

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON IV.—A LESSON ON FORGIVENESS.—APRIL 24.

(Matt. xviii : 21-35.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."—Luke vi. 37.

TIME AND PLACE.—Autumn A.D. 29. Capernaum.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Glory of Jesus. II. The Witness from Heaven. III. The amazed Disciples.

INTRODUCTION.—The time of the present lesson cannot be exactly determined, but it was probably not long after the transfiguration. Our Lord had returned with His disciples from His journey to Caesarea, and was now at Capernaum; and in this eighteenth chapter we find various instructions given to His disciples alone concerning the Kingdom of God. Jesus had been speaking to His disciples of humility and of forgiveness, when interrupted by the question of Peter in the first verse of this lesson.

VERSE BY VERSE.—21. "Then came Peter."—Peter comes forward with a half question based upon a half view of human nature. "Sin against me."—It never occurred to Peter that he might sin against his brother. "Till seven times."—The Jewish rabbis based the duty of forgiveness three times and no more upon Amos i. 3, ii. 6. Peter, in Christian charity, increased the number to seven.

22. "Seventy times seven."—This would be four hundred and ninety times, but this stands for an unlimited number. We are always to forgive.

23. "The kingdom of heaven likened."—Certain principles of the kingdom of heaven and its administration are illustrated in this parable, which is usually called the parable of "The Unmerciful Servant." "Take account."—Make a reckoning, or, as we should now say, have a settlement.

24. "Ten thousand talents."—This has been variously estimated in our money as from \$9,000,000 to \$15,000,000, but it stands for a debt of such great proportions that there could be no hope of its ever being paid—so illustrating the sinner's debt to God.

25. "Worshipped him."—That is, rendered that homage which the custom of oriental courts required.

27. "Loosed him."—Set him free.

28. "An hundred pence."—About \$15; a mere trifle as compared with the debt which had just been forgiven him.

29. "Will pay thee all."—There was reasonable expectation that this promise might be kept.

30. "Cast him into prison."—Thus using the most extreme measures in his power.

32. "Because thou desiredst me."—Not because he had done anything to deserve it, or because of his promises, but out of pure compassion.

34. "The tormentors."—Those who should torture him until he should pay.

35. "From your hearts."—Forgiveness in words only is valueless. It must come from the heart to be acceptable to God.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—A Lesson on Childlikeness.—Matt. xviii. 1-20

Second Day—A Lesson on Forgiveness.—Matt. xviii. 21-35.

Third Day—"Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."—Luke vi. 27-38.

Fourth Day—"If he repent, forgive him."—Luke xvii. 1-10.

Fifth Day—"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another."—Col. iii. 1-17.

Sixth Day—"We should . . . love one another."—1 John iii. 10-24.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, April 24.—"Habits."—Prov. vi. 6-11; xii. 14-25; Luke iv. 16.

HABITS.

The diminutive chains of habit are generally too small to be felt, till they are too strong to be broken.—Dr. Johnston.

Habit, if not resisted, soon becomes necessity.—St. Augustine.

Like little flakes of snow that fall unperceived upon the earth, the seemingly unimportant events of life succeed one another. As the snow gathers together, so are our habits formed: no single flake that is added to the pile produces a sensible change; no single flake creates, however it may exhibit, a man's character; but as the tempest hurls the avalanche down the mountain, and overwhelms the inhabitant and his habitation, so passion, acting upon the elements of mischief, which pernicious habits have brought together by imperceptible accumulation, may overwhelm the edifice of truth and virtue.—J. Heatham.

There is nothing more perennial in us than these two, habit and

imitation. They are the source of working and all apprenticeship, of all practice and all learning, in this world.—T. Carlyle.

Prayer is the best of all habits to practice, because by asking God to help you in everything you will get wisdom to choose what is good, and you will get strength to do it. Other good habits will be easy if you practice this. They are like the branches, this is like the stem out of which the branches grow.

The miller does not observe the noise of his own mill.—C. H. Spurgeon.

Small habits well pursued betimes,
May reach the dignity of crimes.

Hannah More.

BAD HABITS.

Any bad habits which we may have once formed will, if let alone, prove to be great impediments to us in our Christian career. They have been allowed, perhaps, to grow up with our growth, and have almost become part of ourselves, and, now that we desire to follow Christ, they are still ready to cling to us, and we find it hard to shake them off.

The heart is so treacherous and deceitful, that it will often shelter itself under a willing ignorance of what its besetting sins and dangers may be. Let me name a few bad habits, by one or more of which it is possible you may be entangled, leaving it to your own conscience to make the application.

A habit of wasting time in idle gossip.

A habit of listlessness when reading God's word.

A habit of slothfulness, and indulgence in sleep, and so hurrying over the morning devotions.

A habit of putting off what ought to be done at the moment.

A habit of disputing and contradicting.

A habit of exaggerating and coloring reports when you repeat them.

A habit of allowing your eyes and thoughts to wander when in the house of God.

A habit of peevish fretfulness, when we ought to be contented and thankful.

A habit of "building castles in the air."

A habit of spying out the faults and imperfections of others.

Here I have mentioned a few bad habits, others will readily occur to you. Perhaps some one of them may have long proved a snare to you. It may cling very tightly and you may fancy that it is almost impossible to shake it off. But if you would grow in grace it must be parted with.

It is true. You can never release yourself, if you rely upon your own power. But God will supply you with strength in answer to your earnest prayer.

MISSION WORK IN FORMOSA.

(Continued.)

Day after day they were getting more aroused; and the third day, in the middle of the afternoon, they began to twist their queues around their heads, and tie up their clothes around their waists, ready for action. One man threw a stone at the building, and then, if you have ever seen an angry Chinese crowd! It baffles description. The Chinaman is easily excited, and is ungovernable when enraged. Then they pulled the building down, carried it away, and took up even the very foundation. I directly walked with the students into a building right opposite. The owner of that inn came with tears in his eyes and begged us to leave. The British consul came again, and a mandarin, in his large chair. The mandarin told the consul to order me out of the city, but the latter said he had no right to do that. I felt that Jesus was my Master, and He had said, "Go preach the Gospel." When the consul started to leave they yelled and screamed at him with contempt. I walked with him as he bravely stepped out of the city. The mandarin then tried another way—begging and begging that I would also leave the city. I showed him my telescope and my Bible, and told him I was there in obedience to my Master. He wrote officially to say that he would put up a building outside of the city for me if I would go there; but we had planted stations outside of the city already, and now we determined to plant our standard inside its gates. Finally, we had another building put up on the very site of the one that had been torn down, not an inch from it one way or the other. That also was pulled down, and then we erected a larger one near it, and that shared the same fate. But there now, in Hang kah, we have a church with a spire! There is a great change. We see what God has wrought. Dark, proud, ignorant Hang kah, with all its bigotry, welcomes the worship of the living God. Some of the same headmen who at that time stirred up that mob of four thousand, who gathered around to kill us, called the people together a short time ago, and said:—"The Missionary is now going to leave us to visit his native land, and we must show him what the meaning of our heart is." The people had done what they chose in village, town