

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubets' Notes.

Second Quarter.

PRECEPTS AND PROMISES.

Lesson II. April 8. Matt. 7: 1-14.

Read Matthew 6: 19-7: 29.

Compare Luke 6: 37-49.

Commit Verses 7, 8, 13, 14.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.—Matt. 7: 12.

EXPLANATORY.

We have here a number of the laws of the kingdom of heaven.

I. THE LAW OF JUDGING.—Vs. 1, 2. I. JUDGE NOT. The word "judge" here does not mean "form an opinion," for every one must do this of many persons and things (Luke 12: 57; John 7: 24). It means "to impute wrong motives," to put the worst and not the best construction on the actions or words of others.

THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED. Condemned and censured, and misunderstood by others, as they have been by you.

2. FOR WITH WHAT JUDGMENT, etc. The simple fact is stated, that if you are harsh and censorious, you invite others to be censorious toward you, and they will be sure to accept your invitation. WITH WHAT MEASURE YE METE (measure) IT SHALL BE MEASURED TO YOU AGAIN. This is another statement of the same law of retribution.

II. THE LAW ILLUSTRATED: THE MOTE AND THE BEAM.—Vs. 3-5. The inconsistency and folly of judging are shown by the illustration in these verses.

3. WHY BEHOLDENST. "Starest at" from without, "gaze at, examine carefully." THOU, who art judging others. THE MOTE. "The word 'mote' suggests 'dust'; whereas the figure is that of a minute 'chip' or 'splinter,' of the same material with the 'beam.'" THAT IS IN THY BROTHER'S EYE, obscuring his vision. BUT CONSIDEREST NOT. "Apprehendest not" from within, "understandest" not. THE BEAM THAT IS IN THINE OWN EYE. "Beam," a graphic and almost droll representation of a comparatively great fault. The word means a "log, joist, or rafter." The Saviour draws a picture, and shows how morally grotesque the conduct of the faultfinder is.

4. OR HOW WILT THOU SAY TO THY BROTHER, etc. How can you have the face to say, how be guilty of such hypocrisy, such absurdity?

5. THOU HYPOCRITE. Because he professes to be sorry for the faults he reproves, when he is not, or he would hate them in himself. He rejoices to find a sin in his brother to find fault with. He would appear to be good by condemning the faults of others, while he is not really good, for he overlooks greater faults in himself.

III. A MODIFICATION OF THE LAW: PEARLS BEFORE SWINE.—V. 6. This is as though our King had said: "I have just warned you against censorious judgments. But do not go to the opposite extreme of foolish laxity, . . . failing to distinguish between lambs and dogs. Observe the law of adaptation."

6. GIVE NOT THAT WHICH IS HOLY. The sacrificial meats, the holy things prepared for the temple services, to aid men in the worship of God. UNTO THE DOGS. "In the East dogs are savage, unclean ceremonially, and actually filthy and horrible in appearance. They are the scavengers of the cities, and feed upon all the refuse, even when it is far gone in putrefaction. To give holy things to dogs will not elevate the dogs, but only defile the holy things. NEITHER CAST YE YOUR PEARLS BEFORE SWINE. Because they cannot appreciate their beauty nor understand their value, and you lose your pearls. You must change the nature of the swine before the pearls will do them any good. LEST THEY . . . TURN AGAIN AND REND YOU. You not only will fail of doing them any good, but they will injure you for your attempt."

IV. THE LAW CONCERNING PRAYER.—Vs. 7-11. The door to the divine treasure house which contains supplies for all our needs.

First. The Threefold Way of Obtaining. 7. ASK. . . SEEK. . . KNOCK. These words imply three methods of prayer, and perhaps three degrees of intensity. "Ask," express your desire, go to God with it, including and gathering up in itself the "seek" and the "knock," as in v. 11, for these are modes of asking. "Seek" by all active efforts, which are acted prayers; use all possible means, as in the parable of the pearl of great price. "Knock" at the door of God's treasure house of blessings for the blessings which no seeking can obtain, but which must be given by God.

Second. The Threefold Promise of an Answer. 8. FOR EVERY ONE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH. There is no exception True asking will combine seeking an

knocking. The answer will be given according to the kind of asking. AND (every one) THAT SEEKETH FINDETH. Most best things must be sought for, as the graces, education, character. For others, as the gift of the Spirit, special providences, divine guidance, God's tender love, opportunities, revelations, we must knock at God's treasury door, AND TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH IT SHALL BE OPENED.

A Proof from Each Parent's Experience. 9. IF HIS SON ASK BREAD (a loaf) WILL HE GIVE HIM A STONE, which was often found in the shape of their small, flat, round loaf.

10. ASK A FISH (good for food) WILL HE GIVE HIM A SERPENT? Not only useless, but often deadly. To ask these questions is to answer them.

11. IF YE THEN, BEING EVIL; i. e., sinful, imperfect. "Even in our highest, holiest relations there is evil: selfishness is mingled with our most unselfish love." GOOD GIFTS UNTO YOUR CHILDREN. This is the rule. HOW MUCH MORE. The difference is infinite. SHALL YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. The holy, heavenly, loving, perfect Father, who makes heaven what it is, who is able to answer every prayer. GIVE GOOD THINGS. Luke 11: 13, "the Holy Spirit," which is the best of the "good things," and includes them all. If God will give the choicest gift, we need not hesitate to believe that he will give the lesser ones. But whatever God does give is good.

The argument is conclusive. If God does not answer prayer, and if what he gives us in response to our asking is not the best for us, then God is not as good as an earthly parent.

V. THE GOLDEN RULE.—V. 12 THEREFORE. Because what follows is the summing up of all the previous precepts in this discourse, as love is the sum of the Ten Commandments, which James (2: 8) calls the Royal Law, as this verse is called the Golden Rule. Because, also, you are sons of God, and should therefore act like sons. ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU. All that you would have a right to expect from others, but everything criminal, or foolish one might desire. DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM. Equivalent to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "The rule does not require us to do 'the things' which they ask, but to act toward them in the manner and spirit in which we should wish them to act toward us. FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. The sum of the duties to man required by the law and taught by the prophets. It is the state of heart and life which it is their object to produce.

VI. THE NARROW GATE.—V. 13, 14. The way into the kingdom of God.

13. ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE. The narrow, difficult gate. 'Strait' here is a different word from "straight," and is still used in such expressions as "He is in a strait," i. e., a narrow place; or "The Straits (the narrows) of Gibraltar." FOR WIDE IS THE GATE, AND BROAD IS THE WAY, THAT LEADETH TO DESTRUCTION. There are a multitude of sins, each of which is a way to ruin. "To destruction." The end of sin is destruction. It destroys life, health, happiness, hope, heaven. The destruction often begins in this world; it is completed in the next. AND MANY THERE BE WHICH GO IN THEREAT. It was the popular way, and thronged with travelers. It was so then. It still is today, but in a less degree.

14. STRAIT IS THE GATE . . . WHICH LEADETH UNTO LIFE, the true life, the life of heaven on earth, eternal life. FEW THERE BE THAT FIND IT. A fact at the time. He does not say it will always be so, he does not say it "must" be so. All can find who will seek.

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