

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXXIV.

Aug. 25. } THE FRIEND OF SINNERS. { Luke vii.
1878. } 40-50.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This man receiveth sinners."—
Luke xv. 2.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Luke vii. 18-35.... John sends disciples to Jesus.
T. Luke vii. 36-50.... The Friend of sinners.
W. Matt. xi. 20-30.... His mighty works.
Th. Luke xv. 1-10.... "This man receiveth sinners."
F. 2 Pet. iii. 8-18.... "Not willing that any should
perish."
S. Ezek. xviii. 20-32.... No pleasure in the sinner's
death.
S. Matt. ix. 1-8.... Power to forgive sin.

HELPS TO STUDY.

All to whom the Gospel is preached are divided into two classes: those who reject Christ and those who come to Him. We have in this lesson an example of each—two portraits. Let us look at them carefully, and see *what it was* that made the difference between the two.

I. TWO WAYS OF TREATING CHRIST.

1. The Pharisee's way.

What did the Pharisees of Capernaum, etc., think of Jesus? Did not like Him—objected to his ways, e.g., eating with publicans (Matt. ix. 9-17; Luke xv. 1, 2); would not receive Him as Messiah (Matt. xi. 16-24); but not yet His open enemies.

One of them, Simon by name, thinks he would like to do Jesus a kindness—and, perhaps, show off his own hospitality at the same time; he therefore asks him to dinner. See the guests coming in—Simon receiving them courteously—embracing them; servants ready to wash the dust from their feet, and anoint them with oil to soften the parched skin. Now see the tables spread—the guests (according to custom) on couches or "ottomans" as high as the tables, reclining on their left arms, with their feet (unshod) outwards. And who are all these strangers in the room, looking on?

[Note 3.] But see—one guest not looking like the rest—has neither been washed nor anointed—when He came in Simon gave Him no kiss: who is that? ver. 44-46. Why this? No need, thought Simon, to show Him any particular attention. Very willing to honor Him with an invitation, as so well known and popular; more could not be expected—he could not treat the Nazarene carpenter like his rich friends—anything good enough for Him.

2. The Woman's Way.

One of the strangers in the room weeping—a wicked woman—known in the city as openly bad. Why weeping? For her sins? Knew all along how bad she was; but now feels it, can think of nothing else. See what others have felt—Ps. xxxviii. 3, 4; xl. 12; Ezra ix. 6; Luke xviii. 13. Why has she come here? She knows Jesus to be the friend of sinners; very likely, when He said those words, "Come unto Me," etc. [Note 1], she had heard them—they went to her heart—she was "heavy-laden"—she longed for "rest,"—and she believed Him who spoke—knew not much about Him, but felt sure God had sent Him to win sinners from their bad ways. She will sin no more now—will try and be like that pure and holy Saviour. She must do something for Him; but what? she so unworthy—what can she do?

She has a chance now; has seen how uncourtously Jesus has been treated—can make up for it. See her, trembling and weeping, coming behind Him; what does she do? ver. 37, 38. Simon would not spare common oil for His head; she devotes to His feet her precious ointment. Simon did not employ his slaves to attend on Jesus; she is content to be the slave herself [Note 3].

What a difference in these two ways of treating Jesus! Now ask—

II. WHY HE WAS TREATED SO DIFFERENTLY.

Silence at table—all surprised at Jesus allowing this. See what Simon thinks ver. 39 (comp. Isa. lxxv. 5). Were his feelings unnatural? He was looked up to as a religious man. What "good boy" likes to be seen in company with bad boys? But it is one thing to avoid sin—another to despise sinners, forgetting *what we are ourselves*. See Luke vi. 37; 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Yet Jesus has a rebuke to utter, but not to the woman. It is he, the scrupulous Pharisee who would shrink from such a sin, that is to be rebuked. Jesus will show him just what we are asking about—the real difference between him and the woman. Will He do it severely, as one offended by the incivility? See how gently, ver. 40-47.

Now, what was the difference?

(a) See ver. 47—"Loveth much"—"loveth little." The woman loved Jesus "much," thought nothing too good for Him, no trouble too great for Him. Simon loved Him "little," scarcely at all; so neglected His comfort.

(b) But much more than this in the parable. Why was one debtor more grateful to the creditor than the other? Simon could see that—ver. 43 ("forgave most"). Was the woman a great sinner?—well, she felt it, and therefore "loved much" Him who had said to sinners, "Come unto Me." Was Simon so good?—so he thought—then of course he would not care so much for a Saviour. Yet Jesus, by the parable, reminds him that he is a debtor too, though he may think but a small one; that his good deeds of no avail before God ("nothing to pay"); but that he too may get pardon ("forgave them both"). [Note 4.]

(c) But more yet. Simon might say, "Suppose the woman is penitent, why go to this Nazarene? and does he mean that He is the creditor—that my sins are debts to Him—He to forgive them?" What other difference, then, between him and her? She believed Jesus had the right to forgive, and would forgive—did Simon believe that? She had faith; and her faith "saved her," ver. 50. [Note 5.]

Now we see the difference:—

The woman—(c) had faith in Jesus as the Saviour; (b) felt her sins, and so loved Him that forgave them; (a) loving Him, showed her love in her treatment of Him.

The Pharisee—(c) had no faith in Jesus; (b) had no feeling of his sin—so no special reason for loving Jesus; (a) showed his lack of love in his treatment of Jesus.

WHICH OF THESE TWO ARE WE LIKE?

1. Do we neglect Christ? Perhaps not openly bad—regular at church and school, etc.—outward respect for His name, His day, His book, etc.; yet not trying to please Him—no sacrifice for His sake—care for self most. This like the Pharisee. But what the cause? [To illustrate "cause and effect":—Roots and fruits: "do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. vii. 16). Pleasant and unpleasant sounds and perfumes; can tell whence they come.] This, the cause—no sense of sin—so no care for a Saviour. But if so, deceived (1 John i.)—the sin is there—the debt is due—"nothing to pay"—if not freely forgiven now, "the uttermost farthing" demanded at the "day of reckoning."
2. But do we feel sin—feel our debt—feel how poor our goodness is—"nothing to pay?"—

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow," etc.

Then, like the woman, shall come to Christ—confess our sins—then what?—1 John i. And we know more of Him than she did: not only know His kindness, hear His "Come unto Me"—know, also, that He died for those very sins, has paid the debt Himself. Can you think of this and not love Him? See what produced St. Paul's love (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). And if love Him, ready to be His slave, give up all bad things for His sake, all good things to His service.

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. This incident is placed by Luke (who alone relates it) immediately after the discourse arising out of the Baptist's message, which, as given in the parallel passage in Matt. xi., concludes with the words, "Come unto Me," etc. Hence the probability that the woman was brought to repentance by that very invitation which has been the salvation and comfort of so many souls in every age. Observe, too, that the narrative affords an example of both the grounds of complaint against Jesus, alluded to in that discourse: attending feasts ("a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber") and showing Himself the "friend of publicans and sinners."

2. The act of the penitent woman must be carefully distinguished from that of Mary of Bethany, recorded in Matt. xxvii., Mark xiv., John xii. Many of the older writers, and some modern critics of the "destructive" school, confound them; but the only point of resemblance in the two narratives is the name of the host; and Simon was the commonest of Jewish names, there being eleven persons bearing it mentioned in the New Testament. The idea that the woman was Mary Magdalene (which is the origin of the modern term "Magdalen") is also purely traditional, and rests on no evidence whatever. The latter is introduced in the next chapter (viii. 2) as a new character, and is described in altogether different terms.

3. It is the custom in the east, where there has never been such a separation of classes as with us, for the houses to be open even at meal-time, and for strangers to enter and converse with those present, though not joining them at table; and this would be particularly the case at a large entertainment.

On the customs at dinner, see Kitto, "Daily Bible Illustrations (Life of our Lord)." The Greek word rendered "sat down to meat," in ver. 36, is literally "reclined."

On the civilities neglected by Simon, see Gen. xviii. 4, xix. 2, xxiv. 32; Ruth iii. 3; 1 Sam. xxv. 41; Ps. xxiii. 5; Eccl. ix. 8; Dan. x. 3; Amos vi. 6; Matt. vi. 17. With the feet only shod with sandals, washing is both a necessity and a luxury. Oil and ointment are in common use in all hot countries, to prevent the skin from cracking. It was a Jewish custom to show affection and esteem for a Rabbi by embracing his feet (comp. Matt. xxviii. 9).

The woman probably entered the house to hear Christ's words, and, observing His condition, hastened out to fetch her ointment; thus devoting to Him what had been purchased for her own personal adornment. Alford says that the Greek implies that she only intended to anoint and embrace his feet; the washing, etc., being the involuntary result of her excessive weeping. It was considered a humiliation for female slaves to be set to wipe their master's feet with their hair.

"Alabaster box,"—one word in the original—an *alabastron*: a vessel (probably a bottle) made of alabaster: just as we say a "glass," meaning a cup or vessel made of glass. The name was derived from a place called Alabastron, in Egypt, the marble from whence was believed to have special qualities as a preserver of unguents.

5. Verse 47 does not mean that the woman was forgiven because she loved much. The exact reverse was the fact; she loved because she was forgiven. Yet the word "for" is quite correct, and the sentence should be read thus: "You can see that her sins are forgiven, for see how much she loves." As we might say, "The child is better, for he is laughing," or, "The sun is up, for it is light," while in the sentence—"It is light, for the sun is up"—"for" is equivalent to "because." Alford correctly explains: "Simon had been offended at the uncleanness of the woman who touched our Lord: He, having given the Pharisee the instruction contained in the parable, and having drawn the contrast between the woman's conduct and his, now assures him: 'Wherefore, seeing this is so, I say unto thee, she is no longer unclean, her many sins are forgiven, for (thou seest that) she loved much; her conduct towards me shows that love which is a token that her sins are forgiven. For she has shown that love of which thou mayest conclude, from what thou hast heard, that it is the effect of a sense of forgiveness.' With this view Meyer, the ablest of German commentators, agrees."

WORDS OF THE WISE.

TRUTH is the foundation of all knowledge, and the cement of all societies.—Dryden.

CULTURE is good, is beautiful; but culture for culture's sake is contemptible—contemptible because it is utterly selfish, and therefore unworthy.—Independent.

THE truest help we can render to an afflicted man is not to take his burden from him, but to call out his best strength, that he may be able to bear the burden.—Phillips Brooks.

THERE are treasures laid up in the heart—treasures of charity, piety, temperance, and soberness. These treasures a man takes with him beyond death, when he leaves this world.

THE Bible itself must be brought out as the best defence against infidelity—the Bible itself, not only as the great standing miracle of history, but as containing unearthly ideas for which no philosophy, no theory of development, can ever account.—Taylor Lewis.

How do the evolutionists account for the fact that the genus shark has for ages worn his mouth on his most inconvenient side (for himself, that is.) According to the development theory it should gradually have worked round so that he would not have to turn over on his back to eat his dinner.

BEGIN your day aright. A good start does not insure good all through, but it helps immensely. Not to start well is a failure at the outset. Therefore, secure some time in the morning for communion with God before you plunge into the work and worry of the day. To begin your day thus is to begin it aright.

SPRINGS are little things, but they are sources of large streams; a helm is a little thing, but we know its use and power; nails and pegs are little things, but they hold the parts of a large building together; a word, a look, a smile, a frown, are all little things, but powerful for good or evil. Think of this, and mind the little things.

GOD respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how long they are; nor the music of our prayers, how melodious they are; nor the logic of our prayers, how methodical they are,—but the divinity of our prayers, how heart-sprung they are. Not gifts, but graces, prevail in prayer.—Trapp.

To consolidate and methodize and complete what has been most successfully begun in former years—to turn theory into practice—to attack with vigor the great task of life—to cast out old evils, and by grace to exhibit a holy character, these are the duties of him who is growing old. The whole prospect is deeply serious, though it need not be alarming.—J. W. Alexander.

JUST as the eye seeks to refresh itself by resting on neutral tints after looking at brilliant colors, the mind turns from the glare of intellectual brilliancy to the solace of gentle dullness, the tranquilizing green of the sweet human qualities, which do not make us shade our eye like the spangles of conversational gymnasts and figurantes.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

ALL that goes to constitute a gentleman—the carriage, gait, address, voice; the ease, the self-possession, the courtesy, the success in not offending, the lofty principle, the delicacy of thought, the taste and propriety, the generosity and forbearance, the candor and consideration—these qualities some of them come by nature, some of them may be found in any rank, some of them are a direct precept of Christianity.—John Henry Newman.

THAT touch of irreverent cant, "yours in Christ," in close juxtaposition with a demand for cash, affects us very unpleasantly; the more so, probably, because a man we once knew, who habitually closed his letters in this way, proved to be an unconscionable liar and hypocrite. A man of genuine religious spirit does not often fall into this sort of flippant cant. Think of Paul writing to Corinth or Ephesus and saying, "I must have a hundred and fifty dollars a week and board at the best hotel."

Meeting one day with an intelligent lady whose inclination had so obscured her moral vision that she saw, or thought she saw, moral merits in the theatre, John Foster put the question to her in these words:—"If some night there should go forth from God a potent energy, which passing along the surface of the world like the simoom, should blast and destroy every institution and structure which, in the whole account, does evil, would or would not the theatre be in ruins in the morning?"

DOING good is not incompatible with the most refreshing recreation. It will give a delightful flavour to vacation hours, among the mountains or in the seaside cottages, to keep the great relations and objects of life in remembrance. It is not necessary to encroach upon the requisite physical rest, or to challenge the brain to any serious service. Simply keep up the habit of thoughtful piety, and watch for accessible opportunities for a kind, sympathizing Christian word. The field is the world, and we are never out of its limits. A holy heart is a seed-bearing vessel, and wherever one carries it, the blessed germs will be distributed. "Blessed are ye that sow!"

CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, having had placed in his hands by an East Indian missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy, for the speedy and permanent cure for consumption, bronchitis, catarrh, asthma, and all throat and lung affections, also a positive and radical cure for nervous debility and all nervous complaints, after having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, has felt it his duty to make it known to his suffering fellows. Actuated by this motive, and a desire to relieve human suffering, I will send, free of charge, to all who desire it, this recipe, with full directions for preparing and using, in German, French, or English. Sent by mail by addressing with stamp, naming this paper, W. W. Sherar, 149 Power's Block, Rochester, N. Y.