

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1881, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON VIII.

MAY 22.] [About 28 A. D.]

PARABLES ON PRAYER.

Luke 18: 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 11-14.

1. And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint:

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.

4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard men:

5. Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others:

10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.—LUKE 11: 9.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The Lord hears the cry of the humble.

CONNECTION.—The preceding chapter from v. 22 to the end gives the discourses on the second coming of Christ. The Master warns them that at that time many would be given over to sinning as at the deluge.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—The lesson contains two parables, the unjust judge, and the Pharisee and the publican. The first inculcates the lesson of importunity in prayer; the second of sincerity and the true spirit of prayer. "As the widow," says Dr. Arnott, "by her unremitting cry obtained her desire from the judge, God's own redeemed children will obtain from their Father in heaven all that they need, if they ask it eagerly, persistently, unwearyingly."

NOTES.—JUDGE, this office was at first executed by the head of the tribe or king. Moses performed the functions of the office, Exod. 18: 14, Solomon, 1 Kings 3: 16-28, etc. At Jethro's suggestion Moses appointed judges, Ex. 18: 14-24, which were subsequently multiplied, so that every city had its judges who adjudicated cases at its gates, Deut. 16: 18. Fifteen rulers of Israel are known by the special term of Judges, and when the people asked Samuel for a king it was for one "to judge" them, 1 Sam. 8: 5, 20. Moral fitness was a prime requisite in a judge. They were to be "men of truth, hating covetousness," Ex. 18: 21, fearless of man, and "righteous" officers, Deut. 1: 16, 17.—SON OF MAN, a title of our Lord which he uses exclusively of himself in the Gospels. It is also referring to him in Dan. 7: 13, and three times in the New Testament, Acts 7: 56; Rev. 1: 13; 14: 14. The designation has allusion to our Lord's humiliation and poverty, Matt. 8: 20, as also to the perfect manhood embodied in himself, Mark 8: 38.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) PERSISTENT PRAYER. (II.) THE FORMALIST'S PRAYER. (III.) THE PENITENT'S PRAYER.

I. PERSISTENT PRAYER.—(1-8.) UNTO THEM, the disciples more particularly; TO THIS END, "the parable has its key hanging at the door,"—Henry. Its design is indicated at the beginning: ALWAYS TO PRAY, unwearied supplication; NOT TO FAINT, the danger is from little faith which easily becomes discouraged; NEITHER REGARDED MAN, had no proper respect as an officer of the law for any person's rights; AVENGE ME, etc., she wanted him to judge her difficulty and to punish the offender FIND FAITH, many become faint and do not persist in their faith like the widow, "in the last days" scoffers will say, "where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. 3: 4. Of such beware.

II. THE FORMALIST'S PRAYER.—(9-12.) DESPISED OTHERS, self-satisfied and proud; WENT UP, the temple was on an elevation; STOOD, implies a conspicuous position, probably "to be seen of men," Matt. 6: 5. Matthew Henry quaintly says, "The Pharisee came to the temple upon a compliment, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request"; I THANK THEE, a boast. He made it his business to tell God how good he was; I AM NOT, ETC., he did not look at himself in the mirror of the Law and God's requirements.

III. THE PENITENT'S PRAYER.—(13, 14.) AFAR OFF, not at a distance from the Pharisee but from the sanctuary. The temple was holy, and by the remote position which he took he showed a sense of his own unworthiness; SMOTE, gesture of sorrow.

APPLICATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE LESSON:

(.) In whose name should we pray? John 16: 23. (2.) Is urgent prayer acceptable to God? Luke 11: 8. (3.) Have we any goodness to boast of? Rom. 3: 27; 7: 18. (4.) Which is of more value, the form or spirit of religion? Joel 2: 13. (5.) How does God show his great mercy to the sinner? Rom. 5: 8.

ILLUSTRATION.—Need of importunity. Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the success of a good man's prayers. It must be an intent, busy, operative prayer. For consider what a high indignity it is, that a man should speak to God for a thing that he values not! Our prayers up for a thing that we ought to die, which are more precious than imperial sceptres, richer than the spoils of the sea, or the treasures of Indian hills.—Jeremy Taylor.

**Prompted by the Spirit,
Repeats God's promises,
Acknowledges His mercy and grace,
Yields not to doubt,
Entreats pardon, purity and peace,
Relying wholly on Jesus.**

LESSON IX.

MAY 29.] [About 28 A. D.]

PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

Luke 19: 11-27.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 26, 28.

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14. But his citizens hated him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth wilt I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26. For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

GOLDEN TEXT.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.—Rom. 14: 12.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Every one of us must give an account to God.

TO THE SCHOLAR. The parable was designed to answer the expectations of the Jews, who were looking for a visible manifestation of his kingdom, with Jerusalem as the capital. The story of the nobleman going off to get his kingdom, and returning again in power, was a representation familiar to his hearers.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) ENTRUSTED GIFTS. (II.) FAITHFUL TO THE TRUST. (III.) UNFAITHFUL TO THE TRUST.

I. ENTRUSTED GIFTS.—(11-14.) IMMEDIATELY APPEAR, it was expected that Christ would found a visible kingdom; FAR COUNTRY, his departure to the glory of the Father; TEN POUNDS, mine, see Bible Helps; OCCUPY, do business therewith.

II. FAITHFUL TO THE TRUST.—(15-19.) RECEIVED THE KINGDOM, man's opposition cannot overthrow God's plan that Jesus should rule "king of kings and Lord of lords"; FAITHFUL, God does not demand success, but only that we should do according to our ability; THY POUND, our talents we only hold in trust; they are not our own, they are God's.

III. UNFAITHFUL TO THE TRUST.—(20-27.) KEPT LAID UP, many neglect their Christian privileges. His was a sin of omission but nevertheless a sin, James 4: 17; AUSTERE, hard; OUT OF THINE OWN MOUTH, by thine own statement, spoken ironically; USURY, interest; SLAY THEM, a strong expression for the severity of Christ's retributive justice. "Whosoever will not be ruled by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by the wrath of Christ."—Henry.

APPLICATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE LESSON:—(1.) Why was it necessary for Jesus to go away? John 14: 3; 16: 7. (2.) What should be our attitude towards his coming? Luke 12: 35, 36. (3.) How much are we expected to do with our talents? Mark 14: 8. (4.) What will be the reward of faithfulness? Rev. 2: 10. (5.) What will be the punishment of Christ's enemies? Phil. 3: 19.

THE INFLUENCE OF SUNLIGHT.

Sir David Brewster has justly called sunlight "the very life-blood of Nature." The ancients worshipped the sun as Apollo, and made him also god of the healing art. They had their sunny terraces on the tops of their dwellings, where they could bask and bathe in the healthful, life-giving sunshine. The pathological importance of this agent is admitted, theoretically, by all intelligent persons. There are, indeed, ignorant people who make their homes as dark as their minds, who love darkness rather than light, because the admission of light into either their brains or their dwellings would reveal much of rubbish and dirt. But people are getting more correct views, and begin to welcome light of all kinds as a gift of God, who is the Father of lights.

The dynamic value of sunshine is emphasized by the Italian proverb, "Where light is not permitted to go, the doctor will have to go." The stimulus of light is indispensable to the proper oxygenation of human blood, and so to vigor of health, as it is to the germinal life of the vegetable, or the development of animal spawn. The transformation of the tadpole, which Dr. Hammond accomplished in fifteen days in sunlight would not be completed in darkness in one hundred and twenty-five days. Various animals, from the rabbit to the cow, have developed tubercles, simply by depriving them of sunlight. Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, tells with what anxiety he and his ghastly company watched for its return to bring, as he said, its "blessed medicine" to those pale and wasted sufferers. Cretinism, atrophy of the limbs, and other diseases, are common where God's healing sunshine is shut out.

The imperial surgeon of the Russian service, Sir James Willie, at St. Petersburg, says that there were three times as many cases of sickness on the shaded side of the military barracks as on the sunny side, though the air, food and discipline were the same. Florence Nightingale, Baron Dapuytres, and other eminent authorities, join their testimony to the influence of this potent agent in healing the sick, as well as in preserving the health of the well. Pure air and exercise are invaluable, but, as Dr. Willard said before our Legislature, "The triad is inseparable. The absence of sunlight will originate disease."—Exchange.

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