

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

FOURTH QUARTER.

(Condensed from Foliolet's Notes.)

Lesson III. Oct. 18. John 13: 1-17.

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 2: 5.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE ASSEMBLING OF THE DISCIPLES FOR THEIR LAST PASSEYER WITH JESUS. Jesus having spent Wednesday (April 5) in retirement at Bethany in preparation for the awful day of crucifixion, the next morning sent two of his disciples to the city to prepare for the celebration of the Passover. It was to be the scene of His farewell words to His disciples. In the early evening of Thursday He and his disciples went to Jerusalem, and entered the upper room where the meeting was to be held.

II. THE STRIFE AS TO WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST.—Luke 22: 24-30. We cannot understand the full meaning of our lesson unless we turn to Luke and read about the contention among the disciples, probably as they were assembling in the upper room before sitting down to the table. It was apparently twofold, who should be greatest, and who should not be least, and was a very strange scene on the eve of the most solemn time in all their lives.

III. THE PASSEYER MEAL ABOUT. Ver. 1. "Now before the feast of the passover." That is, immediately before just as He was about to sit down with his disciples to the Paschal feast. This is to be construed with "He loved," etc., at the close of the verse. "When Jesus knew that His hour was come." In the full consciousness of the approaching agony and passion. "Out of this world unto the Father." He was conscious not only that it was His hour of agony, but that this hour was the gate to the eternal glory with His Father. The light from beyond those back seen upon this dreadful hour. "Having loved His own which were in the world." He loved them (of the two Greek words for love Jesus uses the word indicating the discriminating affection: the love of choice and selection) unto the end. The end both in time and in accomplishment; that is, He loved them till death broke in on His life of love; He loved them till love had finished its purpose in them by redemption; loved them despite their quarrels and contentions, that by love His might brood and perfect the new life in them.

IV. JESUS GIVES HIS DISCIPLES AN OBJECT LESSON IN HUMILITY AND SERVICE. 2. "And supper being ended." The original is simply, and supper being, i. e., being in progress, during supper, as Rev. Ver. Jesus, by waiting till supper was fully begun, gave the disciples ample opportunity to repent and take the lower instead of the better places, and to wash one another's feet. The delay would also give time for their excited feelings to quiet down, and thus for them to be better prepared for the lesson He would teach them. "The devil having now (already) put into the heart," etc. Satan excites thoughts, feelings, and purposes in such a way that we are conscious of nothing but our own thinking, feeling, and willing, and can judge this or that to come from him only by its moral character. The fact that Satan suggested evil to our minds does not impair our responsibility, since the thought, feeling, purpose, is consciously and freely our own.

3. "Jesus knowing," etc. The knowledge is summed up in three particulars. (1) "That the Father had given all things into His hands." The tense expressing no presentment of coming power, but an act already past. (2) "That He was come from God." The words expressing not only His divine origin, which would have required another form of expression, but that He had left the presence of God as the sent of God. (3) That "He went (was going) to God," as one who has executed His commission. The three clauses thus connect themselves with His work of redeeming love.

THE SUPPER SCENE. We must not think of a modern table, with chairs, as this scene is presented in many of the famous pictures, but we look upon a low, Eastern table, surrounded on three sides by couches or cushioned divans, on which each guest reclines, lying on his left side, and leaning on the left hand, with his head nearest the table, and his feet stretching back towards the ground. Each guest occupies a separate divan, or pillow. Thus, as Jesus, to wash their feet one after another.

4. "He riseth from supper." The supper table, at some pause in the usual ceremonial. "Laid aside His garments." His outer mantle, a cloak which would impede His action, leaving the tunic, which was the ordinary dress of a servant. "Girded Himself." The inner tunic was girded about the loins with a towel, used partly in lieu of a girdle, partly to wipe the feet. Thus Christ put on the ordinary habit of a servant for a servant's work.

5. "He poureth water into a basin." In this feet-washing the feet were not put into the basin; the water was poured over the feet, and the basin held under to keep the water from spilling on the floor. "And began (this word is used because He was soon interrupted for a time by the conversation with Peter) to wash the disciples' feet." As sandals were ineffectual against the dust and heat of an Eastern climate, washing the feet on entering a house was an act both of respect to the company and of refreshment to the traveler. The disciples sat down to the meal without washing their feet, after a hot and dusty walk. The feet-washing should have been done by one of the disciples; the things necessary for it are at hand. The disciples are still disputing who shall undertake to do it. Jesus then rises Himself to perform this duty of a servant.

V. AN ESPECIALLY LESSON TO PETER. 6. "Then cometh He to Simon Peter." In his turn to be washed. "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" The emphasis ought to fall, not on my, but on the Thou. The collocation of the words is unusual and explosive: Thou, my feet dost wash? "Jesus answered." To prepare Peter to accept and ponder the lesson.

"What I do thou knowest not now." You do not comprehend its meaning; you do not see how it is but a visible expression of My glory mission, in which I laid aside My glory with the Father, and took upon Myself the form of a servant.

NOT KNOWING NOW, BUT HEREAFTER. These words to Peter are often spoken to us. There are things in every life which we cannot understand now,—troubles, disappointments, sickness, poverty, death; but the time will come when all will be plain. The child in school cannot understand the reasons for some of his studies, but the experience of after life will make them clear. No one at the beginning knows the full meaning of his life, or for what some of his experiences are training him.

"Thou shalt never wash My feet." The negative is the strongest form possible; thou shalt certainly not wash My feet forever. Peter had not yet learned his lesson. To refuse was the sign of neither humility nor obedience, but of pride; for it showed that he himself would not have condescended to do what Jesus did. He thought the act, which was a manifestation of the true glory of the Lord, dishonored Him. "If I wash these, my, thou hast no part with Me." Cannot share My kingdom, My character, My work.

Why? (1) Because the first condition of discipleship was submission to Christ, even when he could not understand all the reasons for the command. (2) Because this washing was symbolical of spiritual cleansing, and Peter had not understood it (see ver. 9). If he were not cleansed from his pride and selfishness he could not belong to the kingdom of love.

9. "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." If this washing meant being with Jesus, he could not have enough of a cleansing so precious. In spite of his errors his heart glowed with love to his teacher.

10. "That is washed." Rather, He that is bathed (comp. Heb. 10: 22, and 2 Pet. 2: 22). In the Greek we have quite a different word from the one rendered wash elsewhere in these verses; the latter means to wash part of the body, this to bathe the whole person.

"Needst not save to wash my feet." A man who has bathed does not need to bathe again when he reaches home, but only to wash the dust of his feet, then he is wholly clean. So also in the spiritual life, a man whose moral nature has once been thoroughly purified need not think that this has been all undone if in the walk through life he contracts some stains; these must be washed away and then he is once more wholly clean.

"And ye are clean." They were truly converted, and had been cleansed from sin by the pardoning love of God. "But not all of you, Judas, had never truly converted."

11. "For He knew who should betray Him." Rather, as Rev. Ver. He knew Him that should betray Him. He saw his inmost heart, he read his secret character.

VI. THE LESSON APPLIED: A DISCOURSE ON TRUTH CHRISTIAN SERVICE.—12. "And was set down again." This means in the reclining position customary at meals. "Know ye what I have done to you?" This question is asked, not to be answered, but to direct their attention to what He had done, and to the interpretation which follows: Do ye perceive what I have done? This is the meaning of it.

13. "Ye call Me Master." Teacher, with the definite article, the teacher. "And Lord." The one who is authoritative over you. You accept My instruction, and obey My commands. "For so I am." This divine authority Christ never abdicated; His divine consciousness He never lost.

14. "If I then." The I is emphatic. "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Apparently the disciples had just been unwilling to do when their first came in. Each one had been unwilling to perform this humble service, and wanted the others to do it for them. This needful work was therefore undone, till Jesus did it for them. For them, at that time, the command was to be literally obeyed when circumstances demanded it.

15. "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." There are two ways of imitating the example of another person. One is to imitate the form, the other to imitate the spirit. One may do exactly, in other circumstances, what another has done, and yet entirely fail of imitating his example, because all that made it of value is left out. It was a dead body without the soul. To go through a ceremonial of washing others' feet, as on Thursday in Holy Week in Rome, the Pope washes the feet of a few aged paupers, after due private preparation, in the presence of the proudest rank, is not doing as Christ did at this time. Jesus did not institute a rite, but showed us the "true spirit."

16. "The servant is not greater than his lord." If Jesus, their Lord, did much humble service for others, and spent His life in ministering to others, not in being ministered unto, every one of His disciples to the end of time should do the same, and not expect to avoid this duty and privilege. This is the royal road, and there is no other by which we can aid the coming of His kingdom. The great danger of the church, in this as in every age, is pride, self-seeking, and failing to imitate its Master in this humble service for others.

17. "If ye know these things." It is sometimes difficult for men even to perceive their duty in this regard. "Happy are ye if ye do them." Duties involving humiliations, though seemingly repulsive, are found in the doing to be attended with the highest blessedness (Matt. 7: 24; Luke 11: 28).

—Sores, blotches, boils, eruptions, rashes, etc., signify poverty or impurity of the blood, which requires B. B. B. to purify and tone it.

—Thirsty Lady.—"If there any water aboard?" Captain (recounting boat)—"Only 'bout four feet, mum; but please don't tell anybody."—New York Weekly.

—To THE DEAF.—A person cured of Deafness and noise in the head of 23 years' standing by a simple remedy, will send a description of it free to any person who applies to NIMROD 30 St. John St., Montreal.

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Hindrances to Prayer.

A man's head may be wrong. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9) God will pour His blessings upon an inverted vessel. The man that will not hear and heed the law, shall not enjoy the Gospel. The soul that is dead to the commandment is dead to the promise. A mind to hear and a heart to hold go together. Just as well try to fill an inverted goblet as to try to put God's answer to prayer in an inverted soul. Place yourself in an attitude to receive.

A man's faith may be wrong. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11: 6) Faith opens the heart to let the answer in. God will not waste His blessings upon a closed vessel. We must open our hearts as the flowers open their petals to catch the dew; while God opens the windows of heaven. The bolt of heaven's door may be under God's thumb, the latch string to our hearts is in our own hands.

A man's purpose may be wrong. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (Jas. 4: 3) The Lord will not give His funds to a prodigal or selfish man. He will not pour oil into a leaking vessel. We must seek His gifts for holy use. He does not bestow power upon us that we may destroy our selves or wreck the net for lost, which means ruin, but for love, which means redemption. Set our sails in the divine direction, and He will fill them with heavenly breezes. Change our purposes so that they will conform to God's will, and He will grant us power to arrive.

A man's heart may be wrong. "If I regard iniquity in my heart He will not hear me." (Ps. 66: 18) God will not pour the oil of grace into an unclean vessel, nor will He waste His wine of blessing by pouring it into a heart that is already filled with frauds and lies and hypocrisy. All iniquity must be purged away—all indwelling enemies must be driven out. God will not abide in the heart where His foes are encamped and ensconced.

These hindrances are man built, and can be removed by man. "Take ye away the stone," was the order of Jesus to the sisters of Lazarus. What man can do, he must do, and he is foolish to expect Omnipotence to supply to the lack. It is the man's duty to do what he will do. Remove these hindrances, and let us ask and expect divine help.—Pulpit Treasury.

The Power of Old Memories.

There is an old house in a Rhode Island village, with a piazza running the length of the front, and stout pillars at intervals to support it. On one of these pillars is a regular autograph collection, representing four generations of the family. Opposite each name is a horizontal pencil mark on the wood, denoting the height of the person named. When, at different times, the old house has been repainted, the names and marks have been retraced, and they tell a touching story. Away down at the bottom of the pillar are marks with quaint names beside them, where the little people measure the height of the dogs and cats of the place; and like ascending steps, are marks and dates, year following year, of those whose stature was registered from time to time until manhood or womanhood was reached.

The other day there came over a kin of the family who, forty years ago, stood up to be measured at the pillar; then he was a youngster about a yard high, and there was the measure mark and name, with the date, 1851. When the gray haired man looked at it he cried:

"Why, you know I am a positive simpleton over this, but I can't help it. I go right back to the time when I stood there, and my mother bent over with a white dress on, and bending over me with the sweetest smile I ever saw or ever will see."—Selected.

Fault-Finding.

Nothing is easier than to find fault. Almost everything we hear or see is open to criticism, and if we live to pick faults we are nearly kept busy. Conversation is a defective work, and their exact meaning in words, and not a few say what they don't mean simply because they cannot say what they wish to. And if nearly all speech is imperfect, so is nearly all work. For his best, man will yet be poorly enough. His greatest plan, his smallest scheme, will be but imperfectly accomplished; and if sensitive to criticism, the probability is that he will suffer when he hears what people have to say concerning his doings.

Fault finders are generally inconsiderate. They denounce in others what they excuse in themselves, and seem to be most happy when they are making others thoroughly unhappy. Social life is frequently spoiled of its charm, and domestic life rarely improved of its beauty, because of unreasonable, unjust, and useless criticism. Many a home is made unhappy, and many a religious profession is rendered utterly nugatory, by the presence of the fault finder. It is only now and then that these miserable creatures receive the rebuke they deserve. A clergyman was residing in the family of a church member who was in the habit of finding fault with the victuals or cooking at almost every meal. After some days had elapsed, the professor, as he recurrently did, asked the minister to give thanks before dinner.

"I think," said the minister, "that I shall not give thanks at your table any more."

The man looked surprised, and said grace himself.

Towards the close of the repast he asked the reason of the minister's seemingly strange conduct, who replied thus: "I have noticed that you are in the practice of finding fault with your victuals, much to the annoyance of your wife; and it seems to me inconsistent, wife, insulting to God, to give thanks for food and then be displeased with it. My advice to you is, eat your dinner without asking a blessing or giving thanks, and when you have done, if you like your dinner, thank God for it the next day."

It is needless to say that the habit of fault finding was broken off and the professor became a more consistent Christian. But fault finders are not always "professors." Indeed, we believe that most of them are uneducated and ignorant, having a lump of self-conceit thoroughly saturated with unadulterated gall. We wish there were a specific remedy for this malady.

Our homes would be happier and life brighter and better if the grumblers were all cured.—Michigan Advocate.

How a Boy Became a Commander.

There lived in a Scotch village a little boy, Jamie by name, who set his heart on becoming a sailor. His mother loved him very dearly, and the thought of seeing him up and down the world, and of his being finally consigned. As the boy left home she said to him: "Wherever you are, Jamie, whether on sea or land, never forget to acknowledge your God. Promise me that you will kneel down every night and morning, and say your prayers, no matter whether the sailors laugh at you or not."

"Mother, I promise you I will," said Jamie; and soon he was on a ship bound for India.

They had a good captain; and, as some of the sailors were religious men, no one laughed at the boy when he knelt down to pray.

But on the return voyage, some of the sailors having run away, their places were supplied by others, one of whom proved to be a very bad fellow. When he saw little Jamie kneeling down to say his prayers, he went up to him, and, giving him a sound box on the ear, said in a decided tone, "None of that here, sir!"

Another seaman, who saw this, although he swore sometimes, was indignant that the child should be so cruelly treated, and told the bully to come up on deck and he would give him a thrashing. The challenge was accepted and the well-deserved beating was duly bestowed. Both then returned to the cabin, and the swearing man said, "Now Jamie, say your prayers, and if he dares to touch you, I will give him another dressing."

The next night it came into the little boy's mind that it was quite unnecessary for him to create such a disturbance in the ship, when it could easily be avoided if he would only say his prayers quietly in his hammock, so that nobody would observe it. But the moment that the friendly sailor saw Jamie get into the hammock without first kneeling down to pray, he hurried to the spot, and, dragging him out by the neck, he said: "Kneel down at once, sir! Do you think I am going to fight for you, and you not say your prayers, you young rascal!"

During the whole voyage back to London the profane sailor watched over the boy as if he had been his father, and every night saw that he knelt down and said his prayers. Jamie soon began to be industrious, and during his spare time studied his books. He learned all about ropes and rigging, and, when he became old enough, about taking latitude and longitude.

Several years ago the largest steamer ever built, called the Great Eastern, was launched on the ocean, and carried the famous cable across the Atlantic. A very reliable, experienced captain was chosen for this undertaking; and who should it be but little Jamie! When the Great Eastern returned to England after this successful voyage, Queen Victoria bestowed upon him the honor of knighthood, and the world now knows him as Sir James Anderson.—Mail and Express.

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