

strengthened. The unity among them was beautiful. No one coveted or despised another's talent. No one envied another his call to labor, but all joined in praising God, to the best of their ability.

APPLICATION.—A girl, aged sixteen, had suffered all her life from partial blindness. At last an operation was performed, and she gained perfect sight. How strange everything seemed! One evening a week after her perfect recovery, she went into the open air after nightfall. She quickly ran back into the house, the joy of a great discovery lighting up her face. "Oh, come," she exclaimed, "come out quickly, and see what beautiful things have appeared in the sky!" Her friends hastily followed her out, wondering what she had seen. They saw nothing unusual. "What do you mean?" they asked her. "Look!" she said, "don't you see those bright things sparkling all over the sky?" "My dear child," one said, "those are the stars." Till her eyes were opened she had never seen them. Just so God's Holy Spirit is a bright and shining light. Not till He shines into men's hearts can they see God's truth, God's love, God's happiness.

#### NOT KNOWING.

I know not what may befall me;  
God spreads a mist o'er my eyes  
And at each step in my onward path  
He makes new scenes to arise,  
And every joy that He sends me, comes  
As a strange and sweet surprise.

I see not a step before me  
As I tread on another year.  
But the present is still in God's keeping,  
The future His mercy will clear,  
And what looks dark in the distance  
May brighten as I draw near.

For it may be the dreaded future  
Is less bitter than I think;  
The Lord may sweeten the waters  
Before I stoop to drink;  
Or if Marah must be Marah,  
He will stand beside the brink.

It may be He is keeping for the  
Coming of my feet  
Some gift of such rare blessedness,  
Some joy so strangely sweet,  
That my lips shall only tremble  
With the thanks they cannot speak.

Oh! happy, blessed ignorance!  
'Tis better not to know,  
It keeps me still in the arms of God,  
Which will not let me go,  
And hushes my soul to rest  
On the bosom that loves me so.

So I go on *not knowing*  
(I would not if I might)  
I would rather walk in the dark with God  
Than go alone in the light:  
I would rather walk with Him by faith  
Than go alone by sight.

### THE BIBLE CLASS.

FOR SUNDAY JAN. 10TH.\*

#### THE CALL OF PETER AND JOHN.

BY REV. PHILIP A. NORDELL, D. D.

Of the twelve men chosen for the apostolate the great majority are little more than mere names in the history. From the very first, however, Peter and John became conspicuous figures besides their Master; the one because of his rough impetuous manner, and his powerful individuality in which there was nothing tame or commonplace; and the other because of his ambitious and intolerant nature coupled with a rare devotion for his Master, and profound sympathy with Him. By far the greater number of personal incidents related of the disciples during their period of training refers to one or the other of these two.

#### INDIVIDUAL TRAINING NEEDED.

The original notions entertained by the disciples concerning the Messiah and His kingdom differed but a

little from the crude and material ideas current in their day. They had absolutely no conception of the nature of that task in view of which they had been called into the school of Christ. They needed to be taught that the Messiah was not a political deliverer, but a Saviour from the power and penalty of sin; that His kingdom was not of this world, but a reign of righteousness, truth, and peace; that He had come forth from God, not to gratify the pride and ambition of a single nation, but to fulfil God's purposes of mercy toward the human race. For the work of preaching the Gospel they needed training under the direct eye of the Master. Much of His instruction was therefore necessarily of a general character. But aside from this general preparation, the disciples needed a personal training in faith and temper, and like a wise teacher Jesus adapted His instruction to the varying characteristics of each. No one of them apparently needed this firm and tender discipline as much as Peter, and perhaps John next to him. Peter was a born leader. Jesus foresaw all his weakness, his strangely unsteady course, his rashness and presumption, but He foresaw also the possibility of moulding this now plastic temperament into a fixed and rock-like character that could be used as the chief human instrument in the founding of the church.

#### THE TRAINING OF PETER.

The special training given to Peter is illustrated in a considerable number of instances. The need of a strong and unwavering faith, no matter how appalling the external danger, was firmly impressed upon him when with a really stupendous trust in his Master's word, he walked toward Christ on the water. The steady and marvelous growth of his knowledge of Christ's nature was brought to light in his courageous confession at Cæsarea Philippi; and his great place in the church was unmistakably, although mystically, foreshadowed in the promises which Jesus then addressed to him. On the other hand so little had he apprehended the nature and purpose of his Master's mission that when Jesus foretold the sufferings and death which awaited Him at Jerusalem, Peter, in a most arrogant manner began to take Him to task for giving way, as he supposed, to such a fit of melancholy. He was then taught that the triumph of the Messiah's kingdom rested on the unlimited sacrifice of self. Peter knew the old law of retaliation, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," and the teaching of the Rabbis that three times exhausted the duty of forgiveness. He had yet to learn that the new law of love which Jesus taught, and which always looked to the reclamation of the offender, would welcome him with a God-like spirit of forgiveness every time he penitently sought pardon. Like forgiveness, humility was a new grace of which the world had no conception, and for which it had no name. In the washing of the disciples' feet at the last Passover all the disciples were taught, but especially Peter, that the highest are those who are ready to do the lowliest service.

#### THE TRAINING OF JOHN.

John is commonly regarded as possessing a genius for love. But it may be doubted if this was an inborn capacity. The incidents related of him before he had learned by long discipline to exemplify the spirit of his Master suggest that his natural disposition exhibited the reverse of that charity, gentleness, and unselfishness which are the leading characteristics of love. He was intolerant toward the interdicted exorcist, vindictive toward the inhospitable Samaritans, selfish in his ambition to overreach his fellows and to grasp for himself one of the chief honors of the coming kingdom. All these displays of temper were wisely curbed by the Master. The lessons learned in the school of Christ bore magnificent fruit in the entire transformation of His natural character. That which has cost a man no effort to acquire he values little. That which is won at great sacrifice is constantly prized. The mind is full of thought concerning it, and that of which the heart is full the mouth speaketh. Just because John had at length gained by divine grace such complete victory over his former self, he knew its cost, and was never weary of expatiating on the characteristics, manifestations, power and blessedness of love, and of inculcating it as the crown of the Christian virtues.

Thus were the natural asperities of these men toned down, until at the end of life the one is found as conspicuous for his patience as he had been for his precipitancy, and the other as winning by his manifestations of love as he may have been ungracious from his lack of it.

\*An Exposition of Lesson 2 in *The Bible Study Union Sunday School Lessons* on "The Three Great Apostles."