



LESSON II.—JULY 8, 1906.

The Duty of Forgiveness.

Matthew xviii., 21-35.

Golden Text.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—Matt. vi., 12.

Home Readings.

Monday, July 2.—Matt. xviii., 21-35.
 Tuesday, July 3.—Matt. xviii., 15-20.
 Wednesday, July 4.—Luke viii., 1-5.
 Thursday, July 6.—Col. iii., 1-17.
 Friday, July 7.—Matt. v., 17-26.
 Saturday, July 7.—Matt. v., 17-26.
 Sunday, July 8.—Mark xi., 20-36.

(Davis W. Clark).

It is right for him who asks forgiveness for his offenses to grant it to others.—Horace.

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
 Yet with my nobler Reason, against my Fury

Do I take part; the rarer action is
 In Virtue than in Vengeance.

—Shakespeare.

The parable of the king taking account of his servants was a transcript from current history. All the rulers of Palestine were the servants of the emperor. They were likely to be summoned any instant and made to give account of their gubernatorial deeds and revenues. From such a plane Jesus lifts the thought of His disciples to the plane where God is King. It pleases Him to bring His creatures into an accounting with Himself. It is evidently not a last judgment that is pictured, for the unmerciful servant is set loose and given another test. In this parable Jesus portrays a species of preliminary trial which reveals the soul to itself. The effect of this ante-judgment is to reveal to the sinner his insolvency. He is ten thousand talents in debt. These figures simply illustrate the immensity of our liability to God's account. We can not pay a mite out of a talent. In view of his invincible bankruptcy, there is nothing for the sinner to do but to sue for mercy. One of the most consolatory strokes in the parable is this: 'The Lord was moved with compassion, and forgave him the debt.'

This parable is an expansion, in a popular and attractive form, of the truth stated concretely in answer to Peter's question: 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him; till seven times?' The remainder of the parable shows the incongruousness of the forgiven sinner showing an unforgiving spirit toward his fellow. By the very incredulity of the supposed case Jesus shows that the unforgiving spirit is incompatible with discipleship. The servant who had been forgiven a debt of \$15,000,000 finds a fellow-servant who owes him \$15. He does not follow the example of his king. On the contrary, he seizes his debtor and demands the last farthing. On hearing of this deed the king is wroth, and cancels his own forgiveness.

This is Jesus' answer to Peter's question. 'How oft shall I forgive?' Peter had made an advance upon the Talmud and rabbis. They taught the duty of forgiveness to the third offence, but after that, allowed anger, resentment, and revenge.

Peter more than doubled the rabbinic allowance. He proposes to forgive seven times. Will not the sacred number suffice? But Jesus' laconic and decisive answer is, 'Seventy times seven;' that is practically without ceasing. A definite number is put for an indefinite one. In this multiplication of the perfect number by its multiple, Jesus practically says, 'Throw away the multiplication table when you come to the matter of forgiveness.'

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

1. Jesus' use of current events.
For illustration.
Rulers of Palestine summoned To Rome for accounting.
2. Accounting to God.
In this instance not a last judgment.
Preliminary accounting reveals insolvency.
Divine forgiveness.
3. Application to man's forgiveness of fellow.
Paradox: Forgiven sinner showing unforgiving spirit.
4. No degrees in forgiveness.
Question 'How oft?' not to be raised.
Peter's advance on rabbis not sufficient.
70 times 7. Practically without ceasing.
Throw away the multiplication table when it comes to forgiveness.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

A commercial crisis, personal bereavement, or revival of religion may be God's means of bringing us to account in advance of a last judgment. It may be His way of breaking up the careless security in which we rest.

The great uncertainty of Bible weights and measures is illustrated. On the basis of the Hebrew talent Clarke estimates the amount as £70,000,000 sterling, more than the revenue of the British Empire in his day. On the basis of the Attic talent others figure it as low as \$10,000,000. The matter is curious rather than important, however. A vast sum is all that is intended to be indicated.

In view of his debt, its incredible magnitude, and the sinner's invincible bankruptcy, there is nothing left for him but to sue for mercy. The preciousness of the parable is that it teaches one can not appeal in vain.

We are inclined to deprecate this mulling of the once forgiven servant with his whole original debt. Trench asks, 'Do sins once forgiven return on the sinner through his after offenses?' He answers his own question well when he says, 'The difficulty arises from our viewing the forgiving of sins in too formal a way.'

Olshausen says finally: 'This parable explains the ground on which a member of God's kingdom must ever stand ready to grant forgiveness, as only through forgiveness extended toward himself could he have obtained entrance to that kingdom.'

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, July 8.—Topic—Forgiving and being forgiven. Matt. vi., 14, 15.

Junior C. E. Topic.**CONSECRATING GOD'S HOUSE.**

Monday, July 2.—David's preparations. Chron. xxix., 1-5.
 Tuesday, July 3.—Solomon's preparations. I. Kings v., 1-11.
 Wednesday, July 4.—The building. I. Kings vi., 7, 22, 38.
 Thursday, July 5.—The feast of dedication. I. Kings viii., 1-11.
 Friday, July 6.—Address to the people. I. Kings viii., 12-21.
 Saturday, July 7.—Part of Solomon's prayer. I. Kings viii., 31-40.
 Sunday, July 8.—Topic—Consecrating the Lord's house. I. Kings viii., 22-30.

Plan Your Work.

We should be able to read some things two ways—from beginning to end, and from end to beginning. In studying the aspect of somebody's successful effort we can almost always trace it back to the cause. Reading down it would be something like this:

**PLAN
YOUR
WORK.**

Many stop right here. They are great schemers. Plans are always in evidence—so are failures. The biggest failure we ever saw was a man who had no end of plans. What was the trouble? This, he failed to work his plan. He did not read up. There is no perpetual motion in Sunday school work. After you have planned your work, Work your plan.—'Evangelical.'

The Inefficient Teacher.

Each teacher should keep his own class in order. If that were the rule the superintendent could give his whole attention to other matters. The trouble with many scholars is, they are allowed to do as they please, and they usually please to do the very things they should not do. In many cases it is not the unruly boy that must be dealt with, but the inefficient teacher.

A Bible Scholar in the Kitchen

I know of one dear woman who had only a common-school education, and a very common one at that, she used in her humility to say, who yet became so choice a Bible scholar that in her church and Sabbath school it grew to be a habit with the people to defer to her opinion and those who had had abundant opportunity for study learned to mark their own opinion with an interrogation when it differed from hers. To one who questioned her as to how it was possible in her narrowed and wonderfully busy life to give the amount of study and thought that she evidently did to Bible themes, she made answer:

'Why, you see I have a great deal of time to myself. After the children are started for school I am alone all day. And I know that at six o'clock there will be eleven hungry people who will look to me for a good dinner; so of course I have to spend a good deal of my time in the kitchen. Years ago I foresaw that the larger portion of my waking hours would have to be spent there, and I felt lonely and wanted a companion. So I covered my Bible with slate-colored cambric and took it to the kitchen with me. After a while my husband put up a shelf on purpose for it, and made a little wire arrangement to hold it open, and we have had real good times together, my Bible and I. I can peep at a verse here and there and keep thinking it over as I go about my work, and think of all the other verses I know that throw light on it. It is wonderful how many verses one knows that fit in, if we just give them time to find their places! Ironing days were very nice; it was long, slow work, you see, that didn't take much thought, because I knew exactly how to do it, and I could give my mind to some subject that needed studying, and every once in a while find a verse that made it plainer. Then in the evening, when I had a quiet half-hour to myself, I'd look up things that I hadn't had time for during the day, and find out what others thought about the same verse. That would be sure to start me on some new verses, and maybe we would go on for weeks, my Bible and I, studying that one subject.'—Pansy, in the 'Christian Endeavor World.'

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