Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Adapted from Peloubet's Select Notes.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson III. Oct. 20. Ruth 1: 14-22.

RUTH'S CHOICE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."—RUTH 1: 16.

THE SECTION includes the whole book of Ruth.

THE BOOK OF RUTH is an appendix to the book of Judges, and throws a charming but true light over the troublous times we have been studying in our last few lessons. The book of Ruth, lifting up the curtain which veiled the privacy of domestic life, discloses to us most beautiful views of piety, integrity, self-sacrificing affection, chastity, gentleness, and charity, growing up amidst the rude scenes of war, discord, and strife. In the most degenerate times there was preserved underneath the troubled surface many a pure, loving, religious life, as in the time of Elijah, when the prophet felt that he was the only servant of God in all Israel, the Lord knew that there were seven thousand who refused to bow the knee to Baal.

The author and date of the book are unknown.

EXPLANATORY.

RUTH'S CHOICE.—Vs. 16-18. Naomi used the same arguments to Ruth that she did to Orpah. "God wrestled with Jacob with desire to be conquered; so Naomi, no doubt, opposed Ruth, hoping and wishing that she herself might be foiled." She would have Ruth fully understand her own mind, and realise what the decision would cost her. So in the parable of Christ (Luke 14: 26-33).

16. "And Ruth said." "Ruth's passionate burst of tenderness is immortal. It has put into fitting words for all generations the deepest thoughts of loving hearts, and comes to us over all the centuries between as warm and living as when it welled up from that pure, heroic soul. "Entreat me not to leave thee." All that Naomi had said, her solitariness, poverty, sorrow only served to attach Ruth more firmly. Orpah, too, was attached and well disposed; but still, with eyes of love, although she had them, she yet saw herself, while Ruth saw only the beloved one. "Whither thou goest, I will go." "Compare" the very similar entreaties of Elijah, and the steadfast determination of Elisha not to leave him (2 Kings 2: 2-6). In Elisha's case as in Ruth's, the reward of steadfast persistence was very great. "Contrast" some one who in Christ's time undertook to follow him (Mat. 8: 18-22).

"Thy people shall be my people," even though she went apparently to lifelong poverty among strangers. But the blessedness that people had in the true God was infinitely greater than that she left, and transformed the dark clouds as the sun does with his setting glories. "And thy God my God." She accepted the true religion, as it is shone in the example and teachings of her mother-in-law. All this passionate utterance of Ruth is a perfect type of what every one who becomes a Christian says to Christ and his church. All he has and all he hopes for is joined with them. He will suffer with them, rejoice with them, work with them, worship with them, and at last abide forever with them in heaven.

17. "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." She wished to be naturalized for life in Naomi's fatherland. She gives herself up wholly and forever to the people of God. "The Lord do so to me": calling upon herself the severest punishment if she should break her promise. Ruth's use of the name of Jehovah's shows that she was already a believer.

18. She left speaking." Persevering love conquered all opposition.

RUTH'S CHOICE. 1. Like Mary, she chose the good part; she made the best possible choice. 2. She chose in full view of all the consequences. It was a well-considered choice. 3. Her choice was of spiritual good, of right, and duty, and religion, at the cost of poverty, and friendlessness, and toil. 4. She was led to her choice of the God and religion through human affection. 5. She chose irrevocably. It was a life choice.

V. THE RETURN OF THE EXILE.—Vs. 19-22. 19. "They came to Bethlehem": the early home of Naomi, which she had left ten years before. Here, too, she had a small estate (Ruth 4: 3). "All the city was moved." Bethlehem was a small town (Mich. 5: 2); and in such small villages, and especially in an age when there were no newspapers, mails, etc., every event flew quickly abroad by the communications of friend to friend. Naomi's return was an uncommon occurrence. The city, and especially the women, were thrown into peasable uproar. Everybody ran, told the news, and wondered. For more than ten years had passed since she had left Bethlehem. Her husband, we know, belonged to a prominent family in the city. All this renders it natural that the news that Naomi had returned, poor and sorrowful, spread like wildfire, and created what to her was an unpleasant sensation. "And they said." "They" in the Hebrew is feminine. "The women of Bethlehem said": "Is this Naomi?" Can this be the Naomi who went away so happily ten years ago?

20. "Call me not Naomi," "lovable," "pleasant." That name once belonged to me. "Call me Mara," bitter" (Ex. 15: 23), for this better expresses my condition. "For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." My life is in his hands. He has given me this bitter medicine for my soul. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

21. "I went out full," i. e., rich, not in money and property, but in the possession of a husband and two sons; a rich mother, but now deprived of all that makes a mother's heart rich,—bereft of both husband and sons. "The Lord hath testified against me." Has borne witness against me, that our going away was a sin. The testimony he bore was in the sad results that followed their course. "Hath afflicted me." The Jewish writers generally think that they did wrong in leaving their own country to go and live among idolaters. Still this may express her feeling, rather than the fact. All of us are so sinful that we know we deserve all God sends upon us. It is more than likely that at last, in heaven, if not before Naomi realised that God's way was the best way, and could fall at his feet in gratitude for all that God had done.

22. "Barley harvest." Usually in the middle of April. The fact of its being barley harvest suggested to Ruth that she might contribute something to their mutual subsistence by going forth to glean. This right of gleaning was one of the legal provisions for the poor of Israel; and as the land holders were not subject to money taxes for the support of the poor, this claim was liberally construed by them. The part of the field to which Ruth was providentially directed belonged to Boaz, a near kinsman of Naomi's late husband.

THE REWARD OF DEVOTION TO DUTY AND TO GOD.—The rest of the book of Ruth tells the story of her recompense for her self-denying love and giving up all to religion and to God. (1) She found a means of supporting her mother-in-law. (2) She won the respect and favor of the people among whom she lived. (3) She gained a most excellent husband and home. In Boaz we have a model for the character of a rich man in private life: we see one whose deep faith in God breaks out in every word of his lips and every action of his life (2: 4, 11, 12; 3: 10, 11, etc.); one attentive to his own business and diligent in the care of his own property (2: 4; 3: 2); kind and friendly to his dependents, and beloved by them (2: 4); liberal, generous, and courteous to the poor and friendless stranger (2: 8, 9, 14 15, 16; 3: 15); observing and appreciating virtue in others (2: 11, 12; 3: 11), and practising it himself under trying circumstances (3: 8-13); respecting the rights of others even when they interfered with his own wishes (3: 12, 13; 4: 4); observant of the laws of his country, though living in lawless times (4: 1-5, 9); mindful of his obligations to the living and the dead (2: 20; 4: 10); alive to the ties of kindred, of country, and of religion (4: 3; 2: 11, 12); and uniformly humble, quiet, and prudent in his conduct. (4) Ruth had the honor of including among her descendants the great kings David and Solomon, and, above all, Jesus the Christ, through his mother.

Still, we are to be careful not to confound outward rewards with the real reward of virtue. As "Love in loving finds its joy," as the Savoyard singer, neglected and forgotten, declares that

"The song itself shall yet reward
The labors of the Savoyard,"

so virtue contains in itself, in the approval of God, in peace of conscience, in spiritual life and character, in helpfulness and service, its best reward. And yet the reward is not perfect without outward conditions to match the inward grace. So it shall be in heaven.

Virtue without success
Is a fair picture shown by an ill light.

Outward success is God's visible signature before the world of his approval of a good life. Note the ending of Job's life.

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF RUTH.

1. The sure reward of filial devotion and trust in the Lord, and "the failure of all high reward to which selfishness leads."

2. The overruling providence of God in the private affairs of an humble family, as well as in the palace of princes, and the public events of nations.

3. The important evangelical lesson is as plainly taught in her case as in that of Cornelius, "that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."

4. "Every soul decides to turn back to the sinful world, as did Ornah, or to press on to know God, as did Ruth. Perhaps you are now deciding for eternity! Alas, if your decision is like Orpah's!"

5. When your friends are returning to God, it is a favorable time for you to accompany them, as Ruth accompanied Noami.

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B. Y. P. U.

OUR OBJECT.

The unification of Baptist young people; their increased spirituality; their stimulation in Christian service; their edification in scriptural knowledge; their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine; their enlistment in missionary activity, through existing denominational institutions

OUR FELLOWSHIP.

All Young People's Societies of whatsoever name in Baptist churches and Baptist churches having no organizations are entitled to representation. We depend for our unity not upon any young people's name or method. Our common bond is in the New Testament, in the full affirmation of whose teachings

WE ARE ONE PEOPLE WITH ONE MISSION.

Kindly address all communications for this column to Rev. G. O. Gates, St. John, N. B.

Prayer Meeting Topics for Oct 13.

B. Y. P. U. TOPIC.—"Tampering with Temptation."—Act. 5: 1-11.

C. E. TOPIC.—"How may our Society do better work"?—Gal. 6: 6-10.

"What Should be the Attitude of the Pastors Towards the B. Y. P. U."?

By Rev. G. R. White.

Every wise pastor must realise the very great importance of holding and training his young people for Christ and the church. That the training of the young is not only one of the most important, but also one of the most perplexing questions to be solved by the pastor is a fact. And that the intelligence of the church realizes this and has come to the pastor's aid in the solution of this problem is a fact also. And this of itself proves the importance of this work. Also that Satan has set up special claims for our young people in these last years of the century, is clearly seen in this checkmate movement on the part of God and the church, for their safety and culture. That this great revival wave should flow in at this time is not strange. God always has the men and the movement at hand to meet the devil in every sally he makes upon His chosen. And the importance of pushing this movement will appear, as we remember that our young people are in special need of care—just because they are young. It is the formative period of life; it is the period when hopes and aspirations run the highest. It is the transition period, the time when habits become fixed, when training has its greatest and most lasting effect—indeed the only time when you can mould the character. "Beat not your knuckles" says Francis Willard, "against the granite of mature character, when you can mould the clay of the three-year-old's habit and intention." If we pastors fail in this most important work of impressing our young people for good, while they are young, or fail to stamp upon them loyalty to Christ and the church, we need not be surprised if in after years they sacrifice without much check of conscience those principles which are so dear to us and our Saviour.

That it is the duty of the pastors to train their young people to the most effective and efficient work for Christ and the church is clear from the teachings of our blessed Lord. You remember when Peter was reinstated, after his denial, and the Saviour was sending him out again to shepherd his flock, one of the special charges given to him was, "feed my lambs."

That this is a duty on the part of every pastor is plainly seen in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. And as a means to this end, we believe the B. Y. P. U., is the most simple and most effective organization for Baptists in all the world. This being true the attitude of the pastors towards the B. Y. P. U., should be one of great favor—and for the following reasons.

1. Because the B. Y. P. U., stands for the young people of our Baptist churches. You know I always give my head a little turn towards Bidy, when discussing this question, because I love her most. I still belive in the big "B." Yet I remember that the B. Y. P. U., is inclusive not exclusive. It is the union of all our young people's societies in our Baptist churches which have for their object and aim the culture and spiritual training of our young people for service in the kingdom of God and of Christ. That the B. Y. P. U., is an aid to the pastors in the performance of this God appointed task is already proven by those who have tried it, and in number, they are a host in themselves. But the union is only an aid. It will not do the work itself. It would be a failure if it did. If it has failed in any case it is where it has been misunderstood or misapplied. The B. Y. P. U. is not perpetual motion, neither is it any sort of an automaton; but it is an aid and a great aid to the pastor in the performance of this great work of training the young in self reliance and obedience to the Lord Jesus. The B. Y. P. U., as it stands to-day is largely the result of the combined wisdom of the three millions of Baptists on the continent of America, for the training of their young people. For a pastor to choose some other means or to set at naught the importance of this movement is to set his own wisdom against the united wisdom of his brethren. Yet it is his privilege so to do. Baptists have great privileges with great responsibilities. But for those pastors who have not laid hold on this aid, in their work of training their young people, we would strongly urge them to give the B. Y. P. U. a fair consideration—try a "Union" in your church for one year at least.

We must repeat the old statement. B. Y. P. U. is not a separate institution which divides the interests of young and old, neither does it in any way interfere with functions of this church. It is simply the young members of the church at work under the full guidance of the church; and through the regularly appointed channels of church work—no innovation, no new order of things, simply the young people at work. In view of these things why should not every pastor in the convention give this matter of organization due consideration, by asking himself—"Why not organize"?

Again, we think the pastors should look upon the B. Y. P. U. with great favor.

II. Because it is proving itself a most effective means for the education of our young people in our distinctive principles. We firmly believe that a wise and better trained class of men and women will grace the Baptist ranks of the rising generation, than we have today. As a body the Baptists of the next generation will be able to give a more intelligent reason for the hope that is within them, than either past or present. And that is casting no reflections on the present generation. It is only saying that the rising generation have had better advantages, and if they are not more strongly and more intelligently wedded to their principles, they will prove themselves recreant to a most sacred trust and unworthy of their noble sires. But we believe they will do honor to the trust committed to them. And we look upon the B. Y. P. U. as one of the God-appointed means to this end. There was a time after the Baptist fathers had laid down the course and appealed to the denomination to steer for the big "B", there was a time, while the needle trembled, when some of our people doubted the wisdom of the B. Y. P. U. They shook their heads as the needle fell off first toward the east, again to the west; but during the last two years it has become steady, and today it points as the finger of God toward the big "B". Who that has read the sacred literature course of the past winter can longer doubt that the movement is of God? This of itself would settle the matter for me, if I had any doubts. And the growing popularity of these courses supports the statement. This S. S. Course alone speaks volumes for the movement, and appeals strongly to every pastor to look upon it with acceptance.

III. But lastly, and briefly, the pastors should look upon the B. Y. P. U. with great favor, because it has come to stay. The favorable reception which it has received up to date gives assurance to this statement. Get on board, get on board, my brother, organize, organize, both Junior and Senior societies when at all possible, and the presence of a few young people make it possible. And as pastors let us remember that with this full equipment of means at hand for the training of our young people, that our responsibility is more than doubled. Then let us resolve to unite head and heart and hands in the performance of a mission, so high and so holy, that the very angels of God would rejoice to perform it—a mission, the result of which, eternity alone can tell! And let the motto, "Loyalty to Christ at all times," find a glad response in all our souls.

A visitor to Amsterdam wished to hear the wonderful music of the chimes of St. Nicholas, and went up into the tower of the church to hear it. There he found a man with wooden gloves on his hands, pounding on a keyboard. All he could hear was the clanging of the keys when struck by the wooden gloves, and the harsh, deafening noise of the bells close over his head. He wondered why the people talked of the marvelous chimes of St. Nicholas. To his ear there was no music in them, nothing but terrible clatter and clanging. Yet, all the while, there floated out over and beyond the city the most entrancing music. Men in the fields paused in their work to listen, and were made glad. People in their homes, and travellers on the highway, were thrilled by the marvelous bell notes that fell from the tower.

There are many lives which to those who dwell close beside them seem to make no music. They pour out their strength in hard toil. They are shut up in narrow spheres. They dwell amid the noise and clatter of common task-work. They think themselves that they are not of any use, that no blessing goes out from their life. They never dream that sweet music is made anywhere in the world by their noisy hammering. But out over the world, where the influence goes from their work and character, human lives are blessed, and weary ones hear with gladness, sweet, comforting music. Then away off in heaven, where angels listen to earth's melody, entrancing strains are heard.—*J. R. Miller, D. D.*

It is not in vain that you are called to pass through great trials and sufferings. They never leave you what they found you; God forbid they should! But how you bear them, what they lead you to do and feel, will vary according to your own attitude to them. Their trend and purpose are towards those two poles of duty—God and humanity; but it is our weakness and fault that often we do not read aright their meaning. Suffering may leave us hard, selfish, and complaining, or it may lead us into the mysteries of Providence, and into the very fellowship of God.—*Theodore T. Munger, D D.*

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I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility.—John Ruskin.

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One may live as a conqueror, a king, or a magistrate; but he must die as a man.—Daniel Webster.

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God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it.—Bacon.

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"NEARER TO THEE."

They were singing, sweetly singing,
And the song melodiously
On the evening air was ringing
"Nearer, O my God, to thee!"
In my eyes the teardrops glistened
As it stirred the twilight dim,
And I wondered as I listened
If it brought them near him.

Were they like the wanderer weary,
Song and life in sweet accord,
Resting in the darkness dreary
In that nearness to the Lord?
Had his spirit ever sought them,
To be slighted or denied?
Had that dear song been brought them
Closer to the Saviour's side?

I have heard its music often,
Felt its meaning deep and sweet,
And my weary heart would soften
Singing at my Master's feet,
"Nearer thee—O precious feeling!—
Nearer thee in gain and loss:
Nearer thee when I am kneeling
In the shadow of thy cross!

Nearer thee when love, descending,
Falls in blessing on my head:
Nearer thee when I am bending
O'er the graves that hide my dead!
Nearer thee in joy, in sorrow,
'Tis the same where'er I roam;
Nearer thee to-day, to-morrow,
O my King, my Christ, my home!

Frank L. Stanton, in "Songs of a Day."

I may not tread the path He trod
In famed Judea's land,
But I can walk as near to God
As those who touched His hand;
I may not climb the vine clad hills
Nor stand on Olive's height,
But when His truth my vision fills
I see a grander sight!

Tho' to my gaze may be denied
The light of Orient skies,
No distance can from Him divide,
If love anoint mine eyes.
With Christ the thorniest shrub that grows
Burns with celestial flame,
And duty blooms like Sharon's rose,
For Christ dwells there "the same."

A. N. Whitmarsh, in London Freeman.

A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong, which is but saying, in other words, that he is wiser to-day than he was yesterday.—Pope.

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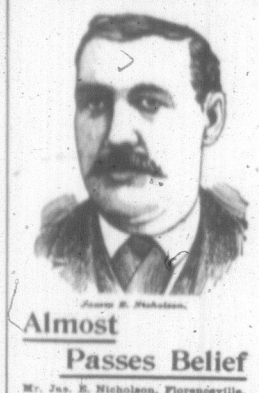

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