as Jesus did.

3. First Visit to Jerusalem

The single recorded incident in the boyhood of Jesus occurred when he was twelve years of age when he made his first visit to the metropolitan city of Jerusalem. This was a critical age and turning-point in the life of a Jewish boy. At this age he was obliged to learn a trade for his own support; he began to wear the phylacteries; and he became "a son of the law," and was in some degree released from parental control.

He was now "of legal age," we would say, and was thrown upon his own responsibility, and this fact throws light upon this incident.

Every year the parents of Jesus went up to the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, the great religious festival and holiday of the Jews. Jesus had now reached the age when he was under obligation to go with them. Probably for the first time he stepped out of village seclusion into the publicity of the metropolis.

It must have been with emotions of deep wonder and reverence and joy that he entered the holy city and witnessed its scenes and shared in the services of the temple.

He had a boy's interest and delight in the sights of the city, but the center of interest for him was his Father's house.

It was no unnatural or unusual occurrence that he did not start on the return with his parents and they probably supposed that he was with friends in the caravan, but when he did not appear at the end of the first day's travel they grew anxious and went back to the city to find him.

He was found in the temple in the midst of the rabbis, hearing them and asking them questions and displaying such wisdom as excited general wonder.

It is a critical hour with a youth when he enters a great city and is left there to himself. Its attractions open before his feet many an alluring path of temptation and ruin.

Jesus was susceptible to these temptations, but his religious nature and habits drew him to his Father's house. He did not leave his religion behind in the village when he went to the city.

The youth that is true to God in the city is safe.

This scene in the boyhood of Jesus has sometimes been despoiled of its truth and beauty by making it out that he was instructing these rabbis and showing off his superior wisdom. On the contrary, he was hearing them and asking them questions: he was scholar and not teacher.

Jesus never played the part of a smart boy or "child prodigy," but was modest and teachable and kept his place in the presence of his superiors; and it was his rare spirit of wisdom and candor that excited the admiration of those that heard him.

A teachable spirit is a beautiful thing in a child, and it is just as beautiful in mature years. It is one of the primary traits of Christian character and of all human greatness.

This is another element in the Christian family: such an atmosphere and example and teaching as will enable children to grow up in a modest and teachable spirit.

4. Anxious Parents

The parents were astonished—struck with admiration, as the strong Greek word means—at the scene. Parents are proverbially pleased with and proud of signs of promise in their children, and Mary and Joseph experienced this delight in a rare degree as the religious genius of Jesus began to flash out. Yet there was an ominous element in the situation which drew from the anxious mother the chiding question, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.”

She realized that the lines of parental guardianship were slipping from her hands and that henceforth she could control her boy less and less and that he would act for himself more and more.

That was a painful moment for Mary, and it is a painful moment for every father and mother when they see their children beginning to separate themselves and assert their own individuality and responsibility.

But this is necessary and best for children. Ripened seeds must drop off the tree, or there will be no more trees.

Mary’s question elicited from Jesus his first recorded utterance: “How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?”

This reply is the kernel of this anecdote, the vital germ that kept it alive and caused it to blossom out in the gospel.

It expresses surprise in the mind of Jesus that his parents did not know that the attractions of the temple kept him and that there was his proper place and chief business.

Already his life was perfectly set to the music of his Father’s will.

Life with him was not idleness, or wealth, or pleasure, but service in his Father's work and world.

Many people waste a good portion of life in finding out what they are here for, and some die without ever knowing why they were born. Young people should discover as early as they can what their mission in life is and should find it in some form of the Father's business.

The parents of Jesus understood not his first recorded utterance—a sad commentary and mournful prophecy. How often has he been misunderstood and misrepresented so that his light has been turned to darkness.

And still the world little understands him, and very imperfectly do the most Christian minds penetrate into the depth and power of his meaning. His simple words are larger than our largest thoughts of life and love.

5. The Beginning of Obedience

“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them”: a wonderful record is this of the Son of God. This relation of course had in it no element of severity and bondage. There were no unreasonable harsh restrictions on the one side, and no waywardness on the other.

Obedience was the disposition and habit and joy of Jesus.

He kept the fifth commandment and so increased in favor with God and men. This was the beginning of that path of obedience that led him all the way through temptation past the cross up to the throne. Had he begun by disobeying his earthly parents, he would have ended by disobeying his heavenly Father.

Obedience is the foundation stone on which life is built, and it is laid in the home in obeying parents.

True obedience is not bondage but liberty. The steel track does not infringe upon the liberty of the locomotive, but gives it all the liberty it has. Right commandments are the steel tracks along which we can drive ourselves with utmost speed and perfect safety and thus enjoy the fullest liberty.

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
Such was this home which may be designated the first Christian**

family, and we may build our homes after this pattern and fill it with this spirit.

6. *The Home in Bethany*

We are given a glimpse into the home in Bethany which more than any other during his ministry was the home of Jesus. We here find a more tangled situation than in the boyhood home of Jesus in Nazareth, for there are in it two sisters of contrasted temperaments and moods and they did not always get along together well. Mary was the more passive and meditative and Martha the more active and assertive sister, and these two temperaments sometimes clashed and struck fire. Martha, busy and fussy out in the kitchen preparing a meal for Jesus as their visitor, could not understand Mary sitting in the parlor absorbed in the words of Jesus and presumed to let the lash of her temper fall on Mary in the presence of Jesus and did not spare Jesus himself.

Jesus spoke a quiet word of rebuke to the irritated and irritating Martha. "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

We here come upon a root of trouble in most of our Christian families: members with differing gifts and temperaments and tastes may misunderstand and misjudge one another.

The cure for this root is a broad charity that sees that we are many with different make-ups and must find our common life rooted down in the deeper things of the spirit.

There is a good part that will allow for and cover all our proper differences and make us one in the mind of the Master.

May he ever dwell in all our homes and make them Christian.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. Are there any other model homes mentioned in the Bible?**
- 2. Are our children less subject to Christian training than those of former days?**
- 3. How can we make the home life interesting and attractive?**
- 4. What are some common faults and failures in our homes?**
- 5. Was there some degree of fault in both Martha and Mary?**

LESSON III—OCTOBER 16

The Home and the Coming Generation

Lesson: Genesis 18:17-19; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; I Samuel 1:24-28; Mark 10:13-16; II Timothy 1:3-6.

*Golden Text: Train up a child in the way he should go,
And even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Proverbs 22:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 128.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Helping to Make Our Homes Better.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Home Ideals for Today and Tomorrow.

Lesson Text: Genesis 18:17-19; Deut. 6:4-9; Mark 10:13-16

17 And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do;

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

4 Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah:

5 And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart;

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when

thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

13 And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.

16 And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Abraham Friend of God.***
- 2. Commanding His Children.***
- 3. Divine Laws Built into the Home.***
- 4. Jesus and the Children.***

The home is the central unit and fountain of society, and as stands or falls the home so will all things else abide or perish. Yet there are in our day special conditions in great cities, especially in its apartment life, that make it increasingly difficult to keep the family in close and vital relations, and there are also being propagated among us doctrines and practices that strike at the very vitals of the home and would dissolve its bonds and end in ultimate promiscuity.

We must take our stand against such evils and defend the home from without and make it stronger and purer and richer within.

1. Abraham Friend of God

Our first passage is taken from the life of Abraham who has the unique distinction of being designated in Scripture as the "friend" of God (II Chron. 20:7).

A dramatic scene is represented as taking place between Abraham and Jehovah as they stood overlooking the plain of Sodom and that wicked city which was booked for destruction. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" This is a picture of the intimacy that obtains between God and a chosen prophet in which divine revelations are made and guidance imparted.

It would be easy to represent such a relation between God and a man that would be irreverent and ridiculous, but we need to be more careful and discriminating. These Hebrew prophets stood especially close to God in their spiritual sensitivity so that they caught divine light quicker and more clearly than other men, as mountain tops catch the glow of the sun while the plain below lies in twilight or darkness.

Does not God have such affinity and is he not in such relation with men that he can in some degree hold fellowship with them and kindle their spirits with divine light?

"There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). All human reason derives its light from the Spirit of all truth. Poets often receive deeper breaths of this divine inbreathing, and does not the scientist in peering into the depths of the heavens read divine thoughts? Even Einstein has said, "I do not know that relativity is the plan of God, but I am working on it as though it were."

That is the language of religious faith, though it comes from a pantheistic thinker.

So we may well believe that Abraham was a friend of God in a special degree so that God took him into his confidence in a grave situation in which Abraham's kindred and people were involved.

It were well for us that we would always take God into our confidence and consult with him in every step in life.

There was also a special reason for this relation between Jehovah and Abraham: "Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him." He was not simply an individual with whom Jehovah was dealing, but the fountain head and seed of a great nation that would play a mighty part in the drama of human history and spread its influence over all the world. Such a man was many men, even a multitude that no man can number.

Jehovah was foreordaining history and humanity the day he held this conference with his friend Abraham.

All parents are placed in a degree in this relation with coming generations and we all step into this line of transmitting our character and conduct down to those that come after us; and there is really no limit to this social transmission of influence out to the ends of the earth and down to the end of time.

No home is an isolated unit in the world, but all homes through all the generations are knit into a social organism in which they transmit and infuse their influence and thus help to shape coming homes throughout the world.

This adds immensely to the responsibility of making our own homes better, and a good home is about the best contribution we can make to our community and country and even to our human kind.

2. Commanding His Children

Why was so great a responsibility as peopling the world with his offspring committed to Abraham? "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that he

may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

Abraham was fitted and worthy of having so great a responsibility and honor bestowed upon him because he would command his children and they would follow in his faith and transmit it over the world.

This responsibility is now committed unto us.

It is the duty of parents to command their children, a duty that is wrought into the very constitution of the family so that the family could not exist without it. Children could not grow up or grow at all if they were not subject to the teaching and care and guidance of their parents. Left to themselves, they would perish as snowflakes falling into the inhospitable sea. Parents must and do shape their children in character and conduct whether they try to do it or know they are doing it or not. If they just let them grow up wild and uncontrollable, they are doing this and are as responsible for the result as though they bent all their efforts to accomplish it.

Like parents like children is far more true than like priest like people.

It is true that there are limits to the power of parents to command their children, but this is the general fact and result in our human world.

By "commanding," however, we are not to think of arbitrary and harsh and forcible commands, such as excite opposition and resentment and rebellion in children. No doubt there is much of this in many homes, and it is a grave mistake that may cost both parents and children heavily in loss of mutual confidence and in waywardness and worse.

Commands in the home should be reasonable and kind and loving, and they can be seasoned with such grace that they will be easier to accept and obey than if they are made acid and irritable with dogmatic authority.

The question is now much in evidence whether the children of this day are or are not less obedient and more wayward and wild than in former days. Much is being circulated to the effect that all is not well with our children and that the "youth movement" with its slogan of "self-expression" bodes no good but much evil to this generation and coming ones.

We may suspect things are not as bad as they are sometimes represented, and there are multitudes of good children in our homes, but we cannot be too careful and earnest in our efforts to bring them up "to do righteousness and justice" as we train them in the admonition and nurture of the Lord.

3. Divine Laws Built into the Home

We pass to the teaching of Moses on the home and get some very pointed and pertinent admonitions.

The love of God is the foundation of true home life, removing from it the atmosphere of harsh and repellent religion and bathing it in the light of trust and affection.

These words of religious teaching should be woven into the whole texture of our home life. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest down in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." They are not to be only taught in a formal way at set times, as we used to be taught the catechism or made to read the Bible, but are to enter into the daily familiar life of the home and be a free subject of conversation when we are out walking or lying down or rising up.

We should try to avoid making religion an unpleasant subject that the children shy away from and regard with aversion if not with fear or something worse, but should endeavor to make it attractive and agreeable to them at all times.

Not that it should be made so free and easy as to be verging on irreverence or undue familiarity with religious things but that it should be as natural and welcome as our talk on any serious subject.

It is important that parents should cultivate such acquaintance with the religious thoughts and lives of their children that they will be free to speak with them on it at any time.

It is true, this is often a delicate point, and children, like some older people, dislike if they do not resent others prying too closely and familiarly into their inner life, but this proper reserve may be respected while yet enjoying their confidence.

Israel was further bidden to "bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes." This led in the later Jews to their ostentatious forms of broadening their "phylacteries," but the spirit of the command is that we should not conceal our religion in public but manifest it in all proper ways.

And they were further bidden, "And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."

Time changes such commands as these into accordance with our own religious spirit and life.

We do not now write anything on our door-posts and gates, but the meaning for us is that we are to build these divine laws into the very structure of our home and life so that they will pervade and control our conduct whether in the home or in social life or business affairs or national or international life.

The command in this passage was the Jewish "Shema," so called from the first word Hear, in the Hebrew, and Jesus made it "the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:38).

The meaning is that our whole life, private and public, is to be saturated with the love of God so that all we think and do will fulfil his will and wisdom and love.

4. *Jesus and the Children*

The relation of any man to children is a test of his character and spirit: if he does not like children, children will not like him, and this aversion is a symptom of some deep defect in his character. Children instinctively penetrate to the heart of a man, and if he is unsympathetic and cold and selfish they will keep aloof from him, but a warm heart will draw them.

Jesus stands this test in a superlative degree.

Children rushed into his arms with utmost confidence and he welcomed them. On this occasion parents were bringing to him their little children, an act that parents should do to this day. But the disciples, big burly if not rough men, "rebuked them." They thought these parents were intruding upon the work of Jesus and ordered them to take their children and be off.

How little did they understand their own Master and how much more surely had these parents interpreted his spirit.

Then he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them." Is there any more beautiful and significant scene in the Bible or in all literature? There were the humble trustful parents committing their children to Jesus, the disciples ordering them off in no gentle tones, and in the midst stood Jesus, taking the children into his arms and then turning in severe rebuke upon his own blundering disciples. Not only did he make it plain that children were welcome to him and folded them in his arms close to his heart, but he held them up as having the very spirit of the kingdom of God without which we shall not enter therein.

That was a great day in the church and in the history of Christianity. A little child is its pattern and door of entrance.

There is something in the spirit of a little child that is the most beautiful and precious thing in the world.

Its innocence and purity, its humility and teachable spirit, its unconsciousness of self and its artlessness in all its ways, what are these but the greatest of human graces?

Let these pervade the home in parents as well as children, and it will be a true and happy home, a blessing to itself and to coming generations.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. How may we be friends of God?
2. May we go too far in seeking to command our children?
3. How can we win their confidence without exciting their aversion?
4. How can we take our children to Jesus?
5. What are some causes of disharmony and unhappiness in the home?

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 23

Problems of the Modern Home

Lesson: Joshua 24:14, 15; Mark 10:2-12; Ephesians 6:1-9.

Golden Text: *As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.* Joshua 24:15.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 127.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: My Home Problems.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Problems of the Modern Home.

Lesson Text: Joshua 24:14-15; Ephesians 6:1-9

14 Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise),

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your

children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

5 Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Fear of Jehovah.***
- 2. Joshua's Choice.***
- 3. Children.***
- 4. Parents.***
- 5. Servants and Masters.***

Few social problems in Paul's day needed more attention than did the home, for it was falling to pieces under Roman paganism, and few aspects of our modern world are showing graver symptoms of disorder.

The divorce evil in our country is one of our greatest perils as the ratio of divorces to marriages in America exceeds that of any other country in the world and has increased fourfold in the last fifty years.

There are symptoms, also, that the children of our day are less subject to home training and discipline and more given to laxness in parental respect and obedience than the children of earlier generations.

Any such weakness and disorder in the home is one of the gravest perils of society, for it unlooses the bonds that hold it together and undermines its deepest foundations. The home is really the unit of society and sustains the same relation to its health and vitality as do the cells to the body. If the home declines, religion will decline and society will dissolve its bonds.

This lesson goes to the root of the problem of the home and deals with its members with an unsparing impartial hand.

1. The Fear of Jehovah

Our lesson goes back to Joshua to lay its foundations, for all our social foundations are ancient, and Joshua, the rugged old soldier, had something to say to us moderns of the first importance. He admonishes his people to "fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth."

That may seem a bit old-fashioned to us, but what is more fundamental and undergirding in our life than the proper fear of God?

Fear is one of the deepest roots of our being, and it has a large and legitimate place in our religious as in all our life. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Any view of the Lord that eliminates fear from our thoughts of him is untrue and will prove disastrous.

This fear may range from the coarsest physical fear of the fire of his wrath up to the finest filial fear of dishonoring and grieving him.

The proper fruit of fearing the Lord is serving him in sincerity and in truth.

The fear of the Lord is not to drive us from him but to draw us to him. He is not a cruel tyrant or blind fate, but a Father in whose arms we

should nestle. Sincere service on the part of the Israelites would show itself in their putting away the gods which their fathers served. Our fathers did some things which we should not do.

Sincere service will cast many an idol out of our hearts and homes and bring every thought into subjection to the will and wisdom of God. Such sincerity in our homes will go far towards solving their problems.

2. Joshua's Choice

Joshua set before the people a great choice. If it seemed evil to them to serve Jehovah, they were to choose that day whom they would serve.

The Lord asks no favors from us in deciding whether we will serve him.

He does not decide this question for us by his authority, but leaves it to our own judgment; and in deciding it we are to be guided by the ordinary principles of reason. If his service is evil, if it does us harm, if it does not pay, then we are to reject it. If it is good it will stand the tests of arithmetic and logic, and of trial and experience: if it will not stand these tests we are to abandon it.

In this appeal Joshua put high honor on the human reason and exalted it to a supreme judgment seat in life. But if the Israelites would not serve Jehovah, then they had to choose what gods they would serve.

We must all choose some God, if not the true then a false one.

We do not escape religion by leaving the church and renouncing Christianity. The highest object of our desire and pursuit is our god and before it we worship and bow down.

Joshua accompanied the choice he set before them with his own example: "but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."

This is a great saying that rings with a soldier's decision and bravery.

Joshua would not follow the crowd but took his own stand. He was not afraid of being unique and of splendid isolation.

He did not need to take a vote to see how he would go.

The color of his character and conduct was not reflected on him from public opinion, but it came from the core of his heart. He would do right, though all others should do wrong.

He also decided as the head of his family; he led his household into the service of Jehovah.

We need more of this spirit of bravery in our homes and especially do parents need not only to take a Christian stand themselves but also to set a right example before their children and endeavor to lead them into the kingdom of God.

3. Children

Our lesson now passes directly into the home. Paul in the preceding verses (5:22-33) had dealt out good advice to wives and husbands as to how they should treat each other, and this relation is fundamental to a harmonious home. Our passage, however, starts with the children.

The complete home includes children as the fulfilment of its ideal and purpose in the world.

Their first and fundamental duty is, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord."

This duty rests on the fact that they owe their parents their very existence and are dependent on them at every point and step in their lives.

Their parents also have the superior wisdom of their experience and on their care and training depend the safety and development of the children. Subsistence and protection, food and clothing and shelter, care and guidance, education and discipline, affection and companionship and joy, all are derived from their parents, and these carry with them the self-evident duty of appreciation and obedience.

Of course this obedience is not to be servile and slavish, but should be free and joyous, just what they delight to do.

A tremendous reason is given for this obedience: "for this is right." A stronger word could not be used, for when we can declare a thing is right we have put under it the eternal Rock of Ages and planted it on the very foundation of the stars.

It is right that children should obey their parents in the Lord, and any other relation is wrong and will work ruin.

“Honor thy father and mother . . . that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” It is no arbitrary arrangement by which honoring parents works out in welfare and length of days, for it is obedience to the laws of right, and such laws always contribute to length and fulness and richness of life.

Our American children need to have this truth and duty instilled into them from their earliest years.

They are charged, perhaps not altogether justly, with unusual laxness of obedience and parental respect in the home, and such laxness will run into lawlessness in the larger home of the community and state, and the end of such ways is disgrace and ruin.

4. Parents

These duties in the home all run in pairs and are mutual relations. Having admonished the children, Paul turns upon the fathers. “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.” All these relations and duties must be exercised “in the Lord,” in the atmosphere of reverence and trust and love, and then they will come true as certainly as every point on the circumference of a circle comes true to its centre.

Fathers often provoke their children by unjust action or unkindness or high temper and anger, and these then provoke the children to angry reaction.

Wrath in parents cannot cure anger in children, and only a Christian spirit can create a Christian home.

In some homes the parents sin against the children as much as the children do against the parents. Like parents, like children. We parents have no right to expect our children to be obedient and sweet-tempered when we are harsh and sharp-tongued ourselves.

Often they provoke us because we have provoked them, and we are simply being paid back in our own coin.

Let us all seek to be Christian in spirit and then we shall have a Christian home.

5. *Servants and Masters*

Our lesson brings the gospel down into business and applies it to the problems of the economic world. For a long time this application was not made except in the most general way, and business and the church went on their respective ways largely independent of each other.

Business supported religion, but religion did not interfere with business, and as long as this division and separation of interests was maintained, they got along together smoothly enough.

But our social conscience has been growing broader and deeper and keener and religion is now prying into fields and conditions that it formerly passed by.

It looks into the relations of capital and labor, employer and employé profits and wages, housing and sanitation, and into all the conditions that affect the welfare of the people.

Not that it attempts to work out a technical solution of these problems and give judicial decisions on them, but it does endeavor to inform itself about them with a view to teaching such principles and especially infusing such a spirit into them as will enable men of Christian minds to work out their solution in mutual justice and brotherhood.

The problems of the home are closely related and interrelated with these problems of our economic system, for often the conditions of labor and wages vitally affect the whole life of the home.

Paul boldly tackles the problem of slavery. "Slaves," he writes, "be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters." He is living in the days of slavery and he recognizes it as an existing institution.

We are happily through with that institution, but Paul's directions still applies to our relation of employé and employer that ramifies our whole industrial and social system.

The "servants" of Paul's day were admonished to serve their masters "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

Every employé should endeavor to render full service and his best work as though it were the very work of God, as indeed it is.

This will lift our work out of drudgery into divine relations and transfigure the humblest task and the hardest job with a celestial light. Especially do we need to take care that we do not degenerate into mere "eyeservice," skimping our work, merely putting in the time with our eye on the clock to drop our work at the first stroke of the hour.

We need workers that will put in full time and do their best work, work that will stand the test of use and be honest goods on the market; workmen who leave no loose joints and rough places that others must tighten up and smooth off afterwards.

On the other hand, also, masters get their share of needed admonition. They are to "do the same things unto" their workmen, "and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him." What a needed spirit is this in our modern economic system, where there is on one side so much poor work and on the other so much threatening, both sides often being moved by suspicion and ill-will and ready for a fight. Fair wages should be promised and paid and then fair work should be given. The golden rule should be applied to both ends of every bargain, and especially to the relation of capital and labor, employer and employé.

Let the whole industrial world and economic order be flooded and pervaded with the Christian spirit, and all these problems will in time be justly and happily solved.

When Christ is the Master of all parties, justice and brotherhood will rule. This will solve these troublesome questions, and nothing else will.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Mention some of the beautiful homes in the Bible.
2. What are some common failures and faults in our homes?
3. How can we make the home so attractive its members will not desire to leave it for outside allurements?
4. What are some faults and wrongs in our industrial system?
5. How can we learn to take delight in our work whatever it may be?

LESSON V—OCTOBER 30

The Christian and Law Observance (World's Temperance Sunday)

Lesson: Proverbs 23:29-35; Romans 13:1-7; I Corinthians 9:19-27; Galatians 6:1-10; I Peter 2:11-17.

Golden Text: *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Galatians 6:7.

Devotional Reading: I Peter 4:12-18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Observing the Law for the Sake of Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian and Law Observance.

Lesson Text: Romans 13:1-7; Galatians—6:7-10

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God.

2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same:

4 For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For for this cause ye pay tribute

also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

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

8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

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

10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Duty of Citizenship.

2. Paying Taxes.

3. *Sowing and Reaping.*

4. *Not Wearying in Well Doing.*

5. *Working That Which Is Good.*

The Bible does not usually single out particular sins and vices and give them separate treatment; it rather deals with them as branches of a common root, and it is this root that it is after and seeks to exterminate. All the branches might be destroyed and yet no permanent good be done, for they would all come back again. But destroy the root and all evil is ended: nothing will come back.

Sin is more than the sum of all sins, as the root is more than all the branches.

However all virtues and vices are woven together, so that every virtue is a friend of temperance and every vice is an ally of intemperance. On this principle we draw inferences and make applications in the interest of temperance, but we should clearly distinguish between the direct teachings of Scripture and our adaptations of it.

Paul, in this letter written at Corinth to the Romans, adorns its massive theology with many passages of practical application and tenderness and beauty; and while this lesson only mentions intemperance incidentally, yet its whole teaching powerfully conduces to this virtue.

1. *The Duty of Citizenship*

The duty of citizenship is enjoined at length and in detail. Government is a foundation of orderly society without which it would fall into chaos and anarchy. Remove it and the vast invisible roof over us protecting us day and night would come crashing down and involve us all in its ruins. Life, liberty and property would be subject to every murderer's gun and robber's hand.

It is therefore a primary duty that every one be subject to these higher powers.

In so far as we refuse or fail to be loyal citizens obeying the laws we are undermining all law and order. And we must not pick and choose our laws as to which ones we will obey while we disregard others, but we must be faithful to all.

This principle applies to our temperance legislation in general and in particular to the Eighteenth Amendment and the laws of enforcement growing out of it.

It stands written in our national constitution and its obligation is upon us. We may object to it and advocate and work for its annulment in a legal way, but may not privately annul it ourselves.

Paul lived under a pagan government that was despotic and corrupt and was cruelly hostile to his Christian worship, but he recognized its divine right to rule and was loyal to all its laws.

We do not ordinarily think of a government officer from the highest to the lowest as "a minister of God to thee for good," but he is divinely appointed for this end and it is our duty to respond with our respect and obedience. Of course questions sometimes arise as to when such officers are rightly elected or appointed and we may raise our protest and in grave cases as an ultimate resort rebel against them, but such situations are rare with us, for which we may well be thankful in view of the many rebellions breaking out in other parts of the world.

We have a good government, and we can correct it at every election, and we should appreciate and respect it and give it our loyal support and personal obedience.

2. Paying Taxes

Paul specifically enjoins upon his readers that "ye pay tribute," or the Roman taxes which were heavy and often corruptly exacted, but they were a necessary part of the duty of citizenship. Government costs money and on the whole is the biggest business in the world and its bills must be collected from the people and paid.

We may think these taxes are too high and this may be in many instances conceded, but perhaps the corruption and even the waste is but a small proportion of the whole.

We are generally disposed to grumble at our taxes and many have no compunction of conscience in evading them, but they are a part of our duty as Christian citizens, and in few things do we get as much for our money as for our taxes. We would quickly discover this if we had to set up and maintain means for our own protection.

We are also bidden to render "honor" to our officials, treat them with

respect due to their position. At this point we often fail and allow our partisanship to treat them with disrespect and ridicule and even to heap upon them every form of insult and opprobrium.

We dishonor our government and nation and ourselves by such treatment of these powers that "are ordained of God."

3. Sowing and Reaping

In a second passage from Paul we have a principle that strikes closer and deeper into the evil of intemperance. We are warned to "be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

In few things are men so self-deceived into thinking that they can escape and mock the laws of God as in the matter of using intoxicating drink.

They all think they are masters of themselves and can go to the edge of but never beyond safety into danger.

But there is an inexorable law of nature that comes into play at this point, the law of sowing and reaping.

Wheat from wheat and weeds from weeds. What you sow, that you reap. Plant a thorn tree and you will not get grapes; sow thistle seed and you will not gather figs or roses. To get corn you must plant corn; and if you plant corn you will get corn and never anything else. Every seed brings forth after its own kind.

This is a universal law and not one exception to it has ever been known.

Nature never forgets what has been sown and never brings forth the wrong thing. By seeing what comes out of the ground you can tell every time what has gone into the ground, and by seeing what goes in you can predict with infallible certainty what will come out. Nature never makes a mistake. She is calmly and coolly impartial and just and shows no favors and makes no mistakes. She would just as soon stop the earth on its axis or drop the sun out of the sky as give you the wrong plant for the right seed or the right plant for the wrong seed. You shall get just what you give, and you can get just what you want by sowing that which you would reap.

Our life is a sowing in which all our myriads of thoughts and actions are living seeds which are either golden grains of truth and righteousness or blackened seeds of sin, and which are selected and scattered in each one's life by his own hand. The same things that we put into our lives shall come out of our lives.

In nothing is this law more strikingly illustrated than in the use of intoxicating liquor.

A single glass of wine or drink of whiskey may not seem to forecast any evil result; it may have a pleasant tang or bite to its taste and may give a fine feeling of exultation. But it may be a sensation that soon expends itself and calls for another glass, and this repetition grows into a habit and the drink must ever be made stronger until the craving calls for fire and sets all the blood burning with the very flames of hell.

And the harvest is always the seed multiplied many fold.

All habits illustrate this. No one ever became profane or a liar or a drunkard all at once. He uttered the first oath with hesitating lips and then was afraid; he told the first fib; he took the first glass only to be sociable and have a good time. These acts did not look bad in the start. But they were seeds which were no sooner sown than they multiplied and these in turn were resown and grew until they were a great harvest, and the boy whose lips were pure was a swearer and then became a liar and finally a drunkard.

The terrible danger of sin is in its first seed: let it alone.

Beware of the first oath, the first untruth, the first glass. Sow only the good seed and they will grow more and more abundantly.

This law of multiplied and accumulated growth has been expressed as follows: Sow a thought and reap an act: sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.

4. Not Wearying in Well Doing

Paul now applies to the Christian life another principle that is a strong safeguard against intemperance: the principle of crowding out evil by crowding in good. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Activity in any right line absorbs the energies and concentrates the mind and thereby leaves no interest in and time for any wrong line.

The busy man wears an armor that may be proof against many of the fiery darts of evil.

It is the idle soul that the devil finds an easy victim to listen to his wiles and fall into his net.

What is well doing? The word translated "well" is the ordinary Greek word for beautiful, and Paul urges us to weary not in beautiful deeds.

How can we tell when a deed is beautiful? There are three plain marks on such a deed.

First, it is right: it conforms to the standards of righteousness and truth.

Any unrighteous or false or wrong deed is ugly; it offends our esthetic sense of proportion and fitness, it is out of place in our world and is not beautiful.

Second, a beautiful deed is good.

It not only conforms to truth and righteousness but it serves some useful end in bettering our human world.

And third, it is gracious, it has about it the charm of kindness and courtesy.

A deed may be true and good, and yet it may lack this grace and be severe and stern in aspect and harsh in spirit and unattractive and even repellent in manner.

But combine truth and goodness and graciousness in a deed and it shines with its own light as a beautiful thing.

Yet we may weary in doing even such fine deeds, for goodness is not always easy. At times we must study our ways and see that they conform to these marks and then gird up our wills and our conscience and courage to persist in them without letting our interest and zeal decline into weariness.

A great promise crowns this command: "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Truth and goodness and beauty are their own inner reward, to be done without pay or hope of return, but they will surely bring a reward in a pure conscience and satisfied spirit and will not fail of respect among men and may even reap material blessings.

5. Working That Which Is Good

Paul adds another admonition in the same line: "Let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith."

Again we are urged to throw ourselves into social activities of doing good and thus give right employment to our energies and draw them off from evil ways. This is the principle of "sublimating" our lower instincts and appetites into higher activities and satisfactions.

When we are absorbed in "working that which is good" we have no desire for that which is evil; our cup of satisfaction is full and contains no room and craving for intoxicating drink to whip up our jaded energies or lower instincts into artificial excitement.

"Working that which is good" is not the uninteresting dull work that many people think, but contains plenty of wholesome satisfaction and even adventure and romance. Paul did not find such work dreary monotony, but it was intensely interesting to him and at times he was "carried away" with it and found it "hilarious," the greatest fun.

We are to do good "toward all men," having the spirit of kinship and brotherhood and the insight to see worth and good in all people of every rank and race, class and condition.

Any one who shuts himself off from his human kind by any class spirit or sense of superiority is narrowing his own life and excluding himself from fine contacts and interests that would broaden and enrich his own experience.

But it is also true that we are to work good "especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." The special ties that bind us to our kin and friends and faith do not restrict the broader relations that we fulfil towards all men.

The more social contacts we have the richer we are, and the more we serve others the more we strengthen ourselves.

This broader life also decreases the craving for and the temptations of any form of intemperance and arms us against it with the breastplate of righteousness.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What are some of the duties of citizenship?
2. Why do we dislike to pay taxes?
3. What are some ways in which we can keep from wearying in well doing?
4. What is the value of laws against intemperance?
5. How can we raise ourselves above the personal need of such laws?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 6

The Christian and World Peace

Lesson: Psalms 22:27, 28; 67:1-7; 72:8-19; Isaiah 2:1-4; Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 2:13-19.

Golden Text: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God. Matthew 5:9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 46:4-11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why Work for World Peace?

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian's Duty to Promote World Peace.

Lesson Text: Psalm 72:9-17; Ephesians 2:13-19

- 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
- 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall render tribute:
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
- 11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him;
All nations shall serve him.
- 12 For he will deliver the needy when he crieth,
And the poor, that hath no helper.
- 13 He will have pity on the poor and needy,
And the souls of the needy he will save.
- 14 He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence;
And precious will their blood be in his sight:
- 15 And they shall live; and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
And men shall pray for him continually;
They shall bless him all the day long.
- 16 There shall be abundance of grain in the earth upon the top of the mountains;
The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:
- And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
- 17 His name shall endure for ever;
His name shall be continued as long as the sun:
And men shall be blessed in him;
All nations shall call him happy.
- 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.
- 14 For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition,
- 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, *so* making peace;
- 16 And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:
- 17 And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh:
- 18 For through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.
- 19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

LESSON PLAN***Introduction.***

- 1. *Extent of the Kingdom.***
- 2. *The Poor in the Kingdom.***
- 3. *The Blessings of the Kingdom.***
- 4. *The Middle Wall of Partition Broken Down.***
- 5. *Fellow Citizens of the Household of the Faith.***

The subject of our lesson is World Peace, a matter that is now very much in the consciousness of the world. The Great War ripped into shreds and convulsed our whole civilization, and we are even yet and now reaping its bitter fruits in world economic depression and civil unrest and revolution.

Yet probably beneath all these results of the war the desire for peace is working deep in the conditions and minds of all countries, and it is increasingly felt that we must end war or war will end us.

Many movements and forces are working towards this end, and it is our duty to understand them and contribute our part towards emphasizing them and bringing our country and leaders into line with them that this grand consummation may be realized.

The Bible is full of the spirit of peace, its very gospel is "peace on earth and good will among men," and many are its teachings that converge upon this vision and victory.

The two passages in our lesson set forth some fundamental principles that bear on World Peace and the Christian's Duty to Promote it.

1. Extent of the Kingdom

The psalmist draws a picture of a king and kingdom that are idealized to the point of perfection. Possibly he had in mind some historic king, though this does not appear probable, and more likely he had in view the Messiah that now filled the whole prophetic field of the Jews with the dawn of his coming glory.

In a similar way we now interpret all such prophecies as being fulfilled in Christ and rightly apply them to him.

It is true they are still pictures that are only partially fulfilled and we still throw their ideal realization on the screen of the future. This fine

prophetic picture of the psalmist portrays the world as we believe it will be when he whose right it is will reign over it.

We are first given a view of the worldwide extent of Christ's kingdom. It will extend beyond the bounds of civilization into the wilderness and the wild and savage people that dwell there will bow to him, and his enemies shall be laid low before him, not by the weapons of war but by the peaceful penetration of his spirit of brotherhood and love. Wealthy kings and queens will bring the treasures of their isles and continental domains and lay them at his feet, and we may see some fulfilment of this in the tributes that many lands that were pagan in the days of the psalmist are now bringing to Christ.

"Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Even this is now being fulfilled in a wonderful way if we put ourselves back in the psalmist's time at his point of view. Only a small part of the globe was then known to him, and now practically all Europe as well as considerable portions of Asia and Africa and nearly all America in some degree recognize Christ as Lord.

This rulership of Christ is as yet only superficial, scarcely skin deep, but it is a tremendous fact in its present attainment; and it grows immensely greater in the light of this prophecy which we believe will yet be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ has a right to reign over "all nations," by virtue of his divine personality and truth and grace, wisdom and might. Here is one point and way in which the Christian can fulfil his duty in promoting world peace; for in proportion as the gospel message is fulfilled and Christ really reigns will wars and all human evils cease and the kingdom of God will come and the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The point at which we are to begin also is within ourselves and we do this when we let Christ dwell in us and reign over us.

2. The Poor in the Kingdom

A test of a country and kingdom is the way it treats its poor. Are they downtrodden and despised; are they exploited by the rich and ruling classes to their own enrichment; do they have no rights that the rulers and the rich are bound to respect? This was the deepest debasement and condemnation of all ancient kingdoms and kings. They trampled the

poor and helpless under their feet and heard not the cry of the slave and suffering and needy.

The psalmist had a better dream of the coming king and kingdom. "For he will deliver the needy when he crieth, and the poor that hath no helper. He will have pity on the poor and needy, and the souls of the needy he will save. He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence; and precious will their blood be in their sight." This was a strange picture to be painted in that ancient day of universal cruelty when the first faint images of it had yet scarcely begun to appear.

The spirit of God was surely stirring in the hearts of these Hebrew prophets and poets when they could dream such dreams and see such visions in the midst of their surroundings.

And the prospects were much worse out in the hard and cruel world of Rome when the empire groaned under slavery and their pitiful cries are heard all through Greek and Latin literature. A very great change has come over the temper of our modern world and this prophecy is visibly on the way to fulfilment though the final realization of it is yet far off.

Slavery has been banished from Christendom and no slave now crouches beneath the shadow of a Christian flag. Not only so, but democracy has flooded large portions of Christendom and its atmosphere has pervaded the world.

The doctrine of the fundamental equality of men has been written into our constitutions and woven into the texture of our legislation and whole civilization so that every man can now stand on his rights and see that they are respected and enforced. Also our civilization has been pervaded and suffused with the spirit of sympathy and help for the poor and needy, and common schools and hospitals and many philanthropies bear witness to and apply this spirit. We stand ready to redeem souls from oppression and violence and precious is their blood in our sight.

It is true enough that this spirit is as yet only imperfectly realized and applied, but great advances have been made and we are moving in the right direction.

Wherever Christ is known and rules today the world wears a juster and kindlier aspect and the poor are better treated. Christ is the best

friend of the poor they have ever had in this world and he has not yet done all that he can and will do for them.

Let us not be so intent on seeing and magnifying what has not been done that we cannot see and appreciate what has been done.

Give Christ the praise for what his spirit has done for this poor needy world and then help him in doing more towards the fulfilment of his kingdom.

3. The Blessings of the Kingdom

We have a fine picture of the blessings of the kingdom when it is realized. It is not simply a beautiful picture hung up in a rich frame for our admiration; not a dream to lull us to a pleasant sleep and then vanish with the morning, or a song to be sung and then fade away upon the air. There have been many visions of a golden age to come, but they have all come to nothing because they were only on paper with no power to put them into practice amidst the hard realities of our sin-saturated world.

It may be counted among the blessings of the kingdom that its subjects will reverence the king, for "men shall pray for him and they shall bless him all the day long."

No kingdom can long stand that is not rooted down in the affections and loyalty of its people; and we see this frequently demonstrated in history, for when a throne tumbles throwing its king into the dust of revolution and ruin it is generally due to some lack of justice and truth in the king by which he lost the loyalty of his people.

Christ is worthy of all reverence and trust and worship, and when any people lose reverence for him, his character and person, his rule and right, rottenness is eating into their foundations and their fall is drawing near.

Other blessings are enumerated, including abundance of things material, grain filling the plains up to the top of the mountains, fruit that shall shake like Lebanon, and cities flourishing like grass.

This part of the picture would appeal to the Hebrew mind and it has not lost its appeal for us.

And is it not a simple fact that wherever the kingdom of Christ comes into the life of a people there material prosperity abounds? There is a reason why the Christian nations are overwhelmingly the richest in comparison with such non-Christian peoples as inhabit India and China and Africa. Are we not being told just now that our production of goods has outrun the demand and need for them? We are burdened and almost paralyzed with a surplus of wheat and other goods.

Of course a nation's life does not consist in the abundance of things it possesses, but there is some connection between Christian wisdom and wealth, piety and profits, righteousness and riches.

We are not to seek these as the first thing or put our trust in them, but they are not to be depreciated and despised as a logical outcome and fruit of Christian character and conduct, of the spirit of Christ in the world.

4. The Middle Wall of Partition Broken Down

The point Paul has in mind in this passage is that the wall of Jewish rites and ceremonies that separated the Gentiles from the Jewish church and shut them out and built up between Jew and Gentile a wall not only of separation but also of enmity and bitterness, was now broken down and utterly removed in Christ. He swept his hand over both Samaria and Jerusalem, points that marked the extremes of this separation and hatred, and said that "neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem shall men (exclusively) worship the Father," but everywhere they should worship him in spirit and in truth.

He leveled and removed the very stones of this wall and let all men, Jew and Gentile, into his kingdom without respect of race or color or creed.

It took a great battle to remove this old wall so deep-set in national prejudice and exclusiveness, and it cost Christ himself the greatest possible price; for, as Paul said to these Gentile Christians, "now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances: that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might

reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh."

Let us see to it that this old divisive wall of prejudice and custom and creed is not again built up between us and other believers of whatever name and that we are all one in Christ Jesus. This is another vital way in which we can promote religious and world peace.

5. Fellow Citizens of the Household of the Faith

The same idea is carried to its logical fulfilment in Paul's declaration that we are all "no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

This ideal is far from being realized even by us who profess and call ourselves Christians, for there are many divisions among us and many of them are attended with the old exclusive spirit and with alienations and bitterness that greatly weaken the church as a form of the kingdom of God in the world and often bring scandal on the cause of Christ. This division and inner weakness of the church render it so largely impotent in the world in preventing war and settling international issues and promoting world peace.

We should do our part towards spreading this spirit of Christian unity and brotherhood by having it in ourselves and exercising it towards others.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Do all great creative ideas run ahead of their age?
2. Is this the way the world gets forward?
3. Why are we so impatient with their slow progress?
4. What signs are there now that the kingdom of God is coming?
5. What are some walls of partition that we build up between ourselves and others?

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 13

Making a Living

Lesson: Deuteronomy 24:14, 15; Amos 5:6-15; Mark 6:3; Luke 12:13-21; 19:1-26; II Thessalonians 3:6-13; I Timothy 6:6-16.

Golden Text: *In diligence not slothful.* Romans 12:11.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 30:7-9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Right Ways of Earning Money.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian Spirit in Business.

Lesson Text: Amos 5:11-15; Luke 19:16-23

11 Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

12 For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins—ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate *from their right*.

13 Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

16 And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more.

17 And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds.

19 And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow.

22 He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow;

23 Then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Judgment upon Extortioners.**
- 2. The Remedy Proposed.**
- 3. The Parable of the Pounds.**
- 4. Rewards for Service.**
- 5. The Unfaithful Servant.**

Amos a sheep farmer of Judah turned prophet and went up into the northern kingdom of Israel to preach. This kingdom under Jeroboam II was at the height of its prosperity and power, but it was also honey-combed with corruption and saturated with sensuality. Great wealth had been piled up in glittering heaps as a crushing burden on the poor, and the bitter cry of the oppressed filled the land.

There was a condition of social inequality and unrest that was an ominous foreboding of an explosion and collapse.

Into the midst of this moral and social condition Amos, a plain farmer and fearless reformer, stepped and began to denounce iniquity in high places and low in burning words.

The sheep farmer was unlearned in the schools, but he had communed with nature and with God until his soul was steeped in high thoughts and holy resolutions, and he spoke a plain blunt speech that was the highest eloquence.

1. Judgment upon Extortioners.

The prophet ran his sharp sword through this social condition and disclosed a state of affairs that was fateful with danger. Officials were turning judgment to wormwood and trampling down righteousness to the earth. The courts of law that should have been fountains of equity and peace were sending forth streams of bitterness that were poisoning all the life of the people. Taxes were grinding down the poor. Dishonest and rapacious men were taking "exactions from him of wheat," a common mode of oppression in the East where the tax gatherer takes a heavy share of the harvest.

With these unrighteous spoils the upper classes were building "houses of hewn stone," palaces compared with the dwellings of the common people, and were planting "pleasant vineyards" that they might live in luxury and dissipation.

The result of this oppression would be that they should not live in their stone palaces and should not drink the wine of their vineyard. Such a social state could not endure, it was rotten at the root, and all its scarlet blossoms should go up as dust. And it did. The Assyrian Colossus came with giant strides across the sands of the desert and crushed Israel under its iron foot.

The problem of the rich and the poor is ever with us.

At times it becomes loaded with dynamite that threatens to blow society to pieces, as in the French Revolution, burying the old order under revolutionary forms of government as in Fascist Italy and Soviet Russia. Stone palaces filled with luxury and dissipation on the one side and packed tenements groaning in misery on the other, face each other like storm clouds that threaten to rush together in a violent collision and explosion.

It should be the business of every one, as much as in him lies, to abate and prevent these conditions.

In so far as these frightful inequalities are due to injustice that law can control or remove, such law should be framed and enforced; and in so far as they are due to individual fault, especially to wrong ways of making and spending money, we should endeavor to reach the hearts of such wrongdoers with better moral and religious education.

2. The Remedy Proposed

The prophet has his remedy for Israel.

He endeavors to arouse their religious consciousness and conscience.

He speaks to them in the name of Jehovah: "I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins." These corrupt fat officials in Israel thought that they were safe in their oppressions because there was no one to call them to account. But the plain farmer of Tekoa told them that the blazing eye of God was upon them and that they would have to answer to him.

This wholesome truth should ever be present with us.

Let no one think, whether he be a high official or a common citizen or the obscurest of the poor, that he can hide his misdeeds and escape their just retribution, for every one of us shall give account of himself unto God.

This intensifying of the sense of personal responsibility is one of the needs of our day in high places and in all places. When sin is resolved

into a twist in our heredity or a matter of social habit and even of personal taste, the whole web of society is growing rotten and will easily tear asunder.

The prophet struck at the root of the trouble in human sin, and this root is at the bottom of our social and individual evils.

The prophet then gives a positive turn to his teaching. "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

The way to crowd evil out is to crowd good in.

Long ago Dr. Thomas Chalmers told us in eloquent language of "the expulsive power of a new affection." An empty heart cannot resist anything but will be an easy prey to temptation, but a heart full of good can quench every fiery dart of the evil one.

If we will seek good with our whole heart Satan may assault us but he will find nothing in us that he wants and can use, no handle to take hold of, no tinder or powder to explode. Then "Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you," and if God be for us who can be against us?

3. The Parable of the Pound's

Our lesson passes into the New Testament and takes a section out of the teaching of Jesus and finds the same principles bearing on right ways of earning money and the Christian spirit in business.

The ground work of the parable is framed out of the political circumstances of the time. It was a common thing in that day for a native prince or nobleman to proceed to Rome and there, perhaps against the remonstrances of the citizens of his province, be invested with kingly authority over them; and on his return to reward his supporters with offices and emoluments and perhaps quench the opposition of his enemies in blood.

Jesus represents himself as a nobleman who is about to depart into a far country and return.

He therefore calls his servants and entrusts to them certain means they are to use in his interest, and thus prepare the way for his kingdom. The pounds bestowed upon these servants represent all the gifts that are entrusted to us.

They include spiritual blessings, the knowledge of salvation, forgiveness for sin, Bible and baptism, prayer and church; but they also include all powers and possessions and privileges, health and strength and skill of body, education of mind, force of will, property and business, social position and influence, and every means and opportunity of doing good.

However we may have inherited or acquired these, they are in the last analysis gifts bestowed upon us from God.

Each servant received one pound. The point is, not that all are equal in their gifts, but that every one has received something and all are equal in their responsibility. No one is so poor in personal endowment and in privileges and opportunities that he does not have at least one pound with which to serve God.

Yet the gift is only one pound, for it does not take a costly outfit and large stock in trade to do business in the spiritual market.

The pounds were given, not for selfish enjoyment, not to be wasted in luxury, but that they might be used and multiplied in service. "Trade ye herewith till I come." "We are not simply to talk religion, but to trade our trusts to make men rich with the barter of the skies. If a man is not a trader for Christ, he is a traitor."

A rightful trade is one that is profitable at both ends, making both seller and buyer better off, and this is one fundamental right way of making money.

It should be fair and profitable to both sides and all sides in the transaction.

This rules out many ways of making money and all ways by which one party takes advantage of the ignorance or weakness of the other party and the one gets gain at the other's loss.

4. Rewards for Service

The king on his return summoned into his presence the servants to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every

man had gained by trading. The first servant came, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more."

This man had traded in the market of good works until his profits exceeded his capital ten times, and his investment had earned one thousand per cent.

Commerce produces wealth. Dollars do not multiply as long as they are hoarded up, but remain barren and may rust away. It is only as they are poured into the channels of manufacture and trade and sent on errands of usefulness that they begin to grow and beget other dollars and add up into large profits. Farmer, manufacturer, merchant, seller and buyer, are each and all profited as they keep their goods moving along the channels of trade.

If all interchange of commodities ceased and every one lived unto himself, the world would soon be reduced to universal poverty and helplessness.

Giving is a means of more abundant getting, and a mart is a prolific mother wealth.

Spiritual goods obey the same law. Hoarded up, kept from service for self, they lie barren and wither away; but put to service, exchanged in the market of social service and human helpfulness, poured into the channels of spiritual commerce, they circulate around the world and yield interest and profit. They increase the world's stock of truth and wisdom and righteousness, of service and sympathy and sacrifice, and they come back to us multiplied a hundred or a thousand fold.

Right thoughts and good deeds, the means and opportunities of service, need only be exchanged in the market of conduct and they will be transformed into the fine gold and precious gems and beautiful raiment of pure and rich character, the only safe investment and enduring treasure.

No other investments will yield so large profits and are so sure in their return. The Christian life pays best.

5. The Unfaithful Servant

There was one dark exception in the line of servants. He returned his pound without any increase and declared he had kept it laid up in a

napkin because he feared the king as an austere and unjust master. He had received the same capital and had the same opportunities of trade as the other servants, but he was unfaithful to his trust and had no profits to return.

Many have gifts of property and position, learning and skill, of song or other art, but as far as the world and our Lord are concerned they keep these tied up in the napkin of disuse and selfishness.

The unfaithful servant's excuse was false and he convicted himself out of his own mouth.

His own statement was his own condemnation.

No witnesses needed to be called against him, but just let him speak and he would expose and prove his own guilt.

None of our excuses will stand in the day of judgment. Our own hearts know better and will condemn us and God is greater than our hearts.

Retribution was visited upon the unfaithful servant by taking away his pound and giving it to him that had ten pounds, in accordance with the law that unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that through his own unfaithfulness hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.

This law runs through the whole world, financial and spiritual. Unused powers wither.

Body and mind, property and position, all the possessions and privileges of life, must be kept in vigorous use and growth, or degeneration will set in.

Only as we use our means in the great field of social service for rectitude in government, justice and mutual profit in business, purity in the home, faithfulness in the church and devotion to the kingdom of God in the world shall we reap immediate and far-off rewards.

Our pounds are every day adding themselves up in compound interest in use, or are withering away in wasted lives.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Are we, or are we not, drifting towards the same state of social degeneracy as prevailed in Israel in the days of Amos?
2. Are any of our social evils due to a declining sense of sin?
3. Name as many as you can of the pounds that have been entrusted to us.
4. How do the goods of life multiply in use?
5. How do these laws apply to making money?

LESSON VIII—NOVEMBER 20

Stewardship of Money

Lesson: Deuteronomy 8:7-18; Malachi 3:7-10; Luke 12:22-34; I Corinthians 16:1-4; II Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-15; I Timothy 6:17-19.

Golden Text: Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Luke 12:15.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 6:19-24.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Christian's Use of Money.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian's Use of Money.

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 18; II Cor. 9:6-15

11 Beware lest thou forget Jehovah thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his ordinances, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

12 Lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

13 And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14 Then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget Jehovah thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

18 But thou shalt remember Jehovah thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth; that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as at this day.

6 But this *I say*, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 *Let* each man *do* according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work:

9 As it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness abideth for ever.

10 And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:

11 Ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.

12 For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God;

13 Seeing that through the proving *of you* by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of *your* contribution unto them and unto all;

14 While they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. *Lest Thou Forget.***
- 2. *The Dangers of Prosperity.***
- 3. *The Power to Get Wealth.***
- 4. *Sowing Bountifully.***
- 5. *A Cheerful Giver.***

The use of money involves as much responsibility and wisdom as getting it. A common impression with many people is that as they have earned their money they are free to do with it as they please. But even the government does not act on this view. It now inquires into how we got our income and also exercises oversight on how we spend it.

The Christian not only comes under these governmental regulations, but also under the closer surveillance and right use of Christian duty.

The Bible has much to say about getting and spending money throughout all its books, and in this lesson we have passages from Moses and from Paul.

1. *Lest Thou Forget*

Moses in these farewell discourses recorded in Deuteronomy traverses the whole round of religious duty and lays down some fundamental principles of giving. He first utters a warning, "Beware lest thou forget Jehovah thy God."

Forgetting plays a legitimate place in life and is often a wholesome duty and a blessed mercy.

Paul tells us that we are to forget "the things which are behind," its achievements which are not to be remembered with pride and its mistakes which are not to be brooded over with discouragement.

But forgetting is also often a danger when it lets us grow careless and unmindful of our duties.

The most serious and disastrous forgetfulness is that in which we forget God.

One would think that we would never be inclined to do this, any more than a child would forget its mother and father, or one would forget his dearest friend.

Yet we appear to have a special facility and disposition to forget God.

We become so absorbed in things that they crowd out God, or our faith in his reality becomes so clouded with doubt and indifference that he practically fades from our consciousness and disappears from our life. When we cease to remember and cherish God all Christian duties are likely to go with him and leave us "without God, having no hope."

Forgetting will cost us dearly when it drops God out of our life. Then we can also quit giving and put God out of all our money affairs, both as to how we get it and how we use it.

2. The Dangers of Prosperity

Moses goes on to apply this danger to our prosperity. We ordinarily think of prosperity as only a blessing and even the greatest of goods. We greatly fear business depression and poverty, and think that plenty of money would cure almost all our ills.

Yet Moses knew better and bids us not to forget God, "lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, and has built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied: then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

A surfeit of material goods has this power of so satisfying and satiating our lower life that we forget and lose the sense of the need of the things that feed the higher life of the soul.

Often may we see this illustrated in persons whose growth in material prosperity is accompanied with a corresponding decline in their spiritual life. Especially does such worldly prosperity tend to cause us to swell up with a sense of pride by which we weigh all values in material scales even as we weigh gold and silver, or corn and wheat, or coal and iron.

Prosperity may thus change the whole level and atmosphere and texture and tone of our life.

Going up in our bank account, we go down in spiritual wealth, and while counting ourselves rich and in need of nothing do not know that we are poor and blind and naked.

Pious people and families may thus be ruined by the very prosperity which they count their highest good fortune. It is pitiful to see people building "goodly houses" and dwelling therein swollen with pride, measuring all things by material standards, looking down on people and even former friends whom they consider less fortunate and are yet unaware of their true poverty of spirit.

Better live in a poorer house and wear cheaper clothes and yet have beautiful garments on the soul and dwell in the tents of righteousness.

Out of a heart satiated with material prosperity we need not ordinarily expect liberal gifts to the work of the Lord.

The fuller the purse the tighter the purse strings, the more we have to give the less we may be disposed to give with liberal measure to the right use.

3. The Power to Get Wealth

Another fundamental principle about the right use of money is that every one of us should "remember Jehovah thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth."

This is a fact that many rich people forget and some may deny it outright.

Many a prosperous man swells with pride as he says or thinks, Has not my superior ability gotten me this wealth, have I not built up this business and surpassed all my competitors, did not my brain conceive and my hand execute all these plans by which I am grown so rich and powerful?

It is very short thinking and shallow insight that can lead a man to take this view of himself.

Back of all our doings is the coöperative presence and working of God. Who created the soil and stored treasures in the forest and mine and saturated the very rocks under our feet with golden streams of oil?

Whatever a man's field of business, that field was prepared for him and its materials created for him, possibly millions of years before he was born.

Deeper still, where did the man get his brain and brawn and all the powers of his personality by which he gained wealth?

The only answer is God; "for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth."

Put that man in central Africa and what wealth could he acquire? Strip him of his mental ability and executive power of will and how far could he get? "He hath made us and not we ourselves," and pitifully poor would we be without this divine endowment and totally blind are we if we cannot see this fundamental fact about ourselves.

This principle lies at the root of both our getting and using our money, and it should intensify in us the sense that we are indeed but the stewards of God put in trust both of our money and of our power to get money, that we may use them in his service.

4. Sowing Bountifully

The question of the Christian use of money appeared early in the church and it turned up right in the midst of the great Pentecostal revival.

In the church as in the world money is a motive power.

Money has spiritual affinities and energies. In a profound sense, money makes the very gospel go. Money is a constant crying need and the lack of it one of the greatest hindrances in our Christian work.

How to get money perplexes and hampers all our churches and boards and charities.

The same difficulties that embarrass us beset the early churches and in this passage Paul was wrestling with the money question.

Paul here lays down a foundation principle in the Christian use of money. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

The harvest in proportion to the seed; the reaping to the sowing.

This principle applies in every field from the coarsest root of farming and business and bargaining up through the tallest branches and finest blossoms of life. It is the business man that gives the fullest return for money who attracts the largest trade; and it is generally a man that has rendered some large service to society that reaps a great fortune.

Stinginess in business never increases profits. It is the man that sows dollars generously that reaps dollars abundantly.

The same principle sweeps with ampler amplitude up through the higher regions of life. "He that soweth with blessings shall also reap blessings" (margin of R. V.). Those that help others in distress will receive the more help in their own distress; while the ungenerous will receive the less generosity. All forms of helpfulness that we sow in other lives may come back to us in a multiplied harvest.

He that thus ministers to others has a capital stored up in their hearts that is his best insurance against the future.

Some men never could be left in distress: the whole community would run to their relief.

But this principle does not wait for the day of distress in order to pay us back: it is all the while growing its harvest of blessing in the heart and making the soul rich. The sympathy, kindness, generosity we sow in another's life immediately enriches our own soul. Goodness feeds on its own deeds, and the more we give the more we have.

Giving to the Lord will never impoverish us, and withholding from him will not enrich us; for what we give him springs up within us a well of water, as what the earth gives up in evaporation to the clouds in the sky comes back to it in dew and rain.

Love divine will fill thy storehouse or thy handful still renew.
Scanty fare for one will often make a royal feast for two.

5. A Cheerful Giver

The next point concerns the spirit of giving. "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver," a "hilarious" giver, as the Greek word means.

Such a giver gives with a shout of joy, as the Hebrew priests blew their silver trumpets as the smoke of their sacrifice ascended from the altar.

Gifts to the Lord should come out of the heart willingly and joyously. Some Christians give because they want to give; a good cause only needs to be presented to them when they respond to it generously and with gladness. Others must be put under pressure and a contribution can be squeezed and extracted out of them only by something like violence; they give only because they feel they must and do not dare to refuse.

These grudging givers are a discouragement and vexation to others and are a misery to themselves.

Whatever they give to others they think is so much loss to themselves and it hurts them terribly. They are not really thinking of the necessities of others and the good they may do them, but only of their own good. The currents of their life are not flowing outward in healthy sympathy and generosity, but inward in morbid self-consciousness and selfishness.

Such gifts do the giver no real good and may be despised of men and offensive to God.

It is the hilarious gift that goes far and blesses whatever it touches. The smallest gift cheerfully given may do more good than a large gift extracted under pressure or given for a wrong motive.

The Lord loves a cheerful giver because he is a cheerful giver himself.

He dips his hands in light and flings it through the universe with boundless prodigality. He embowers the earth in beauty and hides in its soil unnumbered harvests. He giveth to all life and breath and his tender mercies are over all his works. He gave his Son for the ransom of his lost children, and the Cross is red with the blood of his heart.

The Lord would have a hard time of it if he begrudged his mercies and every gift cost him a pang.

But his nature flows outward and giving is his life and joy: and we have not penetrated into the secret of giving until we have discovered through experience that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Can we learn to forget the things we ought to forget and to remember the things we ought not to forget?
2. How can we distinguish between the things we ought to forget and the things we ought to remember?
3. Do we ever pray against prosperity? What was Agur's prayer?
4. Why should the harvest be measured by the seed?
5. How can we learn to be cheerful givers?
6. Is our generosity growing as fast as our wealth?

LESSON IX—NOVEMBER 27

Stewardship of Life

Lesson: Exodus 3:1-12; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 25:1-46; Mark 1:16-20; Acts 26:12-19; I Corinthians 9:17-27.

Golden Text: First they gave their own selves to the Lord. II Corinthians 8:5.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 6:28-34.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Serving God Where We Are.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Living as God's Stewards.

Lesson Text: Mark 1:16-20; Acts 26:12-19

16 And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishers.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they left the nets, and followed him.

19 And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him.

12 Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to

the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.

19 Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. The Call of Four Fishermen.**
- 2. Paul.**
- 3. His Conversion.**
- 4. His Mission.**

The stewardship of life means that life itself is a trust committed to us for the right use of which we are responsible.

This right use is found in serving God where we are, and we serve God by living as his stewards.

These passages illustrate both the stewardship of life and living as God's stewards just where we are.

1. The Call of Four Fishermen

From Nazareth, where Jesus was driven out of town, he went down to Capernaum, which he now made his headquarters during his Galilean ministry. Although the people of his own town had rejected him and tried to throw him over a cliff, yet the people of the next town he entered were eager to receive him.

A man may fail in one place and succeed in another.

Walking by the lakeside Jesus saw the two brothers, Peter and Andrew, and a little farther along the shore he came upon the other two brothers, James and John. He had received these four men in Judea as his converts and followers, but now he gave them a formal call into his ministry, saying, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

These brothers thus transformed their business into Christ's business.

The same powers and attainments of mind and body, knowledge of practical affairs, skill in the use of means, concentration and earnestness of purpose, bravery and daring, that were developed and used in the old service were now to be thrown into the new. Jesus did not condemn their business, but he endorsed it and lifted it to a higher sphere.

By the same principle and process we may transform our business, whatever it may be, into the stewardship of God.

The merchant may sell the gospel along with his goods, and the lawyer may win converts, the physician may heal the souls of people, and the laborer may turn his daily toil into working together with God.

Every one may thus begin to live as a steward of God just where he is and need not step out of his tracks to transform his old into his new life.

These four men responded by immediate action. They "straightway left the nets, and followed him," and "they left the boat and went after him." They did not claim that business must be attended to first and religion afterward; they did not plead for delay and tell Jesus that, after the fishing season was over, he would hear from them; but straightway they followed.

Faith instantly leaped into fact, conscience became conduct, and love became life.

It was the short sharp action of this "straightway" that saved these fishermen and at last made them such strong men. And they "left their nets" behind when they followed Jesus.

They were not so deeply enmeshed in those nets that they could not free themselves from them.

They did not try to bring their boats into Christ's business as a restriction to their new life. In entering the new life they cut loose from the old life.

Too many Christians are still tangled up in their old fishing nets.

Let us leave nets and boats as encumbrances behind. We cannot serve God and Mammon and in a profound sense we must leave all and follow Christ.

Presently Jesus himself gave a striking illustration of the principle of "serving God where we are." A great crowd followed him so that he extemporized a pulpit from a fishing boat lying near by, and from its deck faced a vast audience filling the amphitheatre of the shore.

The great Teacher knew how to adapt himself to every emergency.

Doubtless his unconventionality shocked some of the Pharisees and high ritualists who thought his conducting a religious service from an ill-smelling fishing boat a coarse sacrilege. But Jesus was practicing the great truth he announced to the woman of Samaria that worship is not a matter of place and form but of the spirit and may be offered anywhere.

The world is God's great temple and he may be served and worshiped on any shore or street.

A camp meeting in a field or forest may burn with holy fire that may be lacking in a stately cathedral.

At the close of his sermon Jesus bade the disciples to launch the boat out into the deep and let down their nets for a catch of fish. The Master thus combined fishing with preaching, business with religion. He was a practical man and knew how to build a house, handle a boat and catch fish.

Yet he was as truly teaching spiritual truth when fishing as when preaching, for with him worship and work were fused into one life and made one music.

In this passage from Mark we thus have apt and fruitful illustrations of how to serve God where we are and to live as God's stewards.

2. Paul

Let us first take a general look at this man who always knew how to serve God wherever he was and turned all his life into living as God's steward.

He was a Hebrew university graduate and a lawyer and influential rabbi in Jerusalem, and also a Roman citizen. Born in Tarsus in Asia Minor, he was bred in Greek culture and could quote from Greek literature. Three civilizations, Hebrew, Greek and Roman, thus met and mingled in his blood.

He was a man of acute and powerful intellect, of logic all compact, yet of poetic and fiery temperament, a keen thinker and forceful writer who could sound the depths of philosophy, or let loose his ideas on the wings of imagination, and an impassioned orator who could put the spell of his eloquent speech on vast audiences.

Paul is probably the most strongly marked character in the Bible.

He was unique in his angular individuality and in the mixture in his nature of incongruous elements and discordant moods, and was intense and uncompromising in his principles and convictions.

Especially did he stand in sharp contrast with his Master and Lord.

Jesus was country-bred and was rural in speech and manner. He lived mainly a quiet life, avoiding cities and crowds and carrying on his work in the by-ways of Galilee; and he was supremely serene in heart and temper, yet aggressive and bold enough on the proper occasion; frequently retiring for rest and meditation, bathing his soul in the beauty and mystic influence of mountain and sea and dwelling on the heights of communion with God.

Paul was city-bred and his ears were full of the tumult of the market and the uproar of crowds and mobs. He was intensely active and ardent, militant in spirit, always ready for a fight and scenting the battle from afar.

With almost the last scratch of his pen he exhibited his characteristic spirit and summed up his career in the triumphant declaration, "I have fought a good fight."

Although he often traveled through grand scenery and frequently sailed the Mediterranean, yet there is not in all his letters a single allusion to the beauty of nature or any indication that he ever heard the song of a bird or observed so much as a blade of green grass. The glorious architecture and art of Athens had no interest for him except as furnishing an apt text for a sermon, and versed as he must have been in Greek literature he never quoted it but once and then for a sermonic purpose.

He was so absorbed in his one idea that he had no thought for anything else. "This one thing I do," was his principle and rule, and never did a great man more imperiously concentrate and compress his powers into one narrow channel and swift impetuous torrent of energy and life.

Such was the man who is the greatest single witness to the resurrection of Christ and the greatest preacher and missionary and practical organizer and profoundest theologian in the history of Christianity.

No other man ever more completely and passionately served God and lived as God's steward.

3. His Conversion

This epochal event in his life burnt itself deep into his brain and left a vivid impression which he never could forget or misunderstand or confuse its objective reality with any subjective illusion or delusion.

The story is told three times in the Acts in Chapters 9, 22 and 26, in the last two instances by himself, and he never tires of it.

It is one of the most dramatic and interesting pages in the history of Christianity and remains to this day as one of its epochal events.

At first Paul was a bitter enemy of Christ and his gospel. An intensely orthodox Jew in birth and blood and training and zeal, he regarded Christ as the greatest heretic and most dangerous man in the world, and his soul blazed with hatred towards his disciples and he breathed out fire and slaughter against them.

He stood holding the clothes of those that stoned Stephen the martyr, and next we find him out on the way to Damascus to carry the work of death far beyond Jerusalem. It took him several days to journey on horse from Jerusalem 140 miles northward to Damascus.

This must have been a time of cooling down and quiet meditation in his fiery soul.

The excitement and passion of his work in Jerusalem had subsided and he found himself out in the solitude and silence of the desert under the solemn Syrian stars.

If there was any small voice in him, it now had a chance to be heard.

Possibly the expiring prayer of Stephen strangely awoke and rang through his soul. He unexpectedly found himself troubled over his work. He was surprised to find his convictions were not so unanimous and solid as he had supposed. Cracks began to cleave his conscience into doubts. He felt himself on the eve of an impending crisis; already conscience was ripe for revolt.

Upon this thoughtful and troubled man conversion fell.

Damascus was near and decision could not long be delayed. The Holy Spirit found him trembling upon the point of doubt and bore down upon him at this critical moment.

As in all conversions, human and divine elements were interblended and worked together.

A blinding blaze of light burnt through the sky and the proud persecutor was unhorsed. A voice was then heard saying, "Saul, Saul, why

persecutest thou me?" This was probably the very question that was troubling Saul himself.

The Spirit touched the sorest point in his conscience, piercing his sin.

Paul answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" Already he seems to know the person addressing him as the Lord.

A wonderful answer was given to this enquiry: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." This was a startling revelation and might well have struck terror into Saul's soul. But he was now fast falling into an attitude of faith and obedience. "What shall I do, Lord?" was now his enquiry. Already his restless energies are being reversed and were eager to flow in the channel of service for Jesus. And the answer came, "Arise, and go into Damascus."

Not another word about persecution, but only words of kindness and guidance were spoken to the prostrate humbled man.

Saul's sin was overwhelmed in God's mercy and washed away in a flood of grace.

This wonderful conversion reversed his whole faith and life and henceforth he was a steward of God and served him in all times and places to the end of his life.

4. His Mission

Paul was now led into Damascus where he received his special commission: "Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles" (22:21). Could any message and mission have been more unwelcome to Paul? Was he not a Jew and did not the Jews exclude from the grace of God and verily hate the Gentiles? Shall Paul, now a Christian convert, be at once commissioned to go to these very Gentiles and preach to them the grace of God that he had supposed was the special favor and privilege of his own race and people?

Yet Paul, after some delay and preparation, threw himself into this mission and was the most powerful exponent of the right of the Gentiles to a place in the grace and kingdom of God and won this tremendous victory for them and for us.

Here is a splendid example of becoming a steward of God and serving him just where we are in what we are given to do.

The one question and rule of life for the steward of God is, "What shall I do, Lord?" and then forever after do it.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is the meaning of the word steward?
2. How can we be fishers of men?
3. Give a character sketch of Paul.
4. Name the principal factors and events in his conversion.
5. In what special ways was he a steward of God?
6. In what ways may we live as God's stewards where we are?

LESSON X—DECEMBER 4

Living with People of Other Races

Lesson: I Kings 8:41-43; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:5-10; Acts 10:9-19, 28-35; 17:22-28.

Golden Text: Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.
Acts 10:34.

Devotional Reading: Luke 10:30-37.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Playing Fair with Other Races.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Following Christ in Dealing with Other Races.

Lesson Text: John 4:5-10; Acts 10:30-35

5 So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph:

6 And Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

8 For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.

9 The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel,

31 And saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side.

33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.

34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. No Dealings.*
- 2. A Wayside Conversation.*
- 3. How Jesus Treated a Religious and Racial Controversy.*
- 4. Peter and Cornelius*

“Living with people of other races” is a very live question in our modern world. We must live with them, for all races are now crowded together. Our whole industrial, business and social life brings us into contact with people of many races, and it is impossible for us to isolate ourselves from them.

All races are of one blood or kind or species, and this makes us all akin.

Yet walls of separation have grown up or been by our own hands built up between us, and racial prejudices are among the deepest and often the bitterest divisions among us.

The Christian principle governing this matter is plain.

We are all members one of another and should treat each other as brothers.

This does not mean that we are to enter into the same intimate personal relations with all people, but we are to cherish and exercise the spirit of brotherly good will in our relations with others, even our enemies. This general spirit is illustrated in these two passages.

1. No Dealings

The general background of this incident in which Jesus met the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well was the unfriendly relation between the Jews and Samaritans. They were of the same general race and religion. Originally both peoples were Jews with the same religion, but at the division into the kingdoms of Judah and of Israel, they fell apart and grew more and more widely separated.

Idolatry more deeply saturated the Israelites of the north.

When they were carried into captivity in Assyria a remnant of them were left behind and these became intermixed with pagan colonists so that their Jewish blood was debased.

At the time of Jesus they were still of related races and religions, but with their differences deepened and hardened.

The Samaritans held only to the Books of Moses and also maintained that Mount Gerizim was the one exclusive place of worship, while the

Jews had the entire Old Testament and made the same exclusive claim for Mount Zion at Jerusalem. So it was that at this time the "Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

The Jews in passing to and fro between Judea and Galilee ordinarily would not go through Samaria but crossed the Jordan and went around Samaria to avoid any unpleasant meeting with these undesirable people.

This state of racial and religious prejudice is common in our modern world and often involves us in grave difficulties.

It may divide the nearest neighbors, rip up the web of society and create wars. International hatreds are one of the deepest and commonest causes of war, and divisive prejudices are not less but rather more intense and bitter in the religious world.

We should do all we can to abate such unchristian divisions and feelings and cherish and exercise the spirit of our common humanity and good will.

One of the most unjust and cruel things we can do is to judge and dislike and mistreat and hate persons simply on the ground that they are of a different race and color and religion from our own.

2. A Wayside Conversation

At the end of the first year of his ministry, which was mainly spent in Judea, Jesus transferred his work to Galilee, "and he must needs pass through Samaria." He did not avoid Samaria by going around it, but he passed right through it. This in itself showed his attitude towards Samaria.

He did not view it as an outcast place and people with whom he would have no dealings, but he went right to them in a spirit of friendship, and this was the root of his solution of racial divisions and enmities, as it would solve many of our racial and religious prejudices.

However disagreeable such a journey through Samaria was to other Jews, Jesus welcomed it as an opportunity; or at least he made a virtue out of an unpleasant situation and turned it to good.

How often do we seek to avoid matters, even plain duties, because they will bring us into contact with undesirable people, when

if we go straight at them in the right spirit they will prove opportunities of both giving and receiving good.

As Jesus sat tired and thirsty on the stone curb of Jacob's well, which is there today and is one of the few spots where we know Jesus stood, a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and the well furnished the text and the woman the audience of one of Christ's greatest and most splendid sermons.

A well is one of the most delightful things and centers of blessing in the world, and with such a text in the hands of Jesus we may expect a discourse of extraordinary richness and power, for with him the simplest and most familiar thing became suggestive and eloquent with spiritual truth.

Jesus opened the conversation with delicate tact by asking the woman for a drink of water. He did not begin by alluding to and thereby stirring up the animosities sleeping in the woman's heart, but approached her by asking a common and courteous act of kindness.

How much depends on the manner and spirit in which we open a religious conversation or any kind of conversation with a person with whom we have differences?

Jesus was a master of psychology in dealing with all kinds of people as this conversation strikingly illustrates.

The woman expressed surprise that a Jew would ask a favor of a Samaritan as they were of different and bitterly separated races and religions, and narrow minds and bigoted sectarians still think they should have no friendly relations with people from whom they differ.

The editor of a religious paper recently received a letter from one of his readers complaining that he was always "so gentle in dealing with those with whom we have little or no agreement." The editor rightly answered by saying, "We hope we may ever be fair, courteous and ready to see the good. We do not believe a conservative is any better himself or more valuable to his cause by ceasing to be a high-minded gentleman."

This is the Christian attitude and spirit, and we are far from the method and mind of the Master when we are ungracious in speech and spirit in our relations with those of other races and religions, however far from us they may be at some points.

3. How Jesus Treated a Religious and Racial Controversy

The woman's question opened a fine opportunity for a controversy, but Jesus passed it by in silence, for had he followed up her question he would simply have aroused her race prejudice and partisan religious zeal, and the beginning of controversy is usually the end of edification.

Jesus said nothing directly on the subject of their racial and religious separation, and yet he reached it indirectly and in the end he closed up this gap.

Jesus answered the woman that if she knew the gift of God she would have asked him and received living water. The woman, like Nicodemus, misunderstood him and supposed he was speaking of earthly water. He further explained his water was a well within the heart springing up in the water of eternal life.

The conversation proceeded to the point where the woman put to him the matter of their rival religious temples and altars and waited for an answer, possibly hoping that he would give her own place of worship a triumphant vindication.

What did Jesus answer?

He gave an answer that was equally startling and disappointing, revolutionary and tragical to both Jews and Samaritans.

“The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, shall ye worship,” “but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth”—anywhere and everywhere, and no matter about the place and the name. He delivered the grandest discourse ever uttered on the universality and spirituality of worship.

He showed that worship is not a matter of mountains and temples, but of heart and spirit.

He wiped both mountains off the map as exclusive centers of worship and set worship free and diffused it around the world as a universal privilege. He refused to take either side of this denominational dispute and virtually swept both sides away with a broader principle.

Jesus today is not interested in our little sectarian controversies and wants us to get away from them to great things and lofty visions.

If he were to deliver his decision upon many of these theological disputes, his judgment might bring disappointment and consternation to all sectarians.

God is spirit, and place and technicality and form count for little with him.

If we lift our eyes to the grand mountains of worship, we shall lose sight of the little divisive ravines that lie around our feet.

Such worshipers the Father seeks.

The same principle applies to our racial divisions: they, too, should fade out in the light of the universal worship of the common Father of us all.

4. Peter and Cornelius

Precisely the same principle is illustrated in the incident of Peter's vision and his visit to Cornelius. In his vision he was first ordered to set no difference between clean and unclean, thereby symboling the Jews and the Gentiles, and Peter refused to accept this teaching. However messengers came from Caesarea, forty miles north of Joppa where Peter was, asking him to go to Caesarea to see Cornelius, a Roman officer stationed in that city.

The next day he went with the messengers and met the Roman and heard the story of the vision of Cornelius that matched his own. "Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord."

Peter was astonished at the narrative of the pagan soldier and it wrought in him a profound revolution.

Peter's creed and habits of thought and heredity distilled into him out of more than a thousand years of racial history experienced a sudden shock at the discovery. His most deeply inbred thought was that God was a respecter of persons; that he had put a wide difference between the Jew and the Gentile with all the favor on the side of the Jew.

But this distinction that had been so wide and deep in his mind was here suddenly blotted out: in a moment it melted away and he saw with amazement that there is no such distinction, that "God

is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."

There is, of course, a sense in which God does respect persons: he respects their inner moral character.

But he does not respect their outer conditions, as the Jews thought.

Birth and blood, ancestry and heredity, race and rank, wealth and social standing, are not matters that influence his relation to and dealing with people; his classification runs along no such superficial lines as these, but strikes deep into the will and heart.

God has no favorites in the sense that some religious people think.

Religious sectarianism and racial pride are apt to breed in us the old Jewish feeling of exclusiveness and make us believe that we are of better blood than others and that even God looks on us with special comfort and pride in comparison with these "lesser breeds without the law."

But the world is wide and the Father has many children, and divine grace flows over all valleys and mountain tops.

"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

We have not yet learned this lesson in all its breadth and fulness.

Peter then delivered his message and broadened it out into the universal promise that "through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." This breadth and universality of the divine grace had lain latent in the Jewish Scriptures, but now it shone out in splendor, and Peter realized it for the first time and it came to him as a wonderful revelation and revolution.

All our racial and religious prejudices would be obliterated and we would realize our unity in God and in Christ if we better knew the Scriptures and were filled with the mind of the Master.

The Christian spirit in our hearts will enable us to solve and cure all these problems so that we "can play fair with other races" and "follow Christ in dealing with them."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- 1. Are there Samaritans in Samaria today and do Jews and Samaritans still retain their mutual prejudices?**
- 2. Why do racial and religious prejudices die so hard?**
- 3. Are the divisive differences between our denominations waning?**
- 4. How do we regard and treat foreigners in our neighborhood?**

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 11

The Christian's Use of Leisure

Lesson: Leviticus 23:39-43; Nehemiah 8:9-18; Zechariah 8:5; Matthew 11:16-19; Mark 6:30-32; I Corinthians 10:23-33.

Golden Text: *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* I Corinthians 10:31.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 4:4-9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Best Way to Rest and Play.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian's Rest and Recreation.

Lesson Text: Nehemiah 8:10-17; Mark 6:30-32

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

13 And on the second day were gathered together the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to give attention to the words of the law.

14 And they found written in the law, how that Jehovah had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month;

15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle

branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim.

17 And all the assembly of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and dwelt in the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught.

31 And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. Attention to the Law.**
- 2. The Joy of Religious Life.**
- 3. Open Air Living.**
- 4. Rest Awhile.**
- 5. A Desert Place.**

The Christian's use of leisure is a modern subject. The pioneers of our country and our fathers knew little of such a problem, for they were so busy with clearing the farms and forests and getting a living that they had little time for leisure. Hours of labor were long and hard and idleness and rest and play were looked upon with some suspicion.

But labor-saving machines have now speeded up production so as to shorten the hours of labor and have thereby left time and increasing time for rest and play.

The six-day work week has been shortened to five and a half and in many instances to five, and the twelve hour work day has been shortened, first to ten, and now to eight hours with a tendency towards six. We now have, not only what is known as "the leisure class," but a large measure of leisure for most classes, and this has involved us in a new problem.

For leisure, which means release from our ordinary labor, may be a temptation and an evil as well as a good.

It releases us from toil, but if it only leads us into a wasteful and injurious use of our time, its good is overbalanced by its evil and its gain has turned to loss.

If "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," it is equally true that too little work and too much play has its dangers also. A further proverb tells us that "the devil always finds some mischief for idle hands to do," and this danger attends leisure.

It takes as much wisdom to know how to spend our leisure time as it does to spend our hours of employment.

The increased leisure of our people is putting new strains on our character and conduct and on some of our fundamental social and religious institutions.

If leisure only means dissipation, it were better that we were kept at work. If we break away from work only to run into ruin our last state will be worse than our first.

We can gather from our Scripture passages some general principles that will help us to solve the problem of our leisure.

1. Attention to the Law

The passage from Nehemiah introduces us to the Jews returned from exile to Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, and we witness a great gathering of the people in the public square in the city when Ezra "stood upon a pulpit of wood" with the elders and "they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading." "And all the ears of the people were attentive unto the book of the law," "even to give attention to the words of the law." It was a great community Bible class and revival meeting.

This gives us one principle that applies to our use of leisure time: it is not to rule out our religion but is to be accompanied with attention to our regular religious duties, especially to reading the Bible and attendance on worship.

This is one of the most serious dangers of leisure: that it will release us from such duties and turn us loose in the world that forgets God.

This danger is even now upon us in a grave degree.

Sunday, a day of leisure from labor, is often devoted, not only by irreligious people, but by Christians themselves to pleasure and recreations that carry them away from church and all religious duties and submerges them in the world. Especially do people when they go away from home seem to think that they have left their religion behind them and are free of all its obligations. Bible and church if not prayer itself are dropped and have no place or thought in their pleasures and recreations.

Leisure becomes a flood to sweep away many of the safeguards of our life.

There is something relaxing about being away from home and it may seem to give us liberty to let all our religious and moral principles and

duties go, while we let our leisure and liberty run into license that would shame us when we are at home.

These Jews were now celebrating their feast of passover, their great religious feast and national holiday, and yet they "were attentive unto the book of the law," and in this respect they set us a good example in times of relaxation.

2. The Joy of Religious Life

The reading of the law on this occasion was followed by repentance and mourning as the people realized how far short of its requirements they had fallen. But Ezra said, "This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep."

There is a time to weep, but there are other times when weeping is not in order. "Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto Jehovah our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength."

The joy of the religious life is another principle that should enter into all our living, including our leisure time and recreations.

Religion in many minds is associated with a stern and ascetic life, disassociated as much as possible from play and gladness, a harness that must ever restrict us even in our purest pleasures and joys. This has sometimes turned religion into harshness and austerity that have made it unwelcome and hateful to children and to many other people, and, after the manner of the Pharisees, especially burdened Sunday with restrictions that made it intolerable.

A violent reaction against such forms of religion makes people break away from it into liberty that runs into license.

We do religion a great disservice when we make it unlovely and repellent. The true nature of religion is just the opposite. While at times it bids us weep, yet our weeping is a means of deeper and richer gladness of spirit and life when we are forgiven and cleansed of our sins. Mourning is not to be the constant habit and garb of religion.

To be saved is not to be sad.

Rejoice is the bidding that rings all through the Bible. Paul urges us, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, Rejoice," reiterating the command to impress it deeply upon our minds. Jesus "was annointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows": he was the gladdest man that ever lived.

So we are to carry our religion with us into our leisure, especially its spirit of gladness that it may relax the tension of life and brighten our vocation and our vacation with its joy.

3. Open Air Living

We next observe that these Jews were told to go out into the open to keep their great feast. "Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written." "So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his own house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water gate," "and there was very great gladness." They went out of their gloomy houses into the open and lived in tents constructed of branches, and in the fresh air and sunlight they celebrated their great religious festival and had "very great gladness."

Houses are necessary for our ordinary living, especially in our climate, but there are times when it is good to get out of their close quarters and dim light and stagnant air into the open where there is plenty of room and light and air.

We are now doing this more than our fathers did. Perhaps most people try to take their vacation in the open, riding through the country and pitching their tent wherever it suits them, and living close to nature in its wildness and gladness.

This sweeps the cobwebs out of the brain and sends the blood racing in a richer stream through the whole body and renovating and reinvigorating the whole physical and mental and even religious life.

Our summer religious assemblies have also taken to the open, after the manner of the old camp meeting, and in tabernacles holding services of Bible study and religious worship, and thus combining in happy

proportion and union religion and recreation, piety and play, the wholesome life of nature with the healthy life of religion.

Live as we must most of the year at home and in houses, yet it is good for us and possibly the best use of our leisure at times to take to the woods and live in the great open spaces.

This mingles and merges us in the life of nature and cures us of many of the ills of our crowded civilization and calls our whole nature into free and healthy play.

4. Rest Awhile

We step from the ancient time and life of Nehemiah into the life of Jesus. Did he ever rest? He did and needed to in order to keep his physical and spiritual life in tune and up to concert pitch. His days were usually crowded with activities, sometimes when hurrying to one work of mercy he was interrupted and performed another on the way, and often when worn and weary with the day's work he retired into the mountain to rest and pray.

He had to conserve and recuperate his energies or he would have broken down under the strain.

Sometimes we are given the impression that we ought always to be busy and are made to feel that it is even a sin to take a rest. "All at it and always at it" was John Wesley's motto, and while it has helped to make the Methodist church the great organization it is, yet it may be pressed too far.

The man that is "always at it" may be living a hurried, feverish, superficial life, draining away his energies and never filling up his soul with the reinvigoration that comes from rest and meditation.

It is true that some people rest too much: some even rest all the time. But such rest usually makes us tired. The soul and very body rebels against it. We are made for activity in every muscle and nerve and mental faculty and spiritual aspiration, and proper activity is the very basis of our health and happiness.

But too much activity is another extreme almost if not equally as bad. It empties life of thought and ripened wisdom that are attained through solitude and meditation.

Through excessive activity, as Wordsworth tells us in his noble sonnet,

“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
Are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune.”

5. A Desert Place

It was into “a desert place” that Jesus said, “Come ye apart and rest a while.” Often he went apart into the mountains where he bathed his soul in their majesty and beauty that he might rest and meditate and pray; or into the desert, “far from the madding crowd,” that he might in its very solitude get close to God and look him in the face and into closer fellowship with his disciples.

Such a place is not inviting to many people.

They are always craving a crowd, itching for a new thrill, and left alone they are instantly restless and miserable. They have no inner resources on which to feed. They have not read or thought or done anything on which they can meditate and in which they can find comfort and satisfaction. Their own mind is not a kingdom, a large and wealthy place full of riches of which the feverish world knows not, but is empty and they try to escape from it. They are so little acquainted with themselves that they would scarcely recognize their own souls if they were to meet them on the street.

Such a life is shallow and unsatisfying and will grow increasingly miserable and intolerable. We need to use much of our leisure in being alone that we may rest and meditate and deepen our holiest convictions and intensify our loftiest aspirations. “By all means use sometimes to be alone. Salute thyself. See what thy soul doth wear.”

In such use of leisure, taking into it our religious life, enjoying life, knowing how to take to the open, finding rest and renewal of all our life in solitude, finding even a desert a wealthy place, shall we keep our life healthy and happy, strong and rich.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Is it a good thing that we have increasing leisure?
2. How can we keep our religion in our leisure?
3. What can people who cannot take a vacation do in the way of leisure?
4. Should we take care that other people have proper leisure?

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 18

Review: Christian Standards of Life

Golden Text: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 3:8-14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Following Christ in Everything.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Ideals of the True Christian.

The closing Quarter of the year has passed in review the Christian Standards of Life, touching on important topics in our modern world. We may now gather them into a combined view.

1. The Christian's Devotional Life

The Christian's devotional life is the inner shrine where he lives in closest fellowship with himself and with God, and its most vital breath is prayer.

Prayer is a simple exercise in which the humblest soul can engage and yet it is a high art calling for the best teaching and example, study and effort.

The great example is Jesus himself, and his teaching illustrates its most important points, setting forth its dangers, for prayer is attended with dangers such as ostentation and vain repetition, and then giving us his own model prayer.

The Lord's prayer is remarkable for its simplicity, brevity and comprehensiveness.

It begins with God himself and devotes its first three petitions to God's own interests, the reverence that should be paid to him, the coming of his kingdom and the doing of his will.

It then once and only once touches lightly on our material life, and bounds back into the region of the spirit.

The use of Scripture in our devotional life is illustrated in a passage from Paul.

2. The Christian in the Family

The inner individual life of the Christian at once passes out into social life in the family.

Being a Christian at home is an ideal difficult to realize because the secluded life of the home releases it from publicity and the surveillance thus imposed upon it.

It is easier to let our temper loose when not restrained by social pressure.

The home and childhood of Jesus are taken as a perfect example of what our home life should be. Jesus was a true human child and lived through all the stages and trials of our life. The veil of silence excludes our view from most of the childhood of Jesus, but we have considerable general knowledge of childhood in his time.

An important event occurred when at the age of twelve he made his first visit to Jerusalem and attended the temple service.

It must have been with profound emotion that he stepped inside the holy city, and it is always a critical time with any youth when he goes to the city and is exposed to its temptations.

Jesus found his proper place in the temple service and there engaged in hearing the rabbis and asking them questions that astonished all that heard him. His obedience to his parents in the home was the beginning of the obedience to his heavenly Father that led him through life and all the way to his heavenly home.

A glimpse into the home in Bethany, which more than any other was the home of Jesus during his ministry, shows us how the home may contain members of differing gifts and temperaments, and this may cause home problems difficult to adjust into harmony.

3. The Home and the Coming Generations

The home is not a self-contained unit, but reaches out into the future and molds coming generations.

Special dangers are threatening its integrity.

There are being propagated among us doctrines and practices that would undermine and destroy its very foundation.

We must take our stand against these evils and defend the home from without and make it stronger and richer within.

Abraham has the rare distinction of being designated in Scripture "the friend" of God, and one reason for this divine confidence was Jehovah's declaration, "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and household after him."

This responsibility is now committed to us.

Parents shape their children in character whether they know they are doing it or not, and we cannot be too careful and anxious in our efforts to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord.

Divine laws are to be assimilated into the atmosphere of the home so that, going out or coming in, we shall all consciously or unconsciously obey them.

The relation of Jesus to children was a beautiful feature of his life and should be found in our lives.

4. Problems of the Modern Home

The modern home has problems in plenty and some are peculiar to our time. The home had its perils in the pagan Roman Empire, and many of its worst evils in that day are still with us.

The divorce evil in our country is one of our greatest social perils as the ratio of divorces to marriages in America exceeds that of any other country in the world and has increased fourfold in the last fifty years.

There are symptoms, also, that the children of our day are less subject to home discipline and more given to laxness in parental respect and obedience than the children of earlier generations. This evil is gravely serious, though it may be exaggerated.

If the home declines, religion will decay and society will dissolve its bonds.

The foundations of the home are ancient and Joshua gives us some good advice.

He put the fear of Jehovah at the root of the home, and we go far towards ruin if we dig up this root.

Joshua made a good choice for himself and his house, and no better choice is open to us in our day.

Paul, though a bachelor, was sound in his teaching about children.

He admonished children to obey their parents, and this is a fundamental virtue in children and in the home. He went on to extend his admonition to parents and then to servants and masters and thus covered our whole life.

This teaching and spirit will solve the home problems of our day.

5. The Christian and Law of Observance

Paul, in this letter to the Romans, adorns its massive theology with many passages of practical application and tenderness and beauty, and while this passage only mentions intemperance incidentally, yet its whole teaching powerfully conduces to this virtue.

The duty of citizenship is enjoined at length and in detail.

This principle applies to our temperance legislation and in particular to the Eighteenth Amendment and the laws enforcing it.

It stands written in our constitutional law and its obligation is upon us.

We may object to it and work for its annulment in a legal way, but may not privately annul it ourselves.

Paying taxes is not usually regarded as a duty which we should accept cheerfully, but it is a primary duty of citizenship and we should faithfully give this support to our government.

Sowing and reaping is a law of life from roots in the ground up to our highest moral and spiritual life.

We are often inclined to grow weary and discouraged in well doing, but we should stiffen up our courage and go forward. The end will crown our work with its reward.

6. The Christian and World Peace

The Christian has world relations, whatever may be his own country and citizenship. Many movements and forces are now working towards peace, and it is our duty to understand them and contribute our part

towards bringing our country and leaders into line with them that this grand consummation may be realized.

Our first passage from the Seventy-second Psalm breathes this modern spirit of international peace.

It flings the borders of the kingdom of God around the world and prophecies that "all nations shall serve him."

It makes wide room and welcome in the kingdom for the poor and this is a high test of any kingdom. A kingdom that tramples on its poor will perish, and the spirit of God was surely stirring in the hearts of these Hebrew prophets and poets when they could dream such dreams.

We are also given a beautiful picture of the blessings of the kingdom: justice and truth should prevail and even material goods should abound.

Paul preaches the same message of unity and peace. He declared the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down and swept away in Christ.

This principle also can compass the world and remove all divisive walls.

7. Making a Living

What subject could be more modern and pressing than this?

It is a primary necessity of life and yet it is attended with many perils and much injustice and is often at the bottom of political unrest and revolution.

Amos was a fearless prophet who faced and condemned many of the very same social evils that infest and disrupt our modern world.

Extortion was then a grave social evil, and our modern world can match that ancient time in this point.

The remedy the prophet proposed was to repent of their sins and to "seek good, and not evil."

Jesus teaches the same principles.

In the parable of the pounds he laid upon every one the duty of so using his pound, whatever it may be, so that it will multiply and yield more good.

Spiritual goods, like material capital, when rightly used yield profits and the profits may be large.

But there was an unfaithful servant who hid his lord's pound and naturally had nothing to show for it, and then retribution swift and hard fell upon him.

Unused powers wither.

Body and mind, property and position, all the possessions and privileges of life, must be kept in vigorous use and growth, or degeneration will set in and the end thereof is death.

8. Stewardship of Money

The use of money involves as much wisdom and responsibility as getting it.

The common impression that, having earned our money, we have a right to do as we please with it, is a heresy greater than many a theological error.

Even the government will not permit us to do as we please with our money, and religion is even more imperious in its demands. It puts all our possessions under the rule of the principle of stewardship by which we hold them in trust to be used in the service of God.

This service is broad as life itself and means that we are to use all our goods as means for the good of our human world.

Moses roots this obligation and all our obligations down in the duty of not forgetting "Jehovah thy God."

If we keep him in mind in all our ways his presence will guide us in spending as in getting our money.

We are all mad after prosperity, but prosperity has its dangers and has proved the ruin of many a man and family.

Especially important to this subject is it that we remember that God gives us the power to get wealth and so it should all be held in trust to him.

Giving is subject to the law of sowing and reaping, and the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and this is the only kind of giving that we shall enjoy.

9. Stewardship of Life

Life itself is a trust committed to us for the right use of which we are responsible.

Illustrations are drawn from the call of the four fishermen that left their nets and boats and followed Jesus, and an illustrious example is Paul, one of the great men and masterful souls of his age and of all ages.

His spectacular conversion burnt itself into his very brain so that he never could forget its smallest detail and it is recorded three times in the Acts, twice by himself. His life had been intensely self-centred and murderously opposed to the Christians, but when the Lord called to him he instantly answered, "What shall I do, Lord?"

He immediately reversed the whole stream and torrent of his life and started it flowing with equal swiftness and force in the opposite direction.

This is just what conversion is, turning around, and when we have been following our own will and way we reverse action and follow Jesus.

Paul's stewardship of his life now sent him as a missionary to the Gentiles, the very thing against which his soul had revolted, but now he found in it his passion and his joy.

10. Living with People of Other Races

It may be a hard thing to learn to do, but we must do it if we are to be Christians.

Strange that our human kind through long separation should grow alien to us, but so has our selfish human nature sown our world with prejudice and strife.

Two great illustrations of how to deal with people of other races are given us.

First Jesus, supremely first here as everywhere, dealt with the Samaritan woman so as to win her away from narrow sectarianism to a spiritual height of vision, and the same line of approach and treatment is open to us.

Then Peter, fierce hater of Gentiles, was brought, against his violent shock and resistance, to visit a Roman soldier and convert him to Christian faith and fellowship.

Few social lessons does the world more need in our day than how to regard and deal with foreigners, and nowhere is it more needed than in our own country.

11. The Christian's Use of Leisure

Leisure is a modern problem, for our fathers knew little of it and were untroubled by it in their hard working lives. But it is increasing in our time as we have speeded up production by machinery and are shortening our work week and work day.

When we look into the Bible in both its ancient and its later ages we find suggestions for the use of this portion of our time.

One way is to give attention to our religious life in our leisure, and not leave it at home when we go off on a vacation.

Another way is to make our religious life cheerful so that we shall not want to get away from it. Living in the open is a wholesome and fine way of spending our leisure. Rest is increasingly needed in our hurrying age, and every one ought to have a proper share of it.

And the desert or any solitude and quiet retreat is a good place to spend our rest, where "the heart at leisure from itself" may find soothing and comfort and renewed health and strength.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is a standard?
2. Can we get along in any field without standards?
3. Will the standards of the Bible times apply to our day?
4. Name some of the fundamental Christian standards of life.

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 25

God's Gift to Man (Christmas Lesson)

Lesson: Luke 2:1-20.

Golden Text: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.
John 3:16.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Christmas Means to Me.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus the Source of Peace and Good Will.

Lesson Text: Luke 2:8-20

8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.

9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people:

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *is* the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying.

14 Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men
in whom he is well pleased.

15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child.

18 And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

- 1. All about a Babe Born in a Barn.*
- 2. Glory to God.*
- 3. Peace, Good Will towards Men.*

4. *Let Us Go.*
5. *Promise Fulfilled.*
6. *The Return.*

Few are the tales that will stand retelling; fewer still are the books that will bear rereading; and rare are the new songs that we care to hear a second time and some we are sorry to have heard at all.

Things that last through the ages in literature and art have some precious substance and vitality that the world will not let die.

And these lasting works do not consist of sensational events and lurid colors and loud noise, but are the simple and quiet things of everyday life that spring from the heart and speak to the soul.

It is now passing towards two thousand years since the Christmas message was first heard at Bethlehem, a quiet village hid away in Judean hills, far from the madding crowd and uproar of Rome, but it has survived all the revolutions of these centuries.

Wars have not smothered it, science has not rendered it obsolete, literature has not surpassed it, art has not robbed it of its glory, and here it is again, on the first page of the newspaper and crowding the very store windows with reminders and expressions of its meaning and spirit.

1. All about a Babe Born in a Barn

And what is it all about? We might suppose that some great spectacular and world-shaking event had started this wave of interest and joy surging down the centuries that now pours over all life like an Amazon or Niagara flooding the world, and yet when we trace it back we find it leading to the rocky ledge of Bethlehem.

And even there we find nothing that excited public attention, such as the birth of a Caesar, but only a babe born in a barn.

The babe itself bore no outward marks of exceptional station or significance and indeed it was only a child of the humblest parentage. So little was it appreciated that no room was found for it in the village inn and it was relegated to the cave or stall where the cattle were housed and fed. Judged by its outer surroundings, it signified no more than countless other babes that were born that same morning or have since come into the world.

Yet we make a mistake when we measure things by material standards.

Weighing a baby in scales gratifies a moment's curiosity, but it tells us little. It does not disclose the spark of genius that may be lying dormant in that newly-molded brain that may have in it power to set the world on fire. When Columbus was born America lay in the cradle with him, and when Copernicus opened his eyes on the heavens the sun and stars wheeled into new orbits and did obeisance to him. Time and again has the world been revolutionized when a babe was born and unto it a child was given.

And so was it supremely when Christ lay in his stone manger on the first Christmas morning.

A baby hand reached up out of that cradle and tore down the Roman eagles of Caesar and wrote the American Emancipation Proclamation. In that cradle was incarnated the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God and Everlasting Father.

All the Christian centuries were tucked up in that cradle, and all the songs of the redeemed on earth and in heaven were set to their music on that morning.

Could we strike from the calendar of the years and from the city of God all that was assured in this birth, the centuries would grow dark and despairing and the very jubilant streets of heaven would be struck silent.

This Babe was God's Christmas gift to the world, and blind are we if we cannot see its glory and deaf if we do not hear its music amidst all the superficial joys that may now be flooding the world.

2. Glory to God

The angel chorus interpreted the significance of this event for us. And what was their first note? "Glory to God in the highest!"

Some might raise a question as to whether this was the right point to begin.

Would it not be better to think first on Christmas morning of the poor and needy and do something practical for them? But it is always of

first importance to put the first thing first, to lay the foundation before raising the roof, to get something worth singing about before composing the song.

What can come before God? "In the beginning God"—this is ever the first thing in all things.

We must have the sun shining over us before we can have blossoming trees and fruitful fields around us. We should first look up and then we can with broader vision and safer steps go down.

The glory of God is his shining excellence as it suffuses and fills all fields and worlds.

It means his truth and wisdom and guidance, his purity and goodness and beauty, his love and lovingkindness, and what can we see or hear of any importance if we do not have this divine light in which to see and choose and do it? It is the sky over us that diffuses the sun's light and sheds its showers upon us and creates all the landscape about us.

So the glory of God is his presence over and around us protecting us and pouring upon us such influences of goodness and aspiration as enable us to grow upward and realize our highest ideas and ideals.

We care not who inspired this song or put it into human speech, it was inspired and shaped by divine wisdom and is unsurpassed in either its theology or its literary art in its tonic note and first sublime chord.

3. Peace, Good Will towards Men

Glory to God in the highest immediately comes down to earth and weaves all its music into the melodies of our human world.

God is a God of peace and his glory comes to its greatest splendor as it manifests itself in peace among men.

Warring men are a dreadful sight even to human eyes and must send a shudder through all the hosts of heaven. The Christmas message lays upon all human differences and strife the spell of peace. It bids us study our differences in all fields, in the home and industry and state and in all the world at large and see wherein and why we differ and

endeavor to compose such differences in the spirit of mutual justice and truth, fairness and sympathy and brotherhood, into good will and harmony.

Is not the League of Nations with its world court a step and means towards the attainment of this end?

Did not the angels' song reverberate through the centuries and give birth to this world agency of peace?

It is true that all our differences cannot be tuned down to one basic level and monotone, but they can be wrought as varying chords into one music, the richer and grander and sweeter because more complex.

This spirit of good will is the great need of our discordant lives and disturbed and turbulent world.

It will pervade all our life and help us to solve its problems and adjust it into peace.

We can make no better use of this Christmas time than to take the glory of God and turn it into good will, as the sunlight is transmuted into leaf and blossom and fruit.

4. Let Us Go

The song died away in the solemn silence and the shepherds were left alone. It was a critical hour with them. Shall they follow this vision, or shall they let it vanish with the last echo of the song and relapse into the old dull routine?

This is the danger with our visions.

We have heavenly visions and songs born in us with every better thought and holier resolution, but often we fail to follow them up and let them die and pass into nothingness.

But these shepherds did not let their vision pass, and life was never the same to them again. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." They immediately translated hearing into doing, and presently were climbing the rocky slope to Bethlehem.

They were not content simply to hear so great a wonder, but were bent on seeing it: they assuredly gathered that the Lord had made

known this thing unto them for a purpose which called for action and obedience.

Had these shepherds not followed up the message, their knowledge of their Messiah would have stopped right there. A message, though high and beautiful as a heavenly voice, does us no good unless we follow it, and the grandest vision that ever swept through our brain or illuminated our sky leaves no vestige of worth unless it is turned into conduct and character.

Many hear of Christ that do not see Christ. "Let us now go and see this thing." We do not know Christ until we come into personal contact with him as our Saviour.

Seeing is believing, and when we see Christ through the gaze of obedience we shall be transformed into his likeness.

5. Promise Fulfilled

Promise was exactly matched with fulfilment. "Ye shall find a babe," was the promise of the angel, and now the record reads, "And they came with haste and found the babe."

When did God ever lead us to expect anything and then disappoint us?

He gave us thirst that urges us to seek water, and matching this need he has created sparkling streams and refreshing springs. He gave us hunger that craves bread, and it finds field and orchard and vine that satisfy this need. He gave us minds that seek truth, and they find it in the infinite library of the universe. He gave us hearts craving love, and heart matches heart. He set eternity in our hearts and gave us instincts that reach after the Infinite; hearts that cry, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Is not this instinctive craving and cry for God a virtual promise that he will reveal himself to us and shall be found?

Shall all lower needs be satisfied and this supreme search and cry of the soul be disappointed and mocked? "And they found the babe" is the answer to this promise.

God sends us with all our deep cravings and mysterious longings to that cradle in Bethlehem, where they will be exactly and fully matched and satisfied.

He that hath seen him hath seen the Father. "Seek and ye shall find," is Christ's own promise.

There is room around him for us all. There is fulness in him to satisfy all our need, and no one seeking him sincerely shall fail to find him or be turned empty away.

6. *The Return*

"And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken unto them about the child. . . . And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them." Having seen for themselves, they began to make known abroad the good news they had received concerning the Child.

The gospel is expansive and cannot be shut up in the heart.

We no sooner receive it than we must begin to give it. The more we make it known abroad, the more it grows in our own heart, and the more it grows within us the more do we give it out to others.

Whither did these shepherds return? Back to their fields and flocks.

They took up their old work, but it was no longer a common work of routine and drudgery but was now uplifted and transfigured with a new life and light.

Henceforth they trod heavenly fields and lived a celestial life.

The gospel does not take us out of the world or away from our common tasks, but it keeps us in the world and sets us to doing our old work in a new way.

It puts a light within us that irradiates our place in the world and kindles our daily toil with a new spirit.

This is the great need of our world.

Beware of any vision that promises to lift you out of your place and work and set you down in some downy bed of ease or turn your feet into some primrose-bordered path.

The world needs us where we are.

Our work must be done and be done better with a new spirit of interest and enthusiasm, and we misunderstand and misrepresent the gospel if we think it is only a means to get a better place in life or wings to fly away from the common work and worry of the world.

Christmas should put us back in our work with a more contented and consecrated and thereby a happier spirit. And it should move us to spread this Christmas message among others and recommend it by our own better life.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What would the world be without children?
2. What would the world be without Christmas?
3. How should we treat all children?
4. Where is our Bethlehem?
5. What practical use can we make of Christmas?