



LESSON VI.—FEBRUARY 9.

The Sin of Lying.

Acts v., 1-11. Study Acts iv., 33 v., 11
Read James III.

Golden Text.

'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor.'—Ephesians iv., 25.

Daily Readings.

Monday, Feb. 3.—Acts iv., 32 v., 11.
Tuesday, Feb. 4.—Kings v., 20-27.
Wednesday, Feb. 5.—Jer. ix., 1-11.
Thursday, Feb. 6.—Psa. lli.
Friday, Feb. 7.—James iii., 1-10.
Saturday, Feb. 8.—Prov. xix., 1-9.
Sunday, Feb. 9.—Prov. xii., 13-22

Lesson Text.

(1) But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, (2) And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet (3) But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (4) While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (5) And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. (6) And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. (7) And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. (8) And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. (9) Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. (10) Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. (11) And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Suggestions.

The early Christian Church was a company of great believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were so filled with the Holy Spirit, that their beautiful lives kept attracting others to their Saviour. Persecution only drew them nearer to God and made their light shine more brightly. It was some time before worldliness got into the Church, but when it appeared it was in a terrible form and spoke plainly of its origin. (John viii., 44). Worldliness is a many sided evil. It begins always in the inmost recesses of the heart. Long before it appears outwardly, it begins its secret work in the heart. The first little turning away of the heart from God, the first failure to listen to and obey his loving voice, is the first beginning of worldliness. The soul that lives always close to God in loving fellowship and obedience has no temptation to the gross forms of worldliness. Where there is no inner worldliness there is no outward worldliness, for by the heart the life is directed. The obedient disciple of Christ is too busy with the interests of the kingdom to have time to play with the world's toys. The obedient disciple has too much joy in the fellowship of his Master to want to exchange it for the frivolous pleasures of the world's company.

But the basis of Christian fellowship and of all dealings with God and man must be sincerity and truth. God can do nothing with an insincere man. God can do anything with a man that is sincere and honest in heart.

All that God asks of us is to be sincere, if we are really honest in our desire to please him constantly, he can trust us anywhere. When the Lord God called Abraham to be the father of a chosen people, he said to him, 'I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect,' and this word 'perfect' simply means upright or sincere. So God calls each one of us to walk before him and be sincere or honest with him in our hearts.

It seems a very simple requirement; yet here thousands of Christians have failed. They start out with the honest purpose to serve God, but very soon a temptation comes to them which seems very small and says to them 'pretend you think it would be quite right to do this, pretend you are not disobeying God.' So, after a while they yield to the temptation and try to deceive themselves into thinking they are doing about right. That is an awful moment in their lives, if they succeed in deceiving themselves, they succeed in hardening their heart against God. They turn aside from commission and fellowship with him because sin has come in like a black cloud between, and until that sin is removed there can be no further fellowship. If they will only acknowledge the sin before God and honestly turn away from it, God will gladly forgive and blot out the transgression, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin (I. John i., 5-10). But until that sin is acknowledged and honestly repented of, there can be no peace for the sinful soul. It loses the joy it once had in the Bible and in prayer. The Bible is a dull book to those who cherish sin and selfwill in their hearts, and God does not meet in prayer the soul which will not acknowledge its sin. There is no standing still in the Christian life, the soul is either marching on to victory with God, or, having turned aside through the deceitfulness of sin, is slipping down, down, down, to degradation and everlasting disgrace (Dan. xii., 2).

For these reasons the first appearance of insincerity in the church was severely punished by God. A good man, named Barnabas, had very nobly and generously sold his estate and brought the proceeds to the apostles to be used for the good of all the community of Christians, others also who had land and possessions sold them and gave the money to the apostles, but a man, named Ananias, and his wife, Sapphira, secretly planned to make themselves great in the eyes of the people at no great expense to their pockets, but at a great expense of moral character.

Perhaps when they first joined the Christian church, they were as sincere as any one, but when they saw how Barnabas was honored for his generosity, perhaps they allowed a little envy to enter their hearts, and that spirit of evil soon opened the door of their hearts to other evil spirits. They did wrong in the first place by harboring the first suggestion of sin, and no doubt God spoke directly to their hearts about it over and over, but they turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and proceeded with their plans to make themselves great in the sight of men.

They sold a piece of property and, carefully laying aside what they thought they would like to spend for themselves, Ananias took the rest of the money and with great ceremony laid it at the feet of the apostles as his all. He had chosen a time when a great many would be present to see his great generosity, and, no doubt, expected much praise from them. But no motive or thought can be hidden from God, and he by the Holy Spirit spoke through Peter. Ananias had wanted to deceive men, he had tried to deceive himself, but now God said that he was trying to deceive the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God in the disciples. He had refused to listen to God's voice of mercy, he now must obey God's voice of wrath. He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy (Prov. xxix., 1). Sapphira also shared his punishment.

Questions.

What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

Why did God have to punish it so severely?

Can God do anything with a man who chooses to be insincere?

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Feb. 9.—Topic.—The pathway to peace.—John xiv., 25-31; Isa. xxvi., 3.

Junior C. E. Topic.

PEACE.

Mon., Feb. 3.—Peace with God.—Rom. v., 1-10.
Tues., Feb. 4.—Peace with men.—Luke ii., 8-14.
Wed., Feb. 5.—Peace with self.—Phil. iv., 4-9.
Thu., Feb. 6.—Making peace.—Matt v., 1-9.
Fri., Feb. 7.—How peace comes.—Rom. xii., 16-21.
Sat., Feb. 8.—How peace goes.—Isa. xlvi., 16-22.
Sun., Feb. 9.—Topic.—The pathway to peace.—John xiv., 25-31; Isa. xxvi., 3.



Heart Beats.

(A plain talk with a plainer lesson, in 'League Journal'.)

The late Dr. Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson on one occasion told a meeting that he had been able to convey a considerable amount of conviction to an intelligent scholar by a simple experiment. The scholar was singing the praise of the 'ruby bumper,' and saying he could not get through the day without it. Dr. Richardson said to him, 'Will you be good enough to feel my pulse as I stand here?' He did so. I said, 'Count it carefully; what does it say?' 'Your pulse says seventy-four.' I then sat down in a chair and asked him to count it again. He did so and said, 'Your heart has gone down to seventy.' I then lay down on the lounge and said, 'Will you take it again?' He replied, 'Why, it is only sixty-four; what an extraordinary thing!' I then said, 'When you lie down at night that is the way nature gives your heart rest. You know nothing about it, but that beating organ is resting to that extent; if you reckon it up it is a great deal of rest, because in lying down the heart is doing ten strokes less a minute. Multiply that by sixty and it is 600; multiply it by eight hours and, within a fraction, it is 5,000 strokes different; and, as the heart is throwing six ounces of blood at every stroke, it makes a difference of 30,000 ounces of lifting during the night.

'When I lie down at night without any alcohol, that is the rest my heart gets. But when you take your wine or grog you do not allow that rest, for the influence of alcohol is to increase the number of strokes, and, instead of getting this rest, you put on something like 15,000 extra strokes, and the result is you rise very unfit for the next day's work till you have taken a little more of the "ruby bumper," which, you say, is the soul of man below.'

An Interesting Case.

A medical man writes to 'The Medical Temperance Review' under the heading of 'an interesting case in medical practice' as follows:—

'An ounce of example is worth a pound of precept. Well, some time ago a short, but broad shouldered, powerful, athletic, unmarried man of thirty-five came to consult me. He was quite sound in all respects, and of steady habits, but suffering much from severe indigestion. The only cause for his bad health I could find was beer. Not that he drank much; certainly not over two pints some days, other days none. After seeing this most intelligent man two or three times, I gently hinted he would be better without any beer. He was sceptical, but as the prescriptions I had written him did not cure him, he consented to try. He has just left me. He tells me he has not been so well for years; his digestion is now perfect; his thirst gone, and his strength remarkable. He takes cocoa sparingly. He perspires little, is not fatigued, and looks the picture of health.

'Such a case conveys volumes to my mind. Of course, it may be objected that the man is unusually powerful, exceptionally sensitive to beer, and afflicted with a very feeble