

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

September 8th.] A. D. 32. [Luke 10:30-37.

GOLDEN TEXT:—*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*—Gal. 5:14.

A "lawyer," or scribe whose profession was the study and teaching of the Law of Moses, has put to Christ the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Lord refers him to that law with which he was so familiar, and causes him to answer his own question. The lawyer correctly summarises the law: "love God supremely, love thy neighbour as thyself." Let him perfectly keep this law and he shall have a legal claim to "life." See Matt. 19:16-22. Sinners, it is true, cannot gain salvation by the law; but their futile attempts to keep the law must teach them this—must shut them up to grace.

The lawyer, "willing to justify himself," to "get himself out of the difficulty by throwing on Jesus the definition of neighbour," or "to vindicate himself, being conscious that he had not kept the law," puts the question "and who is my neighbour?" His views on the matter, like those of his nation, were doubtless narrow and selfish. He would never dream of calling Gentiles or Samaritans his neighbours: his own people, and perhaps only some of them, he would so regard. The parable, or illustrative story, which the Lord gives, has, as it were, illuminated for evermore the answer to the lawyer. Our "neighbour," whom we shall love as ourselves, is our *fellow-man*, whoever needs our help, whomsoever we have opportunity to help and comfort. Under no pretext whatever must we narrow the definition to a class.

"A certain man," (a Jew no doubt) was travelling the road, much frequented by robbers, from Jerusalem to Jericho. He is waylaid, stripped and plundered, beaten and left lying on the road "half dead." "By chance," (though there is no chance with God), a priest on his way to Jericho, in which several thousands of priests lived, came upon the wounded man; but he, whose office should have bound him to good doing, wishing to avoid trouble and expense, passed by on the opposite side of the road. A Levite, passing, did no better: he paused to look, and then took the other side. In marked contrast to this timidity and selfishness, a Samaritan, a man wholly or partly of Gentile origin, and of a nation specially hated by the Jews, (Jn. 4:9; Jn. 8:48), shews in his treatment of the wounded man what a neighbour is. Full of kindness and pity, he binds his wounds; according to the surgery of the time, "pours in oil and wine;" brings him on his own beast to an inn where he is cared for: pays two pence or donarii (about 30 cents) and undertakes to pay whatever expense more shall be incurred. This is beautiful, this is admirable. The Lord will again make the lawyer answer his own question and solve his own difficulty. Which was neighbour? the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? The lawyer, though his lips may be unwilling to say the Samaritan, cannot but answer "he that shewed mercy."

If then the Samaritan was the neighbour of the Jew, it followed that the Jew should be neighbour to the Samaritan, and to all; and if the Samaritan with his less standing and privilege shewed the neighbourly spirit and did the neighbourly act, how shamefully guilty was the unneighbourly, self-righteous, and selfish spirit of the Jew! Let us see to it that supreme love to God is united in us with true charity, and that we "do good to all men as we have opportunity."

IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.

September 15th.] A. D. 33. [Luke 11:5-13.

GOLDEN TEXT:—*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*—Luke 18:1.

In answer to their request, the Lord has been teaching his disciples how to pray. He has given them the *Lord's Prayer*. The same prayer, with slight variations, is found in the sermon on the mount; Matt. 6:9-13. Little doubt the prayer was given more than once: for in both instances it seems in proper connexion with what precedes.

The parable, vs. 5-8, is meant to teach the value of *Importunity in prayer*. Like chap. 18:1-8 it shews that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." To our impatient and unbelieving minds, such instruction is very necessary. "The example is taken from daily life, and shews with what sharp penetration our Lord observed the common occurrences and experiences of the same."

The case is supposed (a usual case in the East, where, owing to the heat, travelling at night was common), of a person going at midnight to his friend and asking of him three loaves to set before a friend who had just come in upon him from his journey. Why "three loaves" does not appear. Allegorical explanations of various kinds have been proposed. Bengel says, "one for the guest, one for the host, and one for the sake of honour." The friend of whom the request is made cannot without much inconvenience comply. The father, and the children are together in bed, and the door is barred, ("shut"). He "cannot" i. e., he is altogether indisposed, to rise and attend to this case. The plea of *friendship* is insufficient to overcome his reluctance: but the *importunity*, literally "shamelessness," of him who continues to ask and to knock, finally prevails. Everything gives way before importunate perseverance.

See vs. 9 and 10, the Lord applies the parable, "Ask, seek, knock," each term stronger than the preceding—a climax. The law of the kingdom, attested by experience, is that "every one that asketh receiveth, &c." We must here, as in ch. 18, avoid supposing that God is unwilling to hear prayers, and grants our requests to get rid of us. The argument is *from the less to the greater*, ("a fortiori"). If men who are "evil" thus ask, much more will He who is good. See vs. 11; ch. 18:7.

In vs. 11-13, the certainty of our obtaining from our heavenly Father "good things" (Matt. 7:11) even His "Holy Spirit," is argued from the love of earthly parents. They will not heartlessly mock their children by giving them a stone in place of bread, a serpent in place of a fish, a scorpion in place of an egg; things useless or pernicious, though deceptively like the things asked. It is not meant that because God is our Father we shall receive from Him anything we may ask. We must ask for "things agreeable to His will," for things represented by bread, the fish, the egg. "Should anyone in his foolishness beg a scorpion or a snake, the father would be no father could he fulfil such a wish."

"If ye then being evil," (for such are all men by nature; and such even the renewed are in contrast with God), will not fail to respond to all proper requests of your children, assuredly He who is infinitely benevolent ("God is love") will not withhold the highest gift He has to bestow, the Holy Spirit.

(1) Let us therefore ask from God, in the name of His Son all that He sees to be good for us. (2) Let us ask with unwearied perseverance. (3) Let us ask with full confidence in the wise love of our Father in heaven.