

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Third Quarter.

DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS.

Lesson V.—July 30. Daniel 6: 10-23.

Read Chapter 6.

Commit Verses 21-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.

The Lord is thy keeper, Psa. 121: 5.

EXPLANATORY.

DANIEL GOES STRAIGHT ON IN THE WAY OF DUTY.—V. 10. NOW WHEN DANIEL KNEW THAT THE WRITING WAS SIGNED. It made no difference as to his conduct. It would not have done to swerve a hair's breadth. He could have prayed in secret, and been heard by God, but that course would have been a public confession of want of faith in God, and of yielding to the enemy. He would say as Nehemiah said to Shemshai, "Should such a man as I see?" (Neh. 6: 11). Daniel made no show of his religion, but simply went on his daily path of life, as if no such order had been given. WINDOWS BEING OPEN . . . TOWARD JERUSALEM. "With his face toward Jerusalem, the seat of the temple, where Jehovah was peculiarly present,—an attitude still observed by Jews all over the world; as all Mohammedans, in the same way, turn their face in prayer towards Mecca.

KNEELED UPON HIS KNEES. A fitting attitude for humble prayer, favoring the spirit of devotion. THREE TIMES A DAY. Like the psalmist (Psa. 55: 17). Morning and evening were the times of the daily sacrifice in which the incense symbolized, and was accompanied by, prayer.

Note the two kinds of prayer, petition and thanksgiving; both elements of all true prayer. AS HE DID AFORETIME. He simply made no change in his habits and plans.

THE TRAP SPRUNG.—Vs. 11-15. THEN THESE MEN. The princes who had been plotting against Daniel. ASSEMBLED. "As in v. 6, 'assembled or ran hastily,' so as to come upon Daniel suddenly and detect him in the act." Or, assembled together to receive and also to set upon the proofs of Daniel's conduct.

AND SPAKE BEFORE THE KING. . . HAST THOU NOT, etc. As, soon as they had the proofs they presented them to the king. THE LAW OF THE MIDES AND PERSIANS, WHICH ALTHOUGH NOT. In this two principles are involved: one, the existence of a settled law or rule by which the king himself, theoretically at any rate, is bound, and which he cannot alter; the other, the inclusion, under this law or rule, of the irrevocability of a royal decree or promise.

13. The leaders were now sure of their case. Every door of escape was shut against Daniel. They had simply to announce to the king that Daniel was guilty.

14. THEN THE KING. . . WAS SORE DISPLEASED. . . AND HE LABORED TILL THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN TO DELIVER HIM. But he failed on account of the unalterable law. "Yet the strenuous action which he afterwards adopted shows that he might, even then, have acted on the principle which the Magi laid down to Cambyses, son of Cyrus, that 'the king can do no wrong.' There seems to be no reason why he should not have told these 'tumultuous' princes that if they interfered with Daniel they should be flung into the lions' den. This would probably have altered their opinion as to pressing the royal infallibility of irrevocable decrees."

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.—Vs. 16-18. 16. THEY BROUGHT DANIEL AND CAST HIM INTO THE DEN OF LIONS. This was according to Oriental custom on the evening of the same day. The story of the den of lions is strictly in keeping with Babylonian usages. Asurbanipal says in his annals, "The rest of the people I threw alive into the midst of the bulls and lions, as Sennacherib, my grandfather, used to do."

The dens in which wild beasts are confined are not cavernous, or vaults, like those in which the Romans kept the wild beasts in readiness for the cruelties of the amphitheater. They are simply pits open to the sky, but enclosed with high walls. The Babylonian den might be like these, or it might be a cave with an enclosure round it. A similar pit for bears is seen in Bern, Switzerland, where the bears' den is one of the attractions, the bear being the heraldic emblem of Bern. On its curious clock-tower a troop of bears marches in procession around a sitting figure, two minutes before each hour.

THE KING SPAKE. As they were putting Daniel into the den. WHOM THOU SERVEST CONTINUALLY. A precious testimony to the religious character and fidelity of the prophet. (Compare Matt. 27: 43;

John 18: 38). HE WILL DELIVER THEE, or, "may he deliver thee." As he had, in former times at Babylon, delivered both Daniel and others. I cannot help you, but your God can, for he has proved his willingness and power.

17. STONE . . . LAID UPON THE MOUTH OF THE DEN. The mouth was the door through which the animals were put into the den. "A great stone is still an ordinary way of securing a doorway in the East, as we know it was for closing tombs." SRALED IT WITH HIS OWN SIGNET. "If the access to the lions' den was arranged like that of a sepulcher, a bar would be fixed across the front of the stone, fastened to either side of the doorway by thongs, the knotting of which was sealed with wax stamped with a signet.

18. THE KING . . . PASSED THE NIGHT FASTING. The idea that lies at the basis of fasting is grief so deep that it takes away the desire for food. The king was grieved at the loss of Daniel, but that grief was greatly increased by his consciousness that the evil came upon him through his own weakness and sin. Prayer for Daniel's safety was doubtless joined with his fasting. NEITHER WERE INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC. For his enjoyment. The word for instruments is of uncertain origin and meaning. "Concubines" is the probable rendering.

THE DELIVERANCE.—Vs. 19-23. 19. THE KING AROSE VERY EARLY. Literally, "in the dawning, in the glimmer of morning." Arose with trepidation as well as haste; so the word implies.

20. SERVEST CONTINUALLY. "Perseverance is the only virtue that cannot be counterfeited." Such service must be sincere and strong. ABLE TO DELIVER. No doubt he was able. The only real question was whether, in God's wisdom, it was best to deliver him in this way, or to hasten his reward in the unspeakable joys of his heavenly home.

21. MY GOD HATH SENT HIS ANGEL. It is no more absurd to suppose that God employs angels to defend his people, or to impart blessings, than that he employs one human being to convey important blessings to another. (See Heb. 1: 14). "So Daniel had company in the den of lions." "No music nor gladness in the palace, but celestial joy in the intercourse between Daniel and the angel in the den."

INNOCENCY WAS FOUND IN ME. Daniel declares that he had been faithful to God and to the king, and hence God had seen fit to deliver him. It was God's endorsement of his character. His faithfulness would have shown God's power, and commended Him to men, even if Daniel had died as a martyr. But the deliverance was an open declaration that God was on Daniel's side.

23. BECAUSE HE BELIEVED and had shown it by doing right at all costs. God never fails those who trust in him.

Making Friends.

My animal family consists of a dog and a cat, says a writer in Our Animal Friends. The dog is a long-time pet; the kitten is a new-comer. I hesitated to take her because Dick detested cats, but this kitten was a diplomatist, and she and Dick became fast friends. Just after her arrival Dick went to sleep on a large rug in the sitting room, after curling himself round so that there was a little vacant circle between his body and his legs. The cat, who had been playing at my feet, grew tired and looked about for a sleeping place.

Suddenly she spied Dick, and her indecision vanished. With the greatest deliberation she curled herself up in the circle of his legs and went to sleep.

Presently Dick awoke. He raised his head lazily, and was about to drop it again when he caught sight of the cat. I shall never forget the comical look that came into his eyes. No human countenance ever expressed utter astonishment more

CONSUMPTION

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plainly than Dick's. For several moments he gazed at the cat as if doubting the evidence of his senses, too much bewildered to bark. Then he slowly reached over and gently nipped the cat's ear.

Cutter gave her head a shake, as if to dislodge a fly, and slept on. Then Dick, who seemed to be experimenting, gave the ear a harder nip. This time Cutter started out of her sleep, raised her head, comprehended the cause of her trouble, promptly clawed the dog's nose with one little paw, and straightway resumed her sleep.

For the next five minutes Dick's face was a study as he lay looking at her. Then evidently giving up the puzzle, he lay down and slept too.

Pain.

Alas! no spot of ground In all the world to grow a thornless rose Can anywhere be found; Beside the fairest path some bramble grows.

Unpossessed in all delight A sorrow lurks; there hides a haunting fear By every hearthstone bright; There is no check unmoistened by a tear.

And is all sorrow vain? Nay! rather but a part of God's design, The ministry of pain, That lends to life a purpose more divine.

Not vain; for this I hold: An equal good shall every ill requite, Though ills be manifold; There were no heaven of stars without the night.

So ever must it be: That every loss some compensation waits, Our clearer sight shall see; Our evils are our only Evil Fates.

—(B. Hathaway in Boston Budget.

He Leadeth Them Out.

A day of summer beauty, The earth with sunshine bright, Sweet flowers, glad insects humming, Joy in the golden light. Yet on my heart a shadow, A gathering cloud of fear— When came this precious promise From Unseen Presence near: "He leadeth them out."

Going before, He leadeth Unto fair pasture green; By sweet, still waters flowing, 'Neath soft, blue skies serene. Out of earth's strife and tempest Into a hallowed calm, When His own peace is hovering And all the air is balm, "He leadeth them out."

Oh, living hand, still leading Through all the unknown way, Where darkness falls around me, Dimming hope's cheering ray; How dear, amid the darkness, The prison hours of fear.

To know that Thou art with me— The Shepherd's voice to hear, "He leadeth them out."

Out of all sorrow leadeth, By tender, nail-pierced hand, Giving me strength for weakness In this oft-weary land. Out of myself and evil, Into a larger place, To dwell with Him forever. In glory see His face, "He leadeth me out." —(Rhebe A. Holder.

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