

there is no guile, that there are no hidden motives, that while you profess to love God more than anything else, you are not loving other things more than God.

*Be humble.* Christ was so humble that he could say, without our being in the least shocked or even struck by it, "I am meek and lowly in heart." And if he was such, what ought we to be? Be humble under a sense of your sinfulness, under a sense of what you have been, under a sense of what there is in you that needs the constant cleansing of the blood of Christ, and the constant power of the Spirit of God. Be humble under the weight of God's mercies to you, then you will walk softly before others. Do not try to impress them with a sense of your superiority to them, if you do you will miss the mark altogether and make the contrary impression.

*Be holy.* While I would say, let us avoid anything unnatural. I would say much more loudly, Let us avoid the slightest appearance of evil of tampering with sin. Let us avoid making light of sin, either in our lives or in our conversation. Let us be consistent. That is true eloquence and true Christian influence. Remember what Peter says to wives who have unbelieving husbands. Observe, the advice he gives to the wife is simply to obey her husband. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation" that is, by the conduct "of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." (1 Peter iii. 1, 2.)

Thus let it appear, from your conduct, that your religion is not a matter of theory, of emotion, of talk, but a matter of fact. Indeed, if you please, let the very word "religion" alone, it is very seldom we find it in the Bible. But it, there be seen in your daily life the flowing of a stream the source of which is in heaven. Let the impression go out from your daily walk and conversation that whatever you do is real, that it is founded and grounded on reality. I read a few days ago about a young man who was converted, and who was asked afterward, "Under whose preaching were you converted?" His reply was "I was not converted under anybody's preaching, I was converted under my aunt's practicing."

Again, if you will walk in wisdom toward them that are without in the wisdom that cometh from above, that is first pure, then peaceable.

*Be happy.* Is that a command? It is. The Bible is full of it. "Rejoice." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord," "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." Christ spoke thus a few hours before He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." It is a deep joy, then, not inconsistent with suffering. If there is sunshine on your countenance others will believe that "the Lord our God is a sun and shield," and that Christ is "the light of the world." But, if we speak to them of that Sun and of that light and they never see anything but darkness and gloominess in us, if they observe that the clouds or earth are sufficient to obscure the light which we profess to have received from heaven, they will not believe in it.

*Be kind.* Do not simply love them, but show that you love them. Be kind in every deed. Be thoughtful. Shew your love to them in action. Not very long ago Mr. Weyland, of the London City Mission, was speaking in a meeting in Paris. He told us an incident with which you are perhaps familiar, and which took place in this town. There was a man, quite an infidel, who was dangerously ill, and a colporteur went to see him. The man would not receive him, and asked him never to come again. The colporteur after a few words left the house: but he noticed that the man was

very poor. There seemed to be none of the things necessary to health about his home. What did the colporteur do? He did not go and write an address about charity, but he went to the grocer's and he sent provisions to the man. A little time after he went again. He was well received. The man said, "If you please, sir, was it you sent those provisions?" "Well, yes, it was; but do not let us talk about that." "It was very kind of you. I treated you with so much discourtesy, and you were so good to me." My unbelieving friends, who profess to love me, have not done anything for me, but here you have sent me provisions. Please read me something out of your book." He read to him and visited him again and again. Before that man died he was brought to a knowledge of Christ. The work had been begun by an act of kindness.

A little while ago I read an account of what happened to Pastor Funcke, of Bremen, who is well known in Germany. He went to see a working-man, whom he describes as a tall, strong man, with a red beard, living in a miserable little place up a flight of rickety stairs. The man would not listen to him at all, but flew into a passion, saying, "I don't want to hear anything about your God. I don't believe there is a God." Then, clenching his fist, he said, "This is my god" and, bringing it down on the table with a thump, he added, "if ever I find you on these premises again I will put my god into your face." The pastor went away, but a few days later, hearing that the man was out of employment, he busied himself in finding a situation for him.

By and by the man heard of this. He went to him and said, "Is this true, sir, that you took the trouble to find me this employment?" "Why, yes, it is true." "Well," he said, "all Christians are not hypocrites." That was to him a discovery, it seems. He invited the pastor to his house and listened to him. "And now," says M. Funcke, "he, his wife and children are among the best of my church members, and theirs is one of the happiest homes in the parish." Surely this was "walking in wisdom toward them that are without." *Pastor Theodore Moind, Paris.*

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, March 6.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND. Luke 7. 36-50.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Luke 5. 18.—*And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven.*

Commit—47-50

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

Our last lesson ended with v. 28; the intervening verses serve as a connecting link between that and our present lesson. Verses 28-30 tell us the immediate result of our Lord's words, as given in our last lesson,—they of John's baptism glorified God the Pharisees and lawyers, not having been baptized of John, rejected the counsel of God—that is, Christ's testimony concerning Him against themselves. These words are significant. Having rejected John's baptism, the way was prepared for their rejection of John; and having rejected John, the forerunner and herald of Christ, they were prepared to reject Christ also. All this was, indeed, against themselves. God has said that he that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy—a warning that was awfully fulfilled afterwards in themselves and their nation. The remaining verses are taken up with Christ's own comments upon their folly and inconsistency.

LESSON NOTES.

(36) *One of the Pharisees desired Him, &c.*—It is evident (vv. 44-46) that this invitation was given, not out of respect to Jesus, but rather (v. 39) for the purpose of watching His words and acts, in order to find something whereof to accuse Him. Why, then, it may be asked, did Jesus go? It was to bear witness to the faith of a trembling believer, and to rebuke the pride and captiousness of the Pharisees.

(37) *A woman in the city, which was a sinner, &c.*—Doubtless a woman who had formerly led an abandoned life. This woman and Mary Magdalene have long been popularly regarded as the same person; but there is no evidence of this being true even the name of the former being utterly unknown. It is highly probable that this woman had both seen and heard our Lord on some former occasion, but had not previously been able to come near Him. The opportunity now offered was too precious to be lost—she followed Him tremblingly into the Pharisee's house, and her humility and love were rewarded by being publicly honored and acknowledged by Christ.

*Brought an alabaster box of ointment.* It may be inferred from the costliness of the box, that this ointment was very precious. It may indeed have been so, but we must be careful not to confound it with the costly "spikenard" with which Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus for His burial, and against the use of which, for such a purpose, Judas spoke so strongly. This box of ointment may have been the only treasure the sorrowing woman possessed—some precious heir-loom, perhaps, that linked her dreary present with the memories of home, and innocence, and love; if so, her lavishing it upon the feet of Jesus would be all the more affectingly tender.

*Stood at the feet of Jesus behind him.* People did not then, as now, sit at table; but reclined on a sort of couch. Thus being the case, the woman could stand behind Jesus, and still have access to His feet. *Weeping*—over her blighted and wasted life, and in the now-awakened longing for that purity and peace which she felt Jesus only could bestow.

*Began to wash his feet with tears and to wipe them with the hairs of her head.* As she wept at His feet, her tears would fall upon them; and probably having nothing else with which to wipe them away, she used the long flowing hair which hung loosely over her neck and shoulders. As she wiped those sacred feet, she felt constrained to kiss them, and finally to lavish upon them the costly ointment she had brought, probably, as a gift.

The whole proceeding seems to have been unpremeditated—the sudden prompting of penitent and adoring love.

(39). This scene gave the Pharisee the occasion he had been on the look-out for—one from which to establish a case against Jesus. His conclusion—mentally reached—was this:—If this man were a prophet, he would have known, &c. But Jesus had allowed the woman to touch Him; He had not seemed in the least annoyed by her persistent attentions; He had suffered them for a long time; therefore it was perfectly clear He was not a prophet, for a prophet would have discerned her character at once:—how much less, then, could He be the Christ of God. But Jesus instantly met this unspoken doubt by exposing the Pharisee's thought, a thing that should have convinced the doubter, since that is what none but God can do. He spoke.

(40). *Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee: and he said, Master, say on.* Simon had no idea that his thought had been read, as may be seen by the composed, half patronizing answer he returned. The suspicion of anything personal in the discourse he was about to hear, was probably farthest from his mind.

(41-42). Jesus, with great delicacy and thoughtfulness, conches His rebuke under a parable; and thus leads His host, in pronouncing in a supposed case, to pass judgment on himself. The parable is this. A creditor has two debtors; their debts are, respectively, five hundred pence, and fifty pence. Neither is able to pay, and both are forgiven. It is reasonable to suppose that both will love his generous creditor; but which will be likely to love him most?

(43). Simon's answer was prompt, and apparently frank, and Jesus accepts it as correct. Now for the application.

(44-46). *He turned to (towards) the woman, and said to Simon—Seest thou this woman? Thus the two were set face to face, as it were, being manifestly the ones to whom the parable points—Himself the creditor, Simon and the woman the debtors; which of the two had shown the love to Him which evinced forgiveness? I entered thine house, (an invited guest,) thou gavest me no water for my feet, she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, —this woman, since I come in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil (the common olive oil used for such pur-*

poses) thou didst not anoint. This woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Here is a double contrast. One had failed to offer common oil for His head; the other had lavished precious ointment upon His feet. One had withheld the courtesies which simple kindness should have dictated, the other had gone far beyond, and shown the most tender and unselfish devotion. The one had manifested the love which testifies of much that had been forgiven, the other the indifference which showed he felt no need of forgiveness.

(47). *Therefore I say to thee, her sins, which are many (these many sins of hers) are forgiven, for (the evidence, not the cause of forgiveness) she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* conclusive proof that Simon was not forgiven, for he had not loved at all.

(49). *They . . . began to say . . . who is this that forgiveth sins also? the weak evil of unbelief, as though one who could raise the dead and banish leprosy with a touch would not be able to do even that. Divine power alone could do the former; surely it could require no more to do the latter.*

(50). Jesus knew their thoughts, but He would not prolong the controversy; and turning to the woman, He gently dismissed her with the precious assurance—*thy faith hath saved thee*—or, through faith you are saved *go in (into) peace* into the abiding consciousness of the forgiveness of sins.

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

Sin has involved all men in ruin (Rom. 3: 23). Whether their debt be represented by fifty pence or five hundred, all are equally unable to pay, all equally helpless, all equally dependent upon God's mercy.

The truly forgiven are truly renewed in heart, and the truly renewed in heart love God truly. The love of this woman was held up by Jesus as a proof that she was forgiven. The proof of the opposite in Simon's case was obvious.

Our Lord here as the "Creditor," claims to be the forgiver of sins, and therefore God; and by openly pronouncing such forgiveness, He emphasizes that claim; and both His words and works prove it to have been a righteous one.

LESSON SUMMARY.

(For the Children.)

(36.) Who invited Jesus to eat with Him? (37). Who followed Jesus into the house? Why did she follow him? What did she bring with her? (38). Where did she stand? What did she do, as she stood thus at His feet? (39.) What thoughts were in the Pharisee's mind? (40.) What did Jesus say to him? What was Simon's answer?

Do you think Simon suspected that Jesus had been reading his thoughts? (41, 42). Give the parable that Jesus put forth. What is a parable? It is a little story—something resembling a riddle—from which we are to get a true meaning. When the parable was told, which question did He ask Simon? What was Simon's answer? Was it correct? (44-46). What two people in the room stood for the two debtors? Who stood for the creditor? How did Jesus say Simon had treated Him? Do you think, then, that Simon had been forgiven? Why not forgiven? How did Jesus say the woman had treated Him? Do you think she was forgiven? Why do you think so? 47. What did Jesus say about it? To whom did He say it? How had she shown that she was forgiven? Had Simon shown even a little love? If not, what must we conclude? (48). What did He say to the woman? (49). Were the people at the table pleased to hear Him say that? Why not? Because, in saying it, Jesus claimed to be able to do what none but God can. Did Jesus make any wrong claim, then? What one proof had Jesus first given that He was God? (50). What more did He say to the woman? What is peace? It is a sweet rest and comfort of mind, which Jesus gives all who love Him. Read or repeat John 14: 27.

Curran once said to Father Leary: "I wish, Rev. Father, that you were St. Peter and had the keys of heaven, because then you could let me in." The priest saw the sarcasm, and turned its sharp edges on the skeptic by replying: "By my honor and conscience, sir, it would be better for you that I had the keys of the other place, for then I could let you out."