

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Third Quarter.

STUDIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Lesson VI. August 19. Luke 16: 19-31.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"—Mark 10: 24.

EXPLANATORY.

FIRST SCENE. ON EARTH. TWO CHARACTERS. A CONTRAST. I. THE WORLDLY MAN AT HIS EARTHLY BEST. 19. A certain rich man. His name is not given, perhaps to imply that his name was not written in heaven, perhaps to show how little honor is given by heaven to mere riches. Which was clothed in purple. The purple was anciently the royal robe, the gorgeous hue of the imperial robes. And fared sumptuously every day. Literally, "making merry (12: 19) every day, splendidly." It indicates a life of banquets.

20. His sin was not in the mere fact of his riches. His sin was his worldliness, his selfishness, his utter forgetfulness and neglect of the nobler and spiritual aims and blessings of life.

IF THE GOODLY MAN AT HIS EARTHLY WORST. 20. A certain beggar named Lazarus. It is singular enough, the rich man's name is not mentioned, whereas that of the beggar is. In this world the name of the rich man was sounded by a thousand trumpets. In the heavenly world all is reversed. Greatness alone is prominent now; goodness alone will be prominent there. Laid at his gate. Rather, thrown down at his hall-door. He was deposited there with the hope of attracting the rich man's pity. Full of sores. Ulcerated; one of the natural effects of a mendicant's life.

21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs. "Crumbs" were the fragments of those thin cakes used for bread in those times, upon which guests wiped their fingers after dipping them in the dishes, and which they then hung on the door. Moreover, the beggar was like a dog. Oriental dogs are the local scavengers. They belong to nobody, are a thin, mangy, starved set of outcasts.

III. THE CLOSE OF LIFE. A CONTRAST. 22. And it came to pass that the beggar died. His death is mentioned first, because one in his condition would be likely to die first. The history of his soul is continued beyond the boundary of life, as the real and unbroken history of the man. Was carried (his soul, his true self) by the angels. Probably to be understood literally. Into Abraham's bosom. Of the three terms in common use among the Jews to express the future state of blessedness, (1) the Garden of Eden, or Paradise; (2) the throne of glory; (3) the bosom of Abraham, this was the most widely popular. The rich man died. . . was buried. There is a subtle irony in this mention of his burial, connected as it is with what is immediately to follow. No doubt we are meant to infer that he had a funeral according to the most approved pomp of the world.

THE GOODNESS OF LAZARUS. Jesus doubtless gave the appellation (Lazarus) as Bunyan bestowed the name of his hero in *Pilgrim's Progress*; he called his name Christian because he was a Christian. And this beggar here is called "God is my help," because he was a good man, living according to his light by the help of God.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. 1. We cannot tell by his outward circumstances whether a man is good or not. Wicked men are sometimes rich; saints are sometimes very poor. 2. The real question for every person is, what is his character, what is he becoming through his surroundings, or in spite of them? 3. A good man in the worst circumstances is really much better off than the wicked man in the choicest of earthly conditions. 4. Death does not end all. It is a mere transition from one form of life to another. 5. The souls of believers are watched over and cared for at death. 6. As the players go forth, lay aside their masks, and appear as they truly are, the humblest slaves, so death, when the audience is dismissed, unmasks wealth and poverty.

SECOND. THE SCENE BEYOND THE GRAVE. THE SAME CHARACTERS. I. THE CONTRAST REVERSED. 23. And in hell. Greek Hades, which is represented as containing both Paradise and Gehenna, and is merely the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol, "the grave," the intermediate condition of the dead between death and the final judgment. He lifted up his eyes. Either he looked up to a higher place, or he now became fully conscious. Being in torment. The rich man was in a place of punishment; for the whole scene turns on this point. Physical torment is not implied, save so far as it is necessary for the figurative representation. For the rich man's body was buried. And death Abraham afar off. So represented, because both in condition and in character they were as far apart as possible. And Lazarus in his bosom. Reclining in honor at the banquet of bliss.

24. And he cried. . . Father Abraham. This is the only instance in Scripture of praying to saints. And that prayer was not successful. For the whole scene can be content to claim kinship with Abraham; he calls him Father Abraham; but ye read not that ever he said Brother Lazarus. Have mercy on me. . . send Lazarus. Asked either in the old selfish arrogance, wanting Lazarus for a servant; or in conquered pride, willing to take a favor even from Lazarus. Dip the tip of his finger. He dares ask but the smallest favor. O my tongue. The man who had lived so luxuriously now speaks of relief for his "tongue" which had been gratified with dainties. This hints at the close connection between sin and its punishment. Tormented in this flame. Figures are employed in the Bible, not because the reality is less than the figure, but greater. Our Lord here teaches, all the more strongly because incidentally, that after death the souls of the impatient suffer as terribly as if fire were tormenting their bodies.

II. THE REASONS FOR THE CONTRAST. 25. And Abraham said. The request was refused, not from any unwillingness on the part of Abraham and Lazarus to help the suffering man. But the request itself of the worldly man showed that he was not repentant, and had not changed

his character. There was nothing in him that made heaven possible to him. Son. How kindly Abraham speaks, recognizing that he was his son, and showing him at the same time how little like a son of Abraham he had lived. Remember. Departed souls recollect the events of their former life. Memory and conscience will be the books from which they will be finally acquitted or condemned. Then in the lifetime. . . good things, Lazarus evil things. It may mean that the good things, the object of his life ("thy good things"), were worldly goods, and he gained them. He had not sought salvation and eternal life, and why should he expect to have them? He had done nothing through which they were possible. He repented what he had done. He had what was his own. But Lazarus' evil things were external to him, a discipline and a probation from without.

26. For I have five brothers. And beside all this. The reason drawn from the fitness of things is followed by a reason drawn from the necessity of the case. A great gulf fixed. Literally, a chasm, the opening or gaping of the earth. The gulf symbolizes the necessary separation growing out of inherent and radical difference of character. There can be no interchange and no communication between us. There is little use in imagining what God would do if one in torment should repent. He would forgive him, of course. But they will not repent. They are confirmed in evil. They wish to escape from torment, not from sin.

IV. THE SOURCE OF HIS STATE IN HIS CHOICES, NOT IN HIS CIRCUMSTANCES. A WARNING. 27. I pray thee therefore. Since nothing can be done to alleviate any misery, at least do not let there be any increase. That thou wouldst send him. Still the same supercilious willingness that Lazarus should serve him. To my father's house. This shows that perdition does not of necessity involve the destruction of such natural sentiments.

28. For I have five brothers. They are Jews, living in a privileged, brilliant condition, like that of the rich man. That he may testify unto them. Bear persons witness to what he had seen, and know from experience, of the results of the earthly life.

29. They have Moses and the prophets. All the Old Testament. Abraham's answer is brief and almost stern, rebuking, as was fit, this evil thought of his heart. "They are warned; they have enough to keep them from your place of torment. If only they will use it. They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

30. Nay. . . but if one went unto them from the dead. He imagines that the unwontedness of the phenomenon, together with the authority with which he will testify of what he has seen and experienced, will cause that they shall repent.

31. Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. These words demand to be accurately considered. Jesus had said, "They will repent." Abraham replies, "They will not even be persuaded." Dives had said, "If one went unto them from the dead." Abraham, with a prophetic glance at the world's unbelief in far greater matters, makes answer, "No, not if one rose from the dead." An apparition from the dead might frighten men, but it would not change their natures, nor cause them to think less of self and its gratification.

In the first place, men would not believe that the messenger came from the dead. In the second place, facts show the truth of this statement. Soon after this parable was spoken Jesus raised Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, from the dead, and the Pharisees tried to kill both of them on account of it. In the third place, a new revelation must (1) bring more light, or (2) stronger proofs, or (3) more powerful motives. (1) As to more light, a new revelation might bring it, but it would either leave men unchanged, as devils see heaven and hell with perfect clearness, and yet remain devils, or it would compel to an outward form of virtue, while the heart was unchanged. (2) As to stronger proofs of its authority as from God, all that men can conceive of proof is given by the Bible, Christ from the dead, miracles, prophecies, results, a perfect standard. (3) A new revelation cannot give stronger sanctions. The principal motives are hope, fear, duty, and love. We cannot conceive of any stronger degree of these than are given in the Bible, no better heaven to hope for, no more dreadful hell to escape, stronger sanctions of duty in the law, in conscience, in God as Creator, Father, Holy Spirit, Friend; no greater love than is found in God in Jesus Christ.

"A Still Alarm."

BY CLARA J. DENTON.

Bertha's dull pencil left awkward figures in its track across the slate. This would not do, for Miss Elvo insisted upon neatness as well as accuracy in the work of her pupils. Bertha, therefore, with a distressed little pucker between her dark eyebrows, raised her hand.

"Well," said Miss Elvo, looking at her. "My pencil is very dull—may I go out and sharpen it?" she said.

It was the custom within this great, brick school building, known as "No. 4," to have the pencils put in perfect working condition before school was called in the morning. They were then passed around in a neat box, and each pupil took out her own. In some mysterious way Bertha's pencil had escaped the sharpening process, and its hard-worked point of the previous day was unfit for use. Miss Elvo looked in the box for an unclaimed pencil, but—a rare occurrence—the box was empty. She therefore granted a somewhat unwilling consent to Bertha's petition.

Bertha tip-toed across the floor, shut the door softly and with three long hauls to the back door, and out into the chill winter air. Standing in a sheltered corner on the back porch, she began to sharpen her pencil. While working away busily she took her eyes a moment from her task, and immediately discovered a thin curl of smoke issuing from one of the basement windows. Her decision was immediately taken. Only the night before she had heard her father explain to her brother how to give a "still alarm." How glad she was that she had listened attentively to his instructions, for it was now, above all things, necessary to have the fire com-

pany arrive quietly without alarming the pupils. There was a telephone in the store on the corner, and in less than five minutes the message had reached the chief of the fire department, and Bertha was speeding on her way back to the school building. She paused a few minutes in the hall, near the door of the room where she belonged, to quiet her mind in a loving and calm frightened face. When she entered the room, instead of going to her seat, she went straight to the teacher's desk. Miss Elvo admired and loved her; she was one of those delightful children who are always heartily in earnest in their undertakings. There was nothing unusual in her appearance now save a glint in her dark eyes and a small red spot on either cheek. From these signs Miss Elvo, who was a keen observer, allowed her to step upon the rostrum unchecked. She turned her back upon the school and said in a low, but distinct whisper, "Miss Elvo, there is a fire in the basement, I have been to the corner and sent in a 'still alarm.'"

Miss Elvo's cheek paled a little, but she took a pencil immediately and wrote on a scrap of paper:

"Dismiss your pupils quietly, but as speedily as possible. Miss Elvo."

She handed this to Bertha, saying in a low voice:

"You are a brave girl. Show this paper to each teacher in the building as quietly and promptly as you have done the rest and all, I trust, will be well."

She then turned to the desk and gave the signal for closing work. The pupils, who were poring over their problems in fractions, were surprised, but were too well drilled to give other than prompt obedience. The implements of work were put by, the pupils rose, filed out, and in five minutes the building was empty. Miss Elvo, herself, as principal, moving softly about and quietly helping matters along. When the last pupil was gone, her thoughts reverted to Bertha. She looked in the dressing room belonging to the division. Yes, there hung the well-known gray "pudd" hood with its blue trimming, and the long warm sack that belonged with it, but where could Bertha be?

"She has proved that she could take care of herself," was Miss Elvo's consolation, and as she had just privately told the teachers to assemble in the lower hall when the pupils were gone, she hastened down to meet them. They were all there, and the story of the sudden suspension of school duties was soon told.

"We must do something," said the first assistant, looking vaguely about and wringing her hands, but at that moment they heard the fire engine roll up. The chief alighted from his horse, and was met in the hall by the very teachers. When, after a response to his inquiries, he started for the basement they followed him.

There, smeared and wet, and surrounded by the now decreasing smoke, stood Bertha throwing water upon the burning woodwork and joists. It had caught from a defective flue leading from the furnace to the register above, the temporary closing of which had prevented the escape of the smoke into the hall. She had carried the water, in a large tin pail, from the hydrant in the yard, but a few steps from the door leading down to the basement she had slipped.

Although she had not succeeded in quenching the fire entirely, she had prevented it from spreading by keeping the surrounding woodwork wet, and with a very little effort on the part of the firemen it was soon entirely extinguished. Much praise was showered upon Bertha for her bravery and wisdom, but I think her first wise step was in giving careful attention and picking up a new scrap of knowledge, for without it even her bravery would have been useless perhaps.—*Christian at Work.*

A Story of Two Writers.

Mr. Albert Ross (Linn Boyd Porter) recently told how, when a boy, he satisfied his mind over the end of *Great Expectations*. His little toward had puzzled itself and wondered and speculated over the closing chapter of the book, until to know for a certainty just what did happen on the other side of that last page seemed to him the most desirable thing in life. So when Dickens came over and started on his reading tour the youngster made up his mind to find out. He represented all his yearnings for candy, and when the great story-teller reached his town he was ready to go. He managed to mix himself up with the crowd of persons who wanted to shake hands with the novelist, and as he stood before him and reached out his little brown fist he gasped:

"Mr. Dickens—I want to ask you a question!"

"Well, my lad, what is it?"

"Did Pip marry Estelle?"

Putting one hand tenderly on the little fellow's head, while a pleased look came over his face, Dickens replied with all the confidence of a story-teller who knows privately the whole future life of every one of his brain children:

"He did, my boy; he did."—*New York Evening Sun.*

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