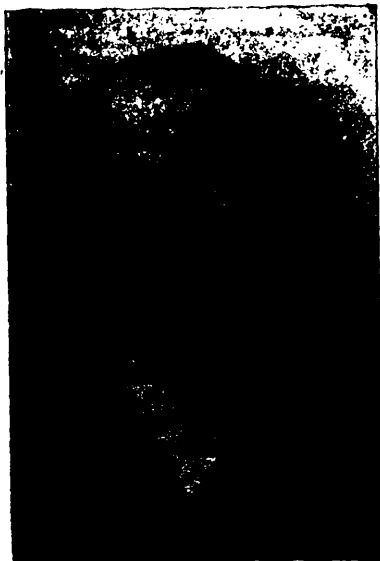


eateth with them." The parables all bear upon this one point, that of the lost sheep, the lost money, the lost son, and the son that thought himself not lost, and should be treated accordingly. Frequently, however, the dominant thought must be discovered by a comparison of the lesson with parallel records and a diligent study of the preceding and following contexts. No effort should be considered too arduous to make this discovery, for, unless the central thought is found and adhered to, grievous injustice may be done to the sacred writer and the truth of God. I have heard, for example, three sermons on the words: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2: 3), in which the preachers insisted upon the greatness of the sal-



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vation instead of the precise truth urged by the writer, viz., the utter impossibility of escape on condition of neglect.

3. The arrangement of the matter of instruction is an essential part of preparation. Here the main thought must stand as the title or theme of the lesson, and the rest must be placed in natural or logical order as supporting it. For example, the Saviour "spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18: 1). Persistent perseverance in prayer is the great truth here ac-

centuated, and all the incidents and drapery of the parable must be interpreted as enforcing this idea. Other lessons or inferences may occur to the teacher, but these should not be allowed to withdraw attention from or to obscure the dominant one.

Revision of the statement and order of subordinate thoughts, as first noted, will always be necessary, and in this work the teacher should, in the first instance, be self-reliant, acting on his own judgment; but, having finished, having exhausted his own resources of thought, he may now, with advantage, consult the best "Helps" at his command. In doing this he should be careful to safeguard his inalienable right of independent thought. Let him not, therefore, lightly set aside what has been impressively borne in upon his own consciousness as the result of prayerful searching of the Bible. The original teacher who makes and follows his own lesson plan, instead of copying one from a Sunday-school paper, and who speaks from the abundance of his own heart, from the treasures of personal Christian experience, is the one who wields power and moulds character.

4. Practical lessons bearing wisely upon the spiritual state and conduct of pupils should be carefully formulated. This implies that his class, and each member of it, is much in the prayerful thought of the teacher. Week by week this is the case, and, therefore, he is never aimless or unexpectant of results. These lessons should be clear and pointed, tersely expressed in words which the child can readily understand. They should rise naturally out of the heart of the subject taught, and be introduced in the course of teaching or reserved to the end. They should never be far-fetched or unduly multiplied. The neglect of this rule is confusing to pupils and apt to engender the thought that a skillful interpreter can make the word of God mean anything he pleases.

5. Vivid and apt illustrations should be framed or selected. The best are those drawn from the Bible, because they carry with them the instructiveness and authority of divine truth. Stories taken from fiction and the daily press should not be allowed to displace the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of illustrations is to make the truth plain, convincing and memorable. When they fail in these respects they are an en-