

LESSON IV.—April 24th, 1898.

A LESSON ON FORGIVENESS. Matt. 18: 21-35.

Read chapter 18. Commit vs. 21, 22.

21 Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would make a reckoning with his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 And the Lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest.

29 So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due.

31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besougest me.

33 Shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due.

35 So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts,

HELPS TO GET THE LESSON.

Jesus had been talking to the disciples about what they were to do when others did wrong to them. The Rabbis taught that they should forgive three times and no more. Peter knew that Christ's teaching was different in many things, and now he wishes to know exactly how often he is to forgive, according to Christ's law, so he asks the question which leads Christ to speak the parable of this lesson.

21. Until seven times.—Seven was often used to mean a perfect number, and Peter thought that it could not be more than seven.

22. Seventy times seven.—The margin of the revised version gives seventy times and seven. Jesus does not mean that one is to forgive either 77 times or 490 times and then stop. It is his way of saying to Peter and to us that one should always have the forgiving spirit and be ready to forgive when there is occasion for it. Then he speaks a parable showing how much God forgives us compared with the little we forgive one another, and showing that we must forgive if we would be forgiven.

23.—Would take account.—Eastern kings used to place men as rulers over different parts of their country, on condition of receiving a certain amount of taxes. These men would gather the taxes from the people to pay the king. This king calls his rulers to see if each one has paid what he should. The king in the parable represents God.

24. One owed him.—This one had either not collected his taxes or he had kept for his own use what he should have paid to his king, and it had come to be a very large sum. In building the tabernacle 29 talents of gold was used, Ex. 38:24. David prepared for the temple 3,000 talents of gold, and the princes 5,000. 1 Chron. 29:4-7. The queen of Sheba gave to Solomon 120 talents. But here

is ten thousand talents. By this immense sum Jesus pictures the debt the sinner owes to God, a debt he can never pay.

25. To be sold.—This picture is taken from Eastern heathen nations, and not from Jewish customs. The laws that God gave Moses did not allow one to put another in prison or to sell him into slavery.

26. I will pay thee all.—He could never fulfil such a promise, but in his hopelessness was ready to offer anything.

27. Moved with compassion.—The truth taught here is the greatness of God's pity. The debt was great. The pity was greater, God is ready to forgive the greatest sinner who truly repents. The King could not see his servants heart and did not know how hard it was, or he might not have forgiven. God knows our hearts and only forgives when we turn to him in the right spirit, ready to forgive as we ask to be forgiven.

28. Fellow servant.—An officer under him who had not paid in all his dues.

29. An hundred pence.—The Saviour here teaches how small are the things we have to forgive one another, beside what God has to forgive us. "Pay me that thou owest." He showed that he had no true idea of forgiveness.

31. Fellow servants.—"These are the praying people of God, who plead with him against oppression and tyranny.

34. To the tormentors.—He was to have been sold into slavery, but now his punishment is very much greater. Words can hardly tell the horrors of prison life among nations that are not Christian. "Till he should pay." He could never pay.

35. If ye forgive not.—So long as we do not forgive, we are doing that which God hates, and he cannot be pleased with us. The forgiving spirit is necessary to being forgiven.