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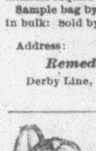

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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.—GENESIS.

First Quarter.

Lesson IX. Feb. 27. Gen. 19: 15-26.

DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Escape for thy life.—Gen. 19: 17.

While Abraham was pleading for Sodom with the "Angel of Jehovah" (our last lesson), the other two angels went on toward Sodom, where they arrived at evening. Lot, sitting in the gate of Sodom, and therefore a leading citizen, welcomed them to his home, pressing them earnestly to stay, for he knew the bad treatment they would be likely to receive at the hands of the Sodomites. During the evening they were attacked in the house of Lot by the Sodomites, but the two angels smote the assailants with blindness. Then Lot knew that he also had "entertained angels unawares," and he was prepared to believe them when they declared that God had sent them to destroy the city.

I. UNHEEDED WARNINGS. — Lot had shown that he was still a righteous man, by his treatment of the strangers, although contaminated with the evil of Sodom; and the angels warned him of the impending destruction. He had only his wife and two daughters at home with him; but at the request of the angels, Lot immediately went out in the night, and awakened his sons-in-law and their families, warned them of their danger. But his sons-in-law refused to believe. "He seemed as one that mocked."

II. ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE. 15. *And when the morning arose.* The morning is the *dawn* (since the sun rose as Lot entered Zoar). *Hastened Lot.* Lot required to be *hastened, urged.* Even his faith was imperfect. *Thy two daughters which are here.* The other relatives might have been there, but refused to believe. All that were ready to flee with him could be saved. *Lest thou be consumed.* All that have not faith enough to escape from the city of sin, must perish with the others.

16. *And while he lingered.* His heart was agonized at the thought of leaving so many relatives behind him, to perish in the perdition of the city. *The Lord being merciful unto him.* He showed patience toward his procrastination.

17. *Escape for thy life.* He could not remain in Sodom and live. So no man can remain in the Sodom of sin and live. God calls to every soul, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" *Look not behind thee.* This was not merely to prevent delay, but also showed that God demanded of them a total alandonment in heart and will of the condemned cities. *Neither stay thou in all the plain.* Lot was to escape from the whole of the devoted region which he had coveted for his own, and where, when he parted from Abraham, he had made his habitation and sought to enrich himself (13: 10). *Escape to the mountain.* The mountains of Moab, which rise abruptly from the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley.

III. THE UNWISE PRAYER. 18, 19. *Oh, not so, my Lord . . . I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die.* Lot was an old man, and had three women with him, so that he dreaded the long journey and the hard climb up the steep and barren mountains. They might be overtaken by the evil before they reached the mountain, or wild beasts or bands of Sodomite robbers might destroy them. *Thou hast magnified thy mercy.* Lot felt encouraged to ask this small favor, because God had already shown his favor by doing much greater things for him.

20. *Behold now, this city is near.* The city was Bela, afterwards called Zoar (*little*), from the incident here narrated (comp. ver. 22 with chap. 14: 2). *Is it not a little one?* Lot's meaning was that since Zoar was the smallest of the cities of the Pentapolis, it would not be a great demand on God's mercy to spare it, and it would save him from further exertions for his safety.

21. *See, I have accepted thee.* His infirmity is not rebuked: his request was granted; the city was spared for his sake. In this God designed at once to show how much the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails, and at the same time by the result to teach his short-sighted servant how much wiser a part he would have acted had he confided in a childlike manner in God, and fled to the mountains in the first instance.

IV. DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN. 23. *The sun was risen.* It had just appeared clear above the horizon.

24. *The Lord rained upon Sodom . . . brimstone and fire.* The words are to be understood quite literally, as meaning that brimstone and fire, *i. e.*, burning brimstone, fell from the sky.

V. THE FATE OF THE BACKSLIDER. 26. *But his wife looked back from behind him.* Regret for the property they had left behind, curiosity, disobedience to her husband, disregard for the words of the angels, all may have conspired to induce her to look back. *She became a pillar of salt.* The dashing spray of the salt, sulphurous rain seems to have suffocated her, and then incrusted her whole body. She may have burned to a cinder in the furious conflagration. She is a memorable example of the indignation and wrath that overtakes the halting and the backsliding.

Facing a Giant.

"Frau Schmidt, will you please to watch mother for a minute? I'm going to try if I can find father."

Christian Klein's mother was very ill—ill of a complaint called hunger, and of which many people died in the cruel old times, nearly 400 years ago. His father had been away since daybreak, in the hope of getting food for her; and now it was evening, and he had not returned. So Frau Schmidt came in, and Christian Klein went out.

Very picturesque looked the old town of Rosenburg (Giant's Tower) in the red light of sunset. Its gray, old church towers, and steep, narrow streets, and queer little loophole-shaped windows, and tall, wooden house fronts, striped with white and black—all looked fairy-like in the crimson glow. High over all rose the shadowy pines that covered the rocky hill, on the brow of which stood one, dark and stern, the battlements of the Grand Duke Ludwig's castle.

But the town-people were in no mood to enjoy the view, splendid though it was. To them the grand old fortress overhead was like a wolf-lair on a vulture's nest. Oppressed, ground down, forced to pay such heavy taxes that they had barely enough to live upon, and in daily terror of being murdered besides (for a prince of the fifteenth century held all his subjects' lives in his hand) the poor wretches had no hope except the Grand Duke might die or be killed, and that his successor might be a little less cruel and hard-hearted.

Suddenly there came a merry burst of hunting-horns from the wood above, and up to the narrow path leading to the castle rode a long train of green-coated horsemen, headed by a figure, at the sight of which every one trembled. Could a huge black bear have mounted on horseback, it would have made a fair likeness of the terrible Grand Duke whose chief pleasure was to go out and kill something, whether man or beast, mattered not a whit.

The blast of horn disturbed for a moment a group that had gathered around a pale, scared-looking man in the dress of a peasant, who seemed to be telling them something very startling indeed.

"I saw him with my own eyes," he was saying, "bound hand and foot upon a horse. They say he had killed one of the Grand Duke's deer, and that he's to be hunted to death for it by the staghounds to-morrow morning. Poor neighbor Klein!"

A faint cry broke forth behind the speaker, and he turned hastily around, but only saw a little boy disappearing behind the corner.

The Grand Duke's deer-park lay upon the side of the hill upon which his castle stood, surrounded by a palisade so high and strong that it was no easy matter to get into it. Nor, indeed, would anybody be likely to try, for, what with the savage dogs that kept watch there all night, and what with the Grand Duke's soldiers who had order to kill anybody that was found trespassing, whoever got in had little chance of ever getting out again.

Just as the moon rose that night, a man who was pacing to and fro like a soldier on duty in an open space at the upper end of the deer-park heard a slight rustling among the boughs overhead; and a small, dark figure, no larger than a child, dropped almost at his feet.

The man started back, but the child, so far from being frightened, came up to him and said eagerly:

"Oh, please can you tell me where the Grand Duke is? I want to see him."

The soldier stared blankly at him for a moment, and then burst into a loud horse-laugh.

"A brisk lad-in truth! And, pray, what dost thou want with the Grand Duke, my young prince?"

"I am not a prince," said the boy simply; "I'm Christian Klein, of the Leder Strasse (Leather street), and my father is to die to-morrow for killing one of the Grand Duke's deer. But I am sure if the Grand Duke knew why he did it he'd never be so cruel as to kill him."

"And why did he do it, then?" asked the soldier.

"Mother's dying for want of food, and father went out to try and get her some, and she's been watching for him all day, and if he don't come back she will die, I know she will die."

The man was silent a moment, and then asked gruffly:

"How came a slip of a boy like thee here at this hour of the night? Knowest thou not that the Grand Duke's bloodhounds are loose, and we guards have orders to kill anyone who enters without leave?"

"I know that; but I don't care if I can save father."

"A brave boy, truly," muttered the sentinel. "I doubt if any living soul would do as much for me. Well, lad, if thou fearest not dog and spearmen, art thou not afraid of the Grand Duke?"

"No," said the little hero, firmly. "I know that they tell fearful stories about him, but I can't believe he's so bad as they say, and then I always think how sad and lonesome it must be to have everybody hating him so, and no little children to love him as I love papa."

The soldier was silent for a moment, and then said in an altered voice:

"Child, thou hast thy wish. I am the Grand Duke. Behold him now."

He threw back his cap as he spoke, and the savage face which haunted the dreams of every man in Rissenbrug stood out in all its terrors under the brightening moonlight. But to Ludwig's unbounded amazement, the child instead of screaming or shrinking back, sprang forward and cried joyfully:

"Oh, I'm so glad, I thought I'd never find you, or that the soldiers wouldn't let me speak to you. You'll let father come back to us?"

"What, after killing one of my deer?" growled Ludwig in his harshest voice. "No, he has broken my laws, and he shall die."

The boy's face fell, and he stood a moment as if thunderstruck, while the Grand Duke watched him keenly.

"Kill me, then, and let father go," said Christian at length: "I'm too little to work for mother, and she can go without me; but if any harm should come to father she would die."

As he stood there in the moonlight with the black shadows of the wood behind him Ludwig fancied that he saw in his face a strange likeness to his own little boy who had died long ago—one of the few living things which that iron-hearted man had ever loved.

"Come with me and show me where thy mother lives," said the Grand Duke at last. "If thou hast spoken truly, well and good; if not—"

The flash of those terrible eyes, which had never known fear or mercy, sufficiently filled up the blank as the prince and the peasant boy went forth into the darkness.

"Good news, mother!" cried little Christian, rushing into the dark and dismal room where his mother was lying all alone, for good Dame Schmidt had at length been forced to leave her.

"Who talks of good news?" answered Frau Klein, in a dreamy voice; for her mind was so weakened by hunger and distress that she hardly knew what was passing around her. "There is no good news for us; unless it pleases God that the Grand Duke should die."

A quick drawn breath, as of some one in pain, answered her from without, and Prince Ludwig's mighty figure stalked into the room, which he surveyed wonderingly by the light of the lantern that he carried.

"The boy spoke truth in every deed," muttered he. "What a place! 'Tis worse than one of my castle dungeons."

It was indeed. The plank walls shook and groaned at every gust of wind. The mud floor was worn into countless hollows by the rain that had trickled through the cracks in the roof. The air was chilling and damp as a burial-vault, and the white, pinched face of the poor creature who lay helpless on her rotting straw might well have passed for one that was already dead.

Roused by the stranger's entrance (though she did not recognize him), she rose half erect, with a look of terror in her shrunken eyes.

"What has happened?" gasped she. "My husband?—"

"Fear not. Thy husband shall be here within two hours," said Ludwig, turning hastily away as if ashamed of himself. But at the door he turned again, and, holding out his hands to Christian, said:

"Little one, wilt thou kiss me before I go?"

The child put his thin arms around the great, thick neck, and as the little wan cheek touched the old tyrant's grim, bearded face, Ludwig's savage eyes grew dim with unwonted tears.

Two hours later Hans Klein was in his sick wife's arms, and little Christian was looking wonderingly at a packet containing a heavy gold chain that he had seen on the prince's neck, with a slip of parchment inscribed, "From Grand Duke Ludwig to the little boy who did not hate him."

Thirty years later, two men, the one in the dark robes of a monk, the other wearing the rich dress that showed him to be the Mayor of Riessenburg, stood together in the old church of St. Adelbert, beside the marble tomb in which Grand Ludwig had just been laid.

"God bless him!" said the Mayor. "If he began by doing evil, he ended by doing much good."

"Thanks to thee, Master Klein," answered the monk. "And they may well write upon thy tomb (though I trust it may be long ere thou needest one) what they have written in the market-place yonder: 'God hath sent his angel, and shut the lion's mouth.'"

Humility.

I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power, or hesitation in speaking his opinions; but a right understanding of the relation between what he can do and say, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it, and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them, only they do not think much of themselves on that account. Arnolfo knows he can build a good dome at Florence; Albert Durer writes calmly to one who has found fault with his work, "It cannot be better done;" Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled anybody else; only they do not expect their fellowmen, therefore, to fall down and worship them. They have a curious undersense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not in them, but *through* them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them—and they see something divine and God-made in any other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful.—*John Ruskin.*

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"All that certain lot, piece and parcel of land, situate, lying and being in the Town of Portland, in the City and County of Saint John aforesaid, on the northern side of that part of the city road called Lombard street, and bounded and described as follows, that is to say: Beginning on the said northern side of Lombard street (so called) at the southeastern corner of a lot heretofore leased by William Hazen and Sarah Elizabeth Hazen, executors of Robert F. Hazen, to John McDermott and the said Barbara McDermott; thence in a northerly direction along said McDermott's eastern line forty-four feet more or less, to the southern or rear line of a lot heretofore leased by Ward Chipman, since deceased, to John Millen, also since deceased; thence in an easterly direction along Millen's said southern line twenty-four feet; thence at right angles in a southerly direction forty feet more or less to Lombard street aforesaid, and thence in a westwardly direction along the said northerly side of Lombard street twenty-five feet to the place of beginning," which said lot of land was demised and leased by Thomas B. Prussic of Yalding, in Kent, England, and Susan Francis Prussic, his wife, in her own right, by Indenture of Lease bearing date the twentieth day of January, A. D., 1882.

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