

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

The relation of our lesson to two others found in the same chapter, must be considered if we would ascertain the precise point of its teaching. The parable of the sower illustrates the condition of heart necessary to the profitable reception of the word; the parables of the tares, and the net, the mixed nature of society amidst which it must grow. The former of these points out that the presence of evil is due to the deliberate act of a malicious agent, and that the separation is not desirable; while the latter indicates that the presence of evil is inevitable under the circumstances and a separation impossible. We take up the lessons suggested by the narrative, as they present themselves in succession.

1. The full explanation of this parable was given in response to the enquiry of men who understood it imperfectly and were not content with the superficial meaning that satisfied the multitudes. In this the disciples admonish us *not to rest in a half-understanding of God's word.*

When you have read over a portion return and peruse it more carefully. By the help of marginal references throw the light of other Scriptures upon it. Ponder and pray over its richer sentences. Consult commentaries and lesson helps, and spare no pains to ferret out its deeper meaning and varied applications. Without the press and the fire we cannot extract the sweet juices of the sugar cane.

2. *Christ claims the whole world as "His field."* In the true spirit of his Master, John wisely took for his motto "The world is my parish." Christians are to sow the seed in every part of the field. All is to be cultivated for the Son of Man.

The servants, the Church of Christ, is responsible for the waste places as yet unreclaimed from heathenism. Weeds and forest fully occupy, as yet, the greater portion of the field. Commendable as the missionary enterprise of the Church is, it is putting forth but a fraction of the power which it has at command. The Lord is opening up the way; He is calling laborers who are responding with alacrity; but the Church withholds her gifts—the laborers cannot go because of that dreadful deficit in the Foreign Mission Funds.

3. The field may be regarded from another point of view. *Everyone has a field to cultivate.*

It lies in his own bosom and the sphere of his influence. The good seed consists of the virtues and graces of the Christian character and their manifestation, with the influence thereby exerted for good upon all whom we come in contact. The tares are the evil impulses of our unrenewed nature, the allurements of sin to which we yield and the baneful results upon others of our bad example and inconsistency.

4. The tares were sown "*while men slept.*" *Satan labors with unrelenting assiduity.* Rest and sleep are necessary to men. No blame is to be attached to the servants for not watching their master's field during the night. But let us learn a lesson here of warning that our love of ease and comfort does not cause us to relax our vigilance in watching against the wiles of the devil."

If we close our churches and Sabbath-schools in summer, Satan takes good care to provide open means of recreation for the public, and follows our ministers and congregations to summer resorts tempting them to throw off the responsibility they should feel for the faithful discharge of Sabbath duties.

The weather may be cold and the roads bad in winter, but Satan gets around just the same, and is all the better pleased to observe that the Sabbath School is, like the maple trees, deciduous, and has gone into a wintry condition of suspended animation, alarmingly like death.

When we think ourselves most secure Satan is most likely to be preparing some snare for our souls. Both in our Christian work and in our individual life we have need of unceasing activity and watchfulness.

5. As soon as Satan had sowed the tares he "*went his way.*" The good grain would receive the constant care of the husbandman but *the tares would need no cultivation.* They would feed for themselves.

There is a wonderful vitality in evil. Thorns and thistles seem native to the soil everywhere. A patriotic Scotchman who planted his national emblem before his door, has cursed California with an ineradicable weed. The Mennonite emigrants to the Northwest have brought with them a thistle far more troublesome than our most persistent native species.