

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XXIX.

THE LEPER HEALED.

July 19, 1874. Mark 1: 33-45.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 41, 42. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Matt. viii. 2-4; John xvii. 6.

With v. 38, read Luke iv. 40; with v. 39, Matt. iv. 23, with v. 40, Gen. xviii. 14; with v. 41, 42, Heb. iv. 16; with vs. 43, 44, Lev. xiv. 2-4; and with v. 45, Luke v. 16.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Jesus healeth our diseases.

LEADING TEXT.—Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.—Matt. viii. 2.

Leprosy we can hardly fully understand, because happily it is not a disease generally known among us; and because, like all maladies of which the symptoms vary in various places and persons, different descriptions of it are given, and different theories are held even by medical men. But there are certain facts about which no doubt exists, and which we shall place in the simplest possible form, as introductory to this lesson.

1. Death comes through sin. Gen. ii. 17, Rom. vi. 23.

2. All disease is a presage of death, almost like the beginning of it; it is the witness to each of us that we shall die. It is the product of sin.

3. It was on this account that the dead and all who touched the dead were ceremonially unclean before God. Numb. vi. 9.

4. So God might have regarded all who were diseased or in contact with disease as unclean. But this would have shut out all sufferers from sympathy, and interfered with the business of life. God does not legislate against the happiness of mankind, but for it.

5. As all men belong to God yet He took the first-born as types and representatives of all, so He takes this one disease and makes it the standing representative of all, sets on it the brand of uncleanness, and gives to men, in it, a constant exhibition of the evil of sin in all its fruits and consequences.

6. Leprosy was in behalf fitted to form this standing lesson. It was often loathsome, often painful in a high degree, always to be feared from its spreading and deeply seated character, taking hold not only of the skin, but of the entire system (Numb. xii. 12). It was, besides incurable by human skill. When it was thrown off, it was by the mercy of God.

This is all consistent with the fact that God included important sanitary arrangements (as when we separate small-pox patients from the healthy) in his law. It is his way to do many things by one, as the sun lights, heats, and steadies the planets of the system. And it is consistent with the facts of Scripture. More contact did not spread the disease (Naaman, Gehazi, 2 Kings viii. 5); the priests touched it with safety; the separation enforced was for Jews, not for strangers, and intended to give energetic expression to this idea of ceremonial uncleanness (Lev. xiii. 45). Here there was an incurable malady, appointed sign of sin, only curable by divine power. If Jesus shall heal a leper, what impression will be made? Only one is possible. This is a Saviour from sin who is the mighty power of God. We have in this lesson, an earnest appeal, a prompt cure, and a disregarded caution.

I. AN EARNEST APPEAL. "A leper" (v. 40), made it. He would have his garments rent, like a mourner's for the dead, his head bare (Ezek. xxiv. 17). Alas! it was for himself he mourned. He was unclean as if he had touched a corpse, or a grave, and when cleansed by the priest (v. 44) it would be precisely in the same way as if he had been defiled. (See Numb. xix. 6, 18, and Lev. xiv. 4-7). He was shut out from the city (Lev. xiii. 46; 2 Kings vii. 3), and his ghastly pallor warned all men off from him, as from one on whom "the stroke of God" had rested.

Yet this man was no worse in himself than others. Christ's words were true of him (John ix. 3). On the contrary, he was better than many who would not believe in Jesus, or cry unto him for relief from the maladies of which this hideous disease was the type.

He makes an earnest appeal "beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying," an humble appeal, "If thou wilt," leaving the decision wholly in his hand; a believing appeal, "thou canst." He was asking such a temporal blessing as was not absolutely promised. An uncertain timid; therefore is proper enough in him, which would be quite improper when plain and absolute promises are being urged before God.

II. A PROMPT CURE. Whether he fully understood his own act or not, this poor suppliant treated Jesus as a priest, capable of dealing with this disease, and more than a common priest, who could judge of a cure, not perform it; and Jesus from pity, "moved with compassion," did what no ordinary man might do and be clean—"touched him" (v. 41), and making the response the more gracious by putting it in the terms of the request, "I will," &c., performed the miraculous act of cleansing. Its miraculous character was attested by the instant and visible departure of the symptoms (v. 42). The reality of the cure was to be attested by the proper legal authority (v. 44), "go shew thyself unto the priest."

Jesus did this, as High Priest of God, appointed for the putting away of sin; touched the leper and yet remained pure, even as (so Calvin) he took our sinful nature yet was not sinful.

III. A DISREGARDED CAUTION. An eager crowd of men, in search of temporal benefits, would not advance the objects of our Lord's ministry. Many a Christian laborer is less useful than he might be, from the temporal benefits he dispenses becoming a temptation to insinuate approaches on the part of the selfish. On the other hand, an early and emphatic display of such power as clearly identified Jesus with the Messiah (as cleansing the lepers did, Matt. xi. 6),

might rouse the rage of our Lord's enemies prematurely. His hour was not yet come. Furthermore, the publicity and importance suddenly gained by a man of undisciplined mind, who suddenly becomes the centre of a wondering circle, may well enough become a snare. Who has not known of such evils? For one or all of these reasons doubtless, while enjoining the man to comply with the law (see v. 44), and obtain the priest's certificate (Lev. xiv. 8), "for a testimony unto them" (which shows that his touching the man was in no disregard of the law of Moses, the testimony being either to his regard for it, or to their unbelief in his claims, v. 44), he forbade his speaking of the cure. "See that thou say nothing to any man. Perhaps the Master would here set an example to all his servants, of quietness and unostentatious fidelity, that rather shrinks from, than courts, vulgar notice, that dislikes a sensation, and that instinctively revolts from its efforts being turned into a spectacle.

But as even the saved too often do, the man disobeyed the order. It is hard to keep from talking of one's self, especially when one has been the subject of something quite without parallel. "He went out and began to publish it much and to blaze abroad the matter" (v. 45), with the result which probably our Lord deprecated—he could no more openly enter into the city.

There is indeed another way of reading this. Had the priests beforehand known that a man claimed to be cleansed by Jesus, they might have refused to endorse the claim; Christ therefore says, "Without waiting to satisfy curiosity, go and have the matter settled," and so he forthwith sent him away, the caution only being until the interview with the priest. The words of the Lord to Mary may be similarly regarded, as having an understood limited application, "Do not delay to touch me now—I am not yet ascending, but go, &c."

Learn here: (a) the cause of our sufferings—sin.

(b) The effects of sin, loathsome, polluting, fatal.

(c) The Saviour from sin, Jesus.

(d) The proof of his power to put it away—he puts away its sad effects.

(e) We are not to make an ostentatious display of what Christ has done for us.

(f) Quiet fidelity to God's commands pleases him.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Leprosy not perfectly understood—why—certain facts—sin in relation to death—disease in relation to death—why dead—unclean—why leprosy taken—how it is treated—not infectious usually—examples—proper officers to deal with it—this leper's prayer—the Lord's response—character of the cure—the directions to the man—probable reasons—his disobedience—the effect of it, and lessons to us.

The First Element of a Home.

I never saw a garment too fine for a man or maid; there was never a chair too good for a cobbler or cooper to sit in; never a house too fine to shelter the human head. These elements about us, the gorgeousness, the imperial sun, are not too good for the human race. Elegance fits man. But do we not value these tools of house-keeping a little more than they are worth, and sometimes mortgage home for the mahogany we would bring into it? I had rather eat my dinner off the head of a barrel, or dress after the fashion of John the Baptist, in the wilderness, or sit on a block all my life, than consume all myself before I get home, and take so much pains with the outside that the inside is as hollow as an empty nut. Beauty is a great thing, but beauty of garments, house and furniture is a very tawdry ornament compared with domestic love. All the elegance in the world will not make a home, and I would give more for a spoonful of hearty love than for whole ship-loads of furniture, and all the upholsterers in the world could gather together.—Theodore Parlier.

In 1845 the first missionaries settled in the Choto Nagpur, India, among the Kols. For five years they laboured without visible fruits. At last 4 men came who were anxious to see Jesus. These became the first fruits of the mission. Now the converts number more than 10,000.

The Moravian Church has one out of every fifty of its communicants engaged in the mission service, and for every member at home nearly three members in the mission field.

He that stands beneath the cross, and understands the scene, dare not sin; not because there is a hell beneath him, or an angry God above him, but because holiness is felt to reign there. God never appears so truly great, so intensely holy, as when, from the pure energy of principle, He gives Himself, in the person of the Son, to die rather than His character shall be impugned. Who, at the foot of Calvary, can pronounce sin to be a slight evil?

Faith doth engraft a man, who is by nature a wild olive branch, into Christ, as into the natural olive, and fetcheth sap from the root Christ, and thereby makes the tree bring forth fruit in its kind; yea, faith fetcheth a supernatural efficacy from the death and life of Christ, by virtue whereof it metamorphoseth the heart of a believer, and createth and infuseth into him new principles of action; so that what a treasure of all graces Christ hath stored up in Him, faith draineth and draweth them out to the use of a believer; being as a conduct-cock, that watereth all the herbs in the garden; yea, faith doth apply the blood of Christ to a believer's heart, and the blood of Christ hath in it not only a power to wash from the guilt of sin, but to cleanse and purgo likewise from the power and stain of sin. And, therefore, saith godly Hooker, if you would have grace, you must first of all get faith, and that will bring all the rest. Let faith go to Christ, and there is meekness, patience, humility, and wisdom, and faith will fetch all them to the soul; therefore, saith he, you must not look for sanctification till you come to Christ in-vocation.—Boston.

Our Young Folks.

Hospitality.

One day Tommy rushed into the kitchen crying out, "Mother, mother, there is an old woman 'down in the road sitting on a log; shall I set Pompey on her?"

"Set Pompey on her!" said his sister, "what for?"

"Oh! because," answered Tommy, looking a little ashamed, "because—perhaps she is a thief."

"Go out, Esther, and see if the poor woman wants anything. Perhaps she's tired with a hard day's travel among the mountains," said the mother.

Esther ran down the green, and peeping through the gate saw the woman resting under the shade of the old oak tree.

"Should you like anything?" asked Esther.

"Thank you, said the old woman; I should be very thankful for a drink of water."

Esther scampored back to the house, and soon procured some cold water from the well, and hastened with it to the poor traveler.

"I thank you," said she after drinking. "It tastes very good. Do you know what the Lord Jesus once said about a cup of cold water?"

Esther was silent.

"I will tell you, He said, Whosoever shall give to one of his people a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward. May the Lord himself bless you little girl, as I am sure I do."

And a happy feeling stole into the child's bosom at the old woman's words, for the blessing of the poor upon her.—Children's Friend.

Hints on Politeness.

My little girl told me last night to give her some rules on politeness. I promised to indicate some very plain rules which govern well-bred persons in their intercourse with the world, promising what I think Hazlitt said to his son, that true politeness requires more than a desire to make those in our presence happy.

1. Girls should rise when an elder person of either sex enters the room.

2. If a gentleman calls upon you, do not hesitate once in a while to ask him into the family room, or give your parents to understand that you want them to come into the parlor to see your company. The young gentleman who does not wish to be occasionally in the company of your parents is not worthy of your society.

3. Be a true lady at home, especially at the table, also you will forget to act the lady abroad. Sit straight; eat deliberately. Don't bow your head too low to eat or drink. Don't pick your teeth or pare your nails in the presence of others. Don't rock or put your feet on another's chair, or look at a person's manuscript while he is writing, or take a book from him, or ask him what he has in a package. Every exhibition of idle curiosity is annoying to a refined person.

4. Do not address a person without speaking out the name. Some persons will take hold of your arm, or touch your shoulder or look at you. This is impolite. Speak out the name—Mrs.—, or Mr.—, or Miss.—, or the given name.

5. Don't speak in a loud tone unless your friends are deaf. Do not whisper in company unless it becomes necessary to say something of importance to your mother. If an old gentleman offers you his easy chair, do not take it; and be sure not to let your mother do anything for the comfort of visitors if you can do it yourself.

6. You will of course never look behind you to notice a person who has passed, nor stare at any one on the street, or in the stores. If you have fine clothes, do not be ambitious to display them on the streets or in the church.

7. Fix on an hour for retirement, and do not deviate from it except under an extraordinary pressure of circumstances. You need not hesitate to tell your friends that you must be at home at 10 o'clock. They will excuse you, for you must have rest, and have it regularly, in order to pass the coming day cheerfully and profitably.

Keep Still.

We fancy this is what every small boy would like to say if he only knew how: Keep still! That's what they always say to us boys. Just as if they never had been any noise in the world until we were born. Haven't old folks all been boys and girls once? Didn't some of them get boxed on the ears at school? Didn't some of them drum on the milk pans, or crack nuts with the fatiron, or slam the doors? Every thing that is smart goes off with a bang. This would be a dull world if it were not for the racket the boys make. Noisy boys are not always saucy. Some are, but we are not. We belong to the "Boy's Rattle-bang Society of Good Manners," and we invite all our young friends to come and join us.—Advance.

Four Good Rules.

1. A suitable place for everything, and everything in its place.

2. A proper time for everything, and everything done in its time.

3. A distinct name for everything, and everything called by its name.

4. A certain use for everything, and everything put to its use.

Much time would be saved, many disputes avoided, numerous articles kept from being lost or injured, and constant confusion and disorder prevented by the strict observance of these important rules.

Upon men of small understanding nothing makes so deep an impression as what they do not understand.

The State of Spain.

"Popery has to answer for the ills from which Spain has suffered and is suffering. It expelled the Jews, the promoters of commerce; it drove out the Moors, the best agriculturists it had; it dried up the fountains of reproductiveness by taking possession of immense wealth in lands and estates, and its convents and numerous army of priests helped further to impoverish the land; and its action and pernicious influence has brought Spain to the miserable condition of decay, bankruptcy, disorganisation, and ruin it is in. Within this very century, and when the population was a great deal smaller than it is, actually, Spain could boast the possession of 58 archbishops, 684 bishops, 11,400 abbots, 936 chapters, 127,000 parishes with as many priests, 7000 hospitals under priestly management, 23,000 religious fraternities, 46,000 monasteries, 135,000 convents, 812,000 secular priests, 200,000 inferior clergy, and 400,000 monks and nuns! These figures have greatly diminished since, but even now there is an army of 40,000 regular priests of different grades—the declared enemies of liberty, good government, and freedom of thought. No wonder, then, if Carlism is raising its militant head. It has all the active and powerful support of the Popish priesthood and their partisans, and both are working hard to establish the ruin and demoralisation of Spain."—Evangelical Christendom.

Philosophy of Clothes.

The Saturday Review has something rather original to say of life when its principal object is the construction or wearing of fashionable clothes. Its observations are suggested by the examination of a journal published for the tailors trade.

"Life all drapery, or at least life viewed exclusively in its relation to drapery, certainly presents a novel and surprising aspect. Political questions, for example, are studied only with reference to the gowns and bonnets which they are supposed to be likely to bring into fashion. It would appear that the fluctuations of French parties keep the drapers and milliners and their customers in a state of perpetual agitation. At one moment the Count of Chambord is thought to be coming to the front, and fleurs-de-lis and costumes of the reign of Francis I. and Henry IV. have to be prepared in haste. These have soon after to give way to bees and eagles and Imperial fashions, while at the same time Republicanism has to be recognized by a revival of the eccentricities of the merveilleuses and incroyables. It may seem strange to a philosophical mind that English ladies should be obliged to change the cut and color of their dresses whenever a new turn is given to political intrigue in France. Perhaps when woman's suffrage is established we shall find our own domestic questions elevated into their national prominence in this respect. The weather is watched by the draper with an intense interest as for the farmer, but the question in which he is interested is its probable effect, not on the crops, but on the style of costume."

Animals Slandered by Man.

There is a fine irony in the use we make of the terms "brutal" and "bestially" and "humane." As no brute ever kicks its mate to death, nor any beast makes itself drunk, it is a happy use of language by which our police reports invariably qualify the first class of outrage as "brutal," and the condition of a tipsy man wallowing in the gutter as "bestially." On the other hand it is by a pretty, if not well-deserved compliment to ourselves, that we describe the courage transcendently displayed by a hen on behalf of her chickens as pre-eminently "manly;" and when we have occasion to speak of compassionateness, complacently call the quality "humanity," as if the race from which have sprung all the Heroes, Neroses, Alvas, and Magendies, of ancient and modern times, were quiet incapable of cruelty.

In one of Esop's fables, charmingly rendered by La Fontaine, a lion is shown a picture wherein a man stands triumphant over one of the animals own kind which he has just vanquished. The four-footed critic in the fable simply remarks:—

Avec plus de raison nous aurions le dessus Si nos confreres savaient peindre.

We may readily imagine the transposition of terms of praise and blame which would follow were the promised experiment of teaching poor Joe (the Chumpanzee in the Zoological Gardens) the language of the deaf and dumb to prove successful, and an age of talking animals to be inaugurated. How the eminently sensible goose, and the calm-judging ass would recalcitrate against the use of their names as synonyms of stupidity and folly! How those affectionate comrades—rats—would repudiate the use of the term "rattling" as signifying treachery! How those quarrelsome and loosely-conducted birds, the doves, would coo satirically under their wings at our romantic inscription to them of innocence and fidelity! And how one and all would hoot, snort, bray and cackle at the utter absurdity of attaching to the word "human" any other sense than that of consummate perfidy and merciless destructiveness!—New Quarterly Review.

"I would not," says Mr. Beecher, "for all the comfort which I might get from the books of the Alexandrian Library or from the Lenox Library, give up the comfort which I get out of nature. . . . There is nothing that grows—no weed, no grass, no flower, no fruit—that is not in some way related to God in my thoughts; and I am never so near Him as when I am in the presence of His works—as when, night or day I am, in that solemn cathedral, the world of nature, and behind it ever changing beauty. There is no such fresco in art as God's hand paints in the heavens. There are no such relations to God as come to us through nature. In the budding, blossoming days of spring, in the balmy days of summer, in the fruitful days of autumn, in the days of winter, in every day of the year, there is something that is a separate leaf to me in God's outside Bible, now that I have learned to read it."

Pastors, Please Read This.

A writer in the Princeton Review of 1850, says: "Ministers have devoted an undue proportion of their labour to those that are grown up; whilst the young, by far the most hopeful part of their congregations, have been almost wholly neglected."

Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, shortly before his death, said, "If I had my ministry to go over again, I would give far more attention to the children."

Rev. D. Samuel Miller, in his seventy-ninth year, said, "After the observation of a long life, I have come decisively to the conclusion, that if I had my life to live over again, I would pay ten times as much attention to the children of my charge as I ever did when I had a charge. If I were now about to undertake the care of a new or feeble church, I would consider special attention to the children and young people of the neighborhood as one of the most certain and effectual methods of collecting and strengthening a large flock that could possibly be employed."

The Future.

The future falls under the cognizance of God alone; we encroach therefore upon his rights, when we would foresee all which may happen to us, and secure ourselves from it by our cares. How much good is omitted, how many evils caused, how many innocent persons deserted, how many good works neglected, how many truths repressed, and how many acts of injustice authorized, by these timorous forecasts of what may happen, and these faithless apprehensions concerning the time to come! Let us do in season what God requires of us; and let us trust to Him for the consequences. The future time, which God would have us foresee and provide for, is that of judgment and eternity; and it is this alone which we will not foresee.—Quemel.

A Long Reign.

Queen Victoria completed the thirty-seventh year of her reign on Saturday, June 20th, as she came to the British throne on the 20th of June, 1837, four weeks after the completion of her eighteenth year. As reigns stand in history, her reign already can be pronounced a long one. It is the longest reign, with six exceptions, that England has known since the Conquest. Of her five predecessors of her own line (Hanoverian) only one—George III., her grandfather—reigned more than thirty-seven years, George II., the longest of them all but one on the throne reigning thirty-three years.—Watchman and Reflector.

Consistency.

Let us remember that whatever unfits us for religious duties, cools the fervor of our devotions, or indisposes us to read our Bible or to pray; whatever we could not engage in with a perfectly clear conscience, wherever the thought of a suffering Saviour or a holy God, of the hour of death or of the day of judgment, falls like a cold shadow on our enjoyment; the pleasure which we cannot thank God for, and on which we cannot ask his blessing,—these are not for us.

Notwithstanding all the assertions to the contrary, open communion is steadily gaining ground in Baptist churches all over this continent. Here is what the President of a leading Baptist College in the United States said the other day: "Open Communion will undoubtedly be the custom of the Baptist denomination in the near future. If I was a young man I should certainly advocate it boldly, and expect to win a victory, and enjoy the fruits of my effort at reform."

The poor copies of Christ's life which are presented to us, even in lives of the most sincere Christians, resemble the copies of good pictures made by little children. The proportions are all faulty, and the colors do not blend together. There is a likeness, but so imperfect a one that we must not take pattern by the copy, but ascend up to the original, and study its every feature there, where alone it is perfect.—Marie Hare.

We are old or young as we have made attainments in knowledge. We are as pupils, to learn. Our education begins at birth; will be carried on after death. Every intellectual endowment is for use; every opportunity and appliance for our service and equipment. We may have had few advantages or many; the question does not hinge there, but what have we gained with our advantages, more or less?

The London Missionary Chronicle gives an interesting account of a contest in medical skill between the missionary at Inyati, in the Matebele mission, and the native doctors. The daughter of the new king, Lupungula, had been given up by native doctors as incurable. The missionary physician found the girl to be in the first stage of consumption, and offered with God's blessing, to cure her, although the natives were much amused at the idea of "praying," they said, "to nothing for a dead body." When she began to grow better, the native doctors tried hard to regain their patient; but the missionary succeeded in keeping her on the mission premises until, to the surprise of her father, she could walk home in sound health.

The India Evangelical Review for January speaks thus of the Santhal Mission (the Santhals are an aboriginal tribe in Bengal): "Few Indian missions can point to results so great, attained in so brief a time, as the Indian Home Mission to the Santhals. It is superintended by a managing committee in this country and depends for its support on the Christian community of India. Most of the converts deem it not only a duty but a delight to make known that Saviour on whom they themselves have believed. Most of those recently-baptized, as well as many inquirers now waiting for baptism, are the fruits of the labors put forth spontaneously by the converts themselves. The report mentions the addition of 220 Santhals to the church during 1873. Many more have been added since the close of that year."