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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN MARK.

First Quarter.

Lesson VII. February 11. Mark 5: 35-34.

THE TIMID WOMAN'S TOUCH.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Be not afraid, only believe."—Mark 5: 36.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE SUFFERER.—25. A certain woman. Nothing is known of her. Which had an issue of blood. The disease involved uncleanness, according to the ceremonial law, and on the part of the sufferer a sense of shame as well as fear.

26. And had suffered many things of (lit. under, i. e., under the hands of) many physicians. She had tried every remedy from every source in vain. And had spent all that she had. Doctors' bills are not a modern invention. But it does not follow that the doctors here spoken of were good-for-nothing, because they could not cure this woman. There are incurable cases of disease now-a-days.

II. THE BETTER A PHYSICIAN IS, THE SURFER HE WILL BE TO ADMIT THAT HE CANNOT ALWAYS GIVE CURE OR RELIEF TO A PATIENT. IT IS ONLY THE GOOD-FOR-NOTHING PHYSICIAN WHO ADVERTISES THAT HE CURES ALL DISEASES.

III. THE PARABLE OF THE SINNER SEEKING TO BE SAVED IS SEEN IN THIS WOMAN'S CIRCUMSTANCES. (1) A real, deep-seated malady, exhausting the strength, depressing the spirits.

(2) The malady of sin separates, defiles, and imparts defilement to others. (3) All efforts to cure it ourselves are vain. Morality, good resolutions, ceremonies, forms, self-inflicted tortures, are all "physicians of no value."

(4) Even when people are so earnest that they spend all they have in such ways, the effort is fruitless. (5) When she had heard of Jesus. Heard what a wonderful being, and in particular what a wonderful healer, he was. Came in the press (or crowd) behind; secretly, so as to be unseen by Jesus, and have no attention called to herself. She would seem but one of an ordinary crowd. And touched his garment. Matthew says the hem of his garment; i. e., the border or fringe of the outer robe.

28. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be healed. Her faith was on his way to heal by his presence and touch, one who was at the point of death.

29. Straightway. The cure was prompt, immediate, complete. Was dried up. fell in her body that she was healed. The first clause tells of the cessation of the ordinary symptoms of her disease: this points to a new sense of health.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HER FAITH. (1) It was well founded. She knew what Jesus had done for others, and therefore could do for others. It was as far from credulity as from superstition. (2) It was a faith in the true Saviour, the Son of God.

(3) It was faith that used means. It led her to go to Jesus and to touch Him. So the faith referred to in James 2: 14, was conjoined with the use of means; for the anointing with oil was among the most sensible remedies then used. (4) Her faith was so strong that it overcame the natural timidity of her nature. (5) It overcame many outward obstacles. (See above.) (6) It was successful and triumphant faith, approved of God. (7) It led her to a public confession, an open avowal of Christ.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH. 30. And Jesus immediately knowing in Himself that virtue (or healing power) had gone out of Him, or, as in Rev. Ver., that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth. The power was neither unconscious nor unwillful on His part. It was caused by her faith, not by her touch. Who touched My clothes? Not because He was ignorant, for His searching glance showed to the woman that she was hid from Him (Luke 8: 47); but to draw out her confession of her faith.

WHY THIS QUESTION? Jesus could not leave the woman with half of a gift. If she had been allowed to carry away her blessing in secret as she purposed it could not have been at all the blessing to her and to her whole after Spiritual Life that it now was. Christ will have Himself openly confessed, and not only secretly sought. Our Christian life is not as it is sometimes called, merely a thing between ourselves and God, but a good confession to be witnessed "before all the people."

31. And His disciples said. "Peter and they that were with Him." (Luke 8: 45). But Jesus affirmed that some one had touched Him, implying a touch of intention and faith, and not a mere thoughtless accidental pressing of the multitude. Who touched Me? The crowd touched Jesus and received no healing influence. The woman touched Him in faith, and was made whole. Christ has untold blessings for all; but what men receive from Him depends on the faith and love with which they come to Him.

32. And He looked round about to see (not who had touched Him, but) her that had done this thing. The tense of the Greek verb implies a continued looking. It is implied that He knew who had done it.

33. But the woman. Each word indicates the inward struggle of the woman. She knew that what had been done in her was a result of her own act, without permission from Jesus, and she could scarcely hope that the faith which suggested it would be accepted as genuine. Fearing and trembling. As if she had

lost her recovery. Perhaps the woman feared Christ's anger. His rebuke rebelling him by her touch. She feared and trembled from an overwhelming sense of unworthiness. Knowing what was done in her. A sense of her cure brought her forward to testify to and for Christ. So always the sense of pardon and acceptance will lead a trembling believer to full confession and to an open testimony for Christ. It will embolden the timid to speak of the Gospel, even before crowds. Told Him all the truth. This, though it tried the modesty of the believing woman, was just what Christ wanted, her public testimony to the facts of her case.

34. And He said unto her, Daughter: Matthew adds, Be of good comfort; or, "Courage, daughter." "Daughter" in this figurative and kindly use appears nowhere in the New Testament save in this narrative. What wealth of goodness! everything on earth is paltry before such a word. Thy faith hath made thee whole. Literally, hath saved thee. In the higher and in the lower sense, soul and body. Her faith, of course, had not been the efficient cause of her cure, but it was the necessary condition, even in timid and retiring natures, faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, if only it be living like a seed, is saving faith. Go in peace. Literally, into peace. Exactly the form of an oriental "good-bye." In peace, not in fear; not with a troubled conscience; not with anxiety, lest the malady return, but into the peace of hope, of health, of friendship with Jesus, of salvation.

WHY FAITH IS NECESSARY TO SALVATION. (1) Faith is the act of receiving the truth. It can only enjoy forgiveness and the love of God unless we believe the message Jesus brings. (2) Faith in Jesus leads us to love Him. (3) Faith is the act of the soul which gives itself to Jesus as Lord, and Saviour, and Leader; this is salvation. (4) One cannot live the religious life without that faith which makes eternal and spiritual things real and trust in God as Father and Friend.

A SWISS STORY.

A group of young men were standing one morning in April on the banks of the river Aar, within the quiet old Swiss town of Berne. There was Johann Leid, the baker's son and Fritz Bund, the wood carver, and half a dozen others, with their sisters and sweethearts.

Bound, as usual, was loud-mouthed and voluble. He talked with one eye on the girls, to see the effect. "What do you say to a race, boys? There is Johann Leid with his big muscles. I can outrun or throw you in five minutes, Leid."

Leid nodded, threw off his coat, and was beaten in both race and wrestle. He was a big, sheepish-looking fellow, and grew red with anger. "If you want to look well in Jeannette's eyes," he muttered, "it is Nicholas Voss you should throw, not me. She thinks more of his little finger than of your whole biggart body."

Bund was enraged. Everybody saw that plainly. He looked at Jeannette, standing with the other girls like a modest little rose among daunting dahlias. Nicholas Voss was playing with his dog on the other side of the hill. He was a quiet, undersized fellow, the son of the schoolmaster.

"Throw Voss! I could do it with one hand. No credit in that. The fellow has no more strength than a girl, poring over his books. I'll put him to a test that'll show his little finger shall see the stuff the baby is made of. Hey, Voss," he shouted.

Nicholas came over, smiling, but coloring a little as he passed the girls. He was a diffident, awkward lad, and felt his arm and leg heavy and in the way whenever a woman looked at him. "Come, girls!" cried Bund. The girls drew nearer, shy but curious.

"Here's a question of courage to be settled. Leid wants me to try a throw with Voss; but it wouldn't be fair, for I could fling him with my finger, and blow him over with that matter." Voss changed color. He played nervously with the dog's collar. He knew that it was true that he could not compete with Bund in a trial of strength. But it was hard to be told before little Jeannette, too.

"But there's something Voss can do as well as I." "What is it?" cried Nicholas eagerly. "You can swim. Come jump into the river yonder with me, and see which of us can reach the other shore!" The girls looked at the river. It was swollen with the spring floods, and filled with great lumps of ice which crushed and tore each other as they went rushing by.

"Ah, that would be a brave deed!" they said, looking admiringly at Bund. He looked and turned away with a shudder. "Well done, Bund," said the other lads. "There's no cowardice in Bund, that's certain."

Bund tore off his woolen jacket and boots, straightened himself and clapped his hands. He was not sorry that the girls should see his broad chest and embroidered braces. "Come, little one, off with your coat! You're a famous swimmer—and Jeannette is looking," under his breath, with an angry flash in his eye.

Nicholas looked at the lads waiting, and at the excited, silly girls, and then at the icy river. He did not trust himself to look at Jeannette. In summer he had often swam the Aar at this very point. But his lungs were weak. He could not bear the slightest exposure; to plunge into this flood would be to plunge into death—and for no purpose but to gratify the pride of a vaporing, idle fellow.

"Come, come!" cried Bund. "Afraid, eh?" The lads and girls looked at Voss. Even Jeannette's eyes were fixed curiously on him. "I am not going to swim," he said. "If he had bluffed it out in a strident, jocular voice, he might have carried the day. But he was painfully conscious that they all thought him a coward. He was a sensitive lad, and it cut him to the quick."

and a "bonnet," he said to Jeannette, loud enough for Voss to hear. Voss turned away, and went hastily down the road. He was bitter and angry, and would not go home to his father in that mood. He went to the bear-pits. Now, everybody knows that bears are a sort of sacred animal to the Bernese; and Nicholas, like his neighbors, took a keen delight in watching the great sluggish beasts in the pits. But he had no pride in them now; in fact, though he leered over the barrier and looked with the crowd, he did not see them at all.

There were many strangers there that day, principally English travellers and Americans. Their children were climbing about the edge of the pit, as no Bernese child would dare to do. "Take care, youngsters!" cried a workman. "They are fierce—those monsters down there. An English officer fell in last spring; and though he fought for his life, that big fellow killed him."

"Ach! See his red eyes, the murderer!" cried a woman. "The crowd surged and pressed against the barrier. Voss was almost crushed upon its edge. For a moment there was a silence like death, as people looked, with straining eyes into the darkness below. Then they saw the little white heap close to the wall of the pit. Two of the smaller bears were snuffing curiously. The monster that had killed the Englishman was slowly gathering up his forces, as if to attack with a child in her arms, stood on tiptoe to leap farther over. There was a push, a scream—

"The child! Ach Gott! It is gone!" The crowd surged and pressed against the barrier. Voss was almost crushed upon its edge. For a moment there was a silence like death, as people looked, with straining eyes into the darkness below. Then they saw the little white heap close to the wall of the pit. Two of the smaller bears were snuffing curiously. The monster that had killed the Englishman was slowly gathering up his forces, as if to attack with a child in her arms, stood on tiptoe to leap farther over. There was a push, a scream—

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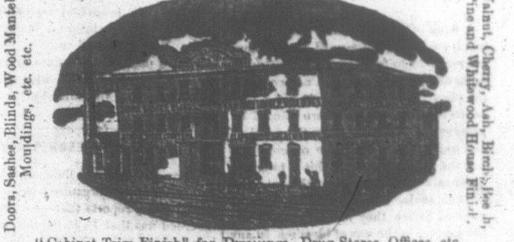


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