

were sitting in the gate of the city, after the ancient manner, and I sat awhile with them."

By Way of Illustration.

Parental love. All love is divine in the sense that it comes from God. Parental love gives us a faint idea of God's love for his children. Love descends much more than it ascends. Parents love children more than children love parents. God loves us infinitely more than we love him. A father in good circumstances in one of the eastern States had a reckless son, who disgraced himself, and brought shame upon his family by his misconduct. From home the prodigal went to California to become even more reckless. For years the father heard nothing from him. Learning he was in a certain city, he sent a messenger with this message, "Your father loves you." The bearer found the boy in a low gambling hell. He called him out and delivered his message. The gambler was brought to himself. The thought of a father who loved him still broke the spell of Satan. He abandoned the game, his companions, and his cups to return to his father. The heavenly Father sends a like message to every prodigal.

Bishop Warren, in writing about the parable of the Prodigal Son, says: "The pearl of this pearl of parables is the father's love that many waters cannot quench nor floods drown. In looking at the love of Christ, we are apt to forget that of the Father. But Christ is just the manifestation of the Father's love. This world can never be wholly dark again to any sinner. There are kisses of peace, feasts of plenty, robes of honor, and infinite love that runs to bring them."

Parental responsibility. The care of a child is one of the most sacred trusts that can be confided to anyone as parent or teacher. Christ loved children and he speaks of them as his lambs. Peter was to show his love for his Master by feeding the lambs. Dr. Potter tells the story of a young man who stood at the bar of a court of justice to be sentenced for forgery. The judge had known him from a child, for his father had been a famous legal light, and his work on *The Law of Trusts* was the most exhaustive work on the subject in existence. "Do you remember your father?" asked the judge, sternly, "that father whom you have disgraced?" The prisoner answered, "I remember him perfectly. When I went to him for advice or companionship, he would look up from his book on *The Law of Trusts* and say, 'Run away, boy, I am busy.' My father finished his book, and here I am." The great lawyer had neglected his own trust with awful results.—*Talmage*.

What if God should place in your hand a diamond, and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence which should be read at the last day! What care, what caution, would you exercise in the selection!

Now this is what God has done. He has given you the immortal minds of your children, more imperishable than the diamond, on which you inscribe your spirit and example, and you will meet it at the judgment.—*Payson*.

Before the Class.

Introduction. Review the last lesson, emphasizing the steps in Absalom's downward career, bringing into clear light the thought that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Very briefly present to the class, or, better, draw from it by questions, the series of intervening events: David's flight from Jerusalem; the sending back of the ark; the sorrowful ascent of Mount Olivet and the service of worship on its summit; the treachery of Ahithophel and the acceptance of Hushai's services; Ziba's treachery and Shimei's cursing; the return of Absalom to Jerusalem; Absalom's acceptance of Hushai's counsel and the rejection and suicide of Ahithophel; the arrangements by David for the battle which took place near Mahanaim; and lastly, the result of the battle.

Lesson text. Place upon the blackboard the following outline—Anxiety, Hope, Bitterness. In this lesson we see plainly the result of a wrong choice, the following of our own way instead of the "way of the Lord." Although the text is taken up with the account of David the father, still in our minds we picture Absalom the son lying under the trees in the forest of Gilead. Note, first, the father's Anxiety, coupled with Hope. He sits in the gateway waiting and watching for news from the field. Ahimaaz is seen afar off, and David's hopes rise, for Ahimaaz "is a good man and cometh with good tidings." And he brought good tidings indeed, but not the news the king was anxiously, so anxiously waiting for. If his anxiety for Absalom had been shown in earlier years and in a different way the end might have been different. So to-day we are anxious about many things and let the "one thing needful" escape us. But another messenger is seen by the keen-eyed watchman, and David waits with eagerness for the news. It is given, and all his hopes are dashed to the ground. These hopes were founded upon a misunderstanding of God's laws, and so were doomed never to be realized. So with many of our own hopes. We cannot see, or rather we will not see, that broken law always brings its results. The result may not come immediately upon the breaking of the law, but it is sure to come, for "the word of the Lord is sure." And then comes Bitterness. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee!" O the bitterness of blasted hopes, the sorrow in the cry, "Too late, too late!" If David had been more thoughtful in living for Absalom he might not have been called upon to pass

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