

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON XXXVII.

Sept. 15. } **IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.** { Luke xi.  
188. } 5-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."—Luke xviii. 1.

## HOME STUDIES.

M. Matt. vi. 5-15..... Christ teacheth to pray.  
T. Luke xi. 1-13..... Importunity in prayer.  
W. Eph. vi. 1-20..... Praying with all prayer.  
Th. Gen. xxxii. 24-32..... Wrestling in prayer.  
F. 1 Kings xviii. 30-38..... The answer by fire.  
S. Acts xii. 1-17..... The prison opened.  
S. Rom. viii. 18-28..... The Spirit interceding.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

Why do most boys and girls "say their prayers"? There are three common reasons—and all wrong ones.

(a) Because "they've got to do it." *A duty.* So it is, but this is not the true reason for praying. [Illustr.—*Poor man begging for bread—does he ask because it's a duty that's got to be done?*]

(b) Because God will be pleased with them, and so they will get to heaven. *A merit.* Well, God will be pleased—praying children will go to heaven—but not because it is so good of them to pray. So this is not the true reason. [Poor man again—does he beg just because it will please kind folk to hear him?]

(c) Because it does them good; they feel happier after it. *A privilege.* So it is; yet even this is not the reason. [Over the poor man beg because he feels the better for begging?]

What, then, is the true reason for praying? [Why does the poor man beg?] There are things which we want, and which God can give us. PRAYING IS ASKING FOR THESE THINGS.

The words of Jesus which we study to-day, show us how we should ask for these things, with what earnestness and importunity.

The Lord had just (ver. 1-4) given his disciples in answer to their request that short and perfect prayer, which was to be the model on which all our prayers should be formed. And then in simple and earnest words he taught them that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

## I. THE EXAMPLE OF IMPORTUNITY. (ver. 5-8).

Which of you, He asks familiarly, and thus He brings home to themselves the point of the story, which is drawn from every-day life, they could well appreciate—shall have a friend come in his necessity for that which he needs. Notice, it is a friend who asks, and friendship has its claims. It may have been that this friend had in former days been a benefactor where he is now a suppliant. There has been at all events reciprocity of affection and professions of attachment, which encourage him now to seek assistance. Moreover he is not asking for himself but for another friend who has unexpectedly come to him (Notes), and who according to the oriental ideas of hospitality has the very strongest claims upon him as a host which he cannot in honor disregard. It was a matter then of real concern and difficulty, that he had nothing to set before his guest (Note 2), and yet the request of one who, having a right to ask for himself, asked for another in need, meets only with the irritable and selfish answer, Trouble me not. Even the plea that his children are with him in bed, is a selfish one. But the case is urgent, the petitioner will not be repulsed. He renews and repeats his entreaties until through his very importunity (Note 3), he prevails. This parable is similar to that of the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1-5). In both the argument is the same. If selfish man can be won by importunate prayer to give, and unjust man to do right, much more certainly must much more earnest importunity be all powerful with the bountiful and the righteous Lord, and why, it may be asked, does there sometimes seem to be in God, as there was in this churlish neighbor and the unjust judge, a seeming neglect and unwillingness to grant, and why does he require from us this importunity in our prayers?

"The great difficulty with all God's gifts is on our part, to make us able and willing to receive. The gifts would be wasted on us, unless we had that appreciation and desire which made us importunate. We lose many prayers for the want of two things which support each other,—*consciousness of object, and intensity of desire.* Let a man define to his own mind an object of prayer, and then let him be moved by desires for that object which impel him to pray, because he cannot otherwise satisfy the irrepressible longings of his soul; let him have such desires as shall lead him to search out and dwell upon, and treasure in his heart, and return to again, and appropriate to himself anew, the encouragements to prayer, till his Bible opens of itself to the right places; and think you that such a man will have occasion to go to his closet, or come from it, with the sickly cry, Why, oh, why is my intercourse with God so irksome to me? Says Jeremy Taylor, Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the success of a good man's prayer. Our prayers upbraid our spirits when we beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die; which are more precious than imperial sceptres, richer than the spoils of the sea or the treasures of Indian hills. The Scriptural examples of prayer have, most of them, an unutterable intensity. They are pictures of struggle, in which more of suppressed desire is hinted at than which is expressed.

## II. THE CHARACTER OF PRAYER: vers. 9-10.

1. *The Command.* This is repeated in three different forms, in an ascending scale of earnestness. Ask: this implies want, which can only be satisfied by free gift. Seek implies more earnest desire. It is that kind of asking which uses the means. It is seeking "as for silver," Prov. ii. 4; It is to "search with all the heart," Jer. xxix. 13. Knock is the climax of persistent importunity. Let us now seek and knock. There shall come a day when it will be

"too late." Luke xiii. 24-28; Matt. xxv. 11, 12; Prov. i. 24-28. There is One now seeking that we may be found of Him, Luke xv. 3, 10; knocking, that we may open unto Him. Rev. iii. 20.

2. *The Promise.* This, too, is three-fold, corresponding to the three forms of the command to which it is annexed. The only limitation to this promise, which under various forms is several times repeated by our Lord, is that hinted at in vers. 11-13 and assert, in Jas. iv. 3.

3. *The law of the Kingdom.* Every one that asketh, receiveth. Upon this the Lord grounds both the command and the promise. The answering of prayer is not something exceptional, but a great law of our Father's spiritual Kingdom, a law which cannot be changed. Observe again the three-fold expression of this law, setting forth its universality and its constancy.

*Prayer is a real power in the universe.* "It has, and God has determined that it should have, a positive and an appreciable influence in directing the course of a human life. It is, and God has purposed that it should be, a link of connection between human mind and divine mind, by which, through his infinite condescension, we may actually move his will. It is, and God has decreed that it should be a power, as distinct, as real, as natural, and as uniform, as the power of gravitation, or of light, or of electricity. A man may use it as trustfully and as soberly as he would use either of these."

III. FATHERHOOD THE FOUNTAIN OF GIVING: vers. 11-13. The law of Prayer is founded upon the relationship of God to man.

1. This relation is foreshadowed by the earthly fatherhood. How tender and strong it is. We, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children. It is good gifts. A human father will not deceive in his gifts, nor will he injure knowingly by what he gives. For this very reason he may have to refuse what the child craves in his ignorance. But he only refuses that he may give, give more and better than was asked. He denies the request that he may satisfy the real necessity that prompted the request. Such is the earthly fatherhood in its beneficence and its wisdom, notwithstanding all its imperfections.

It sets forth—

2. *The Fatherhood of God*, whose love is marred by no selfishness and whose wisdom can never err. How much more. Who can answer this question, or measure God's willingness to give? "My God shall supply all your need out of His riches in glory." Phil. iv. 19. Your Heavenly Father, literally "Your Father from heaven," as if He were represented as coming down to us with His blessings. Compare "Our Father in Heaven," ver. 2. Alford remarks that, "when we address God, He is our Father in Heaven. When He answers us, He is our Father from Heaven."

The Holy Spirit.—In Matt. i. it is good things. The Holy Spirit is the best of all good things. It is the gift which is always good, and which includes all good things. The gift of the Spirit sanctifies all other gifts, and gives them their value and power for good.

It is a great gift to ask for the Holy Spirit, God Himself to come and dwell with us. It honours God thus to ask, and God delights in bestowing this gift.

To pray is to ask God for what we want. Then let us learn to ask—

Like the importunate friend, perseveringly.

Like the child, boldly and confidently.

But there is one thing wanted first, we must feel our need. Let us ask, then, for the Holy Spirit who will show us our need, and teach us what to pray for. Rom. viii. 26.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. *Three Leaves.* One for the traveller; one for himself, for he would wish to eat bread with his guest as his friend; a third, that there might be an appearance of abundance in his hospitality. This is quite natural, hence all allegorical interpretations of the three leaves are unnecessary.

2. *In his journey.* In hot countries night is frequently the pleasantest time for travelling, so that this incident is quite natural.

3. *Yet because of his importunity.* The word rendered by "importunity" is too mild. It should be as in the margin, *shamelessness*; (i.e.), no shame can check or stop.—Alford.

4. *Scorpions.* There is no likeness between the ordinary black scorpion of Syria and an egg. Old writers speak of a white scorpion, and such a one with its tail folded up would not look unlike a small egg. The scorpion strikes longitudinally with its tail, and the pain from its stroke is very intense, but in Syria, not fatal. A species found on the northern coast of Africa are said to be larger and their poison causes death.

## OUTLINE LESSONS FOR THE MINISTER'S CLASS.

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## OUTLINE No. 2.

Course on The Sacraments. Part I.—The Lord's Supper. Based on Thomson's *Sacramental Catechism*.

The Lord's Supper presents to us the whole work of Christ:

His active obedience—kept the law for us

His passive obedience—suffered for us

Christ has by His atonement procured for us spiritual blessings in this life. These are shewed forth and received in the Lord's Supper, viz.:

Pardon of sin: Eph. i. 7.

Reconciliation: Rom. v. 10.

Access to God: Eph. ii. 18.

Sonship: Gal. iv. 6, 7.

Spiritual knowledge: 1 Cor. ii. 10.

Sanctification: 1 John i. 7.

Eternal life: John vi. 54.

NOTE.—These blessings are received only by faith.

The actions observed at the Lord's Supper are significant—

1. Our Lord "took," etc.—solemnly separating the sacrament from the Passover, and yet joining it as successor.

2. He "gave thanks"—teaching us that we should do so

likewise, and setting apart the elements to the sacred use in view.

3. He "broke" the bread, that it might more suitably represent his wounded body.

4. He "gave," etc.—to denote the free and irrevocable gift of salvation to all those who would receive it.

5. He gave the wine apart from the bread to denote that his blood was shed, and life departed (Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 11).

6. The disciples "took" the bread and wine, signifying their acceptance of the offered salvation.

7. They "ate" and "drank," signifying thereby that only in inward union with Christ can salvation and spiritual life be found.

## S.S. TEACHERS' TRAINING CLASS OUTLINES.

## LESSON OUTLINE No. 1.

It is important that we should prepare carefully, for

1. We are to teach boys and girls accustomed to the trained teachers of our public schools.
2. We are to teach the most important of all truths.
3. Teaching is an art that can only be acquired by patient, long-continued effort.
4. The work is worthy of all our talent.

In order to prepare thoroughly we must:

1. Work systematically and persistently.
2. Keep ahead of our work.
3. Construct a plan of study for each lesson; e.g., What do I know?—not know? What do reference passages teach? What practical truths, and how can I illustrate? How is the person and work of Christ involved in the truths of the lesson?
4. Naming each scholar in your mind, ask: What can I say to this one, that, considering character, disposition and home surroundings is suited to lead them to Christ, or to help them to grow in richness of Christian character.
5. Study Lesson Helps for fresh hints, etc.
6. Carefully select and arrange your thoughts.
7. Improve the odds and ends of time. Make time for preparation.
8. Study the Word as a means of grace. Let the lesson be your spiritual food.
9. Study prayerfully. God is his own interpreter. Read "Preparing to Teach," 343-349.

## LESSON OUTLINE No. 2.—HOW TO TEACH A LESSON.

General aim:—Strive to interest, to instruct, to impress.

General principles:—

1. Use simple Saxon words which clearly convey your meaning, and are clearly understood by yourself and by the scholars.
2. When it is necessary to use an ambiguous word, carefully explain the sense in which you use it.
3. Carefully explain all figurative expressions; and use illustrations to assist the scholar in comprehending difficult or obscure truths.
4. Carefully cultivate your style of teaching. (a) Let your questions be concise and simple, and present the same question in various aspects. (b) Keep your attention and that of the scholars strictly to the lesson in hand. (c) Earnestly, vividly and pointedly connect the lesson with the every-day life of your scholars.

It is evident that this will require a thorough mastery of all the difficulties of the lesson, and a patient, prayerful consideration of what you are going to say, even down to the precise words of the questions you are to ask.

Remember for your encouragement that a difficulty is half overcome when it is appreciated and firmly met.

Manner in teaching:

Be patient with the restless and inattentive.

Be polite to the smallest child both in school and on the street.

Speak encouragingly and avoid perpetual fault-finding.

Let your love for the scholars be so evident that they will not fail to perceive it.

Read "Preparing to Teach," 349-355.

"He who digs out the tree, can not also enjoy the fruit."

As the tree is fertilized by its own broken branches and falling leaves, and grows out of its own decay, so men and nations are bettered and improved by trial, and refined out of broken hopes and blighted expectations.—F. W. Robertson.

To do good to men is the great work of life; to make them true Christians is the greatest good we can do them. Every investigation brings us round to this point: Begin here, and you are like one who strikes water from a rock on the summits of the mountains; it flows down the intervening tracts to the very base. If we could make each man love his neighbor, we should make a happy world. The true method is to begin with ourselves, and so extend the circle around us. It should be perpetually in our minds.—J. H. Alexander.

THE learned Max Muller, a profound scholar, who has made the study of the religious systems of India in the originals his life-work, closes his noted "Lecture on the Veda" before the Leeds Philosophical Association with the declaration that, as one of the results of such a careful and impartial comparative study of the oriental religions, "we shall learn to appreciate better than ever what we have in our own religion. No one who has not examined patiently and honestly the other religions of the world can know what Christianity really is, or can join with such truth and sincerity in the words of St. Paul, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.'"

## Births, Marriages and Deaths.

NOT EXCEEDING FOUR LINES 25 CENTS.

## BIRTH.

At St Catharines, on the 31st August, the wife of John Carmichael, of a daughter.