



LESSON.—SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1909.

**True and False Brotherhood.**

Acts iv., 32—v., 11. Memory verses 32, 33.

**Golden Text.**

Lying lips are an abomination to Jehovah; but they that deal truly are his delight. Prov. xii., 22.

**Home Readings.**

Monday, February 1.—Acts iv., 32; v., 11.  
 Tuesday, February 2.—II. Kings v., 15-27.  
 Wednesday, February 3.—Psalm 52.  
 Thursday, February 4.—Prov. xii., 13-22.  
 Friday, February 5.—Jas. iii., 1-10.  
 Saturday, February 6.—Psa. cxxxix., 1-12.  
 Sunday, February 7.—Eph. iv., 25-32.

**FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.**

Anyone of you who can say over the golden text for to-day will be able I am sure to tell us what it means. We can say it all in six words: God hates lies; God loves truth. Does anyone in the world like people to tell lies? No, everybody hates untruths when others tell them, but sometimes people think that a lie will help them, perhaps to get something they want, perhaps to avoid a punishment they deserve, and so these ugly things that we call lies are very often used. Our lesson to-day tells about one lie that had a very quick punishment, but before we study about the man who told the lie, we want to speak about another man who was very good and loving. Both these men belonged to the same church, and that church was the one in Jerusalem, to which Peter and all the other disciples, and Mary, Jesus' mother, belonged. It was the first church on earth after Christ's death, and it was here on earth to show people what Christ would have them do. There were rich people and poor people in this church just as there are in our churches to-day, but none of the poor people ever suffered for want of anything while some others had a great deal more than they needed as sometimes happens to-day, because all those who were rich put all their money together and told the apostles, Peter and the rest, to use this money for the others just as it was needed. One of the men who joined the church was named Joses, or Joseph as we would say, but the people soon learned to call him by a sort of pet name because he was so loving and kind and helpful when he talked to anyone. He was soon called by nothing but this name, Barnabas, and it is by this name that we know him. Let us see one thing he did that showed how unselfish he was.

**FOR THE SENIORS.**

The state of the Christian Church at this time must be well understood to afford a proper background adequately to show up the lackness of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. It has been truly said that were God to punish as severely now every virtual Ananias on the church membership roll the numbers of nominal Christians would be considerably reduced. But we must remember that many of the conditions necessary to the establishment of the early church are not needful in the present state of growth: The visible and audible presence of the Holy Spirit; the miraculous healings and escapes such as Peter's deliverance from prison; the gift of tongues; all these are passed away. The church is no longer in its infancy. The sin is as dark to-day, no doubt, and its evil effects on the church are very great, but the church has established itself as the enemy of sin, not the excuser and shelterer, such as she might well have come to be had so dark a sin at the beginning been treated as slight and excusable. The lie was only the index of a heart

'filled with Satan' (Acts v., 3), the spirit of evil instead of with the Holy Spirit God. Envy of the praise accorded others for their generosity, selfish desire for preëminence, hypocrisy, unbelief in the real presence of God's Holy Spirit (verse 9) were inner companions of the outward lie. Had Peter for the sake of the money given, condoned and shielded the lie, it would have been a clear case of an accepted bribe. However, the punishment was not the act of Peter in any way; it was clearly the judgment of God that 'they which do such things are worthy of death' (Rom. i., 32). It was imperative, also, that the new church should not be numerically augmented by numbers of people professing to hold its tenets for the sake of sharing its benefits (Acts iv., 34). The certainty that the inmost thoughts of the heart were understood by the apostles through the presence of God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (John xvi., 13), made all such deceivers draw back (verse 13) while the earnest souls were but the more surely drawn (verse 14). The need of prompt action and certain sound was all the greater as this was an attack on the church from the inside, always more dangerous and insidious than any attack from without. The successful traitor within a fort is more to be dreaded than a force without.

**(SELECTIONS.)**

It seems to me that the shortest way to check the darker forms of deceit is to set watch more scrupulous against those which have mingled, unregarded and unchastised, with the current of our life. Do not let us lie at all. Do not think of one falsity as harmless and another as slight and another as unintended. Cast them all aside; they may be light and accidental, but they are an ugly soot from the smoke of the pit, for all that; and it is better that our heart should be swept clean of them, without overcare as to which is largest or blackest. Speaking truth is like writing fair, and comes only by practice; it is less a matter of will than of habit, and I doubt if any occasion can be trivial which permits the practice and formation of such a habit.—John Ruskin.

Praise is good. To be applauded by our fellow-men, to hear our ambitions about ourselves caught up by their testifying cheers, to have our own best hopes for our own lives confirmed by their appreciation of us, that is a true delight for any man. To be able to do without men's praise because we do not feel its value, because morosely and selfishly we do not care what men think, that is bad; that is a sign of feebleness and conceit. To feel it is wretched, and to affect to feel it is detestable. But to be able to do without men's praise because that which their praise stands for is dearer to us than the praise is, and it so happens that we can not have both of them, that is a wholly different thing. The first man has sunk below the necessity of men's applause, and the second man has risen above it. The poor demoralized beggar and the calm, philosophic servant of God, standing together in the street, neither of them may care much whether men praise or blame him,—both of them can do without applause. But how different they are. Both can do without the sunlight; but one is the mole crawling out of sight of the sun underground, the other is the angel who lives beyond the sun with God. For men's praise stands for goodness.—Phillips Brooks.

In a town in India, a British agent decided to shade the native shops by planting some peepul trees, but when the shopkeepers learned of his intention they declared they would move. The peepul tree is considered sacred by the Hindoos. 'We cannot tell untruths or swear falsely under a peepul tree,' they said, and naively added, 'and how can we carry on business otherwise?' When Peter asked Ananias, 'Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?' and when he asked Sapphira, 'How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord?' he impressed the truth that God's presence overshadowed them always, and they had not sinned against men but against God. Are we so conscious of God's presence that we can not tell untruths at any time, for they would seem to us untruths told to God?—Peloubet's 'Notes.'

A few counterfeit Christians do not prove that the gospel is a failure, or the church unworthy. A few dead trees in the forest, or dried stalks in the fields, do not prove that spring is a failure, or that the sun does not

impart real life. The debris at the edge of the Nile floods, left high and dry and useless, does not prove that those floods do not fertilize Egypt and make it a garden of fertility. Dead sticks and withered leaves in the stream are no part of its waters. Wormy apples do not prove that the tree bears no good fruit.

If the early church were absolutely perfect we would be absolutely without hope in our own day. But the church grew and has transformed a large part of the world in spite of imperfect members.

We must be careful not to measure a man or a society by its imperfections alone. It is like valuing gardens by their weeds and fruit trees by their worm-eaten fruit. By that method of measuring Sahara is better than the choicest garden in the world, for it has fewer weeds; and a dead tree is better than the most fruitful tree in the orchard, for it has no poor fruit. Not by their weeds alone, but by their 'fruits' ye shall know them.—Peloubet's 'Notes.'

The only safety for a man who desires to appear good is to be good.—Lyman J. Gage.

A lie that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.—Tennyson.

**Bible References.**

Psa. lxxiii., 11; Prov. x., 18; xii., 19-22; John viii., 44; xiv., 6; Eph. iv., 25; Col. iii., 9; Rev. xxi., 8, 27; xxii., 15.

**Junior C. E. Topic.**

Sunday, February 7.—Topic—Christian Endeavor around the world. Ps. cxviii., 1-9. (Christian Endeavor Day.)

**C. E. Topic.**

Monday, February 1.—A universal God. Rom. in., 27-31.

Tuesday, February 2.—Universal worship. Ps. lxxvi., 1-20.

Wednesday, February 3.—A universal kingdom. Matt. xiii., 31-33.

Thursday, February 4.—Universal fellowship. I. Cor. i., 1-9.

Friday, February 5.—Universal service. Mark xvi., 14-20.

Saturday, February 6.—Universal brotherhood. Matt. xii., 46-50.

Sunday, February 7.—Topic—Our Christian Endeavor comrades the world over. Ps. cxviii., 1-9. (Christian Endeavor Day.)

'Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.' You may work and pray for the salvation of your class until your head whirls and your heart grows faint and see no fruit. What you need to do is to get the 'class' idea out of your head and pray and work for the conversion of Mary and Martha and James and Henry.—S. S. Teacher.

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