



LESSON IV.—OCTOBER 28.

**The Prodigal Son.**Luke xv., 11-24. Memory verses, 20-24.  
Read Luke xv.**Daily Readings.**

M. Ungrateful.—II. Sam. xv., 1-23.  
T. Destroyed.—II. Sam. xviii., 1-17.  
W. A Father.—II. Sam. xviii., 18-33.  
T. Our Father.—Ps. ciii., 1-18.  
F. Our Sonship.—Rom. viii., 1-18.  
S. Prodigal.—Luke xv., 11-24.

**Golden Text.**

'I will arise and go to my Father.'—Luke xv., 18.

**Lesson Text.**

(11) And he said, A certain man had two sons: (12) And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portioned unto them his living. (13) And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. (14) And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. (15) And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. (16) And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. (17) And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (18) I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, (19) And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. (20) And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. (21) And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (22) But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: (23) And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

**Suggestions.**

The parable of the lost son and the loving father is the best known, the most exquisite, the most tenderly real of all parables. In its three striking sketches humanity is vividly portrayed, first its yielding to the powerful allurements of sin, and self-indulgence, second in its reaping the fruits of sin and selfishness, third in its repentance and turning to God, and its reception by the loving Father.

Who comes to God one inch,  
Through doubtings dim—  
In blazing light,  
God will advance toward him.

The whole gospel is set forth in this short story of sin, repentance, confession to God, and forgiveness from him. The robe, the ring and the feasting are none too bright as illustrations of the joys of salvation through Jesus Christ. The first picture is that of a young soul with treasures of mind and heart, talents bestowed by God only for use in his kingdom, this soul with the rich inheritance determined to use its riches only for its own self-gratification, deliberately turns its back on God and wanders far away in the pursuit of pleasure. When a little child wanders away from home on a bright sunny day it has no fear of being lost, it is not until the child begins to feel hungry or lonely or afraid that it begins to

want its home—it does not realise its lost condition until it begins to be in want. So with the soul, as long as the sun of prosperity shines it feels safe and happy and self-reliant, but as soon as the darkness of sorrow, the storms of adversity, or the heart hunger occasioned by bereavement, overtake it, it begins to be in want of higher satisfaction, and the strain of want may be the blessed means used by God to bring it to the realization of its lost condition. As Spurgeon says:—

'From the right hand of God our Lord Jesus rules all things here below, and makes them work together for the salvation of his redeemed. He uses both bitters and sweets, trials and joys, that he may produce in sinners a better mind towards their God. Be thankful for the providence which has made you poor, or sick, or sad; for by all this Jesus works the life of your spirit and turns you to himself. The Lord's mercy often rides to the door of our hearts on the black horse of affliction. Jesus uses the whole range of our experience to wean us from earth and woo us to heaven. Christ is exalted to the throne of heaven and earth in order that, by all the processes of his providence, he may subdue hard hearts unto the gracious softening of repentance.

How vain the delusion that, while you de-  
lay,  
Your hearts may grow better, your chains  
melt away:  
Come guilty, come wretched, come just as  
you are,  
All helpless and dying, to Jesus repair.

When the prodigal son had spent all his treasure, penniless, friendless, forlorn and hungry, he was willing to take even the place of a swine-herd so that he might have some shelter, however filthy, and some food, however dry and miserable. In this extremity he was one who had long lain in a stupor, lulled to sleep by the siren voice of sensuous indulgence, waking to find himself robbed and enervated, deserted and helpless. When he came to himself, realizing his misery and degradation, his first thought was of his father's house—would that father, whom he had deliberately turned his back upon, whose loving heart he had so deeply wounded, who had already given him all that he could reasonably expect—would that father receive him back now or give him any help? Reason says no, but faith with quick assurance answers yes, and with penitence and humility the man starts out to find his father, the soul sets out to find its home.

Notice the first phase of the confession: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. All sin strikes first at heaven, for it is rebellion against the holiness of God. No sin is so small that it cannot offend God. All sin strikes second at humanity, sin means separation, and each unrepented sin makes wider the breach between God and the human race. Every sin committed increases the power of evil in the world and makes it harder for other souls to resist temptation. If you cut your finger it may hurt, but you can bear all the consequences yourself, if you tell a lie it will hurt you by making you less able to resist temptation, but it will first hurt God because you have defied his law of truth, and then it will hurt the whole world because you have added to the force of falsehood in the world. Even an offence against yourself is an offence against God, because he created you and owns you. If you think a false or impure thought you pollute your mind, which is meant to be clear and bright and to reflect the likeness of God. If you take strong drink or tobacco or opium you pollute your body, which should be kept clean and upright, as it is the temple which God has created for his own habitation. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' (I. Cor. iii., 16, 17.)

When the prodigal son came in sight of his father's house, though still a long way off, the father saw him and ran to meet him. God is on the lookout for homesick sinners, through the blood of Jesus they may claim his instant recognition and forgiveness. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took the place of guilty humanity and by his death atoned for the sins of the whole world, but only by accepting that atonement

and pleading for pardon through the merits of Jesus Christ's death can we take our place as the sons of God and be received with joy by our loving heavenly Father, 'who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' (I. John I., 10; ii., 1, 2; II. Pet. iii., 9; John iii., 16, 18.)

**Questions.**

Repeat the parable of the prodigal son.

What relation has this to the two preceding parables?

Can any pleasure be permanent apart from God?

Is 'having your own way' likely to bring success and honor?

Is sorrow ever a thing to be thankful for?

Will God accept any soul on its own merit?

How can we call God our Father?

Can our Father reject anyone who comes pleading for forgiveness for Jesus's sake?

**Junior C. E. Topic.****WORRY.**

Mon., Oct. 22.—Worry is needless.—Luke xii., 28.

Tues., Oct. 23.—Worry is wearing.—Luke x., 41, 42.

Wed., Oct. 24.—The Christian can trust.—Ps. lvi., 3.

Thu., Oct. 25.—Be busy.—Prov. xxii., 29.

Fri., Oct. 26.—Be cheerful.—John xvi., 33.

Sat., Oct. 27.—Remember Jesus's way.—John xvii., 4.

Sun., Oct. 28.—Topic.—Do not worry.—Matt. vi., 25-34.

**C. E. Topic.**

Oct. 28.—Do not worry.—Matt. vi., 25-34.

**What Shall Be Done With Dullards?**

This problem presses itself not infrequently upon the minds of Sunday-school teachers. If they should consult their own comfort purely, an easy solution might be found by ridding the class of the presence of the unwelcome scholar. His mental dullness imposes so severe a strain upon the teacher's strength and patience, and so retards the progress of the class as a whole, that it does seem as if the best course to pursue is to get rid of him.

Yet after all it is questionable if that be the wisest plan. In our estimation to endure is far better. It may be, as often the past has proved, that out of the ranks of these very scholars, so dull and stupid, may spring many of the most useful, if not most eminent, men in the church of God. The race is not to the swift always, and in many instances the turtle outstrips the hare.

Said John Wesley's father to his mother one day: 'How can you have the patience to tell that blockhead the same thing twenty times over?' Her gentle reply was, 'If I had told him but nineteen times, all my labor would have been lost.' To the patient instruction of Susannah Wesley the world owes one of its most powerful preachers.

In dealing with blockheads in their classes teachers can well afford to follow the example of this untiring mother, letting patience have her perfect work.—'Baptist Teacher.'

**Keep the Children.**

We have the children in the Sunday-school at the age the most impressible. How great is our responsibility! A philanthropist of wide experience says that the male criminals of London have nearly all entered on their career of crime between the ages of eight and sixteen years, and that if a young man lives an honest life up to the age of twenty, there are forty-nine chances in his favor and only one against him as to an upright life thereafter. Another who visited our state's prison found that ninety percent of the inmates never attended Sunday-school. With these facts before us, ought we not to redouble our efforts not only to keep the children we now have in the Sunday-school, but to induce others to come? Parents should co-operate with the teachers in their efforts, and see to it that their children are in regular attendance.—Jennie Vorca.