

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

CONDUCTED BY S. JOHN DUNCAN-CLARK.

WORLD'S O. E. PRAYER CHAIN, SUBJECT FOR APRIL.—That Christians everywhere may realize the obligations of their stewardship, giving more generously and praying more earnestly for the conversion of the world.

Daily Readings.

SAVING SOULS.

First Day—With the Spirit's help—John iii. 1-8.
Second Day—By all means—1 Cor. ix. 14-23.
Third Day—Saved through the Bible—Acts xvii. 1-12.
Fourth Day—Saved through speech—Acts ii. 14-41.
Fifth Day—Saved by faith—Acts xvi. 16-34.
Sixth Day—Lost through drink—Lev. x. 1-11.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC—WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING TO SAVE THE LOST. Luke xv. 1-10.

No more important subject can possibly claim the attention of the Christian, than this one of saving souls. It is for this work that Christians have been saved; it is their chiefest duty and their highest privilege. While we accept this as true with our minds, how many of us spend our days as if we believed it in our hearts? One of the saddest thoughts that can come to us, is of the thousands of Christians who will appear before Jesus empty handed, with nothing to give Him but their own mean souls. And yet saving souls is the simplest service a Christian can find to do for Christ; because He has made everything ready, and only left it to us to give the invitation. We have not even the responsibility of awakening sinners to a sense of guilt; that is one of the special functions of the Holy Ghost. No, our part is but to say to the lost one "come," to point him to the Lamb, and leave the rest with every confidence to God. Yet even to do this we need more than what we have by nature. We must of course ourselves be saved, and then we must be yielded to the Holy Spirit's indwelling, if we would be able to give the invitation effectively. But all Christians may be and should be, by virtue of their profession, thus qualified; and if so what excuse have they for neglecting this great work? None, absolutely none. O, Christian Endeavorers let us awaken to our duty and privilege! You are missing the sweetest joy God gives you on earth, and failing to lay up treasure in heaven if you are not saving souls. Do not rest until you have tasted of this pleasure. Seek from God this privilege, and beginning in your home, your place of daily toil, or your social circle, do your part, give the invitation, point to Jesus, until you have reaped the first sheaf in a glorious harvest for eternity.

DOCTRINAL TEACHING.—How the message should be delivered, *Larger Catechism* 159.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

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International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON III—THE LOST FOUND—APRIL 19.

(Luke xv. 11-24).

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Likewise I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke xv. 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Father's Love.

ANALYSIS.—

THE PRODIGAL'S DEPARTURE, v. 11-13.
DESPAIR, v. 14-19.
THE FATHER'S DELIGHT, v. 20-24.

TIME AND PLACE.—January A. D. 20, in the country of Perea.

INTRODUCTORY.—The only record of events between last lesson and this one is found in Luke xiv. 25-15. 10. As Jesus continued His journey through Perea, after the parable of the Great Supper, He was accompanied by great multitudes. Addressing them, He taught very clearly the cost, requirements, and conditions of discipleship. The Pharisees and scribes complained because He received kindly and ate with the many publicans and despised outcasts who drew near to Him. In answer to these criticisms Jesus told the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 11. "A certain man."—This the phrase characteristic of the parables in Luke's Gospel, since it particularly deals with the human side of Christ's character.

V. 12. "Give me the portion of goods."—The young man wanted to strike out for himself and "see life," as does many a young man to-day; yet how often seeing life means seeing death, spiritual, moral, mental and physical. This phrase is the mock

ing ambition that drags many a youth to the very mouth of the pit.

V. 13. "A far country."—Moody says, "The farthest a Christian can get from Heaven is the world." We may be right at the door of the church, and yet be in a far country inasmuch as our communion with God is concerned. Our citizenship is in Heaven, and unless we are enjoying our privileges as Christians and dwelling in the Heavens even now with Christ, we must be living in a more or less distant land.

"Wasted his substance."—He had his treasure in the hand, not in head nor in heart; and it does not take a very clever person to squander the former. Let us see that we lay up our treasures in Heaven, and there will then be no danger of waste.

V. 14. "A mighty famine." There can be nothing but famine in the far country, the world. Thousands and thousands are spiritually starving and dying for lack of food. The soul that gets away from God always gets into famine. If we could only see into the innermost beings of some of those who seem most favored by the world, we would find them perishing for very hunger, and famished for the Bread of Life.

"He began to be in want."—And there could be no end to his want while he remained in the far country.

V. 15. "Joined himself to one of the citizens."—This was another downward step. Having cut loose from the old home, he was now forming ties of union with the enemy. He exchanged the fellowship of his Father, for the friendship of this stranger. How many Christian people are doing the same thing? Relinquishing companionship with God, their Heavenly Father, for the companionship of the world, His implacable enemy.

"He sent him to feed swine."—See what it lead to! Allied with this stranger, he had to take the ignominious position of a feeder for the stranger's swine! There are many professed Christians just in that shameful position to-day. Allied with the world, they are prostituting their God given talents and abilities to feed the world's swine, and getting nothing in return but the husks!

V. 16. "He would fain have been filled with the husks."—Moody says, "The devil has never had a famine of husks. There is always plenty of husks, and plenty of swine to eat them." We get an idea of the food some people eat when we glance at the stuff served up by our newspapers day by day, and the dirt and chaff that form the chief elements in many of our modern novels. God pity the souls of the men and women who feed on such poison!

V. 17. "He came to himself."—And what a miserable specimen of humanity he found! This is the first step in the salvation of any sinner; he must first through the conviction of the Holy Ghost, come to himself, and see his deplorable condition and absolute helplessness.

V. 17. "I perish with hunger."—He was a poor testimony to his father's wealth and goodness, as many Christians are to-day. The most convincing argument for Christianity is the life of the Christian who finds his pleasure, peace, occupation, all in Jesus.

V. 18. "I will arise."—This was the determination upon which his salvation was based. The proverb that says "the way to hell is paved with good intentions," is but a half truth. The way to heaven is also paved with good intentions,—intentions put into execution by the enabling of the Holy Ghost. "Will say."—Hos. xiv. 12. "I have sinned."—It is an unwillingness to say this that keeps many from returning.

"Am no more worthy."—This is the only plea man can make effectively to God. His salvation is only bestowed because of our unworthiness. Failure to realize this, and dislike to acknowledge it is a hindrance to many unsaved souls.

V. 20. "Yet afar off."—God is ever on the watch for the slightest indication of repentance on the part of the sinner. The Father never ceases to love nor to long after the wayward child, though the child may neglect and forget the Father. All the days of the prodigal's absence the Father's arms wanted to welcome him back, and when at last he arose and returned, it was the memory of the Father's love that prompted and impelled him onward. "His father ran."—Eyes, heart, feet, hands, and lips are all found here engaged to welcome the wanderer. How beautiful is thought of God's loving haste to receive the returning sinner.

V. 22. "But the father said."—The son was not allowed to make his humble request. The confession of sin, and expression of sorrow was heard, but that was enough; the father in love silenced the rest. "The best robe."—The robe of righteousness, Isa. lxi. 10. Lxiv. 6, Jer. xxiii. 6. xxiii. 16. "A ring."—The evidence of sonship. "Shoes on his feet."—The shoes of peace, Eph. vi. 15.

V. 23. "The fatted calf."—Emblem of the bounty of the Father's love. What a contrast to the husks the world gives!

V. 24. "Was dead."—What, dead? Yes, spiritually a corpse, and that is much worse than being physically so. Every man or woman united with the world, and separated from God is dead, a mere galvanized corpse. How speaks the Holy Ghost in another passage. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," 1 Tim. v. 6. "Began to be merry."—In v. 14, we learned that he "began to be in want," but now an end has been put to his want for ever, and a merriment begun that will never cease.