

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubets' Notes.

Fourth Quarter, 1901.

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER.

WORLD'S TEMPERANCE LESSON.

Lesson VIII. November 24. Isa. 5 : 8-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine.—Isa. 5 : 22.

EXPLANATORY.

I. COVETOUSNESS.—Vs. 8-10. Covetousness leads to the selling of strong drink, to renting buildings for saloons and gambling dens. Even members of the church disgrace their profession and their Master by doing this. Officials take bribes, and policemen protect crime and saloons for money in some cities. Nothing but the love of money could induce men to enter upon the degrading business of selling liquor. In his beautiful Deserted Village, Goldsmith says:—

"I'll fane the land, to hastening fills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

The result to the Jews was such desolation that it took ten acres of vineyard to yield one bath, about eight gallons; and a homer of seed, nine bushels, to produce an ephah, three and a half pecks, or ten seeds to yield one (vs. 10.) And we see that in the drunkard a vast amount of good influences produce but small results in his life; and less is reaped than is sown.

II. THE TYRANNY OF STRONG DRINK.—Vs. 11. WOR UNTO THEM. Not a wish, but a warning; not vengeance, but a plain statement of fact. THAT RISE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING. The first thing they think of, the first and most urgent business of the day, is "More strong drink." "They are already gone into captivity" (vs. 13) THAT THEY MAY FOLLOW STRONG DRINK. They do not wait for its fumes to tempt them, but seek the tempter.

THAT CONTINUE UNTIL NIGHT. Drinking is the chief business of the day. It absorbs body and soul; and whoever drinks intoxicating liquors at all is in danger of coming to that state where drinking is his main business. TILL WINE INFLAME THEM. It sets him on fire of hell. It kindles every bad passion. It excites him so that he sees nothing as it really is. He is no longer himself. It burns up body and soul.

III. THE ANGELS OF SOCIAL LIFE ARE TRANSFORMED INTO DEMONS.—Vs. 12. AND THE HARP, AND THE VIOL. The latter word, generally rendered "psaltery," was a stringed instrument played with the fingers, perhaps a lyre, perhaps a dulcimer. TABRET. Tambourine or tymbrel. PIPE. Flute. All the powers of music, and feasting, and social life are joined to enhance the enchanting and attracting power of strong drink. Here lies one of the greatest dangers of intemperance. The music and song intended to elevate the soul and move the nobler emotions is made to be the procreant of vice.

IV. DEADNESS OF THE MORAL NATURE.—Vs. 12. THEY REGARD NOT THE WORK OF THE LORD. They will not look around them and see what God is doing to save them, nor the punishment he

sends upon those who continue in their course. Warnings are on every hand, but they will not notice them. Strong drink is an opiate to the conscience, and blinds the eyes to the law of God. "Nothing kills the conscience like steady drinking to a little excess."

V. CHAINS AND CAPTIVITY.—Vs. 13. MY PEOPLE ARE GONE INTO CAPTIVITY. The northern kingdom was carried captive by the Assyrians while Isaiah was preaching to Judah. This was a warning they should have taken to heart. The intemperate become the slaves of appetite, driven into all excesses and crimes by their taskmaster. They are exiles from the kingdom of God, and the home of virtue.

VI. IGNORANCE.—BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE, which they might have possessed. They are wilfully ignorant. They learned nothing from observation or experience. They were very dull scholars in God's school.

VII. POVERTY.—THEIR HONORABLE MEN. "The margins call attention to the form of the Hebrew, 'Their glory are men of famine.' The distinguished men of a country are its glory." THEIR MULTITUDE. "The masses, as compared with the distinguished men. The distinguished and the undistinguished alike suffer from famine and from thirst."

VIII. DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.—Vs. 14-17. THEREFORE HELL (Sheol, the place of the dead) HATH ENLARGED HERSELF, because so many more perish through intemperance, who would otherwise have continued to live many years. AND OPENED HER MOUTH. Like some monster ravenous to destroy, or as the earth opened in an earthquake to swallow up Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16 : 30-32.) AND THEIR GLORY, etc. Every good is ruined by intemperance. Great men, great causes, great ideas, great virtues, everything that makes the glory of a nation, have an inveterate enemy in intoxicating liquors.

IX. THE MEAN MAN, etc. All classes and conditions. SHALL BE. Rather "is."

X. THE LORD OF HOSTS SHALL BE EXALTED IN JUDGMENT. Every one will see that the punishment is just and necessary, and tends to righteousness. Its object is to make men righteous, and to keep them so.

XI. THEN SHALL THE LAMBS FEED AFTER THEIR MANNER. Rather "in their pasture;" the city shall become but a rural pasture land. THE WASTE PLACES OF THE FAT ONES, where the few sheep in wide pastures grow fat. SHALL STRANGERS. Foreigners. This verse is a continuation of the description of the ruin that falls upon those who disobey God.

XII. INTENSITY OF THE APPETITE AND DESIRE.—Vs. 18. THAT DRAW INQUIRY WITH CORDS OF VANITY, such as false reasoning, deceptive excuses. WITH A CART ROPE. So strong is their desire for forbidden things that only the strength of a cart rope can express it.

XIII. DEFIANCE OF GOD AND HIS LAWS.—Vs. 19. LET HIM (God) MAKE SPREAD. Let God come to punish us if he will; who fears? Expressing utter unbelief in God's threats. They do not believe that the evil threatened will ever come. They are the fools described in Prov. 1 : 24, 25. "This figure of sinners jeering at the approach of a calamity, while they actually wear the harness of its carriage, is very striking."

XIV. DISTORTED VIEWS OF RIGHT AND WRONG.—Vs. 20. CALL EVIL GOOD. They baptize wickedness with good names. They advocate the cause of strong drink as promoting temperance and liberty. They do not say, "spirit of wine, thy name is devil," but thy name is joy, pleasure, prosperity, life. People will sell liquor, and let their buildings for saloons, and yet not seem conscious of sin.

XV. SELF-CONCERN.—Vs. 21. WISE IN THEIR OWN EYES. Wine makes people self-confident. The drunkard is often the last person to know how much he is under the power of liquor. He thinks he is safe when all his friends know that he is on the brink of a precipice.

XVI. TENDENCY TO EXCESS.—Vs. 22. MIGHTY TO DRINK WINE. The habit grows by indulgence. They can do great things in drinking. They are heroes of the wine cup. But the cup is lighter than they.

XVII. DISHONESTY, BRIBERY.—Vs. 23. WHICH JUSTIFY THE WICKED FOR REWARD. Who for the sake of votes, or money, or influence, give wrong judgments in court, help the wicked to escape justice, make bad laws. TAKE AWAY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, etc. Deprive men of their just rights for the sake of bribes. The power of Tammany in New York, the bribery of the police by liquor dealers, are modern examples.

XVIII. THE RESULTS, vs. 24-30. are compared to a devouring flame, and to a devastating army, "whose arrows are sharp," and "their wheels like a whirlwind," the sound of their coming like "the roaring of a lion," and "like the roaring of the sea."

A LITTLE FENCE.

A good lawyer learns many lessons in the school of human nature; and thus it was that Lawyer Hackett did not fear to purchase the tract of land which had been "lawed over" for years. Some of the people wondered why he wanted to get hold of property with such an incubus of uncertainty upon it. Others thought that perhaps he wanted some legal knitting work, and would pitch in red hot to fight that line fence question on his own hook.

That's what the owner of the adjoining land thought. So he braced himself for trouble when he saw Hackett coming across the field one day.

Said Hackett: "What's your claim here anyway, as to this fence?"

"I insist," replied his neighbor, "that your fence is over on my land two feet at one end and one foot, at least, at the other end."

"Well," replied Hackett, "you go ahead, just as quick as you can, and set your fence over. At the end where you say that I encroach on your two feet set the fence on my land four feet."

"But," persisted the neighbor, "that's twice what I claim."

"I don't care about that," said Hackett. "There's been fight enough over this land. I want you to take enough so you are perfectly satisfied, and then we can get along pleasantly. Go ahead and help yourself."

The man paused, abashed. He had been ready to commence the old struggle, tooth and nail, but this move of the new neighbor stunned him. Yet he wasn't to be outdone in generosity. He looked at Hackett.

"Squre," said he, "that fence ain't going to be moved an inch. I don't want the land; there wasn't nothing in the fight anyway but the principle of the thing."—Christian Observer.

SUNSET GLORIES.

I watched a glorious sunset, marvelling at the beauty wherewith the evening skies were all ablaze and adorning him who gave them their matchless coloring. On the next evening I resorted to the same spot, hoping to be again enraptured with the gorgeous pomp of ending day, but there were no clouds and, therefore, no glories. True, the canopy of sapphire was there, but no magnificent array of clouds to form golden masses with edges of burning crimson, or islands of loveliest hue set in a sea of emerald; there were no great configurations of splendor or flaming peaks of mountains of fire. The sun was as bright as before but for lack of dark clouds on which to pour out his lustre, his magnificence was unrevealed. A man who should live and die without trials would be like a setting sun without clouds.—C. H. Spurgeon.

A YOUNG PHYSICIAN

Wordsworth's lines of the child at play, "as if his whole vacation were endless imitation," were recently recalled by a conversation overheard in the children's ward at a provincial hospital.

A little girl, whose role was that of nurse, rung an imaginary telephone on the wall to talk to her companion at the further end of the room, who played the part of doctor.

"Hello!" said the nurse. "Is that the doctor?"

"Yes," answered her companion in a deep voice; "this is the doctor."

"This lady is very ill," he was informed.

"Well, what seems to be the matter?"

"She has swallowed a whole bottle of ink," said the nurse.

The doctor, not flurried, inquired what had been done for the patient; but the nurse, too, was ready in emergencies.

She answered: "I gave her two pads of blotting paper."—Tit-Bits.

The real necessity for us in spiritual things is that we should be busy in doing, not in looking about to see whether we are doing or not. Above all things, we must walk before God with truth, with a single mind. The smallest actions done for God tend to our sanctification. He tells us that it is so. Never pause to dwell on what you may feel in yourself, of weakness or of strength, but live on in that simple faith without squandering your energies or analyzing your emotions. Do not imagine yourself to be weak because you feel weak or strong because you feel strong. St. Paul believed himself to be strong, but was weak; St. Paul believed himself to be weak though he was strong. You cannot be free except the Son shall make you free. Without him you can do nothing. We are not sufficient to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.—Huntington.



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To make sure of a true Pauline readiness to die, one needs something more than a mere profession of religion. Paul, in his dying moment, does not boast of being a mere believer. He does not lift up his voice and sing, "Jesus Paid it All." He does not cry, "Oh, to be nothing!" He glories not at all in the atonement, namely, that he is in moral oneness with God Almighty, his Father, the Ruler of the worlds; that he is on the verge of translation into a state of complete holiness, and that he has, through grace, amounted to something by living. Very many professors of religion are communists in respect to the Christian life and its rewards, and it requires something more than preaching to reach and convert most of them. But death and the other world will convince them that the kingdom of heaven is not administered on communistic principles. It furnishes no "equal division of unequal earnings," no wages to idlers, no bread for drones! You must work if you would eat. You must fight if you would reign. You must be a concentrated, genuine, and active Christian if you would die with that supreme and Divine compulsion realized in the death of Paul.—E. B. Andrews.



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