

Sabbath School Teacher.

Lesson XI.

October 6th, 1873

FOURTH QUARTERLY REVIEW.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Matt. xiii. 18-23.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 23. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Mark iv. 3; Luke viii. 4; Eph. iii. 17. Read with v. 18, Ps. cxxvi. 6; with v. 19, Prov. xiv. 38; with v. 20, 1 John ii. 19; with v. 22, James i. 21; and with v. 23, Ps. lxxv. 2, 3. CENTRAL TRUTH.—We must take heed how we hear.—Luke viii. 18. INTERNATIONAL TEXT.—Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.—James i. 22. INTRODUCTION.—Two elements of interest about this parable, which we should note.

(a) It is the first of the parables (as v. 10 implies), and the first also of a group of seven reported by Matthew, four to the general audience, and three to the disciples.

(b) It is a key to the rest, the Lord giving the explanation, and showing how this kind of teaching is to be understood, as implied by Mark iv. 18, which see.

Some features run through the whole parable; some have their own place, e. g.,

(1) There are various kinds of human hearts that receive the seed. Path, rock, thorns, all as well as good soil, describe human minds of one kind or another, and in different states.

(2) The seed is the same all through. Not one kind on the rock, and one in good soil. The difference is in the places, not the seed. It is the word of God, Luke viii. 11.

(3) So with the sower. The same hands drop the grains on the path and among the thorns. In the first place it was Christ's hand; then Peter's; Paul's; Timothy's; all true ministers to the end of the world.

Now look at the seed sowing: (1) On the path. Men's feet, the common travel, have made it smooth & hard. The seed lies dry on the surface. The birds watch their chance, and hardly has the sower gone a few yards, till they pick it up. This represents all hearers void of understanding. The words are strange to them. They cannot take in the thoughts. The truth is nothing to them. Such a hearer has made his mind a common trodden by all feet as it were, hardened, and no longer impressible. All sorts of books have been read. All sorts of friends influenced him; all sorts of pleasures sought by him, all sorts of pursuits engaged him. Only God was not received; his soul was never broken up by divine truth. His heart was an inn where every one could be admitted but the Lord.

And so while a text or sermon lay a moment on his mind, the keen-eyed enemy of his soul, lest there should be an opening for it, snatches it away.

He is just thinking perhaps, "That is very true;" when the thought comes, "But what a bad voice, and slow way, that preacher has! not so good as—" It is enough. The seed is gone. The criminal has turned critic, and will not think of begging a pardon. The devil's work is done, Luke viii. 12, "then cometh the devil."

Now you can see why we wish your hearts opened to God when you are young. By and by you will have cares, business, pleasures, losses, all making your hearts like the road.

(2) On the rocky places. In America, the word "rocks," is applied to such stones as a man can lift: not so in Europe. There a "rock" is an immovable mass of stone. It is this that is meant here, Luke viii. 18. Among stones the seed would have found some soil; and often grows the faster from the warmth of the stones. But there was a thin layer of soil on the flat rock, which the rootlets could not pierce, and when they reached it, the plants died.

This describes the persons who think the gospel "very nice," "like it greatly," "are charmed with it" (Ezek. xxxiii. 32). It costs them nothing, they give up nothing, never thought of giving up. They examine little, take much for granted, mostly agree with the last speaker; are quick, impulsive, gushing, "anon with joy they receive the word," and fairly distance old Christians in their experience. But troubles come; efforts, sacrifices, temptations, right hands to be cut off, right eyes to be plucked out; they are like the young man who was very rich, Matt. xix. 22, and who "went away sorrowful;" like the disciples who followed Christ till he uttered the hard sayings in John vi. 66.

There is no "root in himself." The sun shines—that is natural; no shines on all the field; and trials and temptations come to all men. They cannot be escaped. They are the same in themselves to all, but they on whom they come differ—some rooted and grounded in the truth—some not. As the fire that burns up the chaff, parts the dross from the gold, so the same sun nourishes the seed on good soil, hastens the decay and withering of that on the rock.

Paul and Demas are at Rome together in great danger. Demas goes back to the world, Paul clings closer to Christ. (See 2 Tim. iv. 10, and 17, 18.)

"How to be rooted?" one may ask, "I cannot make my character deeper." No, but you can take root in the truth, as in Heb. xi. 13; as in 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; as Joseph in Gen. xxxix. 9 in God's character; as Paul, in 2 Tim. i. 12.

(3) As the sower proceeds, some falls on the ground, in which the roots of the thorns lay hid, waiting to spring up with the advancing season. The seed grew: the thorns grew (Luke viii. 7); but they were there first, had deeper root, were thick and strong, and they choked the seed, so that while there were sickly stalks, there was (Mark iv. 7) "no fruit."

We know these thorns from the Lord's description in v. 22, compared with Mark iv. 18. Care-thorns, wealth-thorns, lust-thorns. See causes of the first, poor man too hard-worked to get time for religion; of the second, too much to mind, oxen to plow, peccers of real estate to look after; of the third, lust of power like Pilate, of pleasure like Herod, of money like Judas. When men are trying to serve God and mammon, the mammon gets the service in the end on this principle—the thorns out-top the good seed.

(4) Proceeding on his task, the sower scatters seed on good ground, not hard, rocky, nor thorny. We have the result all the way down from the great yield that Isaac had, Gen. xxvi. 12, to thirty-fold, and the explanation in v. 23, further made clear by Luke viii. 15.

Now mark as lessons (1), Take heed how ye hear. Luke viii. 18. Reject God's law; the Gospel nothing to you. Own it, and the Gospel good news.

(2) All hindrance to good comes from sin and is sin. Whence do thorns come? Sign of the curse (Gen. iii. 18). It gives them power to grow so fast; makes the spiritual husbandman's toil in rooting them out necessary.

(3) Whether you bring forth a hundred-fold, or thirty-fold, is in God's hand. He fixes place and time. Your care is to be fruitful. If a boy, a Christian boy—if a girl, a Christian girl.

ILLUSTRATION.

Louis XIV. said of Massillon's sermons, "Father, when I hear others preach, I am very well pleased with them; when I hear you, I am dissatisfied with myself."

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Meaning of parable—peculiarities of this—where uttered—to whom—describe the soil—the sower—the seed—the soil—meaning of these—wayside hearers—how marked—the seed lost—how—the rocky ground—peculiarities of it—kind of growth—cause of failure—remedy for this—can we become rooted—in what way—examples—responsibility on us—the thorns—what they are—where they were when the seed was sown—what followed—the effect—the remedy for this—the persons endangered in this way—kind of thorns—examples—the good ground—questions that may be asked—how to deal with them—use of parable—good and bad hearts—examples of both—lessons to us—differences of results all traceable to what—Christ's conclusion—the central truth—the amount of fruit varies—with what—and our main concern.

How to Meet Popular Scepticisms.

The Sunday-school teacher is often perplexed by questions upon which science and the Bible appear to give contradictory answers. The scholar stumbling upon any of these, naturally and honestly turns to his teacher for help. How shall he remove such difficulties? He may safely assure the scholar that there is no real conflict between any established fact of science and the truths of Scripture. If there seems to be a difference, he may rightfully assume that the conclusions of science are not properly stated, or that they are not yet fully established. A careful examination may also show that the teachings of Scripture have been perverted or grossly misunderstood.

It is asserted, with good reason, that the strength of many popular scepticisms comes from a popular ignorance of the Bible. He who knows his Bible well, though he knows science but poorly, will have no shallow belief, nor will he be at a loss for an appropriate answer to any assault made upon it as resting upon Scriptural statements, which concoited science attempts to undermine.

Therefore, much of the infidelity of the present day can best be met by the teacher who knows how to use Bible truth skillfully and promptly. He cannot expect all ways to judge correctly of the truth or falsity of the manifold statements newly made in every branch of scientific investigation, nor to distinguish between the true philosopher and the arrogant pretender. He can have, however, an abiding faith in, because he has a deep knowledge of divine revelation, hidden often from the "wise and prudent."

On this account it is not a serious drawback that the majority of Sunday-school teachers in this country are compelled to educate themselves for their special work. Institutes, conventions, teachers' meetings, and pastor's classes have done much to train and inform teachers, but they have reached only a small proportion of those in the country who are charged with the responsibility of giving instruction from the Scriptures.

The teacher should educate himself patiently and carefully in the knowledge of his English Bible. And in this knowledge of the Word the teacher can seek to educate himself, with hopes of success, for he has the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide him into ALL TRUTH. With painstaking study, an understanding heart and a reverent spirit, he may gain knowledge hidden from others, who count themselves wise in the wisdom of this world, and yet who find that the weak things of the world hath God chosen to put to shame the things which they esteem mighty.

Again any Sunday-school teacher who thinks himself bound to interpret each text of the Bible so as to accord fully with all the announced deductions of science, will do well to remember that nowhere is there more controversy than between the proponent scientific leaders themselves, as to what scientific facts are established. Especially is it true, that there is the sharpest conflict of opinion among them in regard to all those later reasonings and conclusions which are likely to have any important bearing upon revelation. It is far safer for the ordinary teacher of the gospel to answer these questions, by confessing that he cannot decide what are established and trustworthy conclusions, and therefore he must wait until men of sciences settle these, beyond disputes, among themselves. It will then be time for him to consider how far Bible truth is affected or modified,

and how far it may be established on firmer foundations by such scientific results.

For if the inexperienced teacher once forsakes his own field in the gospel for the field of science, his defeat is certain. He drops spiritual armor for scientific weapons, which he knows not how to wield.

Rather should he keep upon the field where Christ has called him, and use the power of that truth and life which Jesus has given him. His pupils may know more of science, and be able to suggest endless questions, prompted by learned scepticism, which he cannot answer from the grounds of science, but which he can successfully turn by using the shield of faith. And this will be the only satisfactory answer any one could give. As the distinguished successor of Sir William Hamilton recently said, "Scientific men are not craving scientific preaching. They desire the homely truth and that the Lord's day be devoted strictly to spiritual refreshment. . . . The highest inquiry in men concentrates in spirit, and the inquiries of the spirit concentrate in the question, How shall we stand before God? Then comes the gospel."

Let the Sunday-school teacher therefore expend all his powers in impressing the profound depths of that love, which redeems man from sin and makes him an heir with Christ.—The S. S. World.

Indoor Complaints.

It is strange how few really healthy women we find, and stranger still, of the small number, the majority are to be found in cities. Various are the causes to which the universal ill-health of women is referred, improper drinking and improper eating being among the number; but if one cause may be set down as inclusive, and as forming the basis of the whole, we should term it indoor life.

Half the ills of women, physical ills, arise from the want of fresh air. They breathe a vitiated atmosphere from the cradle to the grave. Close rooms, hot stoves, odors from kitchen and nursery, do their work; undermining the constitution, snapping the vitality, weakening the purpose, until a languid performance of daily routine exhausts the strength, and there is no energy left for extra exertion.

We have known women to die of indoor illness, but it is a slow and terrible process. We know of one hearty woman capable of doing the work of a family, who was confined by the desire to live genteelly on small means to a narrow boarding-house life. First, it was dyspepsia, then inflammatory rheumatism, and enlargement of the liver; finally insanity, and then death.

We have known another bright, intelligent woman, twenty years of whose life was spent in a small, secluded spot in the country, from which she emerged into a mad-house. Intelligent care, exercise and pleasant society, cured her—the doctor fortunately understanding her case, and her subsequent life, which her husband took pains to arrange so nearly as possible to his directions, has been healthful and happy.

There is no use quarrelling over the necessity that compels most women to the performance of household duties. But we do ask them to "think out" the question of how much time it is necessary to give to these duties, and consider if it is not just as imperative a duty to take care of themselves as it is to care for others.

Fresh air, fresh air is what most women need. Fresh air to decarbonize the blood, to give color to the cheek, and light to the eyes. The sallow complexion, the dull, heavy step, tell the whole story.

Now, we are not going to tell how women are to get fresh air; every woman must figure that out for herself. Is there any need for so much cooking? for such incessant work?

Can you not go out doors to visit a neighbor instead of making hot-cakes, or embroidering the baby's saccos? If you can, pray do.—Demorest's Monthly.

A Seasonable Example.

Lyman Abbott says in the Christian Weekly

"Ever since Noah introduced into the world the art of ship building, sailing has been a favorite pastime; the very hazards of the sea have added to its charm; its discomforts constitute it a luxury. Not only were the twelve apostles boatmen, but Jesus Christ himself was a lover of the sea, and early in his Galilean ministry directed his disciples to procure for him a small ship (Mark 3:9) on which he often used to retreat from the crowd to enjoy that peculiar and indescribable repose which only those enjoy who are rocked to their sleep by the waves and sung to by the music of the winds and water. The perfection of repose is reached only when several miles of water are between you and your work, and you rejoice in the consciousness that neither mail, telegram, nor messenger can reach you with unquiet calls to duty; and this was a repose Christ took on occasions. That he enjoyed the sea is evident from his sleeping so soundly through that storm. Boating and mountain climbing were his only recreations; and he who finds his retreat from the whirl and bustle of daily business, not in the whirl and bustle of city recreation, but in the restfulness of the sea and the quiet of the mountain, does in so far follow Christ even in his recreations."

No Barrels for Whiskey

A master cooper called upon a black man in Ohio, and wished to purchase some stave timber. The black asked for what purpose he wanted the timber, and received for answer, "I have a contract for a thousand whiskey-barrels."

"Well, sir," was the prompt reply, "I have the timber for sale and want money; but no man shall buy a stave from me for that purpose."

The cooper was indignant to meet with such stern reproach from a black and called him a "nigger."

"That is very true," mildly replied the other. "It is my misfortune to be a negro; I can't help that; but I can help selling my timber to make whiskey-barrels, and I mean to do it."

Our Young Folks.

At Mother's Knee.

It may never be known how much of moral strength to bear opposition, when combining with wrong, or of courage to endure, through evil report and good report, he had its origin in childhood's hours, when at mother's side, the precious words she spoke have distilled as the dew, and fitted the heart to receive the seeds of holy truth and sterling principles.

It has been said that impressions received before the age of ten years are the most lasting, if not of greater influence than those received in later years. Be this as it may, hundreds of good men have borne testimony to the life-long influence of a mother's prayers, the pressure of a mother's hand upon the head, or a warning word, uttered long years ago, by his first friend.

How often have these remembrances been the means of arresting a youth, just on the eve of yielding to a great temptation tending to some fearful evil. There are more John Newtons than are known to fame, who have been rescued from ruin, by these very means; and more Richard Knills than earth has cognizance of, who have kept through life strong in holy purpose and rigid in adhering to the right, amid all trials and temptations and opposing influences, through these strong guards of early childhood.

I have in mind one who labored long and acceptably as a minister of Jesus. He would frequently remark that in preaching, some words of his mother, uttered in childhood, would come to mind, and fill him with holy thoughts, imparting enthusiasm and exerting a quickening and inspiring influence both mentally and physically; the results of such preaching, almost invariably, bearing marked indications of the favor and blessing of God.

In these fast times, when, through pressure of social and domestic claims, there are comparatively few hours of quiet intercourse between parent and child, it is well to consider these things.

Said a little lad, not long since, "Mother, I'm sorry you've got a sewing machine."

"Why so, Eddie? I'm sure I would never get my work done if I had not."

"Because," replied the child, "you don't have as much time as you used to; for there's so many frills and tucks and things to be made, that there's no time for nice times in the house, and so I go into the street."

This remark opened the eyes of the mother and led her to think. The result was, she judged it better to have her dresses less elaborately trimmed, rather than sacrifice her child's happiness or moral training. And so the boy was oftener found at her side, and mother's room became once more a dear resort and a sacred refuge from little troubles and from unholy influences as well.

Apart from a religious view the happiness with which through the power of memory one reviews such seasons of childhood in after life is worth something. The few brief years of happiness which the poor Cowper spent in his mother's society were not without their solace to that afflicted man in the retrospect, if we may judge by his inimitable poem, on "the receipt of that parent's picture. On reading this graphic description, one can almost see the little lad at his mother's side, as attracted by the flowers imprinted on her dress, he "picked them into paper with a pin"—an amusement with which some of the elders of the present day may not be unfamiliar. What father or mother could desire a more appreciative tribute than that which the poet so feelingly expresses, when he says:

"My boist is not that I deduce my birth From loins enthroned—from great ones of the earth But higher still my proud pretensions rise; The son of parents passed into the skies."

—Mary F. Halo, in Christian at Work.

The Catechism in the Sunday School.

Never was doctrinal training more necessary than now. Never was there a greater necessity to give clear and consistent views of divine truth. The world is full of vicious thinkers and writers, many of whom are not firm believers, and still more careless of the orthodoxy of their theology. The press is teeming with all sorts of books, written in a bold and fascinating style, exhibiting new truths, so called, or drawing new and startling conclusions from familiar facts. If the young Christian be permitted to entertain loose and unsettled notions of religious truth, where is the protection? Where is the armor that is to ward off the subtle assaults of this modern infidelity?

We know from our own experience, how, in moments of doubt, when the mind seemed to be tossed between conflicting opinions some old truth, some Bible verity, which we learned out of the Catechism in Sunday school, has come up fresh and distinct to memory, and stood us good service in time of need.

Let the children, then, be drilled in dogmatic theology. Let the Catechism of the Church be used; it is not safe to trust this important work to the personal communications of the teacher to the class.

How many teachers have we in our schools who have never been trained doctrinally; how many, even though their motives are of the purest kind, hold very crude, partial, and erroneous views of many important doctrines, and how many others have not the gift of clearly and forcibly impressing their own ideas upon the minds of their auditors.

No, let the system of instruction be uniform, let it be sound, and the mind of the child taken possession of will not go astray in ripper years. Before this school of moral culture existed children were carefully trained at home in the doctrines of religion and were regularly and frequently catechized by the ministers. This work has now been handed over to the Sunday school. The Church recognizes this duty, and, by her highest authority, exhorts to its faithful performance.—Reformed Church Messenger.

A Little Child Learning to Walk.

A little child about to be taught to walk—the mother knows that child won't learn to walk by sending to London and purchasing a discourse on the necessity of walking and reading it; she is equally certain of another thing, that all her threatenings would not make her child walk; it would not take a step for all that. Mothers are wise enough to know that the only way to teach a child to walk is to allow it. What doth she do? She sets it up against a chair, and then holds out an apple, or a sweetmeat, or toy. The young one deliberates—"If I take a step I know I shall fall;" at last the temptation overweighs all the deliberation; it takes the first, tottering step—one, two, three; it reaches its mother's finger, and rests awhile; then a little further, and further; till, step by step, the feat is performed, and in the family annals it is recorded—"the child has walked the first time across the room." Some smile, and say, "Such humble metaphors should not be used." But my Saviour talked about "eggs" and "fish," etc.; you can find the parables out if you like—I read them this afternoon. And in Hosea, there is a similar figure employed; "I taught Ephraim also to go; taking them by the arm," which means he taught him how to walk. This is the figure; now mark it is just the way Christ brings us to heaven. There we stand, trembling to take the first step; but He holds out His beauty—His own fair character—and says, "Come unto me, all ye that are meek and lowly of heart." We take the first step. Then He holds out another bait. "I will give you rest." Then we take another step and all the way He allures us on by the recompense of reward, and I don't know that we are not allured by the black river of death, wading through that dark stream, with the hope of the resurrection of the just, and with the glory of the righteous in heaven. This I do know, if I hope to bring sinners to Christ, it can't be by frightening them; it must be by alluring them.—Spurgeon.

Ten Rules for Farmers.

- 1. Take good papers and read them.
2. Keep account of farm operations.
3. Do not leave implements scattered over the farm, exposed to snow, rain and heat.
4. Repair tools and buildings at a proper time, and do not suffer a subsequent threefold expenditure of time and money.
5. Use money judiciously and do not attend auction sales to purchase all kinds of trumpery because it is cheap.
6. See that fences are well repaired and cattle not grazing in the meadows, or grain fields, or orchards.
7. Do not refuse to make correct experiments, in a small way, of many new things.
8. Plant fruit trees well, care for them, and of course get good crops.
9. Practice economy by giving stock good shelter during the winter; also good food, taking out all that is unsound, half rotten or mouldy.
10. Do not keep tribes of cats and snarling dogs around the premises who eat more in a month than they are worth in a whole lifetime.

The Sacred Heart.

A great deal is now said in Roman Catholic journals about "the sacred heart" of Jesus. We translate a few sentences from an article by Dr. Huber, as we find them in the Deutscher Merkur, giving a statement of the origin of this form of devotion. There was a nun named Maria Alabouco (born in 1647), at a cloister in Paray le Monial, in Charleroi, a sickly woman, who professed to believe that she was visited by the Lord in person, and that he laid his head on her breast, and opened to her the secrets of his sacred heart, and taking hers placed it in his own. Through a wound in his side, she saw his heart glowing like a furnace, and her own like an atom within it. Then he took it, all flaming as it was, replaced it in her side, and made her the possessor of his heart for time and eternity, and authorized her to dispense the treasure of his grace to such as could receive. She declared also that the saints and angels, the Virgin, and the three Persons of the Trinity, had appeared to her, and commissioned her to establish the worship of his heart, and to instruct her father confessor, La Colombiere.

The devotions devised by them were approved by Pope Clement XIII., and she was placed among the "canonized." In 1794 an ex-Jesuit established the Society of the Sacred Heart, which was in spirit, though not in name, a continuation of the Order of Jesus. In 1800 orders of women were established, who gave themselves to the education of girls. At present they have in various countries about one hundred institutions. In connection with this statement we may note the recent sudden outburst of this form of devotion. The French Assembly has voted to erect upon the top of Montmartre, at Paris, a church dedicated to the heart of Jesus. A new church likewise dedicated is now building at Turin, Italy.—Exchange.

The Christian's Enemies.

Then comes in the devil; and sometimes he beats the big drum, and cries, with a thundering voice, "There is no heaven; there is no God; you are a fool to persevere." Or, changing his tactics, he cries, "Come back! I will give thee better treatment than thou hadst before. Thou thoughtest me a hard master, but that was misrepresentation. Come and try me; I am a different devil from what I was ten years ago; I am respectable to what I was then. I do not want you to go back to the low theatre or the casino. Come with me, and be a respectable lover of pleasure. I tell thee, I can dress in broadcloth as well as in corduroy; and I can walk in the courts of kings, as well as in the courts and alleys of the beggar. Oh! come back!" he saith, "and make thyself one of mine." So that this hellish trinity—the world, the flesh and the devil—all stab at the Christian's perseverance.