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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Second Quarter.

Lesson I. April 6. Luke 6: 27-35.

CHRIST'S LAW OF LOVE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."—Luke 6: 31.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE LAW OF LOVE AS APPLIED TO ENEMIES. 27. But I say unto you. Emphasis on the L. Confronting and teaching with the false views of the scribes, who said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," quoting from Lev. 19: 18, and then added their own teaching to this, "and hate thine enemy" (Matt. 5: 43). Love your enemies. That we shall be willing to make sacrifices for them, as we would for our own. Do good to them which hate you. Who detest, pursue with hatred, set out their inward feelings of hatred. Solomon in his Proverbs (25: 21, 22), and Paul, quoting the same in his Epistle to the Romans (12: 20), give an example of the way to fulfil this command—"Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

35. Bless them that curse you. Speak words of peace, kindness and love to those who revile and insult you. And pray for them. Bear them upon your hearts to the good Father of all; seek the highest influences for their good. Which despitefully use you. "Treat you abusively."

Jesus gives two examples to illustrate the treatment of enemies which He had just enjoined.

FIRST EXAMPLE. 29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek. This is a further manifestation of hatred. Offer also to the other. The general principle is "resist not evil" (Matt. 5: 39; 1 Cor. 7: 1; 1 Pet. 2: 19-23) impressed forever on the memory and conscience of mankind by a striking paradox. That it is only meant as a paradox in its literal sense is shown by the fact that our Lord himself, while most divinely true to the spirit, did not act on the letter of it (John 18: 22, 24). Now there is an example of patience more perfect than that of the Lord; yet He, when He was smitten, said not, "Behold the other cheek," but "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if not, why smitest thou Me?" (John 18: 25), hereby showing us that the turning of the other cheek should be in the heart. See also Paul's interpretation of this command by his conduct (Acts 23: 3).

SECOND EXAMPLE. And him that taketh away thy cloak. From personal violence Jesus descends to the demanding of property by legal or forcible means. The cloak or mantle was the outer, larger, and more valuable garment. It was worn loose around the body, and made of various materials, according to the circumstances of the wearer. It was also used as a blanket or covering to wrap one's self in at night; hence it was not allowed by the law to be taken by the creditor and retained as a pledge over night (Ex. 22: 26-27). This fact shows how great the wrong and violence which would take away this outer garment. But if any one should go so far as to take this away, rather than content with him, Forbid not to take thy coat also. The tunic or undergarment, which was made of linen or cotton and folded close to the body. In matters of personal violence and wrong we are not to show a retaliating and generous spirit, but a forgiving and generous one. We are to suffer loss ourselves rather than to resort to quarrelling or law suits.

THE LAW OF LOVE APPLIED TO ALL. 30. Give to every man (without regard to class or condition or race) that asketh of thee. Here again our Lord teaches us by the method of seeming paradox, and enforces a principle binding upon every one in the form of a rule which in his letter is binding upon no man. Were we to give to all men what they ask, we should in many cases be cursing, not blessing, them with our gifts. Not so does our Father give us what we ask in prayer; not so did Christ grant the prayers of His disciples. That which the words really teach as the ideal of the perfect life which we ought to aim at, is the loving and the giving temper which sees in every request made to us the expression of a want of some kind, which we are to consider as a call to thoughtful inquiry how best to meet the want, giving what is asked for if we honestly believe that it is really for the good of him who asks, giving something else if that would seem to be really better for him. The joy the Christian's life is to give, and to help all the people he can in all the ways he can. And of him that taketh away thy goods as he demand them not again. Do not show a revengeful spirit, and neither by violence nor by legal forms demand them back, but by a kind and liberal spirit strive to win back the offender to right views and acts.

31. And as ye would, etc. THE GOLDEN RULE here sums up the precepts so far given into one great heavenly principle, obedience to which would make earth a heaven.

III. THE LAW OF LOVE. REASONS WHY CHRIST'S DISCIPLES SHOULD LIVE ACCORDING TO IT. FIRST REASON. Because it is the principle of the highest kingdom to which you belong, and proves both to yourselves and others that you belong to the kingdom of heaven.

32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye, etc. What have you done that deserves thanks or reward (so in Matthew) as belonging to a higher kingdom?

33. For sinners also do even the same. A man ought to tremble with fear if beside the external part of his religion he finds nothing in his life but what may be found in a Turk or a heathen."

34. And if ye lend, etc. Here the same principle applies. Actions which are common to all are no mark of a divine life, or of membership in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

SECOND REASON.—THE SPIRITUAL REWARD. 35. But love ye your enemies. That is a mark of heavenly love, for it is the exact opposite of what sinners do. And one reason God allows His people to have enemies and to be ill-treated, is to give them an opportunity to exercise

Free Schools in England.

From every quarter the noise of battle in this matter of Church and State, especially in the domain of the education of the young, is sounding. The United States has got its hands full; the Catholics are bound to break down the public school system. In England, after having a fairly liberal school law in operation for some years, the clergy of the Church of England find it does not put enough power in their hands, and so they are working the Salisbury Tory government for all they are worth for a change. There is some danger that they may have their way. The Freeman, the great Baptist weekly, gives it good and hot to the wack-necked who are disposed to let the Church of England work the shadow back on the dial. This is a sample: "Now, all the way along the weakness has been that Nonconformists have hesitated to carry out their principles. Had they definitely from the beginning rallied round their standard and acted on the power of the state to reform the religion, the victory would have been won for education long ago. But a considerable number were quite prepared to accept government aid for their religion so far as it agreed with their opinions. The leaders of the Establishing party know this well. They calculate on finding a victory through our disunion. Like the Russian general, they count upon sickness doing their work in the enemy's camp. The struggle grows furious, and one of the most important in our generation. If Nonconformists will but unite upon principle they will carry at least half the Conformists with them, and the victory will be sublime. We have but to keep to the clear, simple, elementary truth. Let no government aid be given, be the method ever so roundabout and subtle, for the inoculation of religious opinion. Government cannot touch vital religion. It may advance a party, but the result is certain to be adverse to the progress of that for which alone we are anxious, the development of spiritual life, which is no part of public school work."—North West Baptist.

Parliament Field, a portion of Liverpool, England, is said to contain 168 streets, 10,300 houses, 50,000 population and not a grog shop. Pauperism is almost unknown; the police are nearly idle and the people save \$100,000 a year in poor rates, besides avoiding the maintenance of hundreds of dramsshops. The death rate in this sober district is only ten to fourteen as against twenty-five in the thousand in the drinking parish adjoining.—Canada Citizen.

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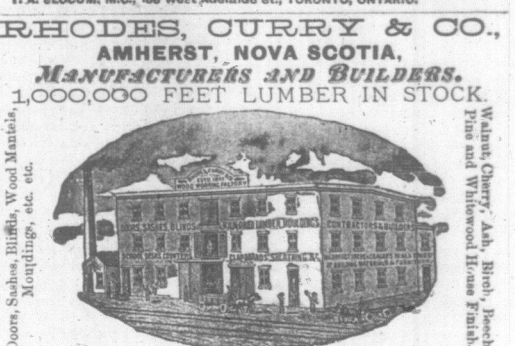
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